The history of human civilisation is a story of the progressive and lateral development of socio cultural groups in different parts of the world; a story of the evolution of societies, languages, science and technology and arts; in short it is the story of the history of human understanding. The language of a social group of a certain period can be reasonably used to measure the extent of cultural development of that group. It is a constant source of wonder how languages of groups all over the world have employed similar concepts to form and shape their language. For instance, nouns, verbs, tenses, genders, adjectives and adverbs form the backbone of the grammar of most languages. Apart from these, there are words that acquire a special meaning or connotation because of their usage or association with certain phenomena or events etc.

Historically, numbers have acquired significance in different cultures across the world, often with each number representing particular concepts or taking on deeper meanings. The purpose of this chapter is to examine the different levels of significance for various numbers and understand whether there are any strong tendencies of human beings to classify things into groups of certain numbers as opposed to others. Understanding this would in turn, help determine whether it is appropriate to group great composers into a Trinity or whether it would be more apt to group them based on some other number and either add or remove other composers, based on their merit.

**Numerical Prefixes**

A numerical prefix is a prefix that denotes a number, which is usually a multiplier for the thing being prefixed. Numerical prefixes are usually derived from the words for numbers in various languages, most
commonly Greek, Latin and Sanskrit. Numerical prefixes like ‘tri’, ‘bi’, ‘penta’ have been uniformly adopted in most languages to denote a number, which is usually a multiplier for the thing being prefixed. These prefixes are usually derived from the words for numbers in various languages, such as Sanskrit, Greek and Latin. The word ‘Trinity’ in English or ‘Trimurthi’ in Sanskrit employs the numerical ‘Tri’, which is indicative of a group comprising three similarly related members.

The concept of numerical prefixes is prevalent in most well developed languages, with certain parent languages like Sanskrit, Latin and Greek forming the basis for other languages. While many Indian languages like Hindi and Bengali trace their origin to Sanskrit, many European languages like English, German and French have their origins in Latin. Numerical prefixes usually retain the words of the parent languages, like ‘bi’ in English from Latin denotes two and ‘tri’ in Hindi from Sanskrit denotes three. The root language of a numerical prefix need not be related to the root language of the word that it prefixes. Following is a brief overview of some of the accepted numerical prefixes derived from Greek or Latin and Sanskrit which are used in English and other Indian languages respectively.

Table 1 - Numerical prefixes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Derived from number words in Greek</th>
<th>Latin</th>
<th>Old English</th>
<th>Sanskrit</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1/4</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/2</td>
<td>Hemi-</td>
<td>semi-/demi-</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Mono-</td>
<td>uni-</td>
<td>eka-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 1/2</td>
<td></td>
<td>sesqui-</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>di-</td>
<td>Duo-/bi-</td>
<td>twi-</td>
<td>dvi-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cardinal</td>
<td>Greek</td>
<td>Sanskrit</td>
<td>Latin</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>------------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
<td>-----------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>tri-</td>
<td>tre-/ter-</td>
<td>tri-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>tetra-/tetra-</td>
<td>quadrri-/quadr-/quart</td>
<td>chatur-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Penta-/pent-</td>
<td>quinque-/quinqu-/quint</td>
<td>Pancha-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>hexa-/hex-</td>
<td>sexa-/sex-/se</td>
<td>shat-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Hepta-/hept-</td>
<td>Sept</td>
<td>sapta-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Octa-/octo-/oct-</td>
<td>ashta-</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>ennea-</td>
<td>nona-/non-/novem</td>
<td>Nava-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>deka-/deca-</td>
<td>deci-/dec(a)-</td>
<td>Dasha-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>hendeca-</td>
<td>undec-/unde-</td>
<td>Ekadasha-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Dodeca-</td>
<td>duodec-/duode-</td>
<td>Dvadasha-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>triskaideca, trideca</td>
<td>tredec, tridec</td>
<td>Trayodasha-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Tetrakaideca-/tetradeca</td>
<td>Quatuordec</td>
<td>Chaturdasha-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>pent(a)deca-/pendeca-</td>
<td>quinde(c)</td>
<td>Panchadasha-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>hexadeca-</td>
<td>Sede(c)</td>
<td>Sodasha-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Heptadeca</td>
<td>septende(c)</td>
<td>Saptadasha</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Ocatadeca</td>
<td>decennoct</td>
<td>Ashtadasha</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Enneadeca-</td>
<td>decennov</td>
<td>Navadasha or ekovimshati</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Icos(a)-</td>
<td>Vige-/vice-</td>
<td>Vimshati-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100</td>
<td>hecto-/hect-</td>
<td>Centi-/cente-</td>
<td>Shata</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1000</td>
<td>chilia-/kilo-</td>
<td>milli-/mille-</td>
<td>Sahasta-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10000</td>
<td>myria-</td>
<td></td>
<td>Dashsahastra-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Significance of Various Numbers

In this section, we examine some of the numbers that have come to signify more than their literal meanings in different cultures, citing examples from Christianity and Hinduism.¹

ZERO

Zero or Shunya as it is known in Sanskrit, in Hinduism can be viewed as representing the Nirguna Brahman – indivisible, formless, with qualities of no beginning or end.

ONE

One is prefixed as uni or mono in English, depending on whether the Greek or the Latin version of the prefix is used and eka in Sanskrit. Some examples from English are unilateral, unicorn, unidimensional, unilateral, uniform, and unique (one of a type), monotheism, monologue and monogamy. Sanskrit words with eka are ekadashi, ekadantam, ekamrutam, ekantam and ekagraham.

One in Christianity can be said to represent singleness, uniqueness as well as unity and agreement in purpose and action – it represents the single God, a unity of purpose between him and his son Jesus Christ as well as between Christ and his followers.

In Hinduism, the number one can be said to represent the Saguna Brahman with form and qualities, as well as Atman, the individual soul. Just as Brahman exists everywhere in creation, the number one exists in every other number. Similarly, the Atman can also

be said to be the number one in every other number. Tyagaraja in his song 'Paramatmudu velige' (Raga- Vagadeeswari) expresses this by saying 'Sagunamulalo vigungamu'.

In music too, there are many occurrences of the number one - in both songs as well as other aspects. Examples of songs starting with the 'Eka' prefix are ‘Ekadantam bhajeham’ (Bilahari), ‘Ekamranatham’ (Gamakakriya), ‘Ekamranathaya’ (Veera vasantam) and ‘Ekamresha nayike’ (Suddhasaveri), all of which were composed by Muthuswamy Dikshitar.

Other occurrences of the number one in Music can be classified into different types as follows:

**Instruments** – One example is the Eka dandi Veena (a Veena where the bowl, stem and headpiece are made from a single block of wood, ensuring a uniformly good tone). Another example is the Eka Raga Mela Veena (ref. Swara mela Kalanidhi by Ramamatya) which is a type of Veena with movable frets, in which only ragas from one mela can be played at a time. These frets need to be moved to enable the playing of a new raga. The Sitar is a type of Eka Raga Mela Veena whereas the South Indian Veena is a Sarva Raga Mela Veena. Other examples include Eka-Tantri, a one stringed veena with a shell made of gourd or coconut and other parts made of Khadira wood or ‘acacia catechu’; Eka Vira, a type of flute where the distance between the mouth hole and the first finger hole is one angula; Ekkam, a one stringed instrument similar to the Eka tantra and Ektara, a one stringed instrument consisting of a gourd and a bamboo stem, that is used as a drone by sanyasis.
**Musical forms** – E.g., Eka dhatu divya nama kirtana like the Yadukula Kamboji kirtana 'Sri Rama Jayarama' of Tyagaraja (where the pallavi and charanas have the same dhatu or tune and the pallavi is not repeated at the end of the charana). Some other examples are ‘Ennaga Manasuku’ (Neelambari) by Tyagaraja and the Nottusvara compositions of Muthuswamy Dikshitar in the Major Scale Sankarabharanam which are characterised by one passage without repetition of music. Another instance is the Eka Mudra Prabandha which is a type of Prabandha in which only one type of mudra occurs e.g. Tyagaraja's 'Mokshamu Galada'.

**Composer classifications** – e.g Eka Mudrakara composers denoting composers like Tyagaraja, Jayadeva and Narayanateertha who have used only one type of vaggeyakara mudra in their compositions

**Music theory** – The Eka prefix occurs in various aspects of music theory, as illustrated below.

**Eka kala** - a type of kala where there is only one kala for each tala akshara)

**Swaras** - Eka Sruti Dhaivata (The Dhaivata used in raga Saveri that is immediately above the panchama and below suddha dhaivata and has a frequency of 28/81) and Eka sruti rishabha (Rishabha used in Gaula raga that is just above the shadja and below suddha rishabha and has a frequency of 256/243). Eka sruti interval (an interval that is less than a semi-tone – 3 kinds of eka sruti interval are Pramana sruti (22 cents), Nyuna sruti (70 cents) and Purna sruti (90 cents)).
**Raga classification** - Eka-swara vakra raga (A vakra raga with one vakra swara in both the arohana and avarohana) and Eka-swara varja raga or shadava raga (A raga with one swara absent in arohana and avarohana). e.g. Sriranjani (22) s r g m d n s—s n d m g r s. Another occurrence of the number 1 is Indu chakra which is the first chakra in the 72 melakarta scheme, consisting of the first to the sixth melakarta ragas – since Indu means moon and there is only one moon, this naturally suggests the number one.

**Talas**: Eka-tala - The last of the seven principal talas and consisting only of one laghu

Eka swara gaayana (Archika) – passages in Sama gana were sung to one note, in ancient times.

**TWO**

Two is denoted by prefixing ‘bi’ or ‘di’ in English and ‘dvi’ in Sanskrit. Examples of English words are dichotomy, binary, bifocal, bilingual, bicentenary, biannual, dilemma, diversion and dimension. Examples from Sanskrit are dvitiya, dvipa, dvivedi.

In Biblical terms, the number 2 stands for several things – there are 2 testaments, the old and the new, there are 2 places for souls (Heaven and Hell), 2 kingdoms of God (Kingdom of God which is spiritual and the Kingdom of Heaven which is literal), 2 witnesses of God (Moses and Elijah) and 2 natures of believers.

Like in Christianity, in Hinduism as well, the number 2 represents multiple things. It symbolises the state of Duality which we experience everyday with our mind and senses, Purusha and Prakriti (Man and
Nature), Atman and Brahman, the knower and the known, knowledge and ignorance, Good and Evil and many more.

There are many instances of the occurrence of the number two in Indian music, some of which are outlined below:

**Musical Instruments** – Do tara, a 2-stringed drone tuned to the adhara shadja of the performer and used mostly in Northern India; Double Pipe, a compound wind instrument with 2 pipes which itself has 2 types – one where the pipes are of equal length, are blown simultaneously and have no finger holes e.g Tiruchinnam and the second where one of the pipes is a drone and the other is used for playing music e.g bagpipes; Dvayānugam, a term for any musical instrument such as veena, mridangam or flute, which was used as an accompaniment to both vocal music and dance

**Swaras** – Diatone (Achyuta Madhyama Gandhara) which is an interval comprising 2 major tones (81/64)

**Music playing techniques** – Double Stop, a fingering technique used for stringed instruments like violin and gottuvadyam, where 2 strings are stopped by a finger or 2 fingers and played simultaneously; Double Tongueing, a flute playing technique used for playing madhyama kala passages. **Dvi-swara gayana** (Gāthika), referring to the singing of Samagana passages in a scale of 2 notes, in ancient times.

**Duet**, a term referring to a musical composition composed for 2 types of voices or 2 instruments, where the voices or instruments perform in unison or an octave apart.
Music Theory

Raga classification - Dvi-anya swara bhashanga raga, a bhashanga raga which takes 2 anya swaras e.g. Hindusthani Behag, which is a janya of 29th melakarta—Dhira Sankarabharanam and takes the foreign notes prati madhyama and kaisiki nisada.; Dvi-svara vakra raga, a vakra raga with 2 vakra swaras in both arohana and avarohana; Dvi-svara varja raga, or audava raga which denotes a raga with only swaras in both the arohana and avarohana e.g. Mohanam, Madhyamavati.

Dvi-gunatva or the quality of doubleness signifying the relationship between a note and its octave, where the frequency of the Ati-tara-shadja is twice that of the tara-shadja and 4 times that of the madhya-shadja.

Dvi-kala, which refers to a case where there are 2 kalas or minor units for each count of kriya of the tala.

Dvi-sruti interval, referring to an interval of 2 srutis or a semi-tone and this has 2 types – purna dvi sruti interval (diatonic semi-tone – 16/15 or 112 cents) and nyuna dvi-sruti interval (135/128-92 cents).

Dvitiya, referring to the 2nd note of the Sama gana scale in the downward order, corresponding to the rishabha swara

Netra, the 2nd chakra of the 72-melakarta scheme which includes the 7th to 12th mela ragas, so called as all living beings have 2 eyes.

Swaras - Dvisruti rishabha, referring to the second sruti rishabha with a frequency of 16/15, used in Todi raga; Dvisruti Dhaivata which is
the second sruti Dhaivata with a frequency of 8/5 and is also used in Todi raga.

**Musical Forms** - Dvi-dhatu divyanama kirtana, kirtanas where the pallavi and charana have different dhatus e.g. 'Vandanamu' (Sahana) of Tyagaraja; Dvi-dhatu prabandha, a musical composition with 2 sections—Udgraha and Dhruva, e.g., Jayadeva's Ashtapadi.; Dvi-khandha Gita, a gita with 2 sections or khandikas e.g. ‘Kamalajadala’ (Kalyani); Dvi-mudra prabandha, a musical composition with 2 kinds of mudras for e.g. many of Dikshitar's compositions (e.g. ‘Vathapi Ganapatim’ – Hamsadhwnani) have both the vaggeyakara mudra and raga mudra; Dvi-pada, a musical form that occurs in operas and has 2 padas or lines of poetry; Dvi-tala pallavi, a pallavi that can be sung in 2 talas in such a way that the padagarbham synchronises perfectly in both talas. Some kritis starting with variants of ‘Dvi’ are ‘Dvaitamu sukham’ (Ritigaula) by Tyagaraja, ‘Dvijo nisham tam’ (Mohanam) by Swati Tirunal.

**Composer Classification** - The term Dvi-mudrakara refers to composers who have used 2 kinds of mudras in their compositions e.g. Bhadrachala Ramadas has used both 'Rama dasa' and 'Bhadrasaila' or its synonyms.

**THREE**

Since the beginning of time, the number three seems to have had a special significance over and above others and recurs in different ways across different spheres of human endeavour. For instance - Time is the essence of everything in the universe. For most things there is a Beginning, a Middle and an End- ‘Adi, Madhya and Anta’. God has been described as ‘aadi madhyaanta rahita’- without any
beginning or end in many songs (for example in ‘Shringara shaktyayudhadhara’ by Muthuswamy Dikshitar in raga Ramamanohari). History is a record of (1) people, (2) places and (3) events as understood by the historian. It is interesting to note that many of the important classifications are threefold; for instance, time is divided into past, present or future, there are three genders- masculine, feminine and neuter; things are either solid, liquid or gaseous and so on. Three is also the first of four perfect numbers, according to Biblical numerology\(^2\): Three denotes divine perfection. The Holy Trinity consists of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. There are three qualities of the universe: Time, Space, and Matter. To exist (except for God), all three are required. Each quality consists of three elements. Therefore, we live in a trinity of trinitiess.

Hence the number ‘Three’ seems to have a special significance over and above other numbers. We understand several concepts in terms of three and having understood the importance of the number, we automatically start categorising things or people into groups of three as a means of conferring a special status on them.

In Christianity, the number 3 is at the core of the Holy Trinity where God is believed to manifest himself in three persons - the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost. Three times also, is the blessing given in Numbers 6:23, 24:--

‘The LORD bless thee and keep thee (the Father);
The LORD make His face shine upon thee;
and be gracious unto thee (the Son);
The LORD lift up His countenance upon thee,
and give thee peace’ (the Holy Spirit)’

Three is also the number of Resurrection, for it was on the third day that Jesus rose again from the dead. Three is also the number of the unholy Godhead or the Devil’s Trinity comprising the anti-god, anti-christ and anti-spirit. In the Godhead, Jesus Christ as a person was on the cross in a body and when he committed his spirit back to the Heavenly Father, the body went into the tomb, the spirit went to the Father and the soul went into hell (fire and torments). A person also is said to have three parts - a body, a soul and a spirit. (I Thessalonians 5:23). Both Christ and the anti-Christ have a death, a burial and a resurrection. The apostle Paul also says that there are three heavens. 1. The air around the earth. 2. Stars and planets. 3. The abode of God (Psalms 48:1,23). Three wise men came to see Christ when he was born.

In Hinduism too, the number three has special significance. In the scheme of Creation, God is One and Prakriti or Nature is Two and together they manifest the rest of creation, including Rtam – the universal rhythm or order and regularity. The first manifested Rtam can be said to be the universal order of creation, preservation and destruction, which are regulated by the divine trinity of Lord Brahma – the creator, Lord Vishnu – the preserver and Lord Shiva – the destroyer. They are the ultimate upholders of universal Rtam. Thus the number three is also a symbolic representation of the Trinity.

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3 Rtam – vedic term meaning Truth; this was referred to as Dharma in the post-vedic period. Ref. Atharva Veda passage (AV.XII.1.1), which elaborates further on the concept of Rtam:

**satyam bruhat , rtamugram , dhikshā tapō Brahma Yajna: pruthivim vārayanthi**

According to this mantra, the 8 virtues that nourish and sustain this world are: Satyam (truth) , bruhat (the vastness with its three cosmic divisions) , rtam (the right attitude of vratha kaari) , ugram (formidable majesty) , diksha (consecration , Initiation) , Tapas (austerity ,study and teaching) , Brahman (motivation for learning as one of its many meanings) and Yaj~nA (dedication to the sacred rite and the sacred rite itself in a spirit of selfless dedication and forthe well being of the world and its beings)
Three also has many other meanings in Hinduism. It symbolises Shiva because he is the third in the Trinity – he also has three eyes (Trinetra), has three braids of hair (Trijata), carries a three-pronged weapon (Trisul or Triayudha i.e. the Trident), brings forth the triple gunas (Triguna) of Sattva, Rajas and Tamas and also destroys them through his grace (Trident). He is said to remove the sins of three births and is called Triloka jnani (knower of 3 worlds – higher, lower and middle) and Trikala jnani (knower of three times - past, present and future). The first verse of the poem, Bilvashtakam, identifies some of the abovementioned features of Lord Shiva with the cluster consisting of three leaves of bilva:

\[\text{त्रिदलं त्रिगुणाकारं त्रिनेत्रं च त्रयायुधं}
\text{त्रिजन्मपापसंहारं एकबिल्वं शिवार्पणम्}\\
\]

\text{trihalam trigu\text{n\text{\text{\text{}}}nkaram trinetram cha tray\text{\text{\text{}}}ayudham}
\text{trijanmap\text{\text{\text{}}}p\text{\text{\text{}}}asamh\text{\text{\text{}}}aram ekabilvam shivarp\text{\text{\text{}}}anam}
\]

\text{Meaning:} ‘Tridalam’ which means ‘having three petals’ is a key characteristic of one cluster of bilva leaves offered to Lord.

Shiva in worship. ‘Trigunakaram’ means constituted of three gunas - Satva guna (characterised by knowledge), Rajo guna (activity) and Tamo guna (inertia). The three qualities constitute Maya, which is the cause of the creation. ‘Trinetram’ means having three eyes (viz. the sun, the moon and Agni or fire).

Source: http://www.ramanuja.org/sv/bhakti/archives/sep98/0112.html
‘Triyayudham’ means having three weapons (The weapons are said to be of three kinds; those which can be used for hitting the enemy, like the sword and mace; those which can be aimed at the enemy like the disc, spear, trident and those which are released using another instrument like the arrow from the bow). Lord Shiva has all the three (viz.) mace, trident and the bow (called Pinaka) and the arrow.

‘trijanmapapasamharam’ means he who destroys the sins accumulated from past three births⁴.

The number three also represents the mystic symbol of AUM which has 3 hidden sounds, is represented by 3 letters and shown diagrammatically using 3 curves said to denote the 3 states of consciousness. According to the Mandukya Upanishad, the lower curve in the symbol of AUM represents the outward moving wakeful consciousness, the middle one represents the inner moving dream consciousness and the upper curve represents the silent consciousness of the deep sleep state, which is a condition of oneness, and peace in which all desires and dreams subside. The semi circle above the upper curve represents the pure consciousness of Atman itself. The three states of consciousness, which are also represented by the three sounds A, U and M, together symbolise the Absolute Consciousness, which is also represented by uttering the word AUM as one word.

Patanjali in the second aphorism of the first chapter of the Yoga Sutras describes Yoga as 'chitta vrtti nirodah', where he defines the word chitta (mind) as comprising three categories:

1. mind (manas): the individual mind having the power and faculty of attention, selection and rejection;
2. intelligence or reason (buddhi): the deciding mind, and
3. ego (ahamkara): the state which ascertains that 'I know'

Thus, we see that many things that are especially complete are stamped with this number three, which also symbolises many other aspects of creation, some of which are enumerated below.

God's attributes are three: omniscience, omnipresence, and omnipotence.

**Trikala** - There are three great divisions completing time--past, present, and future (Bhuta, Vartamaana, Bhavishyat); Even in music trikalam symbolises slow tempo (kizh kalam), medium tempo (madhyama kalam) and fast tempo (mel kalam or durita kalam). The day is divided into 3 parts – morning, noon and evening.

**Triguna** - the triple qualities of Sattva, Rajas and Tamas.

**Tridosha** – the 3 elements of Life in Ayurveda, Vata, Pitta and Kapha, as mentioned in the sloka:

वायुः पितं कफश्चोक्तः शरीरो दोषसंग्रह
मनसः पुनरुद्विष्टो रजश तं एव चाः

Vayuh pittam kaphashchoktah shariro doshsangraha manasah punarudvishto rajash tam eva cha!

---


5 http://www.anandaveda.com/tridosha.html
Meaning: Three doshas vata pitta kapha dominate whole universe and follow all activities in our body.

Triloka - the three worlds of Bhur, Bhuva and the Swaha, or the three worlds of heaven, earth and the hell.

There are three layers of nature, light, fire and darkness.

There are three states of being - immanent, transcendent and the absolute - vyavaharika, pratibhasika and paramarthika

Three phases of life - youth, middle age and old age. Three paths to self-realization, the path of knowledge (jnana marga), the path of love (bhakti marga) and the path of action (karma marga)

Three types of breath - in, out and held (Kumbhaka, Rechaka and Puraka)

Three compulsory duties of a Brahmin, sacrifice, study of the Vedas and charity. According to the Manu Samhita⁶:

Acc. to Manu Samhita:

कामश्रीघ्नानन्देऽसदोहकर्मश्रीमेव
dharmam ama yodhakṣyitam

annā tu karmanām asya trīṇi karmāṇi jīvikā
yajanādhyāpane chaiva viśuddhāc cha pratigrahah

---

**Meaning:** Brāhmanas have six occupational duties, of which three are compulsory - namely, studying the Vedas, worshipping the Deity and giving charity. By teaching, by inducing others to worship the Deity, and by accepting gifts, the brāhmaṇas receive the necessities of life.

The Trishul of a sanyasin or ascetic and also the control of 3 things by an ascetic – the body, mind and action

Three persons, in grammar, express and include all the relationships of mankind.

Thought, word, and deed, complete the sum of human capability.

Three degrees of comparison (positive, comparative and superlative) complete our knowledge of qualities.

The simplest proposition requires three things to complete it; viz., the subject, the predicate, and the copula ⁷.

Three propositions are necessary to complete the simplest form of argument--the major premise, the minor, and the conclusion. Similarly three occurrences are responsible for a given situation- thesis, antithesis and synthesis.

There are three primary colours – red, blue and yellow

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⁷ Copula in linguistics – a word used to link subject and predicate; http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Copula_(linguistics)
The three lines of ash worn by Saivites as well as the 3 lines in the naama worn by Vaishnavites on their foreheads

The 8 limbs of Patanjali’s ashtanga yoga can be divided into 3 stages - The first stage is the outward quest or Bahiranga Sadhana, consisting of the first 3 limbs (Yama, Niyama and Asana); the second stage is the inner quest or Antarana sadhana consisting of the next two limbs (Pranayama and Pratyahara) and the third stage is the quest of the soul or Antaratma sadhana, which consists of the last 3 limbs (Dhyana, Dharana and Samadhi).

Indian music is said to be a synthesis of Bhava, Raga and Tala (taking the first syllable of each, we get Bha ra ta); Pallavis are said to be a combination of Padam (words), layam (tempo) and vinyasam (variations); songs composed in Tisra Nadai have a special lilt to them (like many javalis and folk tunes); the three angas of talas which we use today are laghu, dhrutam and anudhrutam; the three angas of a Kriti are pallavi, anupallavi and charanam and so on.

In shlokas, the number 3 is highlighted as being especially auspicious. In the Aditya Hridayam, you find the words –

‘त्रिराचम्य शुचिर भूत्वा, धनुर आदाय वीर्यवान’

‘Triraachamya shuchir bhootva, dhanur aadaaya veeryavan’

**Meaning:** Doing the rites of purification 3 times, will render the one with the bow (Rama) victorious in battle.

The Vedic peace mantra of ‘Om Shantihi Shantihi Shantihi’, repeats the word Shanti thrice.
In music too, there are many instances of the number 3 being used. Some of these are enumerated below.

Music itself is said to have three divisions – Gita (Vocal music), Vādya (Instrumental music) and Nritya (Dance music)

Many basic and important concepts in Music are classified in groups of three such as Tri Sthayi (Mandra, Madhya and Tara are the three most important octaves that cover most musical compositions), three Layas (Vilambita, Madhya and Druta or slow, medium and fast respectively), three grahas or eduppus (atita, anagata and sama), three sections of a musical composition (pallavi, anupallavi and charana), three characteristics of a musical note (Pitch, timbre, intensity); three gramas or Grama Trayam (Shadja grama, Madhyama grama and Gandhara grama); Tri-sthayi shariram is a term that denotes the human voice, which is said to have a maximum compass of three octaves; Trikala sadhakam, refers to the common practice of singing swara exercises in three degrees of speed (Prathama, Dvitiya and Tritiya kalas)

**Musical Instruments** – Vadya Traya denotes the three instruments Veena, Venu and Mridangam that adorn the hands of Goddess Saraswati Lord Krishna and Nandikeswara; the three main instruments in Ancient Tamil Music are Yazh, Kuzhal and Maddalam.

**Swaras** – Three is the maximum number of Varjya swaras that can occur in a raga's arohana or avarohana; three is also the maximum number of anya swaras that can occur in a bhashanga raga; The Rig Vedic chant has three swaras Udatta, Anudatta and Swarita
corresponding to the swaras Ri, Ni and Sa with the frequencies 10/9, 8/9 and 1, with the Nishada in the lower octave.

Raga classification – In ancient tamil music pans are classified into 3 types based on the time at which they are sung - (Pagal-pan, Iravu pan and podu-pan); Matanga described 3 types of ragas (Suddha, Chhatalaga and Sankirna); The 3rd chakra in the 73 melakarta scheme includes the ragas numbering 13-18 and is called ‘Agni’ suggesting the three sacrificial fires Daksina, Ahavaniya and Garhapatya.

Styles of Composition - There are 3 prominent styles in musical compositions - Draksa paka, Nalikera paka and Kadali paka, which are also said to be mirrored in the compositions of the Musical Trinity.

Tri-svara gayana (Samika) - This refers to the singing of Sama gana in a scale of three notes in earlier times.

Karnatic music song examples feature the prefix ‘tri’: ‘Tripura sundari’ (Devamanohari) and ‘Trilochana Manoharini’ (Sriranjani) by Muthuswamy Dikshitar, ‘Triloka mata nanu’ (Pharaju) by Syama sastri and ‘Trivikramam ahambhaje’ (Kamboji) by Vasudevachar.

Three has a special significance in other cultures too. In Greek mythology, many mythological creatures had three heads or had multiples of three for e.g. Cerberus, a dog with three heads and Scylla, a vicious sea monster with six heads. The Mayans had three calendars that they used. Ancient Greek and Romans had The Three Graces (the Charities – goddesses of things like charm, beauty and creativity), the Vikings the three Norns (who rule the fates of the various races in Norse mythology). Even in fairy tales and literature, the number three crops
up very frequently – for instance the tales of the three little pigs, Goldilocks and the 3 bears, the three witches in Shakespeare’s Macbeth or the 3 daughters of King Lear and so on. Even adjectives often have three levels of description for e.g. good, bad and mediocre; short, medium and tall; old, young and middle aged;

Thus, we see that the number three holds a very special significance in beliefs and cultures throughout the world.

**Trinity**

The word ‘Trinity’ is used to refer to a group of three entities who are similarly placed by virtue of a common binding factor. It is one having significance in all cultures of the world. While it is one which is frequently and freely used by all, its importance is not necessarily comprehended by its users.

The first ever association of the word in English has been said to be traceable to the Christian theologians who propounded the doctrine that God existed as three persons, The Father, Son and the Holy Spirit, united in one substance. In India too, the word ‘Trimurti’ has a deep religious and philosophical meaning, referring to the three principal Hindu Gods of Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva. The word usually denotes a group of three closely related members. In Sanskrit these sets of three are usually arrived at by affixing the prefix ‘Tri’ or the suffix ‘Trayam’ at the beginning or the end of a word, as the case may be, for instance, Triphala, Triguna, Trivarna, Tridasha, Avastatrayam, Tapatrayam, Gramatrayam, Murtitrayam and so on and in all these cases there is a similitude amongst the three subjects which has merited such grouping under one head.
It is pertinent at this juncture to see some definitions of the word ‘Trinity’:\(^\text{8}\): ‘A group consisting of three closely related members; also called ‘Triunity’.

Trinity in Theology: In most Christian faiths, the union of three divine persons, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, in one God; also called Trine.

In addition to its meaning in the general sense, many religions attach significance to the word Trinity, some of which are given below:

1. Trinity, the Christian concept of God as three persons
2. Trinity Sunday in Christian liturgy - The first Sunday after Pentecost\(^\text{9}\), celebrated by a feast in honor of the Trinity.
3. Trimurti, the Hindu concept of God as three deities
4. Ayyavazhi Trinity, Ayya Vaikundar, the triune God.
5. Shinto trinity
6. Triple Goddess, a neo-pagan / Wiccan trinity
7. Ahura, the Zoroastrian trinity

**Trimurti**

Trimurti essentially refers to the three Hindu gods- Brahma, Vishnu and Siva. It is a Hindu concept in which the cosmic functions of creation, preservation and destruction are personified by these three gods. The concept primarily evolved in the post vedic puranic period. During this period there was no homogenity and one finds there existed both orthodox Brahmanism as well as sectarian religions, predominantly Saivism, Vaishnavism and Shaktism.


\(^\text{9}\) The seventh Sunday after Easter, commemorating the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the disciples. Also called Whitsunday
Triad

The triad is a defining characteristic of Celtic religion. Celtic art and literature has long been preoccupied with the number three. Looking at Celtic works or art one notices that often figures are grouped in threes.

Thus, we see that the word Trinity, across cultures, has come to mean three persons of an exalted or divine nature and is a term that is accorded the highest respect and reverence.

FOUR

The number four is the first composite number that is made up of other numbers.

In Christianity, the number four represents a relationship where God sets things in order in fours and is in general said to symbolize God’s created works\(^\text{10}\). There are four directions – North, South, East and West; four seasons – winter, summer, autumn and spring; four gospels – Matthew, Mark, Luke and John.

In Hinduism, the number four is said to represent Dharma – the system of religious and moral laws that aim to preserve divine order and assist beings in achieving salvation. All gods in the cosmos are created to uphold dharma, which is why many idols of divinities show them as having four hands, with the number four symbolizing Dharma. The number four also has other significances in Hinduism, some of which are mentioned below

\(^{10}\) http://www.biblestudy.org/bibleref/meaning-of-numbers-in-bible/4.html
Four vedas – Rig, Sama, Yajur and Atharva
Four yugas – Satya, Treta, Dvapara, Kaliyuga

Four stages of life – studenthood (Balavastha or Brahmacharya), the stage of householder (grihasta), the stage of retirement (vanaprastha) and the stage of renunciation (sanyasa).

Four aims of life (purusharthas) - dharma (righteousness), artha (wealth), kama (desire) and moksha (salvation).

Four varnas or castes – Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya and Shudra, based on the four levels of human activity: pursuit of knowledge, pursuit of selfless action, pursuit of selfish action and pursuit of ignorance. Lord Krishna in the Chapter 4, verse 13 of the Bhagavat Gita describes these four castes as his creation ‘chatur varnymaya shrishtam’.

In the Vishnu Sahasranamam, shloka 15 describes four aspects of Lord Vishnu as:

‘चतुरात्मा, चतुर्वयूह, चतुर्दंश्र, चतुर्भुजा’

‘Chaturatma, Chaturvyooha, Chaturdamshtra, Chaturbhuja’

Meaning: Chaturatma – One whose self has a four-fold manifestation – here the Atman is considered as the Glory (Vibhuti) of the Self and the Vishnu Purana enumerates 4 Vibhutis - ‘nita-vibhuti’ (direct), naija-vibhuti (The abiding presence and power of God in the soul of every one - innate and continuous manifestation), ahita-vibhuti(projected,
place of effected e.g. in properly installed idols) and ‘sahaja-vibhuti’ (natural, original, congenital for e.g. in a salagramam stone)\(^\text{12}\).

Chaturvyooha - One who manifests into the four mighty powers (Vyooha) - According to the Vaishnava literature, for the purpose of creation, Maha Vishnu Himself became four mighty powers (Vyooha) and they were called Vaasudeva, Samkarshana, Pradyumna and Aniruddha.

Chaturdamshtra – One who has four teeth - Damshtra are the canine teeth in carnivorous animals and the reference here could be to the powerful Damshtraa of Lord Vishnu when He took the form of Nara-Simha to protect Prahlada;

Chaturbhuja - One who has four hands’. Lord Vishnu has four hands, which carry the Conch, the Discus, the Mace, and the Lotus, which are used by the Lord in maintaining Dharma among mankind. These 4 could also be said to represent 4 powers – mind (discus), intellect (conch), chit (lotus) and ego (mace).

According to the Shiva Samhita there are four categories of sadhakas (pupils or aspirants). They are (1) Mrudu (feeble), (2) Madhyama (average), (3) Adhimatra (superior) and (4) Adhimatratama (the supreme one).

In addition we also have the four divisions of an army, the four faces of Brahma, the four quarters of the Earth, the four hands of Gods and Goddesses and the four means of accomplishment (friendship,  

\(^\text{12}\) Salagrama kosha: http://www.salagram.net/sstp-salkosh1ch.html
charity, conflict and aggression). There are also many instances of the number four in music, as illustrated below:

**Musical instruments** – The classification of musical instruments itself is fourfold, the four types being Tata (chordophones), Susira (aerophones), Avanaddha (membranophones) and Ghana (autophones); Chaturukha, a type of flute having a distance of four angulas between the mouth-hole and the first finger hole; Chaturmukha Tambura, a four-faced Tambura with a common resonator and with the strings on each face tuned to a well known tuning system thus allowing the performer to not only demonstrate the various tuning systems of tuning but also play two tamburas simultaneously, using both hands.

**Musical forms** – There are said to be four channels through which the melodic character of a raga is revealed – Gita, alapa, thaya and prabandha as well as four varnas (Sthayi, Arohi, Avarohi and Sanchari) which are referred to as Chaturdandi; Prabandhas are said to have four parts or dhatus - Udgraha, Dhruva, Melapaka and Abhoga; Chaturanga, a Hindusthani musical form with four parts or angas – Khayal, Tarana, Sargam and Trivata; Chaturmudra prabandha, a composition containing any four of the dvadasa mudras in its sahitya; Chatuspadi, a musical form having four feet or padas.

**Swaras** – The term Chaturtha refers to the fourth note of the samars scale in the descending order, corresponding to the nishada.; There are four kinds of srutis pertaining to each of the notes ri, ga, ma, dha and ni which are Eka sruti, Dvisruti, Trisruti and Chatusruti.; The terms Chatusruti dhaivata and Chatusruti rishabha denote the higher varieties of these swaras with the frequencies 27/16 and 9/8 respectively; Chatusruti interval refers to the interval 9/8 – there is a
chatusruti interval between suddha madhyama(4/3) and panchama(3/2).

**Music theory** – There are many instances of the number four, especially in the realms of rhythm. Chaturanga prastara refers to a tala prastara\(^\text{13}\) using the four angas: laghu, guru, plutam and kakapadam; Chaturtsra gati denotes a rhythm where the tala has four sub-units of time in each count; Chaturtsra laghu, a type of laghu consisting of four akshara kalas with one beat and 3 finger counts; Chaturtha kala denoting the fourth degree of speed; Manava tana, a type of tana in which each phrase is four aksharakalas in duration; There are four fundamental rhythmical syllables - ta, dhi, tom and nam.

The fourth chakra in the 72 melakarta scheme, including ragas from 19-24, is called Veda, since there are four Vedas—Rig, Yajur, Sama and Atharva.

Some Karnatic music kritis starting with variants of the prefix ‘Chatur’ include ‘Chaturattarai’ (Kamboji) by Arunagirinathar, ‘Chaturumda Vannitanu’ (Varali) by Annamacharya and ‘Chatushshashtyupa charadhye’ (Navaroj) by Muthaiah Bhagavathar.

**FIVE**

The number five is denoted by prefixing penta or quint/quinque in English and pancha in Sanskrit. Some words with this prefix in English include quintuple, pentagram and pentagon and in Sanskrit, we have Panchabhoottam, Panchapandava etc.

\(^\text{13}\) Tala prastara - the possible permutations and combinations of tala angas
In Christianity, five is said to be the number of Grace and the five great mysteries are supposed to be the Father, the Son, the Spirit, Creation and Redemption. There were five major wounds in Christ’s body and he wore five garments.

In Hinduism, the number five symbolises the physical body and the Earth. There are said to be five great elements or Mahabhutas – Ether (Akasha), Air (Vayu), Fire (Agni), Water (Jala) and Earth (Pruthvi). Our bodies are composed of the densest of these – Earth and Water; and are a slave to the five senses, which we experience through the skin, eyes, ears, nose and tongue.

Muthuswamy Dikshitar has composed songs on each of the Pancha Bhoota Lingas. The songs are ‘Anandanatana’ (Chidambaram: Akasha lingam), ‘Arunachala natham’ (Thiruvannamalai: Jyoti lingam), ‘Chintayama kanda’ (Kanchipuram: Pruthvi lingam), Jambupate (Tiruvanaikaval: Jala lingam) and ‘Shri Kalahastisha’ (Kalahasti: Vayu lingam).

Other references to the number five include:

Five great yajnas of Hindu tradition - the Pancha Mahayajnas (Taittriya Aranyaka) namely: Devayajna (consists of offering Ahutis to devas), Pitryajna (consists of offering libations to ancestors or pitrs), Bhutayajna (consists of offering bali or food to all (departed) creatures), Manushyayajna (consists of feeding guests) and Brahmayajna (consists of reciting of bráhman, i.e. the stanzas of the Vedas);

Panchanga - the Hindu calendar with five angas (parts), consisting of Thithi (date or position of the sun), Vaara (day of the
week), Nakshatra (position of the stars), Karan (position of the moon) and Yoga (auspicious moment);

**Panchamrutam** - food made of five sweet things offered to Hindu deities;

Five fold manifestation of Parama Shiva in Saivism, i.e. Parameswara (the primal being): Brahma (creator), Vishnu (preserver), Rudra (destroyer), Maheswara (concealer) and SadaShiva (reveal).

The most sacred mantra in Saivism is the Panchakshara mantra – ‘Om Namah Sivaya’ with five holy syllables.

There are five aspects of Vishnu in Hinduism - as Iswara: Para (transcendent), Vyuha (emanating), Vibhava (incarnating), Antaryami (immanent) and Archavatara (consecrated image).

Five qualities of the Supreme Being (Saguna Brahman) in Vedanta: Truth (Satyam), Knowledge (Jnanam), Infinity (Anantam), Bliss (Anandam) and Purity (Amalatvam).

There are five types of traditional Hindu worship being performed in front of an idol, each corresponding to a specific sense organ (fan, water, flame, incense and food).

In the Svetasvatara Upanishad 1, there are five kinds of errors, five breathing winds, five-fold fountain of consciousness, the river of life and its five whirlpools, five violent waves of sorrows, five stages of pain and five dangerous windings and turnings.
Five classes of beings - Gods, Men, Gandharvas, Serpents and Ancestors.

Five Gods worshipped by smartas - Ganesha, Vishnu, Siva, Surya and Devi.

Five Tantric substances - wine, meat, fish, mudra or gesture and intercourse.

Five breaths of life - Prana, Apana, Vyana, Udana and Samana.

Five great sins in Buddhism – killing one’s father or mother or an arhat, spilling the blood of Buddha or destroying the harmony of the sangha\textsuperscript{14}.

Five daily sacrifices of a Brahmin - Brahma Yajna/Veda Yajna (sacrifice to Brahman or the Vedas or the sages); Deva Yajna (sacrifice to the celestials); Pitri Yajna (sacrifice to the ancestors); Bhuta Yajna (sacrifice to all the creatures); and Manushya Yajna, (sacrifice to men)\textsuperscript{15}.

Five topics of the Puranas or Panchalakshana - the Creation of the Universe; its destruction and renovation; the genealogy of Gods and patriarchs; the reigns of the Manus, forming the periods called Manwantararas and the history of the Solar and Lunar races of kings\textsuperscript{16}.

\textsuperscript{14} http://www.experiencefestival.com/a/Five_Sins/id/82833

\textsuperscript{15} Excerpt from All about Hinduism by Swami Sivananda; http://www.experiencefestival.com/a/Pancha_Mahayajnas/id/23095

\textsuperscript{16} http://www.sscnet.ucla.edu/southasia/Religions/texts/Puranas.html
Five types of salts.

Five types of vata (fig) trees (panchavati).

When a person dies, he is considered to be in the fifth state (panchama avastha) because the other four elemental bodies have left this world.

Kama, the God of love is known as pancheshu because he carries five arrows (corresponding to the five senses) with which he pierces the hearts of lovers.

Five digestive powers in the body, five methods of treatment (Vaman - administering emetics - rechan, purging, nasya - giving sternutatories, anuvasa - giving oily anema, and niruhan - giving an ordinary enema); and Occurrences of five in Patanjali’s Yoga Sutras: 17

Five classes of chitta Vrutti or modifications which create pleasure and pain – Pramana (standard or ideal), Viparyaya (mistaken view which is observed to be such after study), Vikalpa (fancy or imagination, without any factual basis), Nidra (Sleep) and Smrti (memory, holding fast impressions based on experience).

Five causes of chitta Vruti creating pain (Klesa) - Avidya (ignorance), Asmita (‘I-am-ness’, the feeling of individuality which limits a person), Raga (attachment or passion), Dvesha (aversion or revulsion) and Abhinivesa (thirst for life or fear of death).

17 Introduction to Yoga; http://www.integralyogastudio.com/ysp-intro.php
Five yamas or guidelines for interaction with society - Ahimsa (non-violence), Satya (truthfulness), Asteya (non-stealing), Brahmacharya (abstinence), Aparigraha (non-hoarding).

There are also many occurrences of the number five in Indian music, as shown below:

**Musical Instruments** – Pancha Vadyas - Maddalam, Idakka, Timila, Kombu and Ilattalam; Panchamukha Vadyam, a five-faced drum with plain drum heads and a common resonator – the five faces are named after the five faces of Lord Shiva, with the central one being called Sadyojata and the four peripheral faces Isanam, Tatpurusam, Aghoram and Varna devam; Sounding five instruments (Tivari, Datta, Kahandika, Jaya ganta and Kale) constitutes the panca maha sabda.

**Music Theory** – Many classifications are based on the number five such as five branches of Manodharma sangita (Alapana, Tana, Pallavi, Niraval and Kalpana swara), five types of laghus as well as gatis (Tisra, Chatusrtra, Khanda, Misra and Sankirna) of these, Khanda Gati refers to a rhythm where in each count of the tala consists of five units of time and Khanda laghu is a kind of laghu consisting of a beat and four finger-counts i.e. five akshara kalas; there are five sruti jatis (Dipta, Ayata, Karuna, Mrdu and Maddhya); Pancha Sthayis (Anumandra, mandra, madhya, Tara and ati tara) that can be covered by Indian musical instruments; There is a Pancha sruti-interval (frequency 32/27) between chatusruti risabha and suddha maddhya.

An important rhythmical phrase has five syllables 'ta dhi gi natom'; A popular tala - Khanda chapu, is a type of Chapu tala taking five aksara kala for an avarta (rhythm scheme 2+3 or Taka Takita)
Raga classification – There are five main ghana ragas called the Ghana Panchakam- Nata, Gaula, Arabhi, Varali and Sri and there is also a second rung of ghana ragas called Dvitiya Ghana panchakam consisting of Narayana gaula, Riti gaula, Kedaram, Bauli, and Saranga nata; The fifth chakra in the 72 melakarta raga scheme includes ragas 25-30 and is called Bana, based on the Pancha banas or arrows of Manmatha or Cupid, based on five kinds of flowers - Lotus, Mango, Asoka, Jasmine and blue water lily.

Compositions – Five forms the basis of many Kriti groupings called ‘Pancharatnas. Tyagaraja himself has composed several pancharatnas, namely the Ghana raga, Kovur and Tiruvottiyur pancharatnas\(^\text{18}\). Veena Kuppier composed the Kalahastisa pancharatna consisting of kritis in Kamboji (‘Koniyanadina na pai’), Sama (‘Nannubrova rada’), Hamsadhwani (‘Birana nannubrova’), Salagabhairavi (‘Sama gana tala’) and Sahana (‘Sevitamu raramma’); There is also a raga tala malika prabandha in talas – ‘Panchataleswaram’ ; Dikshitar has composed the Panchalinga sthala kritis in praise of the five lingas, Prithvi, Appu, Tejas, Vayu and Akasa in the ragas Bhairavi, Yamunakalyani, Saranga, Huseni and Kedara respectively, with each song containing the vaggeyakara mudra, the raga mudra, sthala mudra and the linga mudra.

Karnatic Music Songs: ‘Panchamatanga mukha’ (Malahari), ‘Panchabhoota’ (Kiranavali), ‘Panchasatpitharupini’ (Devagandharam) by Muthuswamy Dikshitar.

\(^{18}\) These are enumerated and described in greater detail in Chapter 7
SIX

The number six is denoted by prefixing hexa in English or Shat in Sanskrit. Some words with these prefixes include hexagon, hexane, hexadecimal, shanmukha, shadanane, shatkona, shanmatham and shashtipurthi.

In Christianity, the number six represents the completion of God’s work of creation or secular completeness and is said to symbolize man. Man was created on the sixth day and things happen to man in order of sixes. Six is the number stamped on all that is connected with human labour. Further, it is believed that the anti-christ will have the number 666.

In Hinduism, on the other hand, the number six can be viewed as symbolizing the human mind. The mind is the sixth sense organ, with six faculties: reason, emotion, thought, awareness, knowledge and intelligence, and six enemies or impurities: lust, anger, greed, pride, delusion and envy.

Other references to the number six include:

Six Vedangas or limbs of the Vedas - Siksha, Kalpa, Vyakarna, Nirukta, Chandasa and Chitihi;

Six faces of Lord Subrahmanya who is also known as Shanmukha;

Six duties of a Brahmana - teaching, studying, performing sacrifice, offering sacrifice and charity. For a Brahmana’s survival, he is allowed six vocations including begging, commerce, farming, etc;
Ancient magicians performed six acts of magic: creating peace, deluding, immobilizing, creating enmity, ruining an enemy and causing death.

Six schools of Hindu philosophy: Samkhya, Yoga, Nyaya, Vaisheshika, Purva and Uttara Mimansa and Vedanta;

Katyayani, an aspect of Durga is known as shashti;

Married couples perform Shastipurthi, almost another marriage function, when the husband attains 60 years of age while the wife is still alive.

Music too has some instances of the number six, mainly in classification. There are six varieties of Yati (Sama, Gopuccha, Srotovaha, Mrdanga, Damaru and Visama); six degrees of speed or Shatkalas, six margas or Shanmargas (Dakshina, Tara, Citra tama and Ati citratama); six angas of a tala or Shadangas (Anudrutam, Drutam, laghu, guru, plutam and Kakapadam); six types of tanas (some of which are Chakra tana, Vakra Tana Misra tana, Vidyu tana ) and six parts in medieval prabandhas (Swara, Biruda, Padam, Tenaka, Pāṭam and Tala). In addition, there is also a shat-sruti interval among the 22 srutis, which is the interval between antara gandhara and panchama. The sixth chakra in the 72 melakarta scheme is called Ritu, based on the six seasons. Some songs in Karnatic music featuring the number six
include ‘Shadanane’ by Shri Muthuswamy Dikshitar in Khamas, ‘Shanmukha nathane’ by Kavi Kunjara Bharati in Khamas.

SEVEN

The number seven is denoted by the prefix hepta in English and Sapta in Sanskrit. Some words using these prefixes include heptathlon, heptane, and heptagon and in Sanskrit, examples include saptarishi and saptaswaras.

The number seven in Christianity symbolizes perfection and seven and its multiples recur frequently throughout the testaments. There are said to be seven seas, seven continents, seven notes on the piano, seven angels, seven seals, seven woes and seven trumpets. There were to be seven 1,000-year periods upon the earth with the seventh never ending as it goes on into the perfect age.

According to Hindu scriptures, seven symbolizes the earthly plane and there are said to be seven planes of existence. Though some sources cite only three worlds (Bhu, Bhuvan and Suva), the Puranas and the longer version of the Gayatri mantra also refer to four more worlds - Maharloka (the world of radiant beings), Janaloka (the world of deities), Tapoloka (the world of pure souls) and Satyaloka or Brahmaloka (the world of Truth). These seven worlds are said to correspond to seven planes of consciousness as well as seven chakras in the body and seven planets in the solar system. Some of these relationships are depicted in the following table.
The number seven also occurs very frequently in Hindu scriptures – some of these occurrences are cited below:

Seven spheres on our planet, each recognized as a particular dvipa or island (Jambu, Shaka, Kusha, Krauncha, Shalmali, Pluksha and Pushkara);

Seven seas (Kara, Ksheera, Sura, Ghrita, Rusa, Dahi and Jala);

Seven tongues (sapta jihvas) or seven flames of Agni, which are Kali (black), Karali (fierce), Manojava (swift as mind), Sulohita (red as iron), Sudhumravarna (smoke-colored), Visharuch-devi (universally pleasing) and Sphulingini (cracking). These are also symbolized by the seven hands of Agni and probably correspond to the seven dhatus (saptadhatus) of the human body and seven energies that awaken during our spiritual practice;

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Higher Organ</th>
<th>Higher World</th>
<th>Chakra</th>
<th>Plane of Consciousness</th>
<th>Lower Organ</th>
<th>Lower World</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Navel</td>
<td>Earth</td>
<td>Muladhara</td>
<td>Anna</td>
<td>Hips</td>
<td>Atala</td>
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<tr>
<td>Abdomen</td>
<td>Bhuvah</td>
<td>Svadhishtana</td>
<td>Prana</td>
<td>Thighs</td>
<td>Vitala</td>
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<tr>
<td>Heart</td>
<td>Suvah</td>
<td>Manipura</td>
<td>Mano</td>
<td>Knees</td>
<td>Sutala</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Throat</td>
<td>Mahar</td>
<td>Anahata</td>
<td>Vignana</td>
<td>Calves</td>
<td>Talatala</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mouth</td>
<td>Jana</td>
<td>Visuddha</td>
<td>Janah</td>
<td>Ankles</td>
<td>Rasatala</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brain</td>
<td>Tapah</td>
<td>Ajna</td>
<td>Tapo</td>
<td>Feet</td>
<td>Mahatala</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Top of the skull</td>
<td>Satya</td>
<td>Sahasrara</td>
<td>Brahma</td>
<td>Soles of the feet</td>
<td>Patala</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Surya, the sun god rides on a chariot yoked by seven horses each corresponding to a particular color, energy and day in the week.

Seven forms of Durga according to the Durgasaptashashti – the Saptamatrikas Brahmani, Maheswari or Sivani, Kaumari, Vaishnavi, Varahi, Chamundi or Narasimhi, and Aindri; these are the energies of Lord Brahma, Lord Shiva, Skanda, Lord Vishnu, Lord Varaham, Lord Narasimha and Lord Indra respectively;

Saptarishis extolled at many places in Vedic literature, namely Gautama, Bharadvaja, Visvamitra, Jamadagni, Vasistha, Kasyapa and Atri.

Saptapadi – seven steps that the bride and groom walk around the sacrificial fire.

Sapta-puris or seven holy cities: Kashipuri, Kanchipuruam, Mayapuri, Ayodhyapuri, Dwarakapuri, Mathurapuri, and Avantikapuri;

Sapta-badris or seven sacred places: Sri Badrinath Dham, Adi Badri, Vriddha Badri, Yoga Badri, Tibetan Badri, and Nrisinga Badri;

Sapta-nadis or seven sacred rivers: Ganga, Yamuna, Godavari, Saraswathi, Narmada, Sindhu and Kaveri; and

Sapta-kshetras or seven battlefields: Kurukshetra, Hariharakshetra, Prabhakshetra, Ramkshetra, Bhungakshetra, Purushottamakshetra and Sukarkshetra.
In Karnatic music some fundamental concepts like sapta swaras (Sadja (sa), risabha (ri), Gandhara (ga), Madhyama (ma), Panchama (pa), Dhaivata (dha) and Nishada (ni)) and sapta talas (Dhruva, Matya, Rupaka, Jampa, Triputa, Ata and Eka) are based on the number seven. Even the earlier tradition of samagana had seven notes - Utkrsta, Prathama, Dvitiya Tritiya, Chaturtha, Mandra and Atiswarya, as did ancient Tamil music, which had its own names for the sapta swaras namely Kural, tuttam, kaikkilai, uzhari, ili, vilari, taram. Other instances of the number seven include the Misra Chapu tala, which has 2 beats of 3 and 4 units each i.e. a total of seven units per avarta; Dhruva Chapu tala which has seven aksharkalas per avarta consisting of a tisra laghu followed by a chaturasra laghu and Viloma Chapu tala which has 4+3 aksharakalas per avarta. In addition the seventh chakra of the 72 melakarta raga scheme with raga nos 37- 42 is called Rishi, after the sapta rishis.

Some examples of songs in Karnatic music: ‘Sapta girisham sada bhajeham’ by Kalyani Varadarajan in Kanada, Tyagaraja uses the words ‘srgmpdn- vara sapta swara’ in the song ‘Nada tanumanisham’.

**EIGHT**

The number eight is denoted by the prefix octa in English and Ashta in Sanskrit. Some words with these prefixes are Octagon, Octuplet, Octopus, Ashtakshara, Ashtadhyayi etc.

The number eight in Christianity is associated with resurrection, regeneration, and the beginning of a new era or order. After the great flood, eight souls passed with Noah into the new world. The Bible contains records of eight different resurrections, Christ was resurrected
on the first day of the week or the eighth day and the miracles of Elijah were eight in number and so on.

In Hinduism, the number eight symbolizes the division of space and divinities into their constituent parts. According to the Brahmanas, there are eight solar Gods or sons of Aditi i.e. eight Adityas - Mitra, Varuna, Aryaman, Amia, Bhaga, Dhatar, Indra, Vivsvant and the goddess Lakshmi also has eight forms known as Ashtalakshmi - Adi Lakshmi (primal), Dhanya Lakshmi (wealth of grains), Dhairya Lakshmi (wealth of courage), Gaja Lakshmi (wealth of elephants), Santana Lakshmi (wealth of children), Vijaya Lakshmi (wealth of success), Vidya Lakshmi (wealth of knowledge) and Dhana Lakshmi (monetary wealth). Corresponding to these eight Lakshmis are the eight shaktis of Lord Vishnu - Sridevi (goddess of money), Bhudevi (goddess of land), Sarasvathi (goddess of knowledge), Priti (goddess of happiness), Kirti (goddess of fame), Shanti (goddess of peace), Tushti (goddess of pleasure) and Pushti (goddess of health).

Other occurrences of eight in the Hindu scriptures include:

Eight attendants of Indra or eight vasus - They are Dhara (the earth), Anala (the fire), Apa (waters), Anila (wind), Dhruva (north star), Soma (the moon), Prabhasa (the dawn) and Pratyusa (the light);

Eight lords of heaven or ashtadikpalas governing the eight directions - Indra (east), Varuna (west), Kubera (north), Yama (south), Agni (southeast), Niruthi(southwest), Isana (northeast) and Vayu (northwest);
Eight fold salutation or shashtanga namaskara, using all eight limbs of the body;

Ashtanga yoga, with its eight limbs - Yama (Universal moral commandments), Niyama (self purification by discipline), Asana (postures), Pranayama (rhythmic control of breath), Pratyahara (withdrawal of mind from domination of senses), Dharana (concentration), Dhyana (meditation) and Samadhi (state of super-consciousness brought about by meditation) (The first three stages are the outward quests (Bahiranga sadhana), the next two stages, Pranayama and Pratyahara are known as the inner quests (Antaranga Sadhana) and the last three stages are called Antaratma Sadhana, the quest of the soul

There are eight duties of a king and eight elephants guarding the eight quarters of the Earth.

Ashtadhatu is an alloy made of eight metals.

There are eight methods of worship (water, sandal-paste, flowers, incenses, light, grains, sweets and fruit).

Ganesha has eight forms corresponding to the conquering of eight demons or human weaknesses\(^{19}\). These are Ekadanta – conqueror of Moda or arrogance, Dhumravarna (smoke coloured) - conqueror of Abhimana or Pride, Vakratunda (curved trunk) - vanquisher of Matsarya or Jealousy, Mahodara (big belly) – lord of Moha or Infatuation, Gajanana (elephant face) – conqueror of Lobha or

\(^{19}\) Forms of Ganesha, at http://www.himalayanacademy.com/resources/books/lg/lg_ch-05.html
Greed, Lambodara (corpulent belly) – conqueror of Krodha or Anger, Vikata (deformed) – conqueror of Kama or Lust and Vignaraja (King of obsracles) – conqueror of Mamata or Egotism.

Eight peaceful forms of Lord Shiva - Saumya or Anugraha Murthi, Ugra or Rudra or Samhara Murthi, Nritta or Tandava Murthi, Dakshina Murthi, Lingodbhava Murthi, Bhikshatana Murthi, Haryardha Murthi and Ardhanariswara Murthi;

Eight terrible forms of Lord Shiva - Kankala Bhairava, Gajasuravadha Murthi, Tripurantaka Murthi, Sarabhesara Murthi, Kalari Murthi, Kamantaka Murthi and Andhakasura-vadha Murthi;

Ashtakshara mantras of Vaishnavism – ‘Om Namo Narayanaya’ and ‘Sri Krishnah sharanam mamah’; and

Panini’s Sanskrit grammar has eight parts and is called the Ashtadhyayi.

In Karnatic Music, there is the Swarashtakam consisting of the eight notes (s r g m p d n s) that comprise an octave or full scale. Some musical forms featuring the number eight are the Satakam (a song consisting of eight sections, with each section being set to the same tune) and Ashtapadi, a form with eight padas. The eighth chakra of the 72 melakarta raga scheme, consisting of ragas 43-48, is called Vasu, after the ashta vasus. In the tala dasa pranas20 both marga and desiya kriyas have eight types each. Marga kriyas are of 2 types – Shabda

maargam (with 4 sub-types - Dhruva, Šamya, Tāla, Sannipāta) and Nishabda maargam (with 4 sub-types - Avāpa, Nishkrama, Vikshepa, Pravesa). Desiya kriyas are also of eight types (Dhruvakas, Sarpini, Krusya, Padmini, Visarjita, Viksipta, Pataka, and Patita).

Some Karnatic music songs starting with the prefix ‘Ashta’ include ‘Ashtadasha supitaste’ (Kamavardhini) and ‘Ashtamurthim Shishtamurtim’ (Gaulipantu) by Muthiah Bhagavathar, ‘Ashtanga Yogaprabhava’ (Shankarabharanam) by Ettendra Maharaja.

**NINE**

Nine is the last of the single digit numbers and is denoted by the prefix ennea or nona or non in English and Nava in Sanskrit. Some words including these prefixes are Nonagon, enneaagram, nonagenarian in English and Navavarna, Navaratri, Navamsa in Sanskrit.

In Christianity, this is the number of finality or judgment and marks the completeness, end and issue of all things as to man. The judgments of God are said to be nine in number as are the gifts of the spirit.  

In Hindu traditions as well, the number nine occurs in many instances, some of which are listed below:

**Navaratri** – the **nine** days of worship of the Goddess Durga during the festival of Dussehra;

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Navarasa – the nine rasas or moods comprising Sringara (Love, attractiveness), Hasya (Laughter, mirth), Raudra (Fury), Karunya (Compassion), Bibhatsa (Disgust, Aversion), Bhayankara (Horror, Terror), Vira (Heroic mood), Adbhuta (Wonder, Amazement) and Shanta (Tranquility). Shri Tyagaraja refers to these in his song ‘Soga suga mridanga talamu’ in Sriranjani where he says he will worship god in all the navarasas navarasa ‘yuta kritiche bhajiyinche’;

Nine forms of devotion according to the Bhagavatapurana – Sravanam (hearing about God), Kirtanam (singing the praise of God), Mananam (remembering God), Padaseva (serving the feet of God), Archanam (worshipping God), Mantram (offering prayers to God), Seva (serving the cause of God), Maitri (friendship with God) and Sharanam (surrender to God);

Nine planets or Navagrahas in astrology are Sun (Surya), the Moon (Chandra), Mars (Managala), Mercury (Budha), Jupiter (Brihaspathi), Venus (Sukra), Saturn (Sani), Rahu and Ketu;

Navaratna or nine precious gems - Mukta, Manikya, Vajra, Vaidhurya, Gomedhika, Vidruma, Padmaraga, Marakantha and Nila; and

Nine treasures of Lord Kubera - Mahapadma, Padma, Shankha, Makara, Kacchapa, Mukunda, Kunda, Nila and Kharva.

There are several instances of the importance of the number nine in music as well, some of which are outlined below.
**Group kritis** – Many composers have created group kritis in sets of nine for e.g. Dikshitar's Navagraha kritis on the nine planets or navagrahas and his Kamalamba Navavaranam, Swati Thirunal's Navaratna malika or Nava vidha bhakti kritis on the nine kinds of bhakti and his Navaratri kirtanas, Syama Sastri's Navaratna malika in praise of Goddess Meenakshi of Madurai.

**Nava sandhi dance** - performed during the Dhwajarohanam, or the first day of Brahmotsavam in the temples Nava sandhi talas, are the nine talas played during temple rituals in the nine sandhis or places.

The ninth chakra in the 72 melakarta raga scheme consisting of ragas 49 to 54, is called Brahma, after the Nava Brahmas being Angiras, Atri, Kashyapa, Pulastya, Pulaha, Bhrugu, Marichi, Vasista and Daksha.

**Aubat** refers to a band consisting of nine performers on wind instruments and percussion instruments who, in olden times, used to play on balconies or elevations during stated hours of the day or night to indicate the time to people.

Examples of songs in Karnatic music with the ‘nava’ prefix are ‘Navaratna malinim’ (Gamakakriya) and ‘Navaratna vilasa’ (Navaratna vilasam) by Muthuswamy Dikshitar, ‘Navaratrotsava’ (Alankari) and ‘Navavarana sampujye’ (Guharanjani) by Muthaiah Bhagavathar.

**TEN**

The number ten is denoted by the prefix of deca or deci in English and dasha in Sanskrit. Some words with these prefixes include decade, decimal in English and dashavatara in Sanskrit.
In Christianity, ten is the number of the Gentiles, i.e. anyone who is not a Jew. It also signifies the perfection of Divine order and marks the completion of order. There are Ten Commandments, the Lord’s Prayer is completed in ten clauses, fire came down from the heaven ten times according to the testaments, and ten times the people shouted for joy, God’s righteous curses are completed in a series of 10 and so on.

In Hinduism, too the number ten has a deep symbolic significance, marking the coming together of the 1 and the 0, representing the incarnation of God and the conscious and willful coming together of the mortal and immortal. Lord Vishnu's incarnations are ten in number – the Dashavatara, of which nine are said to be complete and one is yet to come. Lord Vishnu is also known as Dasarupabhuta and Lord Rama as dasari as he killed the ten-headed demon king Ravana in the battle.

Some instances of the number ten in Music are described below:

The ten Thaats in Hindusthani classical music are Bilawal, Khamaj, Kafi, Asavari, Bhairavi, Bhairav, Kalyan, Marwa, Poorvi and Todi.

The tenth chakra in the 72 melakarta raga scheme, comprising ragas 55-60 is called Disi, after the ten directions, including akash (sky) and patal (nether region).

Examples of Karnatic music songs with dasha are ‘Dashavatara vaibhavam (‘Pralaya payodi jale’) by Jayadeva, ‘Dasharatha Rama’ (Shankarabharanam) by Bhadrachala Ramadas, ‘Dasharatha Nandana’ (Asaveri) by Tyagaraja, ‘Dasharatha nandana’ (Mayamalavagowla) by
Mysore Vasudevachar, ‘Dasarathatmajam’ (Poorvikalyani) by Papanasam Sivan.

ELEVEN

The number eleven is denoted by the prefix hendeca in English and Ekadasha in Sanskrit. The number eleven does not occur as many times as the numbers described above but still has some significance. In Christianity, the number eleven in the Bible is said to denote disintegration, disorder, disorganization or unfulfilment. For e.g. Jacob had eleven sons, eleven apostles out of twelve witness disintegration, the eleventh hour is proverbial as being contrary alike both to what is right in order and arrangement.

In Hinduism, the eleventh day of the fortnight in each lunar month is called Ekadashi and is believed to be very auspicious, especially by Vaishnavas, many of whom observe a fast on that day as it is believed to lead to redemption of sins and Moksha. Another instance of eleven in Hinduism is the belief that there are eleven Gods of destruction or eleven Rudras whose names are given differently in different Puranas:

- Mrigavyada, Sharva, Nirriti, Aja Ekapad, Ahirbudhya, Pinaki, Bhava Natha, Maheshwara, Sthanu, Bhava, Kapali
- Kapali, Pingala, Bhima, Virpaksha, Vilohita, Shastha, Ajapada, Ahirbudhnya, Shambhu, Chanda, Bhava
- Mahadeva, Siva, Rudra, Shankara, Nilalohita, Ishana, Vijaya, Bhima, Deva-deva, Bhava, Kapali
- Aja, Ekapad, Ahirbudhnya, Virupaksha, Revata, Hara, Bahurupa, Tryambaka, Sureshvara, Jayanta, Aparajita

23 http://www.mudgala.com/articles/panchayatana.html
Another way of referring to the Rudras is as the eleven Rudra forms of Lord Shiva worshipped in the Ekadasa Rudrabhishekam Pooja. These are Mahadeva, Shiva, Maha Rudra, Shankara, Neelalohita, Eshana Rudra, Vijaya Rudra, Bheema Rudra, Devadeva, Bhavodbhava and Adityatmaka Srirudra. The eleven consorts of these eleven Rudras are Dhee devi, Dhritti devi, Ushna (Rasala) devi, Uma devi, Neeyut devi, Sarpi devi, Eela devi, Ambika devi, Ieravati devi, Sudha devi and Deeksha devi.24

There is also a reference to the eleven Rudras in the Bhagavat Gita, in Chapter 10 verse 23, which says25

रुद्राणां संकरस् चाश्मि वितेसो यक्ष –राक्षसं
वसूनां पावकस चाश्मि मेरुुः सिखरिणं अहं

rudranam sankaras casmi vitteso yaksha-rakshasam
dasunam pavakas casmi meruh sikharinam aham

Meaning: ‘Of all the Rudras I am Lord Shiva, of the Yakshas and Rakshasas I am the Lord of wealth [Kuvera], of the Vasus I am fire [Agni], and of mountains I am Meru.’

In the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad, the Rudras are ‘ten vital breaths (Prana) with the heart (Manas) as eleventh’26.

24 http://www.astrojyoti.com/11rudras.htm

25 http://www.bhagavad-gita.us/categories/The-Gita%3A-Chapter-10/?Page=2

26 http://wiki.answers.com/Q/How_did_Bhagvaan_Siva_originate
In Karnatic Music, the eleventh chakra in the 72 melakarta raga scheme, comprising ragas 61-66, is called Rudra, after the eleven Rudras. A song featuring the number eleven is ‘Ekadashi Vritava’ (Madhyamavati) by Vijayadasa.

TWELVE

The number twelve is denoted by the prefix dodeca in English and dvadasha in Sanskrit.

It has a lot of significance in Christianity and Hinduism as well as many other cultures.

In Greek Mythology, there are twelve Olympian Gods known as the Dodekatheon. These comprise the following gods: Zeus, Hera, Poseidon, Athena, Ares, Demeter, Apollo, Artemis, Hephaestus, Aphrodite, Hermes and Dionysus. The corresponding Roman gods are Jupiter, Juno, Neptune, Minerva, Mars, Ceres, Apollo, Diana, Vulcan, Venus, Mercury and Bacchus.[2] In the Bible 12 denotes a number of governmental perfection and is found as a multiple in all that has to do with rule[27]. There are twelve zodiac signs, twelve apostles, twelve patriarchs, twelve sons of Israel, twelve foundations in heavenly Jerusalem, twelve gates, twelve angels, twelve days of Christmas etc.

Another significant occurrence of twelve is in the calendar - there are twelve months in a year, 12 x 2 = 24 hours in a day, 12 x 5 = 60 minutes in an hour and 60 seconds in a minute. The Chinese Zodiac has twelve animals.

In Jainism, among the 63 great persons or Shalaka-purushas, there are twelve chakravartis and $12 \times 2 = 24$ Tirthankaras.

In Hinduism too, the number twelve is quite significant and occurs in many places, a few of which are illustrated below.

The number twelve is linked with the circle and creation, where the circle is divisible by the product of four elements multiplied by three attributes. This is based on the belief that the three attributes exist in the circle. By moving three times, each element completes its revolution.\(^\text{28}\)

There are twelve Adityas or preserver gods and twelve months in the Vedanta, namely: Amsa (the share of the gods), Aryaman (generous, nobility), Bhaga (due inheritance), Daksa (ritual skill), Mitra (constancy in friendship), Pusan (prosperity), Sakra (courage), Savitr (power of words), Tvastar (skill in craft and technique), Varuna (fate), Vishnu (cosmic law) and Vivasvat (social law).

According to the Aitareya-Brahmana, Brahma as Prajapati (lord of beings) manifests himself first of all as twelve bodies or attributes which are represented by the twelve gods, symbolizing fire, sun, soma, which gives omniscience, all living beings, vayu, or ether, death, or breath of destruction – Shiva, earth, heaven, Agni, the immaterial fire, Aditya, the immaterial and invisible sun, mind and the great infinite cycle, 'which is not to be stopped.'\(^\text{29}\)

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The Vaishnava bhakti tradition has twelve azhwars – Poigai Azhwar, Boothath Azhwar, Pey Azhwar, Thirumazhisai Azhwar, Namma Azhwar, Madhurakavi Azhwar, Kulasekhara Azhwar, Periya Azhwar, Andal, Thondaradipodi Azhwar, Thiruppan Azhwar and Thirumangai Azhwar.

Lord Shiva is said to have twelve abodes or twelve jyotirlingas – Somnatha, Mallikarjuna, Mahakala, Omkara, Kedara, Bhimshankara, Vishvanatha, Tryambaka, Vaidynatha, Nagesha, Rameswara and Ghushnesha.

There are said to be twelve elements and parts of the body, according to the laws of Manu – Ether (cavities of body), Wind (organs of motions, touch), Light (Digestive Organs and Sight), Water (Corporeal Fluids), Earth (Solid Parts of Body), Moon (Internal Organs), four Quarters (Hearing), Vishnu (Motion), Hara (Strength), Agni (Speech), Mitra (Excretions), and Prajapati (Organ of Generation)³⁰.

In music, the 72 melakarta raga scheme has twelve chakras and the twelfth chakra comprising ragas 67-72 is called Aditya, after the twelve Adityas. There are also twelve swarasthanas based on the saptaswaras. Swati Tirunal has also composed a group of twelve Kirtanas called ‘Utsavaprabandham’ in Malayalam, with Sanskrit slokas. These twelve songs describe the ten-day festival in the Sri Padmanabhaswamy Temple of Trivandrum.

One can go on and on about significance of different numbers such as fourteen (Chaturdasa ragamalika of Dikshitar), 100 (a century),

108, 1000 (Sahasranamam) and so on. However, the purpose of this chapter has been to show that different numbers have different significance attached to them and amongst the numbers; the number three has a special place.

**Summary**

Thus, we see that while many numbers have deeper symbolic significance in our culture as well as across the world, the number three by far outstrips the other numbers in terms of the level of importance attached to it as well as the number of times it recurs in religions and cultures across the world. Since the number three and the word ‘Trinity’ have tremendous religious and philosophical moorings, one would like to restrict choice to only three composers to form part of this elite group and not more. Hence, any addition or modification of the accepted group would mean removing and substituting one member and not merely the addition of one or two more to make it a quartet or quintet. In order to operate within this framework of three, one would have to make out a strong case for any other composer to merit his or her inclusion in the Trinity and the consequent removal of a member from this group. Given this background, future chapters focus on the present musical Trinity as well as other composers who have marked milestones in the history of Karnatic music and seek to draw parallels between their work and the work of the Trinity to see if any of them were more worthy than the accepted three to merit this title.