This chapter looks at the last link which is necessary to establish whether the Trinity were indeed worthy of their illustrious grouping, i.e. whether their contribution and title have stood the test of time and their place in the contemporary music field.

Today the compositions of the Trinity form the bedrock of every Karnatic music concert and are learnt and passed on from generation to generation both in India and abroad; they have not only stood the test of time, but have gained widespread acceptance and respect across the globe. So much so that there are Trimurthi Jayantis being celebrated with great fervour in different countries and the Cleveland Music festival is almost as prestigious as the Tiruvaiyyaru one. The Kriti form was crystallised by the Trinity in the 18th century to perfection and no single person has been able to make any valuable addition to it till date.

Since the Trinity’s songs are in different languages, they cater to a wide class of persons and are able to hold the interest of the “WeltBuerger” (world traveller) of today. They are often employed in fusion music and other musical systems. Their compositions seem to lend themselves to a wide variety of singers and platforms. They are still the role model for many composers of today and their compositions serve as a reference point to composers on the permissibility of prayogas or musical structures in compositions. Ragas which have been popularised by them are so ingrained in today’s system that music in the absence of these ragas would seem unimaginable. For instance Karnatic music would be a lot poorer without ragas like Kharaharapriya and Harikambhoji and the wealth of songs which Tyagaraja created in
them. Exposure to these ragas has also enabled our musicians to form links with other musical systems since there are corresponding melodies in Hindusthani and western systems as well.

Technologies today have opened up entirely new revenue streams for musicians and it is very common to find music, especially compositions being taught to students in other countries by teachers in Chennai or other parts of India through online classes, skype, virtual classrooms etc. Most youngsters today have learnt most of their Tyagaraja kritis by recording them on their tape recorders in class or today through discs and digital recorders and from downloading them on to their computer. The internet has enabled rasikas and students to share the contributions of the Trinity and other musical geniuses through dedicated web sites like rasikas.org, sangeethapriya.com and carnatica.net. Surely this can only lead to creation of a greater wealth by bringing together existing knowledge of different individuals. This is exactly the spirit in which the trinity composed their music - they did not believe in hiding or selling their music but in sharing, teaching and propagating it, so that it spreads far and wide. The Trinity, had they been here would probably have approved of the sharing which has been made possible in today’s information age. However, while each of them have on certain occasions refused to sell their music or sing for a patron and have chosen to remain poverty stricken or in disadvantaged circumstances so that their music could remain free and unfettered, the livelihood of most musicians today is made from singing these very compositions. However, the greatness of these kritis is that the more they are sung, the richer they become and we should be extremely
grateful that composers of yester years were not concerned with matters such as copyright and digital rights management, otherwise the world would have been a very poor place. As it happens, their compositions have not had the good fortune to remain completely untouched by intellectual property laws of the information society, because singers are recording the compositions of the Trinity and releasing albums in the market and these renditions then are subject to national and international copyright law, which means that as a musical work, they are protected for 60 years after the life of the producer / singer. However, thankfully for us the copyright laws only protect the renditions and not the compositions, which are very much in the public domain for all students, rasikas and musicians to learn from and sing.

In order to measure the greatness and uniqueness of these composers, one should look at the totality of their contribution, namely, in terms of the overall achievement, their legacy of students and composers, the number of succeeding composers who have been inspired by them, the variety of fields to which they have contributed and whether the acceptance of the uniqueness of these composers has stood the test of time. In all these aspects, the Trinity score very high. Not only have we analysed the merit of their compositions and musical contributions, but we can see clearly that they have influenced the course of musical history through their students and admirers who have followed in their footsteps and taken guidance from their creations to create new compositions. Tyagaraja has also given new ideas in the realm of neravel and sangatis. They have all been accepted over the past centuries as undisputed possessors to the title of the trinity. Their
acceptance has been unquestioned by millions of persons across three centuries - for this alone must they be hailed as three very great men, since there have been undoubtedly been several good composers who came after and before them. And although there may have been some schools of thought which advocated for the addition of another composer, the hallowed position that these three great personages occupy as the Trinity of Karnatic music remains untouched.