This chapter will cover the innate tendency of human beings to group, classify phenomena and things and examine some historically well-known examples of grouping.

**Overview of classification and grouping**

Since the beginning of time, human beings have intrinsically tended to group and classify things based on their characteristics. Some of the basic types of classification are enumerated below:

- **Biological classification** - This broad classification may contain sub groups, which are classified based on their status as a living or non living entity, species, sex, age, physical and mental fitness and so on. For e.g. human beings, birds, children under the age of five.

- **Geographical classification** - this mainly refers to the place of origin, location and influence of the entity which is being researched For e.g. American authors, Asian elephants.

- **Temporal classification** - things or persons existing during a given time period. For e.g. Indian composers who lived in the 17th century.

- **Historical classification** - studying a given time period or identifying a block of years as a time period for study. For e.g. the 20th century.

- **Anthropological or social classification** - whether the subject of study is an individual or belongs to a group, the specific characteristics which identify the subject as either of the two, the specialty of that group and of the subject in the group, the social moorings of that group, its relationships with other contemporary groups, its status today and so on.

- **Linguistic and Cultural classification** - this form of classification is usually contained in part in most of the above classifications.
However in case of specific areas of study, this becomes extremely relevant, as in the case of the subject at hand for e.g. Karnatic music composers

- **Classification on the basis of contribution to the society** - whether there was any contribution at all, whether the contribution was of a very high order or not so substantial so as to merit a special study, whether the contribution impacts many areas of social development and is universal in that sense or is merely vital for the development of one particular subject, whether the contribution has been path breaking so as to change the course of the subject and so on.

- **Classification on the basis of subjects which have been recorded and researched and those about which information is relatively unknown**

In addition to these types of classification, there may be many more depending upon the subject being studied. Additionally, it would be pertinent to note here that classification is more often in the realm of the researcher and not something, that is in the hands of the subject. For instance, in the history of English literature, almost all well known poets have been tagged as belonging to a particular group like Augustan poets, metaphysical poets, Romantic Poets etc. This does not mean that these poets had themselves meant to be formed into a particular group. Each poet was writing in his or her own way and only the critics and commentators reveled in the task of placing every poet under some group or the other, depending upon the variety of poetry the authors specialized in. The same can be said about the Trinity in music. Only later, musicologists combined Tyagaraja, Muthuswamy Dikshitar and Syama Sastry into one head as Trinity, perhaps because the three were born and flourished in the same area and time.
Hence, there are innumerable values that a researcher can take into account when she classifies the subject of study. This is by no means an exhaustive list, but merely seeks to illustrate that persons can go on classifying the subjects of their study into many smaller sub-categories until they come to the most specific of categories. This method helps to get focus, narrow down the scope of research and consequently improve the quality of research output that emerges from the study.

**Historical Groupings in Music**

As in all other spheres of human endeavour, music too has seen its share of classification and this section covers some of the prominent ways grouping has been done in various systems of classical music. Classical music itself is a category of music defined by the Princeton web dictionary as a traditional genre of music conforming to an established form and appealing to critical interest and developed musical taste\(^1\). Indian classical music is one of the most ancient systems of classical music still in existence and its origins can be traced back to over 2000 years ago. Western classical music on the other hand, has been defined as art music produced or rooted in the traditions of Western liturgical and secular music, roughly from the 9\(^{th}\) century to the present.\(^2\) Although both systems are based on melody and rhythm, Indian classical music is monophonic and places great emphasis on vocal music and improvisation while Western Classical music can be polyphonic, monophonic or a combination of both, places more emphasis on melody, harmony and counterpoint and has less focus on improvisation. The wide differences between Indian and Western classical music influence further classification within each of these systems, but throw up some similarities as well.

\(^1\) [http://wordnetweb.princeton.edu/perl/webwn?w=classical\%20music](http://wordnetweb.princeton.edu/perl/webwn?w=classical%20music)

Indian classical music is further classified into two major streams – Hindusthani and Karnatic. While this thesis is primarily concerned with Karnatic music, this section offers a brief look at the Western and Hindusthani classical music systems and various elements of classification and grouping in them, before proceeding to discuss Karnatic music in detail.

**Western Classical Music**

According to Wikipedia, a **composer** is defined as (Latin *componere*, literally "one who puts together") a person who creates music, usually by musical notation, for interpretation and performance. In Western classical music, the term composers largely refers to composers of instrumental music, as greater emphasis was laid on musical forms involving multiple or single instruments, rather than on songs unlike Indian classical music where vocal music has traditionally held a pre- eminent position.

Western classical music can broadly be divided into different historical periods - each of which marked the occurrence of some significant developments or advances from the previous era. Composers can also be classified similarly based on the periods in which they lived and composed. ³

- **Early Music (before 9th Century)** – largely improvisatory music, development of the Gregorian chant and modes, the predecessors of modern day scales
- **Medieval or Gothic (9th to 14th centuries)** – development of musical notation and early forms of harmony. Composers were mainly monks

³ Classical Periods: http://www.mfiles.co.uk/classical-periods.htm
• **Renaissance (15th and 16th centuries)** – period of heightened creativity and many changes such as music for the **Mass**, there were **Motets** and **Madrigals** setting texts and verse to music, as well as a number of dance forms; music styles became more complex with multiple parts for different instruments and there were further developments in harmony; prominent composers included William Byrd and Thomas Tallis

• **Baroque (1600 - 1750)** – this period saw the development of more complex harmony and polyphonic techniques like counterpoint, complex musical forms like orchestral suites and concertos, the rise of opera and the development of the modern well tempered scale. Key composers included Johann Sebastian Bach, George Friedric Handel, Johann Pachelbel, Anthony Purcell

• **Classical (1750 - 1820)** – this period saw the movement of music away from church established forms and public concerts became more popular; new musical forms like the concept of a **Theme and Variations** reached its zenith in this period, the **Sonata Form** was the foundation of **Symphonies, Concertos** and **String Quartets** as well as **Sonatas**. Prominent composers included Haydn, Mozart, Boccherini, Schubert

• **Romantic (1820 - 1910)** – this period saw composers following their own heart and emotions while composing as opposed to following external guidelines and music composed in this period had greater dramatic power and the ability to convey more emotions, achieved through more complex harmonies and rhythms, and the invention of the **leitmotif**. Prominent composers included Beethoven, Schubert, Chopin, Mendelssohn

• **Modern (1910 - present)** – this period saw the further fragmentation of classical music into different schools with greater experimentation and departure from traditional norms. Some
modern composers are Richard Strauss, Leonard Bernstein, Prokofiev, Shostakovich, Britten of the many thousands of classical music composers, arguably the greatest, best known and most often cited ones are Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750), Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791) and Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827). Though they were not contemporaries, together in a span of about 150 years, they had a huge impact on Western classical music through the brilliance and innovativeness of their music, as well as the body of work they left behind. A brief synopsis of their work and contribution is given below:

**Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750)**

Considered by many to be the greatest composer in Western Classical Music, Bach was a German composer, organist, violist, and violinist whose ecclesiastical and secular works for choir, orchestra, and solo instruments brought the Baroque period to its summit. He created a voluminous body of music, over 1100 works, renowned for its intellectual depth, technical command and inherent artistic and melodic beauty. Bach composed in German, Latin and Italian and used various scales. In some cases, he also set pre-existing text to music – this is one instance where he differs from a vaggeyakara in Karnatic music, who composes both the lyric and the music. Bach’s compositions spanned many genres including

- Sacred choral music e.g. St Matthew Passion, St John Passion, Mass in B Minor, over 200 church cantatas, motets, chorales, sacred songs, arias
- Secular vocal music (over 30 cantatas) e.g. no.211 Coffee cantata
- Orchestral music (concertos, orchestral suites, sinfonias) e.g. Brandenburg concertos(1-6), harpsichord concertos
- Chamber music (partitas, sonatas for flute, violin, harpsichord, cello etc.) e.g. Musical Offering, sonatas and partitas for solo violin
- Keyboard music (concertos, suites, partitas, fugues, dances etc.) e.g. The Well Tempered Clavier, Goldberg Variations, The Art of Fugue
- Organ music (over 600 chorale preludes, concertos, preludes, toccatas, fugues, fantasias, sonatas) e.g. Toccata and Fugue in D Minor.

Though Bach did not create any new structures or forms, he enriched the prevailing German style with a robust contrapuntal technique (meaning that several independent voices are used to weave a tapestry of sound), an unrivalled control of harmonic and motivic organisation, and the adaptation of rhythms, forms and textures from abroad, particularly from Italy and France. Bach had a number of pupils and held various teaching positions during his life. He taught music per se as well as composition and composed several pieces e.g. ‘The well tempered clavier’, especially for teaching keyboard playing. The most outstanding of his students are said to have been his sons Wilhelm Friedemann and Carl Philip Emmanuel, who became composers in their own right. CPE Bach in particular, was a transitional figure between the Baroque and the classical eras and his music showed influences of his father’s style. Surprisingly, while Bach’s abilities as an organist were highly respected throughout Europe during his lifetime, he was not widely recognised as a great composer until a revival of interest and performances of his music in the first half of the 19th century.

4 http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bach
5 Bach the teacher, http://www.oldandsold.com/articles02/jsbach3.shtml
Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791)

A prolific and influential composer of the Classical era, Mozart was a child prodigy and despite his relatively short life span, has left behind an endurably popular legacy. He was a gifted pianist, he developed a brilliance and maturity of style that encompassed the light, and graceful along with the dark and passionate— the whole informed by a vision of humanity "redeemed through art, forgiven, and reconciled with nature and the absolute." He composed over 600 works, many acknowledged as pinnacles of symphonic, concertante, chamber, piano, operatic, and choral music. Mozart was a versatile composer, and wrote in every major genre, including symphony, opera, and solo concerto, chamber music including string quartet and string quintet, and the piano sonata. He also composed a lot of religious music, including large-scale masses as well as many dances, divertimenti, serenades, and other forms of light entertainment. Some of his compositions are listed below:

- Operas e.g. Idomeneo, The marriage of Figaro, The Magic Flute
- Concertos e.g. no 41. “Jupiter”, no. 35 “Hafner”
- Other orchestral music- serenades e.g. Eine Kleine Nachtmusik, divertimentos, dances
- Sacred music – 18 masses e.g. Coronation, Requiem, oratorios
- Chamber music – 23 string quartets e.g. the Haydn quartets, 4 flute quartets, 2 piano quartets
- Piano music – 17 sonatas, rondos, variations, works for piano duet and 2 pianos etc.
- Vocal music – concert arias for voice and orchestra, songs for voice and piano

---

Though the forms in which he composed were not new, Mozart advanced the technical sophistication and emotional reach of all of them all and almost single-handedly developed and popularized the Classical piano concerto. He was also influenced by the Baroque style, being an admirer of Bach’s work and incorporated fugal techniques in his own later work.

**Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827)**

One of the most influential and acclaimed composers of all time, Beethoven was a German composer and pianist who gained prominence at the time of the transition from the Classical to the Romantic musical era. Though his hearing began deteriorating towards the middle of his life, he continued to perform, compose and conduct even after he became deaf. Beethoven composed in several musical genres, and for a variety of instrument combinations. Some of his compositions are given below:

- Symphonies: 9 symphonies, including no. 5 “Eroica”, no. 6 “Pastoral”, no 9 “Choral”
- Concertos: Five piano concertos e.g. no 5. “Emperor”, violin concertos
- Overtures and Incidental music: e.g. Coriolan
- Opera: e.g. Fidelio
- Choral Music: Mass, D (Missa Solemnis)
- Piano Music: 32 sonatas e.g. no 8 “Pathetique”, no. 14 “Moonlight”, 33 variations on a waltz by Diabelli
- String quartets: e.g. op 18. nos 1-6, Razumovsky quartets
- Other Chamber Music: piano trios e.g. op. 97 “Archduke”, sonatas for piano and violin e.g. “Kreutzer”
- Songs: e.g. An die ferne Geliebte (To the distant beloved), song cycle for tenor and piano
Beethoven's work was highly original and represented a significant departure from the music of his day. He used extremes of speed and tempo, expressing his ideas with boldness and some of his later music was considered demanding in his day – both for performers and for listeners, only becoming more accessible and appreciated in the modern era.

**Impact of the trio of Bach, Mozart and Beethoven on Western classical music**

Thus it can be seen that JS Bach, Mozart and Beethoven had a lasting impact on Western classical music. Though their compositions spanned different eras i.e. Baroque, Classical and Romantic, each of them was an acknowledged master of the corresponding style, with Beethoven marking the transition from the Classical to the Romantic period in his lifetime. Each of them had profound influences on many musical forms, a few examples being Bach's fugues and orchestral works, Mozart's piano concertos and Beethoven's symphonies. Though western classical music is currently in the 'modern' period, which is characterised by wide variety and fragmentation of schools and styles, present day musicians and composers often draw extensively on techniques and forms perfected by Bach, Mozart and Beethoven, each of whom has a very high reputation today. Many subsequent composers have composed pieces explicitly paying homage to them. Their compositions are mandatory studying for a student of classical music and occupy pride of place in concerts even today. Though they are not explicitly clubbed together as a 'Trinity' of classical music composers they are arguably the three most well known ones.
**Hindusthani Music**

Hindusthani music and Karnatic music originated from the same common heritage and are based on the raga as a melodic structure, with the same basic features. However, they have diverged significantly in terms of the style and content of music. While Karnatic music remained largely devotional in nature and closely tied to Hinduism, Hindusthani music was profoundly influenced by the advent of Islam in India between the 11th and 13th centuries. The classification of ragas, importance of the composition and hence composers, types of music forms and styles are areas of significant differences between the two streams of Indian classical music.

Unlike Karnatic music where the composition and its lyrics are important and there are advanced prosodical rules; in Hindusthani music the composition or *bandish* is for the artist, only a means of presenting the raga. Therefore, the musician focuses on the raga and the composition is of secondary importance. The emphasis is on the artiste interpreting the raga and bringing out its essence and though the lyrics may be poetic and deep in meaning, the words are not regarded as being very important in themselves. The composition itself is mostly in Brajbhasha (a dialect of Hindi) and tends to be very short, normally no more than 4 lines or so, divided into two parts – the Sthayi and Antara. Keeping these differences in mind, let us look at some of the aspects of classification in Hindusthani music.

**Musical Forms**

There are three main music forms in Hindusthani musical forms – Dhrupad, Khayal and Thumri, with Dhrupad and Khayal generally being considered as ‘serious’ classical music and the Thumri being considered light classical. Other classical forms include the Tarana and
light classical forms include the tappa and ghazal. The Dhrupad (Dhruva+pada – fixed verse) is considered to be the oldest form of Hindusthani music heard today and is believed to have descended from the prabandha, a fixed composition with a given structure and set to a raga and tal. It is however rarer today than the Khayal which is probably the most frequently heard genre of Hindusthani music today and is said to have arisen as a result of the mixing of the qawwali and dhrupad styles of singing. Khayal lyrics typically deal with themes such as divine love, separation of lovers, the seasons, praises to the kings and patrons and the pranks of Lord Krishna.

**Gharanas**

As we have seen, in Hindusthani music it is the style of singing and the type of musical form, which are of primary importance. Depending on these, musicians are classified into different gharanas, each of which has individual styles of singing, called *gayaki*.

**Dhrupad**: There are 2 main gharanas for Dhrupad singing in existence today – the Dagar-vani and the Darbhanga style, with the former being the more predominant one. The Dagar style puts great emphasis on alap and for several generations their singers have performed in pairs (often pairs of brothers). The Darbhanga gharana has its origins in the Haveli dhrupad style of singing and its performances can be distinguished mainly by the way compositions are sung after the alap, the distinctive feature of the gharana being powerful and expressive vocal delivery, combined with a lively style of performance.

**Khayal**: There are many well-known gharanas in Khayal gayaki, some of the most prominent ones being the Gwalior, Agra, Rampur-Shaswan, Mewati, Jaipur-Atrauli, Patiala, Delhi and Kirana. Of these the Gwalior
gharana is the oldest and the largest and stresses straightforward presentation and an open, natural delivery. The Agra gharana has its origins in the dhrupad style of singing and hence is marked by grandeur and forcefulness in singing. The characteristics of the Rampur-Shaswan gayaki, on the other hand, stress the development of the bhava and rasa of the raga, through a step by step progression and permutation of the notes and maintaining svara clarity. The Jaipur-Atrauli gharana focuses on clear raga development using short sequences and varying svara patterns and also has intricate tan-s. The Kirana gharana on the other hand, gives greater importance to the note by note and expansion of the bandish and vocalists from this gharana tend to elongate the notes and dwell on them for long. The Patiala gharana is characterised by the greater use of rhythm play while the Mewati gharana focuses on developing the mood of the raga through the notes forming it, thus embodying a style of bhava.

Thus, it can be seen that composers of lyric and compositions in Hindusthani music are of lesser importance than the musical form and style of singing – there are no major composers who have impacted the course of Hindusthani music unlike those in Western classical music, as studied earlier. This is certainly true of the period under consideration which spans the 18th and 19th centuries. However, in the later half of the 19th century and early 20th century there have been eminent musicians and musicologists who have had a lasting impact on the field of Hindusthani classical music and shaped it into what it is today. Pandit Vishnu Digambar Paluskar (1872-1931) set up the Gandharva Mahavidyalaya and was instrumental in bringing music out of the gharanas and into the popular consciousness. Pandit Vishnu Narayan Bhatkhande (1860-1936) wrote the first modern treatise on Hindusthani classical music and established the raga classification system in use today.
Karnatic Music

The focus of this research is primarily on Karnatic music composers. As we have seen the meaning and importance of a composer differs widely across different systems of music – with Western classical music focusing primarily on composers of polyphonic instrumental music, with vocal music being a small branch of the overall classical repertoire. Thus, there is less importance given to vocal music. On the other hand, in Hindusthani classical music, the composition itself is of much lesser significance than bringing out the essence of the raga, with the artiste who performs the composition and his/her improvisation and skill taking centre stage. Thus again, compositions tend to be simple and the composer’s contribution is almost entirely limited to providing the words and a basic tune. However, in Karnatic music, the approach is very different and the compositions play a very important role in any performance. To start with, let us define what we mean by composers in Karnatic music and then look at how they are classified within this context.

This research primarily deals with composers, a hybrid value of sub classification arrived at by classifying the subject into living entities, existing in a particular geographical location- say South India, at a given time period (specifically around the 18th and 19th centuries, but also before and after), belonging to a certain community which was part of a certain social order, speaking a certain language and engaged in a certain activity of singing and composing a similar kind of music.

It would be pertinent to begin an analysis of this subject by first listing out already identified values of classification by previous researchers before dwelling at length on different aspects of these values.
Who is a Composer?

Since we are discussing the topic of composers extensively, it is of utmost importance that we first identify what we mean when we refer to someone as a composer.

Indian music is different from all other forms of music in the world. The most important and unique aspect of our music, which remains quite unparalleled in all other systems, is that it has two parts to it - Kalpita sangeeta and Manodharma sangeeta. The raga is a concept, which exists only in India. Compositions, svara elaborations, neravel and alapana serve to bring out different nuances of a raga. A singer in a concert sings all of these above forms of expositions and enthrals the audience. Out of these, the compositions form Kalpita sangeeta, while the svara prastaras, neravel and raga elaborations (alap and tan in Hindusthani music) are Manodharma sangeeta - music that is created spontaneously from the creative mind of the musician. This is not preconceived and flows out of the singer as freely like a cascading waterfall - full of life and energy and beyond human control. The singer hence sings compositions of others, as well as composes and improvises on his own. He composes music while singing raga alapana - this is the purest form of creativity since it is abstract and has no words beyond a few syllables to hold it and composes when he improvises in songs by singing sangatis or neravel, and also composes when he is singing svara prastaras or Ragam-Tanam-Pallavis. Like a finely cut diamond emits different colours whenlight passes through it, each raga reveals new facets in the hands of different composers and singers. In that, sense every singer of Karnatic music is also a composer.

Taken inversely, in our music, every composer is a singer. This is because a composer of Karnatic music is a “vaggeyakara”, meaning
creator of words and music. In order to create a composition, the composer has to embed the lyrics into a raga by giving it a definite shape and form and qualify it by a temporal attribute called “Kalapramanam”. Hence, in addition to having a very fertile imagination, he has to have a very good knowledge and command over the subject to be able to explore and embellish the words with music that will be best suited to the content and raga of the song. In fact, even to choose the raga for a song, the composer must have good skill in this subject.

Given the above observations, the word composer in this research only signifies those who are the composers of both lyrics and music i.e. Vaggeyakaras and not those who engage in creative music in the course of their singing. In addition, only persons who have composed multiple compositions of a reasonably high order will be considered, so as to enable focus on a very definite class of persons.

**Accepted Classifications of Composers**

Prof. Sambamoorthy in his monumental book “The History of South Indian Music” has elaborated in some detail on the subject of classification of composers. He has listed out some of the accepted values of classification that have been adopted by different historians and musicologists for the purpose of their study. Some of these classifications are listed below along with their relevance for our three primary subjects of study.

- Composers of art music, sacred music, dance music, folk music and authors of operas- All three members of the Trinity were composers of art music. While some of their compositions may be considered experiments in folk music or be used for dance, their primary objective however was never so. Out of the three, Tyagaraja alone composed three operas, namely, the ‘Nouka
Charitram’, ‘Pralalada Bhakti vijayam’ and ‘Sita Rama vijayam’ (of which the last one is not available today).

- Major and minor composers- This can usually be determined by looking at the distinctive styles, quality and originality of compositions. However, this is likely to be quite subjective and a point of difference for many musicologists since many composers who have composed prolifically have not necessarily achieved a very high quality in their compositions- whether in terms of the lyrics or music. On the other hand, a composer like Syama Sastry has very few compositions as compared to composers like Tyagaraja and Muthuswamy Dikshitar and has yet been clubbed along with them as part of the Trinity because of the high standard of some of those compositions.

- Uttama, madhyama and adhama vaggeyakara – An uttama vaggeyakara is one who composed both the music and lyrics of the compositions (all three members of the Trinity are uttama vaggeyakaras), a madhyama vaggeyakara is one who has composed the music but appropriated the lyrics of some other person’s composition and an adhama vaggeyakara is one who has appropriated the music from some other person’s compositions and inserted his own words. While this classification sounds simple and reasonable, it cannot be readily accepted since composers often do not fall into either of these categories individually and may instead fall into multiple categories. One good example of this is Papanasam Sivan who was an exemplary composer in his own right. There are enough examples of his outstanding compositions such as ‘Paada Paada tihattada amudam’ in Kamboji and the very famous ‘Sivakama sundari’ in Mukhari. He has also shown his appreciation of Saint Tyagaraja’s compositions by composing several songs that have only lyrics and given a note at the end.
specifying that this composition had to be sung in the same manner of another composition of Tyagaraja’s kritis – the table below lists some examples of this.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Papanasam Sivan Krithi</th>
<th>Tyagaraja krithi</th>
<th>Raga</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>‘Karunai seivaai’</td>
<td>‘Raghunayaka’</td>
<td>Hamsadhwani</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Tunai purindarul’</td>
<td>‘Manasuloni’</td>
<td>Varamu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Saravana bhava’</td>
<td>‘Rama katha sudha’</td>
<td>Madhyamavati</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

On the other hand, in case of Bhadrachala Ramadas’ kritis, we do not have any traditional or authentic tunes handed down by the composer. However, the lyrical content in terms of prosodical beauty, employment of language and philosophical content is of such a high order that he is also a great composer. However, he cannot be termed as a vaggeyakara.

Classification based on language- composers who composed only in one language and composers who composed in multiple languages. All the three members of the Trinity composed in multiple languages. Tyagaraja composed in Telugu and Sanskrit, Syama Sastry composed in Telugu and Tamil and Muthuswamy Dikshitar composed in Sanskrit and three manipravalam kritis. One could also further sub classify this category into composers who used high quality chaste language and those who used colloquial language for their compositions. Muthuswamy Dikshitar never compromised on his language, while both Tyagaraja and Syama Sastry have employed language that was more in everyday usage in those times and compromised on the meaning for the sake of prosody. While Syama Sastry used a very limited vocabulary for his compositions, Tyagaraja’s compositions often employed meanings of words which were not inherent to that language.
and showed signs of his having been influenced by the place where he was staying. Composers like Kshetrajna are well known for their employment of pure and chaste Telugu for their compositions, regardless of the content of their songs.

Professor Sambamoorthy has also made a distinction between those who are born composers (whom he calls Sahaja vaggeyakaras) and those who became composers by virtue of training or any occurrence in their life- for instance Tyagaraja was a born composer, while Srinivasa Iyer became a composer by virtue of the blessing of goddess Meenakshi. While this can be useful to distinguish between composers within one category, this form of classification does not render itself significant enough to be a distinct classification.

There are some other minor categories of classification that can be used in very specific points of study, such as

- Composers who are also poets - example Tyagaraja
- Composers who composed in existing forms and those who established new forms through their compositions - For example, Pachchimiriyam Adiappiyar was the first one to compose a Tana varnam and is hence called a Tanavarna Margadarshi. Tyagaraja was the first one to create a JayaNatakam, before that there were only nritya natakas or dance dramas. He has also introduced the concept of songs with multiple svara sahitya charanas through his Ghana raga pancharatna kritis. The same can be applied with respect to ragas and talas- it is well known that many great and popular ragas like Kharaharapriya and Harikambhoji exist today only because Tyagaraja composed many songs in them. It is curious that Syama Sastry and Dikshitar never even composed
one song in these ragas. Similarly, in the realm of talas, Tyagaraja has been responsible for many compositions in the desadi tala and Syama Sastry has experimented with the 4+3 combination, as well as many relatively less used talas like the misra jhampa tala etc.

- Composers whose compositions appealed more to the common masses and those whose compositions are appreciated more by the discerning audience- Tyagaraja’s compositions fall within the former category while Dikshitar’s compositions fall within the latter category. Syama Sastry’s songs fall somewhere midway between the two.

- Composers who improved nascent and nebulous forms and technical beauties- Dikshitar greatly popularized the samashti charana as a section of a song, Syama Sastry popularized the svara sahitya through songs like ‘O Jagadamba’ and ‘Sari Evaramma’ and Tyagaraja’s contribution to the embellishments of a kriti through the formulation of elaborate sangatis in songs like ‘O Rangashayi’ and ‘Chakkani rajamargamu’ is phenomenal. All three composers also contributed to the concretization of the kriti form and its limbs of pallavi, anupallavi and charanam as we sing them today.

- Composers who were brilliant performers and musicologists as well

- Composers whose compositions are good for singing in concerts and those whose compositions are good for group singing or dance.

- Composers whose compositions are of universal appeal like the Trinity and composers whose compositions are appreciated only in certain areas such as the Dasa Koota
Hence, researchers over the past century have employed different values for classifying and studying composers, each of which may be acceptable and pertinent, depending upon the purpose and nature of study. For the purpose of this thesis, the more generalized approach to classification which has been outlined in the initial part of this chapter will be taken and the Trinity will be studied in light of the historical and socio-cultural developments of their times.

At this juncture, before proceeding further, it is important to note that the Trinity of Tyagaraja, Muthuswamy Dikshitar and Syama Sastry in Karnatic music lived at the same time and exploited the kriti form to its fullest. They composed in several languages, developed new forms and have been universally accepted as the Trinity- as opposed to the other systems like Western and Hindusthani classical music. They did in a sense mark a renaissance in Karnatic music and took it to new heights – bringing it into the realm of the public from the extremely specialised area it had been earlier. So unquestionable was their contribution that even today their songs are being sung in concerts for the major part in India and abroad. Hence, the concept of Trinity in Karnatic music assumes a new significance and this group cannot be compared with groups in other systems because they all fall short in some respect. Hence, a comparison at this level would reveal that the grouping is justified. The following sections now examine the merit of this grouping within members of the Karnatic system itself, which is a more valid and difficult comparison.

**Historical Groupings in Karnatic Music**

In keeping with the human tendency to classify and group, musicologists have attempted to classify composers into groups before and after the Trinity. Such grouping invariably came about after the
lifetimes of the composers, as only then would people have the perspective to look at the entire body of work of a composer and observe similarities and dissimilarities between them. In this section, some of the historical groups of composers in Karnatic music, other than the Trinity will be examined.

**Tevaram Trinity**

Sometimes also called the Tamil Trinity and perhaps the earliest Trinity associated with Karnatic music were the Tevaram Trinity of three Saivite Nayanmars – Thirunavukkarasar (580-661 AD, also known as Appar), Sundaramurti (9th century, also known as Sundarar) and Tirugnanasambandar (635-651 AD), who were well known for their language and devotion.

There are many views as to how the word “Tevaram” came into being. Some of the accepted meanings are as follows:

- **Tevaram:** “te” is deivam and “varam” is isai paadal, i.e., a song sung on God.
- **Tevaram:** “Teva” is deiva kriya and “aaram” is “padalmalai”, hence the word denotes a song that is meant for god and blended with word arrangement and musical discipline.
- **Tevaram:** “te” is deiva tiru aaram, i.e., paadal malai, a garland of songs set in a vara form.

Thus, the Tevarams are a collection of divine songs.

Tevarams form part of the “Twelve Tirumurais” known as the sacred hymns, composed by the Shaivaite saints known as the Nayanmars. The “Twelve Tirumurais” encompass the four forms ‘Stotra, Shastra, Prabandha and Purana’ in Tamil literature. The first nine ‘Tirumurais’ are known as Stotras, the tenth as Shastra, the eleventh as Prabhandha and the twelfth as Purana. The Tevarams were
set in various Panns (ragas) many of which have their equivalents in Karnatic music today (Puraneermal - Bhoopalam, Kausikam-Bhairavi and Sadhari-Panthuvarali, to name a few). In all, Tirugnanasambandar composed in twenty-two pans, Sundarar in seventeen pans and Tirunavakkarasar in ten pans. Tirugyanasambandhar has also sung in the Yazhmuripan.

Tevaram is included in the first seven Tirumurais and is assigned the foremost position. The holy trio, Tirugnanasambandar, Tirunavukkarasar, Sundaramurthy Swamigal as well as Manickavachagar, sung the Tevarams several centuries ago. It is said that between them they have sung more than a hundred thousand Padhigams. Out of these, only 797 padhigams could be retrieved from oblivion, thanks to the efforts taken by the great king Raja Raja Chola, who followed the practice of donating lands etc. to temple singers for allowing them to continue their adherence to music. There is no trace of the rest of the padhigams. They either have been destroyed or have perished owing to frequent wars waged by rival kings in the country.

Appar, Sundarar and Sambandar (800-1000 AD) referred to Chidambaram by its ancient name Puliyur (Tiger Town) and Tillai (the sacred place with trees). They described a dance of Siva that he performed at Tiru Chitra Ambalam (the sacred little hall). Puliyur refers to Vyaghrapada, a Siva bhakta who prayed that he might be given tiger claws and feet so that he could climb rocks and get flowers to worship Siva.

**Appar**

Tirunavukkarasar, also known as Appar was born in a Saivite family, to Pugazhanar and Madhini. He lost his parents at a young age
and subsequently left home and his sister Thilagavati behind to get converted to Jainism. However, when he was afflicted with a serious disease he came back to his sister and re-embraced Saivism. He composed many songs and even converted to Saivism, the Jain King Mahendra who had tried to kill him. He is said to have travelled as far as the Himalayas and attained his eternal rest in Tiruppugaloor.

Appar composed 4900 groups of songs known as "Padhigams"; unfortunately, only around 312 padhigams are available today. All these songs are in the musical form known as "Viruttam". He has also used another musical form, known as "Thandagam". Appar is considered the Father of Bhakti. His songs contain great philosophical ideas couched in simple language and reveal his intense love for Lord Shiva and for beautiful music. He also condemns Jainism in his songs.

**Tirugnanasambandar**

Tirugnanasambandar was born to Sivapada Irudayar in Seerkazhi. It is said that at the age of three, by the grace of the Goddess Uma, he was able to compose and sing devotional songs. He started travelling from shrine to shrine and met Appar twice.

Yazhpanar is said to have accompanied Sambandar on his journeys playing his yazh. It is believed that on one occasion he was unable to play a pann sung by Sambandar. Thereupon he tried to break his yazh in frustration but was prevented from doing so by Sambandar. From then on that particular pann came to be known as "Yazh Muri Pann" (some say that this Pann corresponds to the ragam we know as Neelambari today). Sambandar is said to have attained his union with the Lord on the very day of his marriage in Tirumananatloor.

---

7 Tiru Neelakanta Yazhpanar, Saivite saing and contemporary of Sambandhar
Sambandar is said to have composed 16,000 songs of which only 4181 songs are available. These songs are in the musical form of "Virutham". Quite a few decorative features "Yamakam" are found in these songs. Sambandar takes the role of Nayaki and speaks intimately towards Lord Shiva, who is represented as the Nayaka. In some songs, we find beautiful descriptions of dialogues and intimate scenes with the Lord.

Sambandar has done much for the promotion of both Saivism and music in Tamil Nadu through his hymns. His hymns fall under the first, second and third Tirumurais.

**Sundarar**

Sundarar was born to Sadaiyanaar and Isaignaniyaar in Tirunavalur. He is said to have married Paravaiyaar and Sangliyaar. He composed and sang his songs before the Chera and Pandiya kings. He also sings about both Appar and Sambandar. After visiting many shrines where he poured out his devotional songs, he is said to have attained union with the Lord.

It is said that he composed 38,000 songs; but today only a few are available. Some songs are in the form of the protagonist speaking to the lover as if with fears and in some he uses a mocking tone. His songs are in the form of simple and sweet "Viruthams". He sings of the beauty of nature in these songs; and unlike Appar, does not use any harsh words against the Jains. The hymns of Sundarar are grouped under the seventh Tirumurai.

Tevaram hymns are considered as the Tamil Veda by the Saivites, and sung even today with reverence and Bhakti during Pooja time and
festivals in the temples of Tamil Nadu. Musicians known as “Odhuvars” who specialize in the rendition of these hymns sing them in the traditional manner. The Tevaram hymns are sung largely in temples but not much in concerts; their influence and reach have not extended beyond Tamil Nadu.

**An Early Sanskrit Trinity**

Perhaps one of the first Trinities in Karnatic music, especially from a prosodical point of view, can be said to be Adi Sankara, Ramanuja and Madhvacharya. These three teachers together brought about a revival in Hinduism and established doctrines that are still followed today. Though their intention was not to compose for music but to express their spiritual and philosophical thoughts and encourage devotion to God, their compositions have a lot to offer in terms of rhythm, themes and language. A brief summary of their life and work is given below:

**Adi Sankara**

Adi Sankara was a great teacher of Advaita Vedanta, believed to have been born in the village of Kaladi in Kerala, South India, in 788 AD. His teachings are based on the unity of the soul and Brahman, in which Brahman is viewed as without attributes. He critiqued the philosophical and religious traditions of his day and not only brought about a cultural renaissance in his time, but also had a tremendous impact on the religious, cultural and spiritual history of India. He was a living example of the fact that spiritual renunciation is not synonymous with an inactive, purely contemplative life and he established the importance of monastic life at a time when ritualism as prescribed by the Mimamsa School had gained prominence.
Adi Sankara wrote a large number of Sanskrit commentaries on sacred Hindu literature and founded four important monasteries. Traditionally, his works are classified under *Bhaṣhya* ("commentary"), *Prakarana gratha" ("philosophical treatise") and *Stotra" ("devotional hymn"). The commentaries provide a consistent interpretation of the scriptural texts from the perspective of Advaita Vedanta. The philosophical treatises provide various methodologies to the student to understand the doctrine. The devotional hymns are rich in poetry and piety, serving to highlight the relationship between the devotee and the deity.

Adi Sankara was highly adept at tailoring his messages to suit the audience – though he could be highly polemical for the world of scholars, he came down to the level of the common man with ease when composing prayers like "Bhaja Govindam."

Adi Sankara was a master of metre and language and his poetry has an innate rhythm. For e.g., “Bhaja Govindam” is set to Adi talam and each stanza of the poem has a rhyme scheme. It has been said, “Whether it is a quickfire sequence of consonants as in ‘*nalinee dala gata jalamapi taralam*’, or an up-and-down undulation as in ‘*punarapi jananam punarapi maranam*’, he has proved himself a master of metre”. He has also demonstrated his command over laya and kalapramanam by composing strotas in different gatis like the Ganesha pancharatnam in Tisra gati and the Kalabhairavashtakam in Tisra gati and ‘Sarada Ashtakam’ in Khanda gati.

---

Ramanuja

Ramanuja (1017-1137 AD) was a scholar, theologian and philosopher and one of the foremost proponents of the Visistadvaita branch of Vedanta philosophy. Though he wrote relatively, few works compared to Sankara or Madhva during this life, what he did write had a major impact on the development of Vaisnavism in India⁹. Ramanuja has authored nine works: Sri-bhashya, Vedanta-dipa, Vedanta-sūtra, Vedanta-samgraha, three prose works (Gadhyas): Sharanagati-gadya, Sriranga-gadya and Vaikuntha-gadya, the Gita-bhasya and Nitya-grantha. However, he did not write any commentaries on the Upanishads unlike Sankara and Madhva. In his magnum opus, Sri Bashya, he presents the fundamental principles of Vishistadvaita, describes the three categories of reality (tattvas): God, soul and matter, which have been used by the later Vaisnava theologians including Madhva and talks about the principles of Bhakti as a means to liberation (moksha). The Vedanta-samgraha is a summary of Ramanuja's views on the important Upanisads. The three Gadhyas are prose lyrics that also expound the doctrine of selfless surrender to God. Finally, the Nitya-grantha explains the daily rituals and the mode of worship for Sri Vaishnavas.

Madhvacharya

Madhvacharya (1238-1317 A.D.) was a philosopher and teacher who founded the Dvaita or dualistic school of Hindu philosophy. He was a pioneer who went against many conventions in his day and championed social reforms. He founded the Sri Krishna temple at Udupi and established Mutts there, which until today, still follow the traditions laid down by him.

During his lifetime, Madhvacharya authored 37 works, among which there are many important commentaries on the Upanishads, Bhagavad-gita, Brahma-sutras, Mahabharata and the Bhagavata-purana\(^{10}\). He also wrote many original works dealing with important aspects of his new Dvaita philosophy. His powerful literary output established his teachings during his own lifetime and inspired a literary tradition that continues till today. The Dvadasha stotra composed by Madhvacharya, said to have been composed at the time of the installation of the Sri Krishna idol in Udupi, also encapsulates his philosophy and is known for its depth and the wide-ranging ways in which it can be interpreted.\(^{11}\) Many musical compositions have been created based on these, over the years.

**Tamil Trinity or Seerkazhi Moovar**

The Tamil Trinity or Seerkazhi Moovar group of composers consists of Muthu Tandavar (early to mid 7\(^{th}\) century), Arunachala Kavi (1712-1779) and Marimutha Pillai (1717-1787), who lived five decades before the Tiruvarur Trinity of Tyagaraja, Muthuswamy Dikshitar and Syama Sastry.

**Muthu Tandavar**

Muthu Tandavar is believed to have lived in the early to mid 17\(^{th}\) century and his work marks the transition from the earlier Tamil pann corpus to the new corpus of kritis in Tamil, and the burgeoning of a more professional scientific system of music.

He was born in a musical chinna melam family (traditional nagasvara players) attached to the Seerkazhi temple. He was named

\(^{10}\) http://www.Sanskrit.org/www/Madhva/madhva.html

\(^{11}\) http://www.dvaita.org/madhva/dvaadasha.html#intro
Tandavan after Lord Nataraja of Chidambaram and is believed to have become deeply interested in music by listening to the Sivanama kirtanas sung by a lady named Sivabhagyam, who was in service at the temple. Legend has it that he was unable to perform his traditional duties due to some illness and one night when he accidentally got locked inside the Seerkazhi temple, the Goddess Parvati appeared before him, in the guise of the small daughter of the temple priest and advised him to go to the Chidambaram temple everyday and compose a song in praise of the Lord, beginning with the first word or phrase he heard in the sanctum. When the temple authorities heard about this, he was named Muthu Tandavar, in recognition of his receiving the Devi’s blessings.

The next day, when he visited Chidambaram as commanded by the Goddess, he heard the words ‘Bhooloka Kailasam Chidambaram’ with which he started his first composition ‘Bhooloka Kailasagiri Chidambara allaal bhuvanattil verum undo’. It is believed that as a mark of the Lord’s approval, he found five gold coins after singing this and was cured of his leprosy. From then on, he continued to compose a song each day. One day, he could not go to the temple as the Kaveri river was in flood and so he composed a song as saying how his day was wasted without seeing the Lord (‘Kaanalal veeniley kaalamkazhitome’). In this song, he also mentions the shrine of Govindaraja (Vishnu) at Tillai. One day, none of the devotees spoke and the silence inspired Muthu Tandavar to compose ‘Pesade nenjame’. He is said to have composed ‘Darisanam seivene’ on seeing the deity and ‘Manikkavaachagar perenakkutaravallyo ariyen’ just before attaining samadhi. The padam “Teruvil varaano yennai chatru tirumbi paarano” (Khamas) became a hit after Balasaraswati the famous dancer, included it in her repertoire. ‘Sevikka vendum ayya’ (Andolika);
and ‘Araar aasai padaar’ (Naadanamakriya) were included in concerts by Madurai Mani Iyer and M.S. Subbalakshmi.

He was cured of a poisonous snakebite when he composed the Kamboji song ‘Aru marundu oru tani marundu idu ambalathe’ where he says that God’s rare medicine is special at Tillai. This kriti was popularized by D.K. Pattamal in her concerts.

Muthu Tandavar is regarded as a divinely inspired composer both during his lifetime and afterwards. He is credited with bringing the pallavi-anupallavi-charanam structure into use in Tamil compositions. In his songs, the three limbs are clearly marked out and the tala structure is harmonized with the wording and the three-limb format. Somewhat earlier to him, Arunagirinathar had set a different model in his Tiruppugazh away from poetry but also away from the three-limb model. He used a different talagati format for each of his songs, and each song had a studied asymmetry in structure without three separate limbs. Tamil musical composition might have followed this format but it did not, as Muthutandavar refined and consolidated the three-limb model.

In his time and right up to the time of Tyagaraja, music and dance were closely related and this is reflected in his use of tala words in several of his compositions. We find this usage in Oothukkadu Venkatasubbier, half a century later as well. In fact, this practice persisted down to Muthuswamy Dikshitar. Tyagaraja is said to have broken this practice of using sollukattu in his songs, thereby reducing the connections with dance.

There was much gain from this separation and some loss. Muthu Tandavar really set the model for subsequent Tamil composers from
Marimutha Pillai to Arunachala Kavi, to Gopalakrishna Bharati, Ghanam Krishna Iyer, and Kavikunjara Bharati down to Neelakantha Sivan. He was also the last towering figure in the Tamil melam caste tradition before Venkatamakhi’s scientific organization of the raga system divided the musical community into supporters and critics of that system, the latter drawn largely from melam castes.

Muthu Tandavar was again the great link with the nayika bhava devotional poetry in Tamil. He took it over smoothly into his padas, and provided the model for Ghanam Krishna Iyer and other 19th century composers. His padas have the same three-limb structure as his kriti compositions but are of course characterized by the erotic romantic approach with their varied sringara from virahotkantita to kalahantarita. In fact the padam ‘Teruvil vaaraano’ made famous by Balasaraswati, portrays a vasakasajjika, not of the classical type but the 'Kaikkilai' type characteristic of Muththollayiram.

It is evident that Muthu Tandavar was familiar with the intricacies of nayika bhava in Tamil literature and it is equally clear that this literature was alive in several circles though bowdlerized by puritanical commentaries and Sanskritization. It is interesting to note that the later Tamil padam composers of the 19th century took up Lord Muruga as the hero and the target of their padas, instead of Siva as Nataraja. This 'return' to Muruga as lover supreme seems to have occurred after a gap of a few centuries, after Arunagiri, Kumaragurupara and Kachiappa Muni glorified Muruga again from the 17th century onwards.

The Tamil lsai movement and other influences led to a revival of interest in Muthu Tandavar in 1941-42 and the late Tiruppamburam Swaminatha Pillai set to music 60 of his kritis in well known and
apoorva ragas after some discussion and these were subsequently published by the Annamalai University. Swaminatha Pillai’s tunes however, do not seem to have been fully adopted. Madurai Mani sang ‘Sevikka vendumaiya’ in Andolika, instead of Abhogi, Professor S. Ramanathan sang ‘Aarukkuththan teriyum’ in Devamanohari instead of Natabhairavi and M.S.Subbulakshmi sang ‘Aaraar aasaippadar’ in Nadanamakriya instead of Sankarabharanam. The changes were made probably because Pillai’s tunes were suited primarily to performance on instruments.

Muthu Tandavar was the first composer of kritis and padas in Tamil, thus inaugurating the transition from Pann Murai into the style of Karnatic music and the transfer of nayika bhava sringara from its birthplace in Tamil devotional poetry into the popular padam idiom.

**Arunachala Kavi**

Arunachala Kavi was born in Tillaiyadi close to Seerkazhi in 1711 A.D. the fourth son of Nallatambi Pillai and Valliammai, who were devout Saivites. According to family tradition, he began his education at five and continued until the age of 12, when his father died. After that, he went to the Dharmapuram Mutt to study Tamil and Sanskrit. At 18, he left the mutt but continued his study of Tamil for 12 years thereafter.

He married at 30 in Paruppur and set up a jeweller’s shop, while continuing his studies. He delved into the Divya Prabandhas, Tirumurais and other religious works. He concluded that the Tirukkural was the greatest and noblest of works and the life of Sri Rama exemplified the principles set out in the Tirukkural. Thereafter he concentrated his studies on the Tirukkural and Kamban’s Raamayana.
Once on his way to Pondicherry, he met Chidambaram Pillai, the head of the Dharmapuram Mutt in Seerkazhi and completed a composition for him. Pleased by this, Chidambaram Pillai requested Arunachala to settle down in Seerkazhi and he came to be known as Seerkazhi Arunachala Kaviraayar. He composed many works, but is primarily known for the Rama Natakam. When he started to teach Kamban’s Ramayana to Venkataramayyar and Kodandaramayyar, two friends of his, who knew music well, they suggested that he compose an opera. He chose the life of Sri Rama as the topic of his opera and this has become famous as the ‘Rama Nataka keerthanai.’

He initially composed a few kirtanas up to the song ‘Adada Veliya Purappadada’ in the yuddha Kanda and his disciples composed the music for this. After they performed this before a learned audience, they persuaded him to finish the whole work and weave it into an opera.

Arunachala Kavi wanted the first performance of this dance song at Srirangam where Kamban had his first performance (arangetram), but the priest refused unless the Lord allowed permission himself. At this point, the legend goes that the poet sang ‘En pallikondeer ayya’ (Mohanam, Adi), and Lord Ranganatha of Srirangam appeared to both the poet and the temple priests in their sleep, and the priests arranged for the arangetram.

The Rama Natakam opera is set in 40 ragas, including some rare ones. The popular ragas in those days seem to have been Mohanam, Madhyamavati, Asaveri, Todi, Sankarabharanam, Kalyani and Punnagavarali. Rare ragas like Saindhavi, Ghanta, Gaulipantu, Ahiri, Dvijavanti and Yamunakalyani have also been used. It is interesting to note that no vivadi melam except Nattai has been used. It starts with
invocations to deities, declaration by an actor of the greatness of King Dasaratha, and it closely follows the traditional story of the Ramayana. It includes 197 darus (descriptive songs), 278 verses in viruttam meter, and 56 dvipadis (songs of 2 lines). Arunachala Kavi's darus are famous - and Ariyakudi Ramanuja Aiyyangar sang one or two in every concert. Some famous compositions from the opera are ‘Yaaro ivar yaaro’ (Bhairavi), ‘Shree ramachandranukku jayamangalam’, ‘Kanden kanden’ (Vasantha), ‘Ramanukku mannun mudi’ (Hindolam), ‘Sharanam sharanam enraane’ (Sourashtram) and ‘Vandaan vandaan’ (Madhyamavathi). Other songs are ‘Eppadi manam tunindedo’, ‘Inda vibheeshanan’, ‘Sharanam sharanam enraane’ etc.

Some scholars have drawn parallels between the worship of Rama done by three persons, namely, Valmiki in the Adhyatma Ramayana, Tyagaraja in his songs and Arunachala Kavi in his Rama Natakam. They held that Valmiki envisaged Lord Rama in his complete glory only in the third chapter, whereas Tyagaraja worshipped Lord Rama above all other gods and placed him even above the Trinity of Brahma, Vishnu and Siva. This can be ascertained in his song ‘Tatvameruga tarama’ in Garudadhwani, where he says ‘tatvamasi anuvakhyarthamu’ while referring to the name of Lord Rama. Arunachala Kavi on the other hand visualized Lord Rama in his complete glory in his work i.e. he worshipped Lord Rama as “parabrahma swaroopa” just like Tyagaraja.

Many people also find his Rama Natakam easier to follow than the Ramayanas of Valmiki and Kambar. Arunachala Kavi believed that in the Treta yuga many divine powers came into the world to help eliminate evil, for example, Indra came as Vali, Surya as Sugreeva, Brahma as Jambavan, Chakra as Bharata, Shankan as Shatrugna, Adi
Sesha as Lakshmana and Ganapati as Hanuman. This last avataram has been identified by Tyagaraja in his song ‘Anjaneyaavataram subhashinam’ and has been accepted and followed by Arunachala Kavi in his song ‘Avataaram saididuvire’ sung in Jaunpuri.

Arunachala Kavi has witnessed many wonders in his Rama Natakam; for him the happening of the Putrayaagam, the giving of the payasam to the queens, the slaying of the Asuras by the sons and the saving of the Yaagam of Rishi Kausika were all matters of great wonder. He has expressed this in his song, “Yaaro yenrenaamale naalum ivan atisayangal sholla kelum’ in Sankarabharanam”. He has also witnessed other wonders like stringing of the bow etc.

Apart from the Rama Natakam opera, Arunachala Kavi was also the author of several literary works like ‘Ajamukhi Natakam ’, ‘Anumar pillai’, ‘Sirkazhi sthalapurnam’, and ‘Sirkazhi kovai’.

The great composer of Rama Natakam died in the year 1779 A.D. at the age of 68. Some modern scholars in music affirm that Muthu Tandavar, Marimutha Pillai and Arunachala Kavirayar are to be considered the Mummoorthigal” (i.e. Early Music Trinity) of Karnatic music.

**Marimutha Pillai**

Marimutha Pillai was a great 18th century Tamil composer and was a contemporary of Arunachala Kavi. He was the son of Perumal Pillai, a pious Saiva vellala, who lived a simple life at Vidangam, a village situated to the northeast of Chidambaram. From his early days itself, Pillai was initiated into a life of music and devotion to Lord Tillai Nataraja. He showed a gift for composition and his prabandhas soon
became popular with people, who started singing them in their daily worship.

Marimutha Pillai married early and had 3 sons, two of whom inherited his interest in Tamil and music. His eldest son, Theivangal Perumal Pillai even started composing at the age of 19 and was so steeped in Bhakti and devotion to Umayammai of Chidambaram, that he went away from home, to renounce all worldly pleasures. Marimutha Pillai prayed to Lord Nataraja to bring his son back and dreamt that this would happen if he composed a prabandha in praise of Lord Nataraja. The next day, he prayed devoutly at the temple and composed the ‘Puliyur Venba’. After he completed, to his surprise, his son returned home.

He composed 50 songs in praise of Lord Nataraja and several other pieces. Some of his compositions are ‘Chidambaresvar virali vidu thuthu’, ‘Adimulesal Kuravanji’, ‘Anedhi Natakam’ and different types of varnams. However, among the 51 kirtanas and other Bhakti songs he composed, only around 25 are available to us today.

Marimutha Pillai’s deep knowledge of Tamil was reflected in his compositions. Many of his compositions are full of devotion and often in the form of Ninda stutis. In the phrases ‘Vidum Ambalamgi nirum andhara manir’, he uses an inner Bhakti cloaked in outer sarcasm. These songs are very popular in dance performances today. The songs of Marimutha Pillai tend to be lengthy, with multiple charanas, sung to the same tune but since each charana expresses a different idea, the listener’s interest is retained. He used the kshetra mudra ‘Tillai’ in every song and followed the rules of prosody.
He has composed a lot of Ninda stutis, for e.g. ‘yenna pizhaippu undan pizhaippu ayya’, ‘Pichchaandi aahi pichchai yediteero’, ‘Pittukuman sumandiro’, ‘Yenneramum oru kaalai tooki irikira vagai edayya’, ‘Edakkittanai moditaan umakkedayya’ etc. Many singers sing his songs in the manner of padams, as post pallavi items in their concerts. In dance, his compositions are popularly used for depicting bhava. He has sung many prabandhas. Some of them are ‘Puliyur venba’, ‘Tillaipallu’, ‘Vannam’, a pancharatnam on ‘Vadatirumullevayiru kodidai’ amman, Varunapuri kuravanji, Adi Moolesvara kuravanji, Adi Moolesvara Nondi Natakam, Vidangesvara Padigam, Rathabandham, Nagabandham, ‘Puliyur sringaravelan’ padigam, Chitra Kavigal etc. His compositions are standing testimonies to his prowess in poetry and the Tamil language. It is unfortunate that a very small number of his compositions are available today.

The following lines from his ever-popular kriti “Kaalai tooki ninru aadum deivame” in Yadukula Kamboji illustrate his scholarship and devotion:

Raga: Yadukula Kamboji Talam: Adi (Double Kalai)

பல்லவி

காலை தூக்கி நின்று ஆடும் லைவமே என்றை லையை

அட்டவனை

பல்லவி காலையில் பிள்ளையல் பபற்ற லையை

பீணகுண்டு பண் செய்து பீணகுண்டு பல்லவமற்கு செய்து

98
Meaning: Oh Lord who dances with raised foot, pick me up with your hand and rule over me.
Oh lord who brought forth the spear wielding son, in the flashing Tillai of great fame in the golden hall you dance.
You hold aloft in your reddened hands the deer and the glowing fire; you carry your girl as a part of your body forever; in your spread out hair, you carry Ganga and the moon. The two who tried to find your beginning and end failed.

(The allusion to the “two” is a reference to Brahma and Vishnu who tried to find out the top and bottom of Siva when he manifested as a column of fire.)

The words are sonorous and the repetition of tūkki at the end of each line brings to life the awesome stance of Siva with his raised foot.

Marimutha Pillai described the gopurams of Chidambaram in his songs and used several different names to denote Tillai, such as 'Then kailasam', 'Ponnambalam', 'Natesar vazhum Pundarikapuram', 'Bhuloka Kailasha' and 'Puliyoor'. As in the case of Muthu Tandavar, the songs of Marimutha Pillai have many Charanams, each presenting a new ideal. His songs expressed great devotion to Lord Nataraja. He believed that it is enough to utter ‘Siva Chidambaram’ to attain salvation and mentions this in the song ‘Orukkal siva Chidambaram’ (Arabhi). In the song ‘Edukkku ithanai modi than unakku endana’ (Suruti, Rupakam), he pleads with Lord Nataraja not to accuse him of using sarcastic language. In his Poorvikalyani kriti, he refers to Tillai as a sanctified place (‘deiviga sthalam inda vaibhogam engum illai’). In his songs, he says that Chidambaram was the visible representation of pancha aksharam (the moola mantra na-mah-si-vaa-ya) ‘pancha aksharame sutri valindu irupadu chidambarame’.

He also drew on stories from the Siva Purana in his songs for e.g. ‘Pallaikkatti Muppurathar munnae ninrathu’, ‘Pennaipidi Kuravar vittil punnkondathu’ and ‘Pirambadi pattathu’. His Todi kriti has the line:
ennēramum oru kālai tūkki nōndi konḍu irukira vagai edayya?

**Meaning:** What kind of pose is this with one leg raised and hopping like a lame person?

In the charanam, he describes the mighty deeds of the Lord and wonders if these are the reasons why he is resting one foot. This kriti reveals his thorough knowledge of Siva puranam.

He used prosodical embellishments in his compositions such as or madakku, where in the same similar phrase gives an altogether different meaning. The phrase is used as antyaprasa throughout the song at the end of each charana. For e.g. ‘*Pala mandirathirkkum Balamanduram*, ‘*Ennum Mandirame*’ the sahitya figures of or madakku is illustrated.

He attained Samadhi in April 1787.

**Tanjore Quartet**

The Tanjore quartet was a post-Trinity group of composers who were disciples of Muthuswamy Dikshitar. The quartet comprised four brothers, Sri Ponniah (B.1804), Sri Chinnaya (B.1802), Sri Sivanandan (B.1808) and Sri Vadivelu (B.1810) who became court musicians and early promoters of art. Their accomplishments include the popularisation of the violin as an instrument in Karnatic music, adaptation of
Bharatanatyam as a stage art, the creation of the classical dance, Mohini Attam and many musical compositions. Of the quartet, the best-known composer is the eldest brother Ponniah Pillai, about whom more details are given below:

**Ponniah Pillai**

Born to Kannuswami Pillai in 1888 in Pandanainallur, he learned music, dance and mridangam for 15 years from his uncle Pandanainallur dance teacher Meenaakshi Sundaram Pillai. He also learned some compositions from Palghat Anantarama Bhagavat.

When his father died, he became music professor in the Music College started by Rajah Sir Annamalai Chettiar in Chidambaram, and he taught vocal music and mridangam. He also composed many svarajatis, varnams, kirtanas, and thillanas and taught them to his students. He was later invited to be on the Music Board at the University of Madras and as an Expert of the Music Academy, which conferred upon him the title of "Sangeeta Kalanidhi" in 1932.

Ponniah Pillai has the singular distinction of standardizing the ten adavus for Bharatanatyam, such as tattadaivu, nattadaivu, kudita adaiyu, tattu meettu adaivu and so on, which form part of the initial lessons of training for dance and may be viewed as being analogous to sarali varisai, janta varisai etc in Karnatic music. He has composed in a variety of forms such as Allaripu, jati svaram, shabhdam, varnam, pada varnam, svarajati, kriti, padam, shlokam, ragamalika and tillanas and his creativity in the employment and variety of ragas and talas in each form is quite extraordinary. He has composed svarajatis in both Tamil and Telugu depicting the nayaka-nayaki bhava suitable for dance. His innovations in the dance field led even Muthuswamy Dikshitar to place
his contributions in Bharatanatyam to be on par with Purandara Dasa’s contributions to music. He has composed many songs suitable for dance because of the depiction of the nayaka-nayaki bhava in the name of his own family deity and upon Tulaja, Sarabhoji, Sivaji and some other Maratha rulers.

Some examples of his Tamil Pada varnams are ‘Ati moham aanen’ (Sankarabharanam) and ‘Sakhiye inda velayin’ (Anandabhairavi). Other popular Tamil compositions are ‘Moham aanen’ (Bhairavi), ‘Samiku nera manave’ (Khamas), ‘Deshiya ashtaragamalika’ in Khanda Chapu tala, Sankarabharananam thillana (‘tat tadim tadim tana dirana’), ‘Kaapaduve un bharanam’ (Anandabhairavi), ‘Sarasijanabha’ (Kamboji), ‘Kanakangi’ (Todi), ‘Murugan kavuttuvam’ (Gowla) and ‘Tandai taay’ (Shanmukhapriya) to name a few.

All his Tamil compositions were compiled and published by his sons K.P. Krishnamoorthy Pillai and K.P. Sivanandam with the title "Rajah Annamalai Tamil Isai Karuvoolam" in the year 1949. This work contains 8 Sanchari Geethams, 8 Raga lakshana Geethams, 5 Jatisvarams, 4 Svarajatis, 35 Alankarams, Tana varnams, 2 Pada varnams, 10 Keerthanais and 4 Thillanas. Ponnaiah Pillai passed away in the year 1945, at the age of 57.

**Summary**

Thus, in this chapter we have seen how grouping or classification is inherent in human studies and looked at grouping in various systems of classical music. The nature and importance of compositions and musical forms vary across Western classical, Hindusthani and Karnatic music and it is only in the latter that vocal compositions are accorded great significance. Though Western classical and Hindusthani music
have their own repertoire of compositions for vocal performance, the
collection of Carnatic vocal music compositions in the form of ragas,
talas, themes, prosody etc. is unparalleled in any system of music.
While the Hindusthani system is very strong in the gharana system and
has a well-recorded history of guru shishya lineage, the contribution in
terms of compositions has not been universally accepted. Therefore,
students of one-gharana sing songs that are in the traditional repertoire
of their gharana, but do not often sing songs by another gharana
composer. On the other hand, the compositions of composers in
Carnatic music, especially the Trinity, are being sung by musicians all
over the world and by all schools of Carnatic music in different styles.

A cursory perusal of the few other groupings that have been made
in the Carnatic system itself reveals great differences amongst all of
them. Sankaracharya, Ramunajacharya and Madhvacharya contributed
to a phenomenal extent to the development of Sanskrit literature and
the establishment of major religious sects. They have been an
inspiration to composers, poets and spiritual persons alike after their
time. However, in terms of contribution to music they cannot be hailed
anywhere near in comparison to the Trinity. To begin with, they do not
fit into the definition of vaggeyakara, which is itself the starting point of
all comparisons. Their domain was the language of prose and poetry
and the sheer beauty of Sankaracharya's stotras itself for instance is
music to the ears. Though Sankaracharya’s attainment and supremacy
in Sanskrit verses is unquestionable, one cannot deny the fact that he
did not engage much with music, as we understand it today. Granted
that it was hardly as developed as it is now, but there do not seem to
have been any stotras that are available in any musical tune. It maybe
that he had envisaged and sung them so back then, but the present day
scholars do not seem to have any knowledge of the same.
In the case of the Seerkazhi Moovar, their area of operation was very limited - limited to Tamil Nadu mostly, their composing was only in praise of Lord Shiva and did not extend to other gods (unlike the Trinity), almost all of them were drawn into composing by some divine intervention, they did compose their songs to panns, but not all of them are available or known today, they composed in only one language. In comparison with the Trinity hence they fall short in several aspects - the catholicity of compositions, the universality of their songs, the innovations in raga, tala and Manodharma singing, the extensive guru shishya parampara which they had, the versatility with different languages and so on. While the Trinity's songs are universally accepted and sung today, the same cannot be said of the songs of the Seerkazhi Moovar.

In the case of Arunachala Kavi, Marimutha Pillai and Muthu Tandavar - they existed prior to the Trinity and were spread across a wider time span ranging from Muthu Tandavar in the 7th century to Marimutha Pillai in the 18th century. Like the previous Trinity of Seerkazhi Muvar, they also based their songs only on one God and their songs even today are sung only in Tamil Nadu, because of the medium of composition. Hence, they failed to capture a larger audience for their music. Further, though the output of these three composers was quite rich, they have not covered the range and wide gamut of musical possibilities that have been explored by the Trinity in their time. In the case of the Tanjore quartet, the compositions were mostly for dance. They composed many beautiful varnams and tillanas in addition to songs and the focus of their creations was entirely different. Overall, however, their contribution, while being quite significant, is not in the league of the Trinity. However, that being said, it is also pertinent to note here that grouping is a measure of convenience and
commonalities, rather than an indicator of greatness. Each of the groupings examined in this chapter consisted of great composers who all had some things in common. Thus, the Trinity in comparison with other groups of composers still have a special place and manage to hold their own above all of them in some aspect or the other.