This chapter looks at the contribution of the Trinity and other composers to Karnatic musical forms and the lasting impact of their contributions on the musical forms in use today. One of the seminal contributions of the Trinity has been giving shape to and refining the Kriti musical form that is most widely used today. Amongst all the forms in Karnatic music, the Kriti stands alone in capturing the essence of the raga with the minimal number of angas in addition to being rich in musical and prosodical embellishments. It not only serves as a malleable framework for showcasing words conveying with meaning, but is also suitable for the performer to display his or her skills in Manodharma sangita.

The evolution of the Kriti/Kirtana form occurred over a long period of time – it had its origin in the Vedic period, in the form of classical Sanskrit verses. As Vedic grammar developed these verses had to conform to rules of prosody and over time started being set to music. With the rise of vernacular languages, musical compositions were created in these as well as classical Sanskrit and came to be known as Prabandhas. As rules governing musical compositions and rhythmic variations began taking shape, Prabandhas with higher melodic content passed into music while those with higher literary or religious content got amalgamated into religious literature. These musical compositions evolved into the Kirtana form in South India in the 15th and 16th centuries, largely used for the presentation of religious themes and prayers; in the North, the Prabandha evolved into the Dhrupad musical form. The earlier vaggeyakaras whose compositions or kirtanas are available with us include Sripadaraya (1403-1502), Sri Vyasaraya (1447-1539), Sri Vadiraja (1480-1600) and Sri Raghavendra (1623-1671), Tallapakkam Annamacharya (1408 to 1503) of Tirupati and Purandaradasa (1484-1564) of Karnataka. However, the original tunes
of many of these compositions are lost to us. It is Purandaradasa who is credited with having established and codified systematic teaching in Karnatic music through Swaravalis, Sarali varisai, Janta Varisai, Alankaras, Gitas, Suladis, Ugabhogas etc. The tarangas of Sri Narayana Tirtha resembled the kritis, as they had a Pallavi, Anupallavi and Charanam (P-A-C). The use of solkattu swaras at the end of the tarangas illustrating the rasa krida of Krishna with gopis was perhaps a forerunner of the idea of the Kriti with decorative angas such as swara sahitya, solkattu, madhyamakala, etc.

Other forms of musical compositions which had become popular before the advent of the Trinity were -

- Tillanas (derived from Taranas, said to have been introduced by Amir Khusro in the 13th century)
- 'Padams' (songs in vernacular languages, typically with heavy focus on lyrics)
- 'Javalis' (romantic songs)
- Varnas and Swarajatis (instructional pieces in vernacular languages)
- Vritta (Virutham in Tamil – slokas or verses in vernacular languages, with an alapana at the end)
- Raga alapana

The modern 'kirtana' form of musical composition of three sections (pallavi, anupallavi and charanam) is believed to have been evolved only during the latter half of the fifteenth century and the earliest kirtanas are attributed to Tallappakkam Chinniah. Among the predecessors of the Trinity, Paidala Gurumurti Sastri and Margadarsi Sesha Iyengar were noted for their kirtanas in the modern format. However, kritis with the Pallavi, Anupallavi and Charanam style came into their own and were given a definitive shape only during the time of
the Trinity. The sections below discuss the contribution of different composers to the development of the Kriti as well as other musical forms that are in use today.

**Syama Sastri**

In terms of his contribution to kritis, structurally Syama Sastri has not made as many innovations as Tyagaraja and Dikshitar and seems to have favoured the standard pattern of Pallavi, Anupallavi and Charanam or Charanas. He has composed kritis with Chittaswara and swara sahitya as found in ‘Sari evvaramma’ (Bhairavi) and ‘O Jagadamba’ (Anandabhairavi). He has used madhyamakala sahitya in some of his kritis – for instance, composing the entire anupallavi and charanam of Anandabhairavi Kriti ‘O Jagadamba’ in madhyama kala. He has also used patterns like employing the dhatu of the anupallavi in the charanam again in kritis like ‘Marivegati’ (Anandabhairavi), ‘Sari evvaramma’ (Bhairavi), ‘Ninne namminanu’ (Todi). Another feature of Syama Sastri’s kritis is the relatively fewer number of sangatis as compared to Tyagaraja – it is possible that a few sangatis were created by the composer himself and/or later introduced by his son Subbaraya Sastri.

Looking at other musical forms – Syama Sastri is said to have composed four varnams¹ in Anandabhairavi (Ata tala), Begada (Adi tala), Saurashtram (chatusra ata) and Kalyani (Tisra Matyam). In the Kalyani varnam he has given an anubandham (‘Kama koti peetha vasini’, Kalyani). He has not contributed much in terms of ragamalikas – even the authorship of the ragamalika ‘Amba ninnu neranammiti’ with

¹ As given in Shri T.K.Govinda Rao’s book
raga mudras that is attributed to him, is disputed\textsuperscript{2}. However, it is in swarajatis that Syama Sastri has made a unique contribution and even though he has composed only 3 swarajatis, they are in a class of their own. The greatness of these swarajatis is discussed in greater detail below.

**Swarajatis**

Syama Sastri's Swarajatis in Bhairavi, Todi and Yadukula Kambodhi are a separate type and do not resemble dance swarajatis like 'Emandayaalara' (Hussaini ragam, rupakam talam), as they do not have the muktayi swara section with sahitya and jati. All the three, are dedicated to Goddess Kamakshi and resemble the kriti in form and sequence of angas and are provided with swara sahitya. However, they differ from the Kriti in having a number of swara sahitya passages, having an entirely different dhatu, all of which invariably should be sung. As compositions these are probably closest to Tyagaraja's pancharatna kritis (excepting the Arabhi one) than to swarajatis.

The Todi Swarajati 'Ravehimagiri kumari kanchi Kamakshi' in Adi tala is the smallest, with 6 swara sahityas, each of which begin with the raga chaya swaras dha, ga and ma. Swarakashara syllables are dexterously woven into the texture of the sahitya for e.g.

\begin{align*}
G \ m \ P \ m \ g \ m \ D \\
ka \ mi \ tartha \ pha \ la \ da
\end{align*}

The essence of the raga is brought out through powerful and appealing phrases and the use of panchama in alpa prayogas is quite appealing.

\textsuperscript{2} Some say it has been composed by Chinni Krishna Dasar
The Bhairavi swarajati *'Kamakshi amba anudinamu maravakane'* is set to Chapu tala and has the unique characteristic that the 8 charanas begin with the 8 swaras ‘s r g m p d n s’ in that order. This is arguably the most popular of Syama Sastri’s swarajatis and the pallavi starts in the mandra sthayi. Syama Sastri also appears to have treated all the swaras as graham swaras and has delineated the Bhairavi raga beautifully.

The Yadukula Kambodhi swarajati *'Kamakshi ni padayugame'* is also set to Misra Chapu and also has the characteristic of the different sections commencing on the raga chhaya swaras of the raga – sa, ri, pa, dha and tara s. The music for this swarajati is mostly in mandra and madhya sthayis and some lines go to the Tara sthayi.

In all his three swarajatis, Syama Sastri appears to have presented a gradual sequence of music with the last section representing the climax both from the standpoint of sangita and sahitya; almost as if he has adopted the alapana paddhati, through his singular musical treatment of these compositions.

**Themes**

In terms of the themes covered in his musical compositions, Syama Sastri has been fairly uniform, with all his songs except for one (Anandabhairavi Ata Tala varnam which is dedicated to Lord Varadaraja) addressing Devi in the form of a child entreating his mother and all his kritis can be said to exhibit the Karuna rasa. He neither has the conversational style of Tyagaraja nor the descriptive detail of Dikshitar. Though he has employed the conversational style in some kritis, e.g. ‘*Mayammayani ne pilachite matlada rada*’ this is extremely rare.
Group Kritis

Syama Sastri has composed one set of group kritis - the ‘Navaratnamalika’ group of Kritis (of which only seven are available) upon Goddess Meenakshi of Madurai. The seven kritis generally accepted as being part of the Navaratnamalika are:\n
1. ‘Minalochana brova’ – Dhanyasi – Mishra Chapu
2. ‘Sarojadalanetri’ – Sankarabharanam – Adi
3. ‘Devi minanetri’ – Sankarabharanam – Adi
4. ‘Marivere’ – Anandabhairavi – Mishra Chapu
5. ‘Devi nidu padasarasamule’ – Kambhoji – Adi
6. ‘Mayamma’ – Ahiri – Adi
7. ‘Nanubrova lalita’ – Lalita – Mishra Chapu

It has been said that the remaining two kritis are in the ragas Sri and Nattaiakurinji; however there is not much information to substantiate this belief.\n
Tyagaraja

Tyagaraja made many contributions towards solidifying the Pallavi-Anupallavi-Charanam structure of a Kriti in Karnatic music and also experimented with variations in his compositions, like using multiple charanas, starting songs with the anupallavi and composing songs with swara sahitya as in the case of the Pancharatnas.

Tyagaraja's kritis bring out the significance of the 3 angas very well, using the pallavi to introduce a train of thought, the charanam

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3 A dictionary of South Indian Music and Musicians Vol 3 (L-N), Page 134
elaborating on it and the anupallavi is an important section, linking the pallavi with the charanam. In fact, in some kritis like ‘Soumitri bhagyame’ (Kharaharapriya), the song itself starts with the anupallavi ‘Chitra ratna maya’. Other examples songs that are sung starting with the anupallavi include ‘Elani daya radu’ (Atana) which starts with ‘Balakanakamaya chela’, ‘Mokshamu galada’ (Saramati) which starts with ‘Saakshat karanee’. In Tyagaraja’s compositions the Pallavi is said to be the Sutra (which outlines the core theme or idea of the song), the Anupallavi is the Vritti (which elaborates the main theme) and the Charanam is the Bhashyam (which is a detailed elaboration/description of the theme). Thus an idea or theme is developed progressively throughout the song.

An important concept introduced by Tyagaraja into the singing of kritis was the Sangati – where the same line of sahitya is repeated, set to different sets of dhatu in the same raga either using tonal variations or different sets of swara combinations etc. This was possible as he started composing his kritis with fewer words than the earlier prabandhas, leaving some scope for improvisation and this has been one of his most important contributions to the Katcheri paddhati as we know it today. The earlier prabandhas like the Divyaprabandhams and Jayadeva’s ashtapadis were more wordy and descriptive than the Kriti form as established by Tyagaraja.

Some of the variations in Kriti structure with which Tyagaraja has experimented are discussed below.

Single charanas

Tyagaraja, has composed many kritis in the standard Pallavi-Anupallavi-Charanama format - this is a format that he seems to have
adhered to for all his kritis where the eduppu is at $\frac{1}{2}$ of the little finger. For e.g. ‘Chalamelara’ (Marga Hindolam), ‘Sarasa sama dana’ (Kapi Narayani), ‘Raghu nayak’, (Hamsadhwani), ‘Marugelara’ (Jayantasri).

A structure predominantly found in Tyagaraja kritis is, the employment of the dhatu of the Anupallavi in the last part of the charanam again for e.g. ‘Kaddanu variki’ (Todi), ‘Etavunara’(Kalyani), ‘Telisi rama’ (Poornachandrika) etc. In kritis like ‘O Rangasayi’ (Kambhoji), the dhatu of only the second half of the Anupallavi recurs in the last line of the charanam, ‘Kailasadipudu ga leda’ – the 2nd line of the Anupallavi is sung corresponding to ‘Tyagaraja hrid bhushana’ which is the last line of the charanam.

Many of Tyagaraja's kritis have a pallavi and anupallavi of equal rhythmic length and a charanam that is the combined length of the first 2 angas for e.g. ‘Enta nerchina’ (Suddha Dhanyasi), ‘Chakkani raja margamulu’ (Kharaharapriya). Other variations on this structure are kritis where the pallavi is half the size of the anupallavi for e.g. ‘Marugelara’ (Jayantasri), ‘Raju vedala’ (Todi) and kritis where the charanam is four times the size of the anupallavi for e.g. ‘Ragaratna malikache’ (Ritigaula), ‘Tulasidalamula’ (Mayamalavagaula). Some of these kritis have an additional variation where the tempo of the charanam is faster than that of the rest of the Kriti for e.g. ‘Enduko ni manasu’ (Kalyani), ‘Emi dova’ (Saranga) and ‘Enduko bhaga teiyadu’ (Mohanam).

**Multiple Charanas**

Tyagaraja has composed many kritis, both in single as well as double kalai, with three charanas. The ragas he has used for such kritis include both rakti ragas as well as rare ragas and in general the dhatu
of all the charanas is the same. The only exception to this is the Kriti ‘Rama deivamu’ (Surati), where each charanam is supposed to be in a different tune and only one is normally sung. Some examples of kritis with three charanas are listed below:

Examples of Rakti raga kritis

- ‘Ninu vina sukham’ - Todi - Rupakam
- ‘Muripemu’ – Mukhari - Adi (2 Kalai)
- ‘Mutsata Bhramadulaku’ – Madhyamavati - Adi (1 Kalai)
- ‘Bale balendu’ – Ritigaula - Adi (1 Kalai)

Examples of Rare raga kritis

- ‘Nidayarada’ - Vasantabhairavi
- ‘Varalandu’ - Gurjari
- ‘Raka sasivadana’ - Takka

In kritis with more than three charanas, however, Tyagaraja seems to have composed quite a few with charanas of varying dhatus. E.g. ‘Enduku Nirdaya’ (Harikambhoji, double kalai, 5 charanas), ‘Sri Raghuvaram强大eya’ (Kambhoji, double kalai, 4 charanas). The Kriti ‘Brochevarevare’ in Sriranjani, though intended as a Divyanama Sankirtana, deserves special mention here as the Pallavi ‘Brochevarevare’ is followed by 8 charanas of different dhatu in durita kala, of which the first four of which are less than ½ Avarta and the other four charanas are one full avarta long.

Divyanama kirtanas and Utsava sampradaya kritis

Another variation used by Tyagaraja is omitting the anupallavi in kritis with multiple charanas which is the pattern he has followed in all of his Divyanama Kirtanas and most of the Utsava Sampradaya Kirtanas.
The latter kirtanas have three or more charanas and are mostly set to slow tempo. These types of kritis are ideal for devotional congregation and chorus singing on account of the multiple charanas having identical dhatus. Some examples are ‘Rama Rama Rama Sri lali Sri Rama’ (Sahana) with a record number of sixteen charanas, ‘Dina janavana’ (Bhupalam), ‘Karuna jalade’ (Nadanamakriya), ‘Bhaja Ramam’ (Huseni), ‘Ramabhirama’ (Darbar). The Nilambari kirtana ‘Ennaga manasuku ran’ is a solitary kirtana of a format where each stanza (total 4 stanzas) has the same dhatu but is also complete within itself in grammatical construction and meaning and does not exhibit the pallavi-charanam relationship. Examples of Utsava Sampradaya kritis include ‘Hecharika ga rara’ (Yadukula Kamboji), ‘Nagumomu’ (Madhyamavati).

**Pancharatna kritis**

The Ghana raga Pancharatna kritis, despite having multiple charanas like the kritis discussed earlier, actually represent yet another variation in structure. Though they have a large number of charanas, each charanam is rendered both as swara and sahitya, similar to a swarajati. However, even within these five kritis, there are variations with ‘Jagadananda karaka’ (Nattai) not being sung with swara and the last charanam in ‘Dudukugala’ (Gaula), ‘Sadinchane’ (Arabhi), ‘Endaro mahanubhavulu’ (Sri), being sung without swara. In terms of variation in dhatu – in ‘Endaro mahanubhavulu’, the entire charanam is the same dhatu and length as the anupallavi, in ‘Dudukugala’, the last two lines of the charanam have the same dhatu as the anupallavi and in ‘Sadinchane’, the dhatu of the second half of the anupallavi and the last line of the anubandham are the same.
Madhyamakala sahitya

Tyagaraja has composed many kritis using madhyamakala sahitya in various ways, composing madhyamakala sahitya for the charanas of his kritis, sometimes composing entire charanas in madhyamakala and even composing madhayamakala portions or rather durita kala portions, for his madhyamakala kritis which themselves are of quick tempo. The latter kritis when sung with understanding accompanists, can have a very arresting impact on any audience, thanks to their inherent raciness. Some examples of each of these are given below:

Kritis with madhyamakala sahitya

- ‘Darini Telusukonti’ (Suddha Saveri)
- ‘Dorakuna’ (Bilahari)

Madhyamakala charanam

- ‘Muripemu’ (Mukhari)
- ‘Rama bana’ (Saveri)

Madhyamakala kritis with madhyamakala or druta kala sahitya

- ‘Emi dova’ (Saranga)
- ‘Vallagadanaka’ (Harikambhoji)
- ‘Brochevarevare’ (Sriranjani)
- ‘Koluvaiyunnade’ (Devagandhari)

He has also composed an unusual Kriti with a madhyama kala portion after a durita kala portion, a rare occurrence of a slower tempo section occurring after a quicker one. e.g. ‘Bhajana seyave’ (Kalyani) where the charanam starts with ‘nada pranava’ in durita kala, followed by ‘vada tarkka mela’ in a slower speed.
Operas

Tyagaraja not only gave us a vast variety of kritis but also composed three operas - ‘Nauka Charitram’, ‘Pralhada Bhakti Vijayam’ and ‘Sitarama Vijayam’, of which only the first two are available today.

The ‘Nauka Charitram’ is an allegory based on the religious concept of abject surrender to the Lord and is set in a boat or a ‘Nauka’ in which the gopis take an infant Krishna out to play. This is said to have inspired a later Sanskrit version as well as a lavani on the same theme. The ‘Nauka Charitram’ comprises twenty one darus (songs with a pallavi, followed by an optional anupallavi and several charanas) set in thirteen ragas and forty seven padyas (poetic verses set to different metres) besides fifty one vachanas (prose passages that set the sequence and provide narration). Darus do not paint a complete picture of a raga but comprise of catchy tunes woven with raga phrases that convey the sentiment of the sahitya. Tyagaraja has mostly used madhyama kala sahitya in this opera, and only used druta kala in case it was warranted by the nature of the dramatic scene. Vilamba kala was not used at all.

The second opera, ‘Pralhada bhakti vijayam’ consists of the prayers of Prahlada to Lord Hari on being tortured at the bidding of his father Hiranyakashipu. These prayers are in the form of praises sung by the sage Narada and devas present when God appears in his Narasimha avatara before Prahlada, with Goddess Lakshmi. The opera has forty five kirtanas set in twenty eight ragas, one hundred twenty nine verses, a churnika, a dandaka and one hundred thirty two prose narrations, all in Telugu and eleven shlokas in Sanskrit. It also has mangalam songs at the end of three chapters or scenes. Songs from this opera are set in all tempos - vilamba, madhya and druta kalas and are more widely sung in concerts than the ‘Nauka Charitram’.
Some examples of Tyagaraja's operatic songs which are sung in concerts today are given below:

Songs from 'Nauka Charitram'
- ‘Sringarichukani’ (Surati)
- ‘Odanu Jaripe’ (Saranga)

Songs from 'Prahlada Bhakti Vijayam'
- ‘Vasudevayani’ (Kalyani)
- ‘Eti janma’ (Varali)
- ‘Raramayintidaka’ (Asaveri)
- ‘Naradamuni’ (Pantuvarali)
- ‘Sri Ganapathy ni’ (Saurashtram)
- Mangalam - ‘Ni namarupamulaku’ (Saurashtram)

Group Kritis
Tyagaraja has composed several sets of group kritis – though some of the groupings were most probably carried out by musicologists and disciples in later years, rather than intended by him. One grouping that he does seem to have intentionally created is the 'Ghana Panchakam' which comprises the Pancharatna kritis composed in five ghanas ragas. These have a similar structure as discussed earlier.

The other group kritis seem to have been classified on the basis of the deities of the temple about whom the kritis were composed and the groupings are most probably of recent origin. Some examples of such kritis are:
- Thiruvottiyur Pancharatnam in praise of Goddess Tripurasundari consisting of the songs
- ‘Kanna Talli’- Saveri - Adi
• ‘Darini telusukonti’ - Suddha Saveri - Adi
• ‘Sundari ninnu’ – Arabhi - Chapu
• ‘Sundari nannedirilo’ – Begada - Rupakam
• ‘Sundari ni divya’ – Kalyani – Adi
• ‘Kovur Pancharathnam’ - in praise of Lord Sundaresa and Goddess Soundarya Nayaki
• ‘Kori Sevimpa’ – Karaharapriya – Adi
• ‘Vasuda’ - Sahana – Adi
• ‘Sundareswaruni’ – Sankarabharanam – Adi
• ‘Sambho mahadeva’ – Pantuvarali – Rupakam
• ‘Nammi vachchina’ – Kalyani - Rupakam
• ‘Sriranga Pancharathnam’ addressed to Lord Ranganatha of Srirangapatnam
• ‘Raju Vedala’ – Todi - Rupakam
• ‘O Rangasayi’ – Kambhoji - Adi
• ‘Jutamurare’ – Arabhi - Rupakam
• ‘Vinarāda’ – Devagandhari - Adi
• ‘Karuna judamayya’ - Saranga - Adi

Lalgudi Pancharatnam - Of the Lalgudi Pancharatna Kritis, the first three are addressed to Goddess Pravruddha Srimati and the last two are in praise of Lord Saptarishisa of Lalgudi Kshetram. The kritis are
• ‘Isha pahimam’ - Kalyani - Rupakam
• ‘Lalithe sri’ - Bhairavi - Adi
• ‘Mahita pravrddha’ - Kambhoji - Tisra Triputa
• ‘Gatinivani ne kori’ - Todi - Adi
• ‘Deva sri’ - Madhyamavati - Misra Chapu

**Themes**

Tyagaraja has covered a much wider variety of themes as compared to his peers. As many of his songs were based on his
reflections upon life or the Ramayana and were composed in various moods, he has covered all the nine rasas from Shanta to Raudra in his compositions. Barring a few kritis where he has composed in praise of various deities, most of his compositions are conversational and addressed to his ishta devata Lord Rama. As Rama was a human incarnation of Lord Vishnu, it was perhaps easier for Tyagaraja to address him in conversation, in different moods and term and he was possibly inspired to compose in this vein by Bhadrachala Ramadas who had also addressed both Lord Rama and the Goddess Sita in familiar terms in his kritis like ‘Paluke bangaramayena’ and ‘Nannu brovamani cheppave’. In the Keeravani Kriti ‘Kaligiyunte’, Tyagaraja has ranked Bhadrachala Ramadas along with bhagavatas like Narada and Prahlada.

A few examples of Tyagaraja’s using the conversational style to express his sentiments are cited below

1. ‘Teratiyagarada’ (Gaulipantu)
   Meaning - 'Will the curtain not be lifted?', expressing his agony while waiting for darshan of Lord Venkateswara

2. ‘Vayasu nuraina I vasudha nelina gani dayaleni bratukemi dasarathi Ramuni’(Nayaki) –
   Meaning - 'Of what use is that life even if of hundred years or with the fortune of being a ruler of the whole world, if Rama’s grace is not there?'

3. ‘Ramachandra ni daya’ (Surati) -
   Meaning – ‘when will I get Lord Rama’s mercy’?
4. ‘Nannu vidachi’ (Ritigowla) - In the second charana, Tyagaraja says ‘abdhilōmunigi śvāsamunu paṭṭi āṇi mutyamu kannaṭlāye śrī ramaṇa’ meaning ‘It is as if, diving into sea holding breath and finding a faultless and spherical pearl; O Beloved of Lakshmi! O Lord Rama! Please do not move away from me; do not abandon me’.\(^5\)

5. ‘Anyayamu seyakura rama, nannu anyuniga judakura’ (Kapi) – Meaning – ‘O Rama, you are committing this atrocity on me of viewing me like a stranger’

6. ‘Manamuleda’ (Hamirkalyani) – Meaning – ‘O Rama, have you no shame?’

7. ‘Narayana hari’ (Yamunakalyani divyanama) – In the last charana, he says ‘na jupulu mi naajuku tanamu- ne juda shri tyagaraju ullamalaru’, meaning ‘O Lord Narayana who shines (or blossoms) (in) the heart of this Tyagaraja! O Lord Hari! Let my sight behold Your elegance only’

In addition to Tyagaraja's conversational kritis he has also composed descriptive kritis where he uses his imagination to describe natural scenes or Gods and Goddesses – much unlike the factual nature of Dikshitar’s kritis. Some examples of his descriptions of nature are in the Kriti ‘Sari vedalina i kaverini judare’ (Asaveri), where Tyagaraja describes the flow of the river Kaveri in lyrical terms; in another Kriti 'Muripemu', he describes particular places on the banks of the Kaveri river. Examples of his descriptions of deities also abound –

\(^5\) Sahitya and meaning available at http://sahityam.net/wiki/Nannu_vidichi
for instance, in the Arabhi Kriti 'Sundari ninnu varnimpa', he describes the goddess thus 'Seeing the radiance of your graceful face, the moon dare not come to the earth. Seeing your exquisite beauty Manmatha disappeared long ago; seeing the majesty of your pose the ocean became stupefied, mount Meru became a rock'.

Raga: Arabhi  
Mela 29  
Tala: Misracapu

**Pallavi**  
sundari! ninnu vaḍ ṇimpa brahmādi  
suralakaina taramā?

**Anupallavi**  
kundaradana! Sanandanādi-  
vandita! nē nenta! tripura

**Charanam**  
1: kalakalmanu mukha kaḷ alanu gani kalu  
valarāju bhūmiki rādāyē;  
celagu nī lāvaṇyamunu gani yalanādē  
valarāju gānaka pōyē;  
niluvaramagu nī gambhīramunu gani  
jalarāju jaḍa vēshyḍāyē;  
balamaina dhīratvamunu gani kanakā-  
caluḍu tā śilārūpuḍāyē; Tripura

2: Kanulanu gani siggubaḍi gaṇḍu mīnulu  
vanadhi vāsamu sēyanāyē;  
jananil nī cīṛ unnavu kānti sōki śīvu-
Tyagaraja’s descriptive kritis also encompass his spiritual experiences for e.g. in the Bilahari Kriti ‘Dorakuna ituvanti’, he describes the sight of the Lord being glorified by songs of praise and prayer by great souls like Tumburu, Narada, Ambarisha etc., and being served by other divine and semi-divine beings.

Some examples of other sentiments covered by his kritis are given below

Humour/ amusement – e.g. ‘Vasudevayani’ (Kalyani) where he describes the entry of ‘Sutradhari’ with his funny pranks, dirty clothes, etc.

Disgust/ agony – e.g. ‘Sarasiruhanana’ (Mukhari) where he laments the deteriorating morals in the present age
Tyagaraja has also composed many kritis where he imagines hypothetical situations that would have confronted his Lord and then comes up with his thoughts on what God would have done in such a situation. For e.g. in the Kapinarayani Kriti ‘Sarasa sama dana’, he wonders what Rama would have done if both Vibhishana and Ravana had sought asylum from him, after he had promised to crown Vibhishana the king of Lanka. He responds by reflecting that Rama would have probably promised to give his own kingdom of Kosala to Ravana.

Another type of composition that Tyagaraja covered that was not explored by his Trinity peers is Ninda Stuti. A couple of examples of Tyagaraja's compositions in this form are given below:

‘Ilalo pranatartiharudanu’ (Atana) where Tyagaraja questions the propriety of calling the Lord as Pranatartihara (one who removes the difficulties of those who prostrate before him) when the Lord has not condescended to come to Tyagaraja’s rescue despite his having prostrated before God for a long time with devotion

‘Ma Janaki’ (Kambhoji) where Lord Rama is looked down upon as having become famous only because Sita did not reduce Ravana to ashes by one angry look, so that Rama could claim the prestigious achievement

‘Sari evvare’ (Sriranjani) where Tyagaraja takes Sita to task for having fallen for Rama, who indeed had charming lotus-like eyes but did not have matching kindness at heart.

Tyagaraja, has also on occasion, used musical and musicological phrases in his compositions, but unlike Dikshitar he does not go into
any technical detail and only has references to these in passing. Many
of his kritis refer to the greatness of music for e.g. ‘Nadaloludai’
(Kalyana Vasantam), ‘Nadasudha rasambilanu’ (Arabhi). However, in
most cases, these references are incidental to the main theme of the
song. For e.g. the famous Arabhi Kriti ‘Nadasudha rasambilanu’ is
actually a song in praise of Lord Rama where Tyagaraja has hailed
Rama as the very embodiment of Nada and pictured Rama’s bow and
arrows as consisting of various musical attributes like sapta swaras;
ghana, naya, desya ragas; talas gatis and even sangatis.

Muthuswamy Dikshitar

Muthuswamy Dikshitar, like Tyagaraja, has many innovations to
his credit and has experimented with the structure of a Kriti in various
ways. Apart from the standard Pallavi-Anupallavi-Charanam format, he
also invented the Samashti charanam, where the anupallavi is
dispensed with, extensively composed madhyamakala sahitya,
composed the unique nottu swara sahitya and also left his mark on the
ragamalika musical form. He has also composed a Telugu padavarna
‘Rupamu juchi’ (Todi) and a daru ‘Ni sati’ (Sriranjani) Unlike other
composers, he did not compose any kritis with multiple charanas, but
stuck to the single charanam format. The only kritis of his with multiple
charanas are ‘Maye tvam’ (Tarangini) and his ragamalikas. Another
practice that was not followed by Dikshitar, but employed by his
contemporaries was using the dhatu of the anupallavi in the charanam
again – this is something he has not done in any of his kritis.

Dikshitar’s kritis offer less scope for sangatis as compared to
those of Tyagaraja as they only have little spaces between the textual
syllables and these spaces are already filled up with gamakas and
swara phrases outlining the raga chaya. Attempts to add sangatis
might disturb the aesthetic effect of the Kriti, so additional singatis have been found in only very few Dikshitar kritis like ‘Sri Krishnam bhaja manasa’ (Todi).

Samashti Charanam

It is not immediately apparent what led Dikshitar to invent the Samashti charanam form – whether it was the lack of possibilities in a particular raga (e.g. Natanarayani – composition ‘Maha Ganapathim’) or to create simpler compositions suitable for teaching his students or whether it was simply the spirit of trying out something different. Whatever the reason, Dikshitar's kritis with Samashti charanam have added significantly to the variety that is found in the Kriti musical form and have endured in the form of popular compositions such as ‘Sri Saraswatī’ (Arabhi), ‘Parvati patim’ (Hamsadhvani), ‘Vallabha nayakasya’ (Begada), ‘Saraswati vidhi yuvatī’ (Hindolam), ‘Sri Ranganathaya’ (Dhanyasi). Even in these smaller Samashti charanam compositions, Dikshitar has composed madhyamakala sahitya.

Madhyamakala sahitya

Dikshitar seems to have had a magnificent obsession with madhyamakala sahitya, judging by the extent to which he has used it in his compositions – ranging from the smaller ones with samashti charanam to the larger ones like the Chaturdasa Ragamalika where he has used madhyama kala sahitya in every alternate line.

Given Dikshitar's predilection for providing exhaustive information about various deities and shrines, his kritis are invariably longer than those of his contemporaries who've used the same Pallavi-Anupallavi-Charanam format. Since he did not compose multiple charanas, his single charanas tended to be quite lengthy – it is perhaps this
circumstance also that led to his composing madhyama kala sahitya which enabled him to introduce some variation in the long charanam, without compromising on the amount of information provided. It has been speculated by some musicologists that the line 'Matwa tadeka charanam' in the Anandabhairavi Kriti 'Manasa guruguha' expresses Dikshitar's determination to stick to a single charanam even if it be unduly long and hence, less musically appealing. This is something that is evident even in his kritis in ragas with limited possibilities like Navaroz (Kriti – 'Hasti Vadanaya').

However, despite his liking for Madhyama kala sahitya, there is no Dikshitar Kriti with the entire Anupallavi and Charanam in Madhyama Kala.

**Ragamalikas**

A talent for composing Ragamalikas seems to have run in the Dikshitar family - Muthuswamy Dikshitar's father had a penchant for composing long ragamalikas and has in fact composed the longest ever ragamalika in Karnatic music, the Ashtotrasata ragatalamalika – which is set in 108 ragas and talas. This composition stands out not only for its technical richness and length but also for the employment of rare and closely related ragas and the suladi sapta and marga talas. The names of the ragas and talas have been skilfully woven into the sahitya of the composition, of which only sixty one ragas are available to us today. Ramaswamy Dikshitar also composed a remarkable palindromic song in the raga Gangatarangini, which yields the same text, when read in both the normal as well as reverse orders.

Muthuswamy Dikshitar did not compose as many ragamalikas as his father – but the four that he did compose are a class apart.
'Madhavo mam patu' is a Ragamalika on the ten avatars of Lord Vishnu, with ten passages set respectively to ten ragas (Nata, Gaula, Sri, Arabhi, Varali, Kedara, Vasanta, Surati, Saurashtra and Madhyamavati). This has several striking features including the choice of raga as well as the sahitya. The first five ragas are ghana ragas, suitable for rendering tana on the veena. The sixth raga Kedara is the next in order of preference for this and the last four ragas are Mangala ragas, in order of increasing suitability for singing Mangalam, ending with Madhyamavati. The sahitya too is remarkable as the first eight passages are in the eight cases in the vibhakti order and the ninth and tenth are in the accusative case. The Ragamalika is also sung differently, with the first passage of the pallavi not being repeated after each passage; the singer just proceeds to the next passage.

The Ragamalika 'Poornachandrabimbavadane' is a composition in praise of Goddess Kamalambika at Tiruvarur and has six charanas i.e. it is a 'Shadragamalika'. The ragas are Poornachandrika, Saraswatimohanari, Narayani, Suddhasanta, Hamsadhwani and Nagadhwani. All the six ragas belong to 'Dheera Sankarabharana' (29th) mela. It is believed that there are also two more charanas in between the Narayani and the Suddhasanta passages, in the ragas Kedaram and Bilahari, also belonging to the same mela.6

The third Ragamalika 'Simhasanasthite' has four passages in praise of Devi, set to four ragas that are believed to be highly suitable for singing Mangalam - Saurashtra, Vasanta, Surati and Madhyamavati. Hence this ragamalika is often sung as the final composition in Dikshitar festivals today. It is very popular with Bharatanatyam dancers too.

6 Srinivasan, KN; The contribution of the Trimurthi to Music, Ch 20.
Perhaps Dikshitar’s most famous Ragamalika is his Chaturdasa ragamalika ‘Sri Vishwanatham bhajeham’ which employs fourteen ragas and follows an intricate pattern. The pallavi has two ragas, starting with Sri raga and each raga is encapsulated in two lines of one Avarta, the second being in Madhyama kala. Similarly, the anupallavi is set to four ragas Gauri, Nata, Gaula and Mohanam; but at the end, after Mohanam, a viloma passage takes us through the same four ragas of the anupallavi and the two of the pallavi in reverse order, back to Sri. The same pattern is followed in the charanam with eight ragas Sama, Lalita, Bhairavam, Saranga, Sankarabharanam, Kambhoji, Devakriya and Bhupala, and these are again taken in reverse order in a Madhyamakala sahitya, back to the pallavi in Sri. Dikshitar has followed a pattern not only in the order of the occurrence of the ragas, but also in terms of the lengths of the avartas for each raga. The fifth and sixth ragas – Gaula and Mohanam have been allotted 1½ avartas, all in Madhyamakala, while the preceding ragas have been given 2 full avartas – one each in sama kala and madhyama kala. The same pattern has been followed in the first half and second half of the charanam of the Ragamalika. Another striking feature of the sahitya of this Ragamalika of Dikshitar is that the last part of the swara sahitya set to each raga is composed of the same words as of the last part of the preceding line of sahitya.

**Nottu Swara Sahitya**

Dikshitar’s remarkable versatility is exhibited in the compositions known as Nottu Swara sahityas, which are a completely different genre from the rest of his work. The Nottu Swara Sahityas are thirty seven simple, short compositions sung at one stretch without the strict Pallavi, Anupallavi, Charanam divisions. Initially Dikshitar composed Sanskrit sahitya on various deities set to Western tunes, some of which closely
resemble English band music (such as their National Anthem). These simple pieces are in the raga Dheera Sankarabharanam and set to different talas such as Tishra Ekam, Chatusra Ekam, Rupakam etc. These compositions can serve as an ideal introduction to Karnatic music for very small children. Some famous Nottu Swara Sahityas are ‘Shakti sahita ganapathim’ (Tishra Ekam), ‘Shyamale Meenakshi’ (Chaturshra Ekam). Even in these short compositions, Dikshitar’s impeccable command over Sanskrit and his adherence to the rules of prosody shines through.

**Varnams**

Dikshitar is known to have composed one chauka kala varnam – ‘Rupamu juchi’ (Todi, Ata tala) for which sahitya is available today only for the pallavi, anupallavi and charanam sections.

**Group Kritis**

Dikshitar has composed a number of group kritis and the manner in which he has composed them leads us to believe that he must have intended the grouping himself. For instance, it seems typical of his methodical approach that he would go about composing vibhakti kritis like the ones on Lord Tyagaraja of Tiruvarur, by systematically composing compositions starting with the different declensions of the word Tyagaraja in Sanskrit. Similarly he has also composed vibhakti kritis on Lord Subramanya or Guruguha Abhayanga – these group kritis are listed below.

**Vibhakti Kritis on Tyagaraja of Tiruvārur**

(a) ‘Tyāgarāja Virājite’ - Atana - Rupakam
(b) ‘Tyāgarājam Bhajare’ - Yadukula Kambhoji - Triputa
(c) ‘Tyāgarājena’ - Sālagabhairavi - Adi
In addition to the vibhakti kritis, Dikshitar also composed other theme based group kritis like the Navavarna kritis upon Goddess Kamalāmbā, Navagraha Kirtanas in praise of the nine planets, Panchalinga Sthala Kritis – a set of five kritis on five elements Prithvi, Appu, Teyu, Vāyu and Akasa representing Earth, Water Fire, Wind and Sky respectively. A Navavarana in praise of Lord Rama has also been recently popularised. He also attempted the Gaula Series (Eight Songs) in praise of Goddess Nilophalāmbikā – these are also vibhakti kritis, all composed in ragas whose name contains the word Gaula, but which otherwise have very little in common. These kritis are listed below:
Themes

The themes covered by Dikshitar were much fewer than Tyagaraja as his kritis were composed mostly in calm moments and in harmony with tunes he played on the Vina. However his kritis do exhibit more thematic variety than Syama Sastri and he has covered the Santa Adbhuta and Karuna rasas in his compositions, e.g. the song ‘Annapoome Visalakshi’ (Sama) is in Shantha rasa, ‘Kailasanathena’ (Kambhoji) conveys Adbhuta rasa and ‘Kshitija ramanam chintaye’ (Devagandhari) conveys Karuna rasa. Most of his compositions are descriptive in nature in praise of various deities he visited on his pilgrimages. He composed many kritis which speak of the glory of different forms of Gods or serve as matrices for meditation on the deities and their mystic forms, based on his extensive knowledge of Tantra and Mantra. For instance, his Nnavavarana kritis on Goddess Kamalamba set out the details for Tantric worship such as the form of the Deity, the name and shape of the Chakra in which the tantric form dwells, its power, attendants, the bijakshara, hints for chanting the mantra and so on. Since he was also a scholar in Advaita Siddhanta, his kritis also propound Advaitic doctrines and values.
As Sanskrit was his chosen medium the scope for using conversational language like Tyagaraja, was limited and his kritis tend to be highly informative, with details of various shrines, mantra, tantra and sastras. The only form of conversation possible in Sanskrit songs is addressing God by various epithets and end by saying ‘Pahimam’ or ‘Rakshamam’, ‘Palayamam’ or ‘Tarayamam’ for e.g. ‘Tyagaraja palayasumam’ (Gaula), ‘Ganesha kumara pahimam’ (Chenjuruti), ‘Himadrisute pahimam’ (Kalyani).

However, there are also some instances where Dikshitar has address God in different, less impersonal ways. for e.g. ‘Narasimha agachcha parabrahma puchcha’ (Mohana) which says ‘Come Oh Lord Narasimha’ and ‘Hiranmayim Lakshmim bhajami hinamnasrayam tyajami’ (Lalita) where he says ‘I am always thinking of Lakshmi, the Goddess of wealth. I will shun entreating the lesser mortals.’

Though Dikshitar sang in praise of all deities, he seems to have composed more kritis on Saivite Gods, which is understandable since his Ishta Devata was Lord Subramanya, based on whom he chose his own mudra of Guruguha.

Dikshitar also used musicological phrases in the body of his kritis, sometimes giving technical details of music and musicology in precise ways that could be of use to music students. For e.g. he refers to Dasavidha Gamakas in the song ‘Meenakshi memudam’ (Purvi Kalyani) in the phrase ‘Dasa Gamaka Kriye’, a reference to seventy two mela kartas in the phrase ‘Dvisapatati raganga raga modinim’ in the Kriti ‘Sringira rasa manjari’ in Rasamanjari raga (Rasikapriya).
Summary

The Trinity appear to have concentrated most of their composition efforts on the Kriti musical form. Though Syama Sastri composed some pathbreaking swarajatis and Dikshitar composed the nottuswaras and a varnam, the bulk of their contribution has been in defining, exploring and perfecting the Kriti musical form and laying the foundation not only for the Kriti as it is today, but also a huge library of kritis which form an integral part of music concerts today.

Musical forms like Varnams, Thillanas, Swarajatis, Padams, Javalis and Jatiswarams have been passed over by the Trinity (barring the exceptions mentioned earlier) and the repertoire of such compositions available to musicians today is the contribution of a galaxy of other Karnatic composers – both historical and contemporary. For instance, Purandaradasa composed many of the Geethams that are the foundation for today’s students of music; the Tanjore Quartet made significant contributions to dance forms like Varnams, Javalis, Alaripus, Swarajatis and Jatiswarams; Poochi Srinivasa Iyengar, Veena KuppaIyyar, Swati Tirunal, Subbarama Dikshatar, Pachchimiriyam Adiappayyar, Karvetinagaram Govindsamayya and T.R Subramaniam composed many Varnams; Narayana Teertha, Poochi Srinivasa Iyengar, Maha Vaidyanathan Sivan, Balamurali Krishna and Lalgudi Jayaraman have composed many Thillanas; Dharmapuri Subbarayar, Pattabhiramayya and Patnam Subramanya Iyer composed famous Javalis; Kshetrayya, Papanasam Sivan, Muthu Tandavar, Subbarama Iyer, Ghanam Krishna Iyer have composed many Padams. Although a few of Tyagaraja’s songs may be in the padam vein (with the gait of a padam), they are not comparable with Kshetrayya’s padams.
However that being said, the immensity of the Trinity's contribution to the Kriti musical form, the pre- eminent position of the Kriti in musical concerts today and the enduring legacy of the Trinity's Kritis by itself guarantees the Trinity a special place in the pantheon of Karnatic composers.

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