Performing 'Religious' Music:

Interrogating Karnatic Music within a Postcolonial Setting

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Abstract

This research looks at contemporary understandings of performance arts in India, specifically Karnatic Music and Bharatnatyam as 'religious' arts. Historically, music and dance were performed and patronized in royal courts and temples. In the early 20th century, increased nationalist activities led to various forms of self-scrutiny about what represented 'true' Indian culture. By appropriating colonial discourses based on the religious/secular dichotomy, Karnatic Music was carefully constructed to represent a 'pure' Indian, specifically 'Hindu' culture that was superior to the 'materialistic' Western culture. Importantly, the category called divine was re-constructed and distinguished from the erotic: the divine was represented as a category that was sacred whilst the erotic represented 'sexual impropriety.' In so doing, performance arts in the public sphere became explicitly gendered. Feminity and masculinity were re-defined: the female body was re-imagined as 'sexual impropriety' when in the public sphere, but when disembodied in the private sphere could be deified as a guardian of spirituality. Traditional performing communities were marginalized while the newly defined music and dance was appropriated by the Brahmin community, who assumed the role of guardians of the newly constructed Indian-Hindu identity, resulting in caste-based 'ownership' of performance arts.

Mechanical reproduction of Karnatic Music has created a disconnect in contemporary Indian society, in which Karnatic Music is disembodied from its contexts in order to be commodified as an individual's artistic expression of creativity. This move marks a shift from substantive economics (music was performed and experienced within a specific context, be it royal patronage or

Indian nationalist movements) to formal economics (music as a performer's creative property).

I question the understanding of Karnatic Music as 'religious' music that is distinguished from the 'secular' and seek to understand the colonial patriarchal mystification of the female body in the private sphere by deconstructing the definition of the 'divine.' In doing so, I also question the contemporary understanding of Karnatic Music as an item of property that disembodies the music from its historical context.

Contents

Preface

I began this study as an exploration of issues that arise in copyrighting Karnatic Music, also known as Indian classical music. I was specifically interested in seeing how some musicians were beginning to advocate copyrighting Karnatic Music, which is generally understood as a form of prayer and an expression of one's devotion to the divine.

The deification of Karnatic Music, to me, puts this genre into a different category from other music. By saying this, I do not mean that Karnatic Music is unique (every genre of music is unique, in its own way), rather that there is an issue of translatability here. Perhaps this will clarify the context a little: whilst growing up in a family of Karnatic musicians, I often asked my mother how some Karnatic musicians were so talented, and she explained that these musicians conducted *abhishēkam* (lit. unction) with honey and milk (signifying smooth and sweet voice) during their previous birth. In addition, my music teacher, everyday during lessons, emphasized how music is a form of *yoga* and *prānāyāma* (a type of yogic breathing exercise) that purifies our soul and protects us from those aspects of our lives that might distract us from focusing on the divine. These two are examples of many similar contemporary understandings of Karnatic Music as divine music that are reiterated in every learning, performance practices and experiences.

Karnatic Music is generally understood as 'religious' music and passed on from one generation to the next through oral tradition. The majority of the compositions performed at the concerts were written by 17th century composers; these compositions are deified and <u>therefore</u> revered by Karnatic musicians as 'sacred', and thus, contemporary musicians see no real need for incorporating newer compositions. In other words, all composers have been

musicians, but not all musicians are composers. The suitability of songs composed by contemporary musicians being integrated into concerts depends upon how 'elders' of the Karnatic Music community (that is, veteran musicians and music critics) evaluate the composers' devotion to the divine. For instance, veteran musician Balamuralikrishna's or violinist Lalgudi Jayaraman's compositions have been included in concerts because their religiosity is 'known' and accepted, whilst it is unlikely for an amateur musician have her/his composition accepted in such settings. It seems to be a very arbitrary determination. Nonetheless, there is some common 'unspoken' consensus as to which composer is deemed 'devoted' and how sacred a song is. I do not use the term 'unspoken' to mystify these understandings; rather, it is 'unspoken' in that the musicians provide no definitive explanation <u>because</u> they take a mystified approach to Karnatic Music, its composers and their compositions. Reverence awarded to performance spaces (be they music halls or temples) adds to this perceived sacredness of the music: most performances are on stage in these spaces and because the space and the music performed are deified, musicians do not wear footwear whilst performing. Thus, in addition to the music being sacred, the performance space is then deemed sacred as well, because the space embodies the music. The instruments are sacred, too: they are seen as an embodiment of Saraswati, the Hindu deity of arts and knowledge. Thus, for instance, the ninth day of a 10-day festival called *navarāthri* (about which I discuss in Chapter 2) is assigned to worshipping tools, books and musical instruments as embodying Saraswati.

Although most compositions are not composed by the musicians, they do not pay any royalty to the composers or their legal heirs. The normative understanding is that the more often a composition is performed, the more the composer's devotion is affirmed through the acceptance of the public who revel

in the tune and the meaning of the composition. Thus, the entire performance becomes a communal spiritual experience. The Karnatic Music community is an exclusive community consisting mostly of Brahmins and upper class Non-Brahmins, in which most audiences have prior knowledge of the composers and their compositions, the style of the musician, etc. Novices go through a rite of passage during initial concerts in order to be accepted by the community. However, as novices, they are only performers and never accepted as composers. Consequently, novices always perform traditional compositions. They have to first seek the acceptance of the audiences to get to the stage of becoming a regular performer.

Therefore, my curiosity was piqued when I saw a news article in *The Hindu* in 2010, which reported that Karnatic musicians were joining forces against copyright infringements. As a Karnatic musician, this raised a series of questions about the issue in my mind: what does copyright infringement mean in the context of Karnatic Music? How can a performer/composer own a particular composition in the context of such a communal experience?

However, as I proceeded to explore these issues, I realized that the larger question was: what makes Karnatic Music what it is and what does it mean to say that Karnatic Music is 'religious' music? In other words, where did the contemporary understanding of Karnatic Music come from? Also, since Karnatic Music is defined as 'religious' music, a definitive category, where did the category come from?

What became apparent was that Karnatic Music itself was an ideological construct and a result of nationalist activities in the early 20th century colonial Madras (now called Chennai). Moreover, Karnatic Music (and Bharatnatyam, Indian classical dance) was constructed by specifically choosing histories that would best be suited for the project, and that marginalised traditional

communities, such as *devadāsis*. However, what was even more apparent was that Karnatic Music and copyright laws signified a larger point: a paradigmatic shift of categories during a period that is commonly understood as 'modernity'; more specifically, the shift occurred over the course of a few decades during the Indian colonial period when the colonizers were constructing an identity for India that was both modern and traditional <u>at the same time</u>. Both Karnatic Music and copyright laws were influenced by these myriad, complex historical developments. This research project is not an exposé of India before and after the British colonial period. Rather, what I seek to explore is how indigenous understandings of certain categories, such as 'religion' and 'secular', transformed into ideological categories whilst, during the colonial period, the interaction with the West increased. This resulted in paradigmatic shifts of these categories, of which Karnatic Music and copyright laws are examples. Thus, in this thesis, I will look at historical and contemporary understandings of Karnatic Music and copyright laws <u>in relation to</u> these ideological categories.

My own positionality as a Brahmin, a woman, and a Karnatic musician from India has been challenged many times throughout this thesis. Works on 'Hinduism' as a colonial construct, for example, not only challenged but also transformed understandings of my own identity and positionality. Similarly, as a Brahmin trained in Karnatic Music for 20 years, seeing the influence of Brahmins, a dominant group, in both constructing Karnatic Music and playing an important role in abolishing the *devadāsi* tradition by re-defining gender roles in colonial India was not altogether surprising, but was an eye-opener. Growing up within the Karnatic Music community, *devadāsis* meant those who were 'dedicated' to a Hindu deity and exponents in dance and music. However, the term *dāsi* (lit. female servant) was always used to refer to a 'prostitute' or a

sex slave pejoratively.[1] But looking into specific aspects of the history of the *devadāsi* tradition was enlightening, not only on how ideas on morality and the repression of sexuality in the public sphere in Victorian Britain influenced the early 20th century developments in India but also, remarkably, how these ideas have shaped contemporary understanding of gender stereotypes, roles, female sexuality and morality in India. Although this thesis does not pertain directly to contemporary understanding of gender, it is worth pointing out here because it became apparent to me that contemporary understandings are deeply rooted in these historical developments that are easily overlooked.

Thus, in this thesis, my arguments highlight issues that would certainly be disputed by many in the Karnatic Music community that I am a part of. However, that is not the focus of this preface. Instead I would like to draw attention to my privileged positionality (privileged at least in the contexts that I address in this thesis), which was at times a challenge to understanding the historical developments that marginalised certain groups (such as *devadāsis*). Nevertheless, I cannot disown my positionality; rather, I can acknowledge it (as I have done here and especially in Chapter 4) whilst making my arguments, thereby showing that at certain times I take the position of a mere observer, whilst on many occasions I critique the hegemonic discourse for what it is: a marginalisation of certain communities, rendering them 'voiceless'. This might be deemed an anti-Brahmin discourse: as Amartya Sen points out, ascribing a singular identity and deploying reductive identity-labels are useful for misrepresentation.[2] Discourses do not always need to fall into 'either/or'

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[1] What is pejorative about a sex slave on the part of the slave is quite ambiguous: it robs the slave of her agency, yet, the term *dāsi* always indicated a lascivious woman who could be enslaved for sex; that, somehow, was her choice, because she was born into the tradition.

[2] Amartya Sen, *Identity and Violence: The Illusion of Destiny* (London: Penguin Books, 2006), 8.

categories. Brahmin and upper class Non-Brahmin discourses on constructing Karnatic Music were and remain very problematic. That being said, counter-movements to the hegemonic discourses such as the Tamil Isai Iyakkam (Tamil Music Movement) have been equally problematic. This particular movement began as an anti-Brahmin movement but ended up appropriating similar discourses as those of hegemonic groups, but ultimately marginalised women in doing so.

In addition to these, what also problematized writing this thesis was my positionality as a non-native English-speaking student. Throughout the thesis, I have struggled with articulating certain categories or explaining certain phenomena only to realize that certain phrases and terms that I use in English do not always translate to the Tamil or Sanskrit languages, the indigenous languages of Karnatic Music. I, myself, have been guilty of using certain terms that are not indigenous, owing to the fact that I went to English-medium educational institutions in India, only to be reminded by my supervisors that these terms are Anglophone, that they have a very specific connotation, and that I ought to have some term in Tamil or Sanskrit that I could use. What this indicates is how pervasive certain categories and the terms we use to describe them in English are, and how we take these categories and terms for granted as being global. I attempt to question and deconstruct some of these categories in this thesis. However, as a solution to the issue of translatability of these Anglophone categories, I have used Tamil terminology to help readers understand the possibility of the existence of multiple meanings in diverse contexts for certain terms that we generally understand in a particular way. For instance, the term *prasādam* is generally translated in English as food received at a Hindu temple 'transubstantiated' by the deity. The use of the term transubstantiated is very common in Hindu contexts. However, the term has a

Christian connotation, to refer to bread as the body of Christ and wine as the blood of Christ. Thus, in order to point to the difference in context (and in the process, being unable to find a suitable term in English), I have used Tamil terms such as *padaitthal* to mean 'offering to the deity.' The word *prasādam* thus refers to food blessed by the deity but not always necessarily 'embodied' by the deity.

Also, as the thesis at times uses three languages to describe or clarify a point, a stylistic clarification is needed here: in this thesis, I have italicized non-English terms. These terms are mostly Sanskrit and Tamil; however, on rare occasions, there are some Telugu terms as well. However, I have not italicized names of people and places. Since I have used italics for this specific purpose, in order to avoid confusion for the readers, I have used the underline function for those terms in English I wish to emphasize. Also, all non-English terms have been transliterated and translated into English. These translations have been provided with the source in the footnotes for the corresponding terms and phrases. Translating and transliterating Tamil is, in general, quite complicated because there are several schemes that are in use. I have used the University of Madras Tamil Lexicon for transliteration involving long vowels. Accordingly, I have used the macron to indicate to longer vowels (for example, *kādhal* instead of *kaadhal*- lit. love). However, I have differed from the lexicon in the usage of the following syllables: whilst the lexicon uses *c* for the pronunciation *sa* (as in the word sat), I use *s* for the pronunciation of *sa* and use *ch* for *cha*. This is because in the Tamil alphabet ச can refer to both *sa* and *cha* pronunciations, depending on the word in use and its context. Thus, for instance, சத்தம் (lit. sound or noise) is pronounced as *sattham*, whilst the word சக்கரம் (lit. wheel), although it uses the same consonant ச, it is pronounced as *chakkaram*. Similarly,

I have used *tth* to indicate the pronunciation as in the word 'the,' whilst the lexicon tends to use *tt* for the same. Thus, whilst I would write *katthi* (lit. knife), the lexicon gives it as *katti*.

Single quotation marks have been used for those terms and phrases that have common understanding but those that I want to deconstruct. Thus, for example, the terms 'religion' and 'secular' are often enclosed by single quotation marks. Direct quotes from sources have been enclosed with double quotations marks.

Finally, methodologically, this thesis builds on previous works on Karnatic Music, gender studies, religious studies and copyright laws. In addition, the thesis builds on discussions with Indian musicians, musicologists and copyright expert on India. Finally, to support my arguments on, and interpretation of, historical developments, sources such as the transcripts of early music conferences in colonial Madras have been used. Thus, most news articles that have been used in this thesis are from one English daily national newspaper, *The Hindu*. There is a rationale to this: historically, the newspaper management (launched in 1878) was deeply involved in the early 20th century music 'revival' project, so much so, that the early management committee of the Madras Music Academy was made up of members of the Kasturi and Sons Limited company (later, The Hindu Group). This holds true for contemporary management committee of the Academy as well. As the principal music institution in South India, the Academy organises the Madras Music Season (now with the co-operation and involvement of other music *sabhās* in Chennai); *The Hindu* covers the music season extensively every year, with articles on music theory, concert reviews and newspaper-supplement columns with schedules of events throughout the city for the entire month. Thus, the popularity of Karnatic Music (historically and contemporarily) has a strong dependence on news media, specifically, *The Hindu*.

"In talking about the past we lie with every breath we draw"

— William Maxwell

1 Introduction

*" . . . there is hardly any festivity in India in which some part is not assigned to music–
and for religious ceremonies it is universal."*

— Captain C. R. Day[1]

Karnatic Music, also known as Indian or more specifically, South Indian
classical music, is a popular form of music that is learned and performed in the
South Indian states of Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Kerala and Andhra Pradesh.[2] It
is commonly understood as spiritual music that bestows *moksha*[3] and is
<u>therefore</u> a form of prayer; hence, performances are deemed as 'divinely
inspired' and performers are seen as embodying the divine. In contrast, for
instance, the other popular music-form, Tamil film music (music composed for
films in the language Tamil, spoken in Tamil Nadu), is generally understood as
'non-religious' music. To this end, Karnatic Music and film music are seen as
two distinct categories. The popular understanding of Karnatic Music echoes
the sentiments expressed by Captain Day above, a 19th century Orientalist with
a deep interest in South Indian music: that music is ubiquitous in Indian
celebrations and more importantly, that this music is strongly associated with
'religion.' To this end, mystification of Karnatic Music through the notion that it
is 'religious,' 'divinely inspired,' and is a form of prayer that transcends the
plight of our daily lives to bring oneness with the divine, is a common narrative

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[1] Lakshmi Subramanian, *From the Tanjore Court to the Madras Music Academy: A Social History of Music in South India* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 27.

[2] However, Karnatic Music is most popular in Tamil Nadu due to certain specific historical contexts that I describe below.

[3] *Moksha*- lit. liberation from the karmic cycle of life, death and re-birth. *Moksha* is often equated to the Christian notion of salvation in that *moksha* deals with ultimate aim of the soul — to become one with the divine. However, corresponding ideas of sins are quite differently dealt between *moksha* and salvation. *Moksha* mainly deals with self moving beyond birth and death.

in contemporary Indian society.[4] In addition, <u>because</u> of its association to 'religion,' Karnatic Music is generally considered a shared traditional knowledge that has historically been bequeathed from one generation to another through oral teaching.

In the recent years, due to the demand from film musicians[5] that their artistic expression of creativity be protected and rewarded,[6] the Government of India passed an amendment in 2012 that extends additional protection to creative works of musicians. Thus, whilst demands from film musicians to protect their works have been well known, in the recent years Karnatic musicians also have shown similar interest in copyrighting their creative work. For example, during an event in 2011, Sudha Raghunathan, a prominent Karnatic musician, argued for more awareness amongst musicians of copyright infringements that had become more prevalent due to "modern technology."[7] However, such a move is

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[4] "'Music Could Erase Religious Hatred, Casteism'," *The Hindu*, December 12, 2002, accessed July 16, 2013, http://www.thehindu.com/2002/12/12/stories/2002121204180500.htm.

[5] This term refers to a range of artistes involved in composing film music in India: the lyricist/poet, the music director/composer, and the singers (called playback singers) – a typical film song would involve <u>all</u> of these artistes. Making music for films itself is much more complicated; see Anna Morcom, *Hindi Film Songs and the Cinema* (London: Ashgate Publications, 2007), 19-23.

[6] In fact, until now, the recording companies held the rights for the reproduction of a song for commercial purposes, thereby essentially ignoring some of the parties involved in the production of a song using pre-production contracts. Lyricist/poet and Rajya Sabha member Javed Akhtar and singer/composer Shankar Mahadevan have been vocally supportive of the copyright amendment bill that ensures royalties to all parties involved in production of a song and that was made into law in 2012. See Sangeetha Devi Dundoo, "Rightfully Theirs," *The Hindu*, May 20, 2012, accessed July 5, 2013, http://www.thehindu.com/arts/article3439178.ece. Several studies have looked at copyright infringement in the Indian film industry. The focus has always been on enforcement or lack thereof. For example, see Harini Ganesh, "The Need for Originality: Music Infringement in India," *The John Marshall Review of Intellectual Property Law* 169 (2011): 170-191; Rachana Desai, "Copyright Infringement in the Indian Film Industry," *Vanderbilt Journal of Entertainment Law and Practice* 7 (2004): 259-278; Priti H. Doshi, "Copyright Problems in India Affecting Hollywood and "Bollywood," *Suffolk Transnational Law Review* 26 (2003): 295-479.

[7] "Artists and Musicians Told to Come Together to Safeguard Their Work," *The Hindu*, February 2, 2011, accessed July 5, 2013, http://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/chennai/artists-and-musicians-told-to-come-together-to-safeguard-their-work/article1147345.ece. Also, see Priyadarshini Paitandy, "The Virtual Sabha," *The Hindu*, October 21, 2011, accessed July 5, 2013, http://www.thehindu.com/features/friday-review/music/the-virtual-sabha/article2558794.ece.

a result of the 2012 amendment that has extended protection to all musicians, including Karnatic musicians. A brief look at Indian copyright legislations and amendments (specifically the 2012 amendment) pertaining to Karnatic musicians is necessary here.

India's first copyright law was The Indian Copyright Act of 1847, passed by the Governor General of India under the East India Company's rule on 18th December 1847.[8] The act remained in effect until 1911 when the then Government of India passed the Imperial Copyright Act of 1911 that included both published and unpublished works. The Indian Copyright Act of 1914 was the next law passed that "introduced criminal sanction for copyright infringement."[9] After independence, India passed the Copyright Act of 1957, which went into effect on 21st January 1958, affirming previous legal statements. Amongst many further amendments to the law, the 1994 amendment is most closely related to Karnatic musicians because it provided protection to all original literary, dramatic, musical and artistic works, cinematography, films and sound recordings.[10] It expanded the protection for performers by defining sound recording to mean "a recording of sounds from which such sounds may be produced regardless of the medium on which such recording is made or the method by which the sounds are produced."[11] This would include recordings of live concerts of Karnatic Music. In fact, Sundara Rajan mentioned that this particular amendment was introduced to protect Karnatic musicians because

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[8] Mark Perry, "Towards Legal Protection for Digital Rights Management in India: Necessity or Burden?" *Social Science Research Network*, June 24, 2013, http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=1647582.

[9] Perry, "Towards Legal Protection for Digital Rights Management in India."

[10] Mira Sundara Rajan (Canadian Research Chair, Tier II) in discussion with the author, April 2011.

[11] See *The Copyright (Second Amendment Bill), 1994,* Part 4, accessed June 28, 2013, http://parliamentofindia.nic.in/ls/bills/1994/1994-31.htm.

before and after the technology boom in the 90s, the audience members were generally known to record live Karnatic Music concerts.[12] The most recent amendment (The Copyright Act (Amendment) Bill 2012 mentioned above) provided further protection for musicians and their performances by:

a) Protecting the performer's rights by allowing him/her to make sound or visual copies of the performance and allow its production in any medium; the copies can be issued for rent/profit/to the public.[13]

b) Giving the performer the right to restrain any distortion of the performance.[14]

The amendment specifically strengthened the moral rights of the musicians and performers, which is described as

> The author of a work has the right to claim authorship of the work and to restrain or claim damages in respect of any distortion, mutilation, modification or other acts in relation to the said work which is done before the expiration of the term of copyright if such distortion, mutilation, modification or other act would be prejudicial to his honour or reputation. Moral rights are available to the authors even after the economic rights are assigned.[15]

Performers' rights, including of Karnatic musicians', were already protected by the 1994 amendment, which laid the groundwork for ownership claims on sound recordings. However, by strengthening performers (rather than only creators/authors) against distortions of such sound recordings, the 2012 amendment sought to guard against any misrepresentations of their performances. As a consequence, whilst this amendment (and the one passed in 1994) certainly protects film musicians and artistes, it has brought Karnatic

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[12] Mira Sundara Rajan (Canadian Research Chair, Tier II) in discussion with the author, April 2011.

[13] See *A Handbook of Copyright Law*, accessed June 24, 2013, http://copyright.gov.in/Documents/handbook.html.

[14] Ibid.

[15] Ibid.

Music under its purview more strongly than before. This amendment has become significant for contemporary musicians ever since music sharing on the Internet has increased in popularity and ease. These recordings have proven to be very popular among Indian immigrants in the West, whose exposure to Karnatic Music concerts was possible mostly through such recordings. This explains the anxiety expressed by Karnatic musicians as in the quote of Ms. Raghunathan on p. 15 above. At a fundamental level, the question that then arises is, how can one claim ownership of traditional art and a form of prayer?

A disconnect prevails among the performers and the audiences of Karnatic Music between understanding the ownership of the artistic expression of creativity, and individuals claiming the ownership of traditional knowledge that has been historically shared through oral rendition. This was best illustrated during a recent controversy surrounding a lullaby written and performed in Tamil by Karnatic musician Bombay Jayashri that appeared in the film *Life of Pi*. The film's nomination for eleven Oscar awards included the category 'Best Original Song' for which Jayashri (along with Mychael Danna) was nominated. However, The Irayimman Thampi Smaraka Trust in Kerala accused Jayashri of plagiarizing a lullaby in Malayalam that poet Irayimman Thampi had composed in the mid 19th century; the Trust argued that Jayashri's composition was a verbatim translation of the original Malayalam composition.[16] The accusation came <u>after</u> the nomination for the Oscars was announced indicating that the economic benefit (and the accolade) she would receive out of it had warranted acknowledgment of the 'original.'[17] What

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[16] "Irayimman Thampi Trust Alleges Plagiarism," *The Hindu*, January 13, 2013, accessed July 07, 2013, http://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-national/tp-kerala/irayimman-thampi-trust-alleges-plagiarism/article4303751.ece.

[17] "Irayimman Thampi Trust Alleges Plagiarism."

seemed to have set-off the allegation was the category under which her composition was nominated: 'Best <u>Original</u> Song.'

This is a classic example of the problem, that highlights the complicated understandings of plagiarism of art forms that have long been understood as shared knowledge. Lullabies are one such shared art form. Of course, this particular lullaby, in Malayalam, was composed within a specific context.[18] In a news article that appeared in *The Hindu*, Jayashri defended her composition by arguing that "I can only say that I wrote whatever that came to my heart."[19] The 'Comments' section of the news article showed much deliberation and many dilemmas among the readers and the audiences of Karnatic Music regarding this issue. Whilst some agreed that copyright infringement is a serious issue, others claimed that lullabies are traditional knowledge and that creativity expressed as music must be shared and appreciated, and not copyrighted.[20] Moreover, arguably, this lullaby would be classified as a film song because it appeared in a film; that certainly <u>is</u> the rationale for the way most films songs are classified. However, because this lullaby was performed by a Karnatic musician and set to a Karnatic Music tune, its classification has become problematic. Hence, it is no longer understood as the musician's <u>own</u> work (as in the case of film music), but as <u>traditional knowledge</u>.[21] Thus, in addition to

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[18] The poet composed it for his nephew who later became King Swathi Thirunal, a prolific Karnatic Music composer. See G. Sreekumar, "A Case of Two Lullabies," *Business Standard*, last modified March 15, 2013, http://www.business-standard.com/article/beyond-business/a-case-of-two-lullabies-113031500573_1.html.

[19] "Pi's Lullaby: Bombay Jayashri Denies Allegations of Plagiarism," *The Hindu*, January 13, 2013, accessed July 07, 2013, http://www.thehindu.com/features/friday-review/music/pis-lullaby-bombay-jayashri-denies-allegations-of-plagiarism/article4304475.ece.

[20] Ibid. See 'Comments.'

[21] This dichotomy — between film music and Karnatic Music — and the capacity to copyright the former and not the latter is very problematic. I discuss certain relevant aspects of this dichotomy, such as the classification of film and Karnatic Music as 'non-religious' and 'religious' music, respectively, as well as problems that arise in seeking to copyright Karnatic Music, etc., in the following chapters. However, I do not go into great detail in problematizing film music as a distinct category.

Karnatic Music being understood as 'religious' music, contemporary performing practices, experiences and perceptions problematize the move towards copyrighting and owning music compositions and performances.

Protecting indigenous knowledge (of arts and science) from commercial exploitation is an ongoing issue within Intellectual Property Rights circles and several works have argued that copyright laws protect indigenous knowledge from such exploitation.[22] However, Seeger, using the example of Suyá, a small horticultural society in Brazil, has argued that Euro-American copyright laws, whilst intended to protect musical works, are not applicable to all types of music. He, thus, argues that the international copyright law statutes "override [their] local concepts of music ownership, creativity, and ethics."[23] He also argued that such 'overriding' nature of the international copyright laws do not protect these indigenous communities, rather focuses primarily on popular music and recording labels.[24] Tan has written on similar issues pertaining to an Amis aboriginal song, which, a half a decade later, became a popular theme song for the advertisement for the 1996 Olympics without any initial monetary compensation or recognition for the original performers (in 1999, the case was settled out-of-court).[25] She has argued that the recording label, a big corporation, has influence and power whilst the indigenous communities lack

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[22] This question is specifically significant in relation to issues on copyrighting traditional knowledge in the case of aboriginal designs in Australia. See Kamal Puri, "Cultural Ownership and Intellectual Property Rights Post-Mabo: Putting Ideas into Action," *Intellectual Property Journal* 9 (1995): 293-347; Daniel J. Gervais, "Spiritual but not Intellectual? The Protection of Sacred Intangible Traditional Knowledge," *Cardozo Journal of International and Comparative Law* 11 (2003): 467-495. There are popular examples of cases such as protecting Australian aborigine traditional knowledge and on patents, the issue of an American pharmaceutical company patenting turmeric, a medicinal plant grown and used in India for centuries.

[23] Anthony Seeger, "Traditional Music Ownership in a Commodified World," in *Music and Copyright*, ed. Simon Firth and Lee Marshall, 2nd ed. (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2004), 160.

[24] Seeger, "Traditional Music Ownership in a Commodified World," 157-160.

[25] Shzr Ee Tan, *Beyond 'Innocence': Amis Aboriginal Song in Taiwan as an Ecosystem* (Surrey: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2012), 1-3.

representation to take on these corporations.[26] Thus, this thesis addresses the question: can Karnatic Music, shared traditional and indigenous knowledge, be owned by individuals as expressions of creativity through copyright law? But central to the issue of copyright law and Karnatic Music is another question: what do we mean by 'collective knowledge' and 'traditional communities'? Hence, let me lay out what this thesis looks at.

Albeit contemporarily understood as 'religious' music, Karnatic Music is a product of 20th century developments in the colonial city of Madras (now, Chennai) that was a culmination of nationalist activities coupled with politics of identities and morality in the public sphere that involved removing dance and art from traditional communities (such as *devadāsis*). The construction of the idea 'Karnatic Music' involved construction of the ideal of music and dance that encompassed the newly emerging notions on nationhood and Indian subject. Thus, Karnatic Music is not a standalone category, rather a collective construction of dance, music and colonial politics. In this thesis, I look at these historical developments in detail to answer the overarching question raised on p. 18, whether Karnatic Music, understood as a shared traditional knowledge, can be copyrighted?

It might be asked: why have I chosen music and its history to explore the transformation in understanding the colonial categories of religion/secular and the reconstitution of the divine within these historical developments? The Indian nation-building exercise involved juxtaposing indigenous society to that of the colonizers to assert the former as a culture capable of self-governing and superior to that of the colonizers. Also, they believed music and specific aesthetic preferences of the (representative) subjects of the nation articulated

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[26] Tan, *Beyond 'Innocence'*, 4.

the establishment of the superiority of their culture. To this end, a very specific understanding of what 'culture' meant, specifically what 'Indian culture' meant and what role arts play in it was constructed. This thesis builds on existing literature on Karnatic Music history and postcolonial literature to address the themes described above. However, this thesis adds to this existing literature in the following ways: as described so far, whilst there have been studies looking at the issue of copyright law and indigenous arts, studies have not looked at the issue of ownership laws pertaining specifically to Karnatic Music. In addition, whilst works[27] have deconstructed the category called Karnatic Music within the context of nationalist politics of the early 20th century, this thesis brings together history of music and dance to show how politics of identity and morality shaped the process of classicization of music and dance. Also, as Schofield shows, classicization and institutionalization of performance arts were developments that were not exclusive to the early 20th century nationalist movements.[28] However, I highlight a different kind of classicization and institutionalization, one that reified Karnatic Music as 'religious' music based on the religion/secular dichotomy. In other words, this thesis argues that the religion/secular dichotomy has played an important role that has influenced the historical and contemporary understandings of not only Karnatic Music but also ownership laws, thus highlighting ownership laws as a question of

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[27] See Lakshmi Subramanian, "The Reinvention of a Tradition: Carnatic Music and the Madras Music Academy 1900-1947," *The Indian Economic and Social History Review* 36, no. 2 (1999): 131-163; Lakshmi Subramanian, *From the Tanjore Court to the Madras Music Academy: A Social History of Music in South India* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006); Amanda Weidman, *Singing the Classical, Voicing The Modern: The Postcolonial Politics Of Music In South India* (North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2006); Matthew Harp Allen, "Tales Tunes Tell: Deepening the Dialogue between "Classical" and "Non-Classical" in the Music of India," *Yearbook for Traditional Music* 30 (1998).

[28] Pertaining to Hindustani music, see Katherine Butler Schofield, "Reviving the Golden Age Again: "Classicization," Hindustani Music, and the Mughals," *Ethnomusicology* 54, no. 3 (2010): 484-517.

economics, this thesis argues that such commodification of ownership laws is the result of religion/secular dichotomy. This thesis deconstructs this dichotomy historically and contemporarily as way of answering the question on copyrighting Karnatic Music.

This thesis is set chronologically beginning from the history of music patronage in the Vijayanagara Empire (14th–16th centuries) and the Tanjavur Kingdom (15th–19th centuries). Covering six centuries of history cannot be done with any measure of completeness, but I want to emphasize that my study looks at a specific aspect of the history of these kingdoms: patronage pertaining to performance arts. I then turn to the early 20th century developments surrounding nationalist movements that influenced the music (and dance) 'revival' movements in South India. Finally, I examine how mechanical reproduction has transformed the ideas based on which Karnatic Music was imagined by the Indian colonial elites; I also explore how these transformations have affected ownership laws on the artistic expression of musicians' creativity. The mechanical reproduction of music, that began with gramophone record companies in the early 20th century, significantly altered what was meant to be a communal 'religious' experience: live Karnatic Music performances and oral traditions shared through classroom learning that emphasized the bond between a teacher and the student. Thus, within this context, understandings of the 'divine' have been transformed, more so in the contemporary society through music sharing on the Internet. However, in addition to newer understandings of the divine, newer understandings of the 'secular' have also emerged through the adoption of laws that encourage individual ownership of creativity. Copyright laws and Karnatic Music are examples of ideological complexity amongst musicians who on the one hand want economic benefits but on the other hand are embedded in the traditions of music learning,

performance, and experience, an example of which is the composition in the film *Life of Pi* discussed earlier. This deeply problematizes the identity of Karnatic Music as a <u>shared</u> experience of the divine.

In order to unpack the research question raised above, it is important to look at historical and contemporary performances, learning practices and experiences of Karnatic Music.

1.1   *Music In Tamil Nadu*

Music in Tamil Nadu broadly refers to four different genres: Karnatic Music, Tamil film music, Tamil devotional music, and Tamil folk music. Classification of music based on genres and sub-genres has a Western classical connotation and is problematic to apply to Indian music traditions. Yet, historically and contemporarily, we see genre-based classifications of music in India, even within Karnatic Music, which arguably draws from a very different tradition. At this point in my discussion, I shall retain this classification as signifiers although it would be generally known to the readers that these are merely floating signifiers: particular characteristics of a genre (that defines the genre) and the compositions classified based on those characteristics are difficult to pin-down; there is a constant overlap between these genres. It certainly is so in the case of music in Tamil Nadu, as I shall soon show.

Of these genres listed above, film music has less complex origins with regard to the historical contexts within which it emerged that resulted in its classification as such. In 1931, Imperial Film in Bombay (now, Mumbai) produced the first Indian talkie *Alam Ara* in Hindi and *Bhakta Prahalada* in Telugu.[29] However, the developments leading up to the emergence of film

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[29] Stephen P. Hughes, "Music in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction: Drama, Gramophone, and the Beginnings of Tamil cinema," *The Journal of Asian Studies* 66, no. 1 (2007): 11.

industry were complex. How these developments contributed to the popularity of film music and how the other three genres (Karnatic, 'devotional' and folk) together represented different manifestations of the constructed dichotomy of 'religion' and 'secular' categories are discussed in the following sections.

1.1.1   Contemporary Understanding of the Category - Karnatic Music

The *yogic*[30] and *moksha* nature attributed to Karnatic Music stems from the discourses surrounding the art that express the notion that the origins of Karnatic Music can be "traced back to 2500 to 3000 years"[31] bequeathed to the musicians directly by the divine through *Sāma Vēda*.[32] This notion is commonly prevalent in discourses on Karnatic Music in essays, speeches and movies. For instance, movies such as *Thiruvilayādal* (The Divine Play, 1965), *Saraswati Sabhadham* (Saraswati's Oath, 1966) and *Agathiyar* (Sage Agathiyar, 1972) extensively portray this perceived divine connection that Karnatic Music possess and also, Karnatic Music as a tool to express one's devotion to the divine. For instance, whilst all of these movies are musicals (which is not altogether surprising, given that most Indian movies are musicals), when the divine appears in human form, (in different contexts such as imparting a moral

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[30] The *yogic* nature of Karnatic Music works in two ways: firstly, *Vēdanta* philosophies advocate different yogic traditions that would ultimately lead one to *moksha* and secondly, Karnatic Music is seen as derivative of such traditions. Furthermore, Karnatic Music itself is seen as a *yoga* given the physical effort that it takes to perform this type of music. Such deification of Karnatic Music has been dealt by scholars. For example, see Amanda Weidman "Gender and the Politics of Voice: Colonial Modernity and Classical Music in South India," *Cultural Anthropology* 18, no. 2 (2003): 194-232; Reginald Massey and Jamila Massey, *The Music of India* (Delhi: D.K. Fine Art Press Pvt. Ltd., 1993); Lewis Rowell, "Scale and Mode in the Music of the Early Tamils of South India Scale and Mode in the Music of the Early Tamils of South India," *Music Theory Spectrum* 22, no. 2 (2000): 135-156; Karaikudi S. Subramanian, "An Introduction to the Vina An Introduction to the Vina," *Asian Music* 16, no. 2 (1985): 7-82.

[31] Chitravina N. Ravikiran, "Bright Prospects for Karnatic Music," *The Hindu*, August 15, 2007, accessed July 30, 2013, www.hindu.com/af/india60/stories/2007081550772100.htm.

[32] *Sāma Vēda* is one of the four types of *Vēdas*, the others being, *Rig*, *Yejur*, and *Adharvana*. *Sāma Vēda* is specifically associated with Karnatic Music because of the musical rendition of the text, whilst the other three *Vēdas* are recited as prose.

lesson or blessing a devotee or rescuing a devotee from a complex situation, etc.) it is Karnatic Music that is used to communicate to the devotees, reifying the notion that Karnatic Music is a language of the divine. In this context, Karnatic Music is then seen as a 'divine language' between the devotee and the divine.[33] Perfecting the language is what is seen as being displayed in the performances. The *moksha* aspect then refers to the perfected language that the performers and the audiences use for dialectic communication that enables a communal goal of achieving liberation.

P. Sambamurthy, a famous early 20th century musicologist who wrote many important texts for learning Karnatic Music that are still used in institutions and by private tutors, wrote in one such text that music is a tool to worship and to 'know' the divine.[34] Furthermore, he wrote "music gives supreme happiness and satisfaction that material prosperity does not"[35] and that learning music enables one to develop discipline and good conduct.[36] This narrative regarding Karnatic Music is prevalent among contemporary musicians as well. Thus, because music encompasses *bhakti*, Karnatic Music is elevated to 'other worldly' status in which it transcends (and also solves) the travails of our society.[37] *Rāgas* are central to Karnatic Music. Row defines *rāgas* as "a set of musical materials that together form a unique modal identity that serves as the basis for composition and improvisation."[38] Neuman argues that *rāgas* do not have any

[33] However, it must be noted that the type of Karnatic Music used in the films generally tend to be orchestrated and not concert style except in those contexts where the film warrants a concert-styled performance.

[34] P. Sambamurthy, *A Practical Course in Karnatic Music: For Beginners and For Use in Schools*, 20th ed. (Madras: The Indian Music Publishing House, 2001), 3.

[35] Sambamurthy, *A Practical Course in Karnatic Music*, 2.

[36] Ibid., 3.

[37] "'Music Could Erase Religious Hatred, Casteism'."

[38] Peter Row, "The Device of Modulation in Hindustani Art Music," *Essays in Arts and Sciences* 6, no. 1 (1977): 104.

conceptual similarities in Western music.[39] *Rāgas* can be best described as melodic modes that comprise of set of notes. However, Row adds

> depending on the rāg the ascending pattern may employ either (a) stepwise motion, (b) combinations of steps and leaps, (c) oblique motion or (d) alternate possibilities such as primarily (b) but sometimes (c). The descending pattern will also employ one of the above but rarely simply the reverse of the ascending motion.[40]

According to Widdess, "Raga is a noun derived from the Sanskrit root *ranj*, 'to colour', especially 'to colour red', and hence 'to delight'. Red is the colour of passion, hence raga implies the emotional content of a song, by which the listener is delighted."[41] Certain *rāgas* are prescribed metaphysical values: for example, *amrithavarshini rāga* when performed rightly is believed to bring rain/storms, *āhiri* is believed to cause hunger or starvation, *nilāmbari* is believed to cause sleep (many traditional lullabies are, therefore, composed in this *rāga*), *varāli* is believed to ruin the *guru-sisya* (lit. teacher-student) relationship, etc. However, the emphasis is not only on the metaphysical characteristics of these *rāgas* but also on the factor that these need to be performed 'rightly,' i.e. with devotion. Neuman points to similar discourses in the Hindustani music tradition (of North India) by saying that when performed if a *rāga* did not have the intended effect (of bringing rain and such), "it was not because the [*rāga*] did not have the inherent power; there just were no longer any musicians who had the power to generate the kind of magical effect… "[42] Contemporary Karnatic musicians ensure these traditions and beliefs are adhered to whilst learning and/or performing music because to them, the meaning of Karnatic

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[39] Daniel M. Neuman, *The Life of Music in North India: The Organization of an Artistic Tradition* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1990), 23.

[40] Row, "The Device of Modulation in Hindustani Art Music," 107. Although he defines *rāga* in Hindustani music tradition, the general definition is appropriate for Karnatic Music as well.

[41] Richard Widdess, "Rāga," *London: Centre of South Asian Studies, SOAS*, 2006, http://eprints.soas.ac.uk/5431/

[42] Neuman, *The Life of Music in North India*, 66.

Music rests within these contexts.[43] In the following sections, I describe and discuss these contemporary learning, performing and experiencing practices of Karnatic Music.

It is important to note here that Karnatic Music was re-defined during specific historical developments that occurred in the colonial city of Madras (now Chennai) in Tamil Nadu in the early 20th century (discussed in Chapter 3) and therefore is geographically associated with Tamil Nadu. However, in general, the music is performed in all four South Indian states, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, and Kerala. Compositions consist of all four languages spoken in these states, Tamil, Telugu, Kannada and Malayalam, respectively. This point needs reiteration here because as discussed on p. 162ff below, the issue of language, or rather, what compositions in which language must be part of Karnatic Music concerts, was taken up during the music re-defining project by the colonial elites of Madras in the early 20th century.[44]

The perception, that Karnatic Music is 'religious,' is used to differentiate Karnatic Music from other forms of music based on the 'religious' and 'secular' dichotomy.

1.1.2   The 'Religious' Genres: Karnatic Music and Devotional Music

The contemporary understanding of Karnatic Music as divine and 'religious' music curiously distinguishes itself from the genre of music called 'devotional.' That is compositions, albeit on the divine, are classified into these two genres that are generally seen as distinct. I call this distinction curious because by

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[43] For instance, one of Tyāgarāja's (a 17th century composer and one of the Karnatic Music 'Trinity') pivotal compositions — one of the *pancharatnam kritis* and a must-learn for students — was composed in *varāli rāga*; my teacher refused to teach me. I, in turn, learned the composition from an audiocassette.

[44] See Chapter 3 below.

definition or classification, devotional music signifies devotion towards the divine; therefore, the distinction between the two seems almost pointless. Yet, this distinction — however ambiguous it might be — has a very particular understanding in this context: the normative understanding is that Karnatic Music encompasses devotion as a crucial (and only) emotion, but the genre devotional music itself is different from Karnatic Music in terms of what compositions constitutes those two classifications. Hence, whilst Karnatic Music consists of compositions called *kritis* by composers from the 17th century and thereafter, devotional music comprises of *bhajans*, which are short compositions that are seen as less technical than Karnatic Music in the way they are composed and performed on deities, and poems by saint-composers *ālvārs* and *nāyanmars*.[45] For instance, Weidman refers to *kritis* of the 17th century composers as devotional,[46] also adding " . . . this type of spiritual devotion came to be thought of . . . as the essence of music itself."[47] However, whilst discussing the rendition of a prolific Karnatic musician, Weidman says the musician always pays " . . . great attention to the pronunciation of lyrics . . . singing not only Karnatic compositions but also Hindi bhajans (devotional songs) and Sanskrit chants."[48] Thus, in the context of the 17th century composers, devotion refers to the *bhāvā* (lit. emotion) conveyed in their *kritis* whilst when Karnatic compositions are discussed in conjunction with other types of compositions,

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[45] There are 12 *ālvārs* (eleven male and one female) and 63 *nāyanmārs* according to the Vaishnavite and Saivite traditions, respectively. They are known as the Tamil saints because their biographies contain miracles and mysticism; in most of the biographies, either Vishnu or Shiva is said to have appeared before them, which changed the course of their lives and prompted them to enter the ascetic life and perform services to the deity to attain salvation. *Ālvārs* are composers of *nalayira divyaprabandam*, a collection of 4000 poems called Tamil *Vēdas*. *Nāyanmārs* are composers of *thēvārām*, *thurippugazh* and many such collections of poems.

[46] Weidman, "Gender and the Politics of Voice," 210.

[47] Ibid.

[48] Ibid., 207. My emphasis.

devotion refers to a separate genre and specific types of compositions that are generally seen as non-Karnatic music.

In addition, devotional music compositions are, in many instances, confined to temple settings whilst Karnatic Music is performed in temples, *sabhās* (lit. music halls) and other public spaces such as weddings, festivals, etc. For instance, it is more common to see poems of *ālvārs* and *nāyanmārs* in temples recited (as a group) during daily worships and festivals than at Karnatic Music concerts. Only recently were these poems included in Karnatic Music concerts (never as a center-piece, but performed only towards the end of a concert in a slot reserved for non-Karnatic compositions). This came about after much resistance from veteran musicians, who generally considered compositions by the 17th century composers to be the 'true' representation of Karnatic Music.[49] What this imagined distinction between the two genres shows is not only what the genres are defined as (there is not much distinction between the two) but also who imagined the definitions of both genres and the perceived distinction and to what end. As I discuss in this chapter and in Chapter 3, it becomes evident that the definition of Karnatic Music and the distinction made between the genres ensured the exclusivity of Karnatic Music within a group, more specifically, within a caste (read: Brahmins). Even within the context of devotional music and Karnatic Music, whilst Karnatic musicians tend to always be Brahmins or upper class Non-Brahmins, devotional songs within temple settings are performed by performers from different castes.[50] In other words, there is an implicit distinction made between Karnatic Music as 'high art' and

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[49] "Why Compose New Songs, Asks Semmangudi," *The Hindu*, December 02, 2002, accessed July 07, 2013, http://hindu.com/2002/12/02/stories/2002120203650500.htm.

[50] The set-up is quite complicated: within temple settings, it is common for people from different castes to perform at Saivite (worshippers of Siva) temples, whilst Vaishnavite temples performers tend to be mostly Brahmins.

devotional music as 'lower art.'[51] More specifically, this distinction is drawn on Karnatic Music being 'religious' music whilst devotional music, albeit being on deities, being 'religious' but not the kind that represents the classical, high culture, in other words, those of Brahmins and upper class Non-Brahmins— Karnatic Music. This is a complicated argument to make, not least because it accuses a particular caste of discrimination against others with regard to access to performance arts. However, as I discuss below, early 20th century music developments ensured that Karnatic Music remained within a particular group whose aesthetic preferences were deemed as 'superior.'

If we were to discuss Karnatic Music as 'religious' music, it is important to briefly look at those genres classified as 'non-religious' because they are 'non-Karnatic.'

1.1.2.1 The 'secular' genres: folk music and film music

The regional film industries emerged in the third decade of the 20th century, at the height of nationalist activities in colonial India.[52] Film music refers generally to songs that are part of the narrative of the films. In this context, the background score for a film is deemed less significant than the actual songs. As discussed on p. 15 above, film music composition involves several artistes ranging from the composer/music director to singers/performers/playback singers. As a genre, film music is distinct from Karnatic Music, as demonstrated by the significant presence of 'Western' instruments such as guitar, keyboard,

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[51] I call this 'lower art' because there are other types of music such as 'secular' film music that are considered 'low art'- lower than devotional music, which I discuss in the section below.

[52] The emergence of gramophone record companies in the early 20th century contributed much towards the popularity of the talkies. The new medium helped in nationalist activities. See Hughes, "Music in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," 3.

etc in addition to use of diverse genres such as jazz, blues, hip-hop, etc. in such compositions. Such use of diverse genres is called fusion or medley music.

Film music is generally understood as 'secular' music[53] due to the perceived absence of religiosity <u>in comparison</u> to Karnatic Music.[54] As popular music, film music is seen as reaching wider audiences because it is not seen as 'religious' music and is less technical (in terms of performance) when compared to that of Karnatic Music. However, the classification of film music as 'secular' is problematic because whilst typical films would be of various genres, such as romance or action etc., films on Hindu deities would typically contain songs (compositions) composed tunes that are used in Karnatic Music. Yet, these songs are classified as film music and not Karnatic Music because of the medium in which these songs are performed and recorded. More importantly, Karnatic Music is seen as an origin for all types of music performed in South India; thus, it is common for musicians to argue that film music emerged from Karnatic Music, which is generally seen as evidenced by the number of Karnatic musicians who also record film music, and the influence of Karnatic Music *rāgas* in film songs.[55] Yet the Karnatic Music community tends to view film music as a 'child gone astray,' due to a perceived lack of religiosity in compositions, an emphasis on *shringāra* (lit. eroticism),[56] etc.

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[53] There are several regional film industries in India, the most popular being Bollywood, referring to the Hindi film industry. The second largest (on the basis of number of films produced and revenue generated) is the Tamil film industry known as Kollywood.

[54] This emphasis on <u>in comparison</u> has a historical significance. See Chapter 3, p. 149ff.

[55] Anna Morcom points to a certain bias towards old film songs by music critics due to the significant presence of Karnatic Music *rāgas* in the songs when compared to contemporary film songs. However, throughout the decades, composers such as M.S. Viswanathan, Ilayaraja and more recently, A.R. Rahman have continuously used *rāgas* in Tamil film songs even though they typically fuse them with Western music. See Morcom, *Hindi Film Songs and the Cinema*, 5.

[56] I develop this issue — the perception of eroticism as profane — to a much greater extent in Chapter 4.

The other genre of music that is commonly understood as 'non-religious' music is folk music. Folk music is generally defined as songs about the day-to-day lives of the people, mostly in rural areas.[57] It does not contain any specific divine aspect to the compositions (which are in Tamil) and is therefore understood as 'secular.' However, folk music, much like devotional music and film music, works on very ambiguous definitions. For instance, folk music as a genre also encompasses (amongst many others) a sub-genre called *kuravanji* (*kurava-* lit. name of a tribe in hilly parts of the Tamil Country; *vanji-* lit. a woman from the tribe). Compositions in this sub-genre are called *kuratthippāttu* (lit. gypsy woman's song) that includes those on the Tamil deity Karthikeya and his lover Valli, a gypsy woman.[58] This particular category problematizes the definition of folk music as 'non-religious' music because if both 'devotional' and Karnatic Music genres are categorized as such because there is an element of the divine involved in the compositions, then *kuravanji* must also be classified as 'religious' music, especially since *kuravanji* compositions are now a part of *kucchēris* (lit. Karnatic Music concerts).[59] In certain contexts, again much like devotional music, what seems to pin down the definition of folk music is its definition as not-being-Karnatic Music or 'light music.' Folk music is mostly associated with rural areas where performers are seen to belong to the lower-

[57] It must be noted here that Tamil folk music has a long tradition that is identified with the Tamil classical period, even before 1 C.E. Certainly, this historical context was (and is) raised as an issue when Karnatic Music was (and is) said to have *Vēdic* origins.

[58] *Kuravanji* is a very prolific sub-genre with compositions themselves constituting several sub-genres such as satire, rural-life, and in this example, love-poems between Karthikeya and Valli. Most of these are songs about love-in-separation that Valli sings to her girlfriends or a female messenger sings to her. However, this genre has been the premise for dance recitals in early 20th century Madras and has been an important aspect of folk studies on Tamil Nadu. See Edwina Ranganathan, "*Kuravanji Nattiya Nadagam*: A Dance Drama from Madras State," *Comparative Drama* 4, no. 2 (1970): 110-119; Chitra Sankaran, "The Gypsy Girl of Kuttralam: A Feminist Archetype in Tamil Literature," *Journal of South Asian Literature* 31/32, 1/2 (1996/1997): 94-105. Early Tamil cinema was influenced by various dimensions of this genre in movies such as *Kuravanji* (1960).

[59] Here again, *kuravanji* are included in the concluding parts of a *kucchēri* as 'light' compositions, meaning they are less technical than Karnatic Music.

castes in the hierarchy, whilst Karnatic Music is almost always performed by Brahmins and upper class Non-Brahmins. As Blackburn argues when talking about *villupāttu* (another category within folk music tradition that involves a group of singers with various instruments while the main singer taps the string of a bow for rhythm whilst singing and narrating stories; *villu*-lit. bow, *pāttu*-lit. song), "the performers come from the low and middle-level castes in the area (Natar, Tevar, Konar) and from low-status segments of higher castes (Pillai)."[60] In addition, it is worth noting that some *rāgas* in Karnatic Music have their origins in Tamil folk music tradition.[61]

These classifications point to a larger question on class and caste identity being defined by the aesthetic preferences of these communities, a theme I will discuss in more detail in this thesis. But these definitions arose out of specific historical developments in the early 20th century that involved a music re-defining project during which what were identified as non-Karnatic Music genres were positioned as 'non-religious,' less-technical and therefore, 'light music.' The early 20th century music re-defining project was taken up to re-define aesthetic preferences that would best represent the indigenous culture as superior and 'purer' in the wake of increased nationalistic activities against the colonizers (discussed below). I deliberately do not discuss these types of music any further here because firstly, the thesis deals with Karnatic Music and to discuss film and folk music would be beyond the scope of this study; and

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[60] Stuart Blackburn, "Oral Performance: Narrative and Ritual in a Tamil Tradition," *The Journal of American Folklore* 94, no. 372 (1981): 210.

[61] A Karnatic Music scholar, Mr. Balasubramaniam, argued that, music described in Tamil literature to have been practiced in Tamil Nadu during the Sangam Period (between 3rd B.C.E. and 3rd C.E.) has had more influence on Karnatic Music, with regard to *rāga* (tunes) and *tālā* (cyclical rhythm) structures, compositions, and *rasās* (expression of moods). Discussions through e-mails in April 2011. Widdess, "Rāga," *London: Centre of South Asian Studies, SOAS*, 2006, http://eprints.soas.ac.uk/5431/

secondly, classification of music types based on religious/secular dichotomy is an issue discussed in this chapter on p. 51ff below and in Chapter 3.

1.1.3 *Kucchēri* — An Aesthetic, Communal Experience

Since 1928, the Karnatic Music community has been celebrating its association with the art through music festivals organized during what is called the 'Madras Music Season' that runs from December to January every year in Madras/Chennai during which the music associations or *sabhās* organize daily *kucchēris*. The most prestigious of these *sabhās* is the Madras Music Academy, which was founded in 1928 as a part of the music-'revival' project.[62] A very festive part of the year, the Madras Music Season comprises musicians from around the world performing at various *sabhās*.[63] These *kucchēris* include instrumental music, vocal music and sometimes, Bharatnatyam — Indian classical dance — performances. In the past decade, these concerts have been televised in that in addition to the *sabhās*, television channels have begun organizing their own concert series during the season, televised to benefit those for whom these concerts are inaccessible. In addition, Karnatic Music concerts are organized throughout the year during various occasions such as temple festivals, weddings, and as concerts during the off-music season.

A *kucchēri* is generally seen as a shared aesthetic experience. For many, it is a form of communal worship because the performance consists of compositions on deities and therefore, an expression of *bhakti rasā*[64] (*bhakti*- lit. devotion to the

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[62] See Chapter 3, p. 126ff.

[63] High-profile musicians perform in the evening time-slots to make the concerts available to the wider public [a similar idea to prime-time television slots], whilst morning slots are taken up by amateur musicians/dancers and lecture/demonstration sessions on music theory and pedagogy.

[64] There are nine *rasā* classified under 'aesthetics' according to *Nātyasāstra* (lit. laws of dance), a text on music and dance theory believed to have written by Sage Bharata before 2nd century.

divine and *rasā*-lit. juice or essence; in this context, it refers to emotions).[65] This expression of a *rasā* is called *bhāvā*.[66] Because Karnatic Music is understood as 'religious' music, in this context *bhāvā* normatively refers only to *bhakti*. For instance, when questioned about *bhāvā* in his performances, veteran musician M. Balamuralikrishna said, "Every *rāga* has a shape and if you can imagine the shape . . . bhava flows. You are the same person changing dresses everyday. Music is like that in relation to ragas."[67] Higgins, whilst describing the historical shift in patronage, argues that "a court musician is responsible to God"[68] and that music is an expression of an intense devotion of the musician to the divine.[69] Such deification of music and <u>therefore</u> the musician is very common in works on Karnatic Music.[70] It is often common to hear critics and *rasikās* (lit. connoisseurs) talk about 'right devotion,' or musicians performing *mei marandhu* (lit. transcending one's body to reveal one's soul) or *atmārtham* (lit. revealing the soul's commitment or meaning, in this context, to the divine) to refer to Karnatic Music concerts. For instance, concerts of prominent singers are seen as embodying the divine and devotion towards the divine. What do they mean by these terms?

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[65] However, it common in recent *kucchēri* to include compositions expressing not exclusively *bhakti rasā* but also *shringāra* (lit. love — although, this is severely restricted or re-interpreted to mean 'divine love' — I discuss this particular aspect of Karnatic Music in relation to understandings of colonial morality in public spaces and performance spaces in Chapter 4), *veera* (lit. valor), etc.

[66] The root for the word *bhāvā* comes from *bhava*, which means 'to become' or 'to exist'; therefore, for instance, *anubhavam* means experience. Thus, *bhāvā* refers to the existing, 'internal' feeling of devotion through music, in this context. In the context of Bharatnatyam, the Indian Classical Dance, it refers to body language and gestures.

[67] Usha Akella, "'Carnatic Music is the Base For World Music'," *The Hindu*, October 27, 2011, accessed July 07, 2013, http://www.thehindu.com/arts/music/article2573775.ece.

[68] Jon Higgins, "From Prince to Populace: Patronage as a Determinant of Change in South Indian (Karnatak) Music," *Asian Music* 7, no. 2 (1979): 21.

[69] Higgins, "From Prince to Populace," 21.

[70] For example, see Chandra S Balachandran and Surinder M Bharwaj, "Geography as Melody in Muttusvami Dikshita's Indian Musical Works," *Geographical Review* 91, no. 4 (2001): 690-701; Barbara Benary, "Composers and Tradition in Karnatic Music," *Asian Music* 3, no. 2 (1972): 42-51; Vijaya Moorthy, *Romance of the Raga* (New Delhi: Abhinav Publications, 2001).

This notion, that 'music emanating from the soul is true music' relates to an idea that the divine lies within an individual and 'true devotion' comes from the soul. This notion is further reiterated in the idea that the 'body' is temporary and the 'soul' is permanent. Musicians are seen, therefore, as a medium between the audiences and the divine during these performances. This is certainly true when *kucchēri* are performed by prolific musicians such as M.S. Subbulakshmi (hereon, M.S)[71] or D.K. Pattammal. For example, an article on M.S written for her 83rd birthday said "she can induce in them a paravasam (ecstasy) because she is herself in such a state [of *bhakti*]. She has sung bhajans in ten languages, each one of them an example of the highest standards of purity of diction and emotional content."[72] Here, the terms *paravasam* and emotional content (the purity of, as the author writes) is used to refer to a 'spiritual' or 'devotional' ecstatic state. Articles such as these are fairly common on M.S. or other such prolific singers. For instance, Balamuralikrishna was described as "resonat[ing] with something beyond the familiar plane of consciousness."[73] Popular and revered musicians are seen as embodying the devotion and therefore the divine, by belonging to a realm that is 'other-worldly' and 'supernatural;' this they could do, through Karnatic Music <u>and</u> through devotion to Karnatic Music. Thus, *bhakti* expressed through Karnatic Music is understood as an emotion that is innermost in that it is 'pure' and 'sacred.' *Kucchēri* is seen as a space for experiencing that emotion. Music is thus deified but also mystified. The larger emphasis is on the shared spiritual experience of both audiences and the musicians, and the musicians' ability to

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[71] M.S.'s life and career is a curiously complicated one that will be discussed in detail in Chapter 4. M.S. rose to fame and became a legendary Karnatic musician.

[72] C. V. Narasimhan, "The Song Supreme," *The Frontline* 16, no. 19 (1999) available at http://www.frontline.in/static/html/fl1619/16190970.htm.

[73] Akella, "'Carnatic Music is the Base for World Music'."

deliver it. Hence, musicians are seen as embodying not only the music they perform but also the *rasā* they express.

Two different schools exist in relation to Karnatic Music performances: one that emphasizes the *rāga* as a medium of expression of *rasā*. According to this school, *rāga* is only as meaningful as the *sāhitya* (lit. text of the composition) to which it is set; thus, while *rāga* represents moods, *sāhitya* expresses the yearning of a devotee to see the divine and free him/her from the material world. The second school emphasizes on the *sāhitya* and the meaning of the *sāhitya* to express one's *rasā*. A typical *kucchēri* would consist of several compositions (mostly of 17th century composers). Weidman describes typical format of a *kucchēri* as:

> In a two-hour concert . . . the first hour would be given over to kritis of fair to middling weight [significance] and difficulty. The centrepiece of the concert would be the "main item": either a much-shortened pallavi or a lengthy kriti with improvisation [both of which I discuss next]. Following the main item would be "lighter" pieces, called *thukkada* (a Marathi word meaning "miscellaneous"), to send the audiences off on a cheerful note.[74]

Albeit discussing about the Hindustani music tradition, Neuman points to understanding of improvisations similar to that of Karnatic Music. He argues,

> improvisations themselves are usually made up of previously worked-out phrases, musical elements put together in unique ways for each performance. The intricacy if the structure of these musical elements and the ingenuity of the architectural assembly establish the degree of creativity and inspiration in a performance.[75]

The session that allows for such exhibition of musicians' creativity through improvisations is called *manōdharmasangeetham* (lit. music of a mind's rule or conduct).[76] The session is very complex in that it requires advanced skills from

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[74] Amanda Weidman, *Singing the Classical, Voicing the Modern: The Postcolonial Politics of Music in South India* (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2006), 98.

[75] Neuman, *The Life of Music in North India*, 23.

[76] *Manodharmasangeetham* is a compulsory session at *kucchēri* performed by professional musicians. Some sabhas such as Madras Music Academy or Karthik Fine Arts have made these

the musicians. The session broadly contains four sub-sessions: *ālapana* (lit. elaborate singing) is "a genre of melodic improvisation which normally occurs at the beginning of a performance of a particular *rāga* [that contains seven notes]."[77] The second session (that goes along with *ālapana*) is *tānam* (lit. elaboration of notes), which is the rhythmic improvisation of a *rāga*, whilst *ālapana* is non-rhythmic. The third creative session is called *kalpanaswaram* (lit. notes of imagination) in which containing permutations/combinations of the seven notes of a *rāga*. The fourth session is called *sāhityavinyāsa* (lit. spreading of text), which consists of the elaboration and improvisation of a line from a composition within the constraints (of seven notes) of a *rāga*. *Manōdharmasangeetham* is considered to be a coming-of-age session for amateur musicians. There is certain rigidity within these creative sessions and within Karnatic Music performances as well: rigidity in terms of how a *kucchēri* is conducted, how a musician performs, what they perform and how they perform any particular composition. However, much of *manōdharmasangeetham* rests on a crucial feature of the performer: spontaneity. Creativity exhibited on stage must be spontaneous. Here, spontaneity is synonymous with divine inspiration. Spontaneity comes from rigorous practice (not <u>rehearsals</u>), extensive knowledge of *rāgas* but more importantly, *bhakti* and the resulting divine inspiration.

The stagecraft is seen as equally important in *kucchēri*, almost to the point of appearing kitsch. The performers always wear what are considered traditional Indian clothes: for women it is *sari* and for men, it is *veshti* and *kurta* or a shirt.

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sessions mandatory — that is, in order to perform in these sabhas, one must be prepared to perform this session.

[77] Matthew Harp Allen, "Tales Tunes Tell: Deepening the Dialogue Between "Classical" and "Non-classical" in the Music of India," *Yearbook for Traditional Music* 30 (1998): 45.

Any other clothes worn during the *kucchēri* are seen as non-traditional and therefore, disrespectful towards the music and the divine. Underpinning such rigidity are the early 20th century historical developments that insisted on defining Karnatic Music to signify particular ways of performance and what such performances would consist of, in other words, a way of re-defining the aesthetic preferences of the musicians and the audiences.

A Karnatic musician is measured on their ability to adhere to these rules of performance and also be creative, and express devotion while remaining close to the teaching lineage they come from. Thus, the *kucchēri* might be an exhibition of the musicians' skills but they carry the burden of their positionality with them that has arisen within certain contexts whilst performing. What is interesting about a *kucchēri* experience is that because it is a collective shared experience, the audiences are generally aware of the music performed and the musicians' positionality. This happens because Karnatic Music remains within a specific community (that is, mostly Brahmin and upper-class Non-Brahmin) due to the caste-based ownership of music and the developments in the early 20th century that I discuss below. Most members of the audiences have prior knowledge of the *rāga* and compositions performed at the *kucchēris* and therefore, for instance, during the *manōdharmasangeetham* session, most audiences-members can spot even a subtle error in the performances. Thus, *kucchēri* is a communal experience, but it is <u>also</u> a dialectic experience; the audience members actively participate as connoisseurs and critics.

1.1.4   Learning Karnatic Music: Deified *Guru*

If musicians embody the divine and the devotion to the divine, as teachers, musicians are equally deified. The following mantra illustrates that:

Guru Bramha Guru Vishnu Guru Devo Maheshwarah
Guru Sakshat Para Bramha Thasmai Sree Gurave Namah[78]

Whilst a musician's skills exhibited during *manodharmasangeetham* is a measure of their devotion, *guruparamparā* (lit. lineage of a *guru*) is pivotal in the audiences perception of such skills. To the audiences, a new musician's authenticity of 'devotion' depends largely on the teacher who trained the performer. Thus, since musicians such as M.S and D.K. Pattammal are synonymous, along with their superior rendition, with their devotion in their performances, their students are revered for having learned not only music from them but also their *gurus*' devotion. Also, it is a fairly common practice for *sisyas* to accompany their *gurus* on stage during performances. This, in a way, introduces the next generation of musicians in the *guruparampara*[79] to the Karnatic Music community thereby driving acceptance and acknowledgment of their commitment to music and the *guru's bāni* (lit. music style), which is also a signifier of the *guru's* devotion.[80] Neuman discusses similar deification of *gurus* and the importance of *guruparampara* in Hindustani music tradition; it is telling that he discusses these practices in a chapter called 'Becoming a Musician' signifying the importance of *guru* and their lineage at a fundamental level for a learner to <u>become</u> a musician and recognized for the same.[81]

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[78] '*Guru* is Bramha (the creator); *Guru* is Vishnu (the protector); *Guru* is Shiva (the destroyer); *Guru* is the absolute; I salute such a *Guru*.' My translation.

[79] On the importance of *guruparampara* in the Hindustani Music tradition, see, Regula Burckhardt Qureshi, "Mode of Production and Musical Production: Is Hindustani Music Feudal?" in *Music and Marx: Ideas, Practice, Politics*, ed. Regula Burckhardt Qureshi (London: Routledge, 2002), 94.

[80] A well-known example is Ms. Sudha Raghunathan who always accompanied her *guru*, the prolific singer Ms. M. L. Vasanthakumari (popularly known as M.L.V.). By the time Ms. Raghunathan gave independent performances, she was already known and accepted by the Karnatic Music community, mainly because of her presence during her *guru's* performances.

[81] Neuman, *The Life of Music in North India*, 43-60.

However, not all *gurus* are established musicians; for performers from lesser-known lineages, much rests on their acceptance by audiences. The audiences, on their side, trust established music *sabhās* such as the Madras Music Academy, Karthik Fine Arts, Naradha Gana Sabha, etc. to ensure adherence to the tradition by inviting the 'right' musicians (to mean, one with 'right devotion') to perform.[82] Thus, there is much emphasis on the perception of the audiences (within the Karnatic Music community) for acknowledging the 'legitimacy' of a performance and the performer's *bhakti*. Thus, in this set-up, learning, performing and experiencing music is a symbiotic relationship between the musician, the audiences and the *sabhā*. The audiences depend on the *sabhā* to uphold the Karnatic Music traditions by choosing the right musicians for performances, whilst the musicians depend on the *sabhās* for the opportunity to perform, and the audiences for their acceptance and participation in the communal spiritual experience. For this to work and thereby signify upholding the traditions, the *sabhā* depends on the audiences' approval of the musicians. However, as discussed in the previous section, this is a dialectical experience in which the audiences actively participate. Thus, the role of the audiences is not limited to experiencing music, but they also act as connoisseurs, ensuring Karnatic Music stays true to its tradition.

What is notable in contemporary understandings of Karnatic Music is a specific and exclusive way the art is performed, learned and experienced. That a particular genre of music is enjoyed by a specific community, (or that this genre has boundaries within which music is performed) is not exclusive to Karnatic Music – this occurs in many other contexts. However, what is

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[82] To reiterate the point, this is not to mean that only students of prolific performers make it to the top. Many musicians, including from North India such as Aruna Sairam, have made a mark in Karnatic Music but much depends on the evaluation of their devotion by the connoisseurs and critics.

exclusive with regard to the position of Karnatic Music in the 20ᵗʰ century is the association of 'religion' or 'religious' with music in all these settings, that then also deifies the music, the space where it is being performed and the context. What I have called rigidity in relation to parameters within which Karnatic Music is learned, performed and experienced was something that was deliberately imagined and reified in the early 20ᵗʰ century, during the nationalist movements in South India. Thus, whilst Karnatic Music is understood as a collective spiritual experience and a shared traditional knowledge, Karnatic Music itself is a category that acts as an ideological operator; more importantly, Karnatic Music functions with another ideological operator as its basis: the category 'religion' or more specifically, the religion/secular dichotomy. Lacan calls these 'quilting points,'[83] Karnatic Music and the religion/secular dichotomy are those nodal points around which discourses on nationalism, gender and sexuality, an individual's artistic ownership of creativity, etc. have operated and have influenced contemporary understandings of Karnatic Music. For example, often Karnatic Music is juxtaposed to Tamil film music to indicate the 'superior' aesthetic preference of the former and lack thereof of the latter. This allusion to 'elitism'[84] of a certain caste or community based on their aesthetic preferences is a central function of Karnatic Music as an ideological operator. However, such a construction emerged within very specific historical developments: the early 20ᵗʰ century nationalist movements in India and specifically Tamil Nadu, a South Indian state.

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[83] Jacques Lacan, *The Psychoses* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1997), 267.

[84] I use the term here purely in the sense of aesthetic preference.

Historically, courts and temples patronized music and dance performers, transcending our modern distinction between 'religious' and 'secular.' However, the early 20th century Indian nationalist movements and the discourses that emerged around these movements produced newer and re-defined understandings of several categories such as questions on nationalism, national identity and the nation itself. This politics of identity set off various 'culture defining' projects which nationalists used in an attempt to answer these questions.

One such project was to re-define the performance arts in South India as 'religious,' specifically 'Hindu,' within the context of politics of identity and nationalism, by appropriating colonial categories such as 'religion,' 'secular' and 'Hinduism.' Whilst court patronage previously did not deliberately distinguish between 'religious' and 'secular' music, Indian nationalists appropriated imagined colonial distinctions between these categories to intertwine music with the category 'religion' and re-define music as Karnatic Music. Thus, the category 'religion,' specifically the religion/secular dichotomy, acted as an ideological operator behind the re-definition of Karnatic Music. In addition, whilst defining Karnatic Music not all music genres were included in this project; a very precise selection process ensued in order to weed out those genres that were deemed 'unsuitable' to be included in this newly defined Karnatic Music (for various reasons that I explore in this thesis), because it was a project of music 'revival' in which the art itself had to be 'rescued' from the practices that were demeaning it, restoring its 'original' sacredness. In doing so, music was re-defined as Karnatic Music to be learned and performed as 'religious' music, and a form of prayer deemed as being 'divinely inspired.' More importantly, such a definition ensured Karnatic Music remained within a specific hegemonic group in which the performance and the experience of

music were also gendered. Such gendering of Karnatic Music, again, emerged within the larger project of nation building in which masculinity and feminity were re-defined.

1.2   From Music to 'Karnatic Music'

Although music and dance were extensively patronized by various kingdoms in the Tamil country,[85] by the late 19th century and the early 20th century, court patronage to music and dance were abolished by the colonial government, which forced the musicians to move to Madras where a new urban city was developing due to increased colonial trade and commerce. The rapidly developing urban Madras also saw a growth in Indian elites consisting of Brahmins and upper-class Non-Brahmins, who had received colonial education and worked in the government, increasingly involved in nationalist activities. With the influx of musicians from rural Tamil Nadu to Madras, in addition to the "cultural articulation of [the] colonial situation"[86] in the city, the Madras intelligentsia took up a task that came to be understood as the "re-definition of a classical tradition"[87] by re-constructing Karnatic Music as a cultural identity — an identity to signify a culture rich in history and heritage at par, and in many cases superior, to their European counterparts. Added to this was the popularity of *kathākālakshepam*, a musical performance that involved partly the recital of stories on deities set to music and partly the narration of these stories. Subramanian argues that

> these developments had fostered a genuine listening habit among an urban audiences that responded to music and dance not as a ritual experience, but as a kind of hybrid

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[85] See Chapter 2.

[86] Subramaniam, *From the Tanjore Court to the Madras Music Academy*, 46.

[87] Ibid.

personal experience, that helped to negotiate new professional life detached from the older moral economy.[88]

Such a re-construction was seen as a necessity at the juncture of increased nationalistic activities. Elites of Madras consisting of businessmen and educated Brahmins together set up a system of patronage through *sabhās*. However, a significant aspect of nationalist activities and the music 'revival' project was to unite the people of India and forge a <u>single</u>, unified cultural identity. Thus, they appropriated the idea of a unified religion called 'Hinduism', a colonial construct, as discussed in Chapter 3. In fact, theosophists such as Margaret Cousins promoted the greatness of 'Hinduism.'[89] Thus,

> a heightened self-reflection mediated through music and religious performances combined with the theosophist reading of the Hindu past and the special place accorded therein to the Brahmin caste fuelled an enormous enthusiasm for Hindu culture . . . translated later into Indianness.[90]

Karnatic Music was, thus, defined as 'religious' music, specifically, 'Hindu' music by making deliberate connections to ancient sacred texts such as the *Vēdas* and the *Upanishads*, to make a case for a divine and mystified origin. Institutionalizing Karnatic Music was a very important part of reifying the art as a cultural identity for the colonial Madras intelligentsia. The project involved the establishment of associations such as Gayan Samaj during the late 19th century for music lovers with 'superior taste,'[91] an aesthetic preference that they would contrive. Orientalists' writings contributed to the idea of such 'pure music' and 'superior taste.' These writings expressed a general idea that South

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[88] Ibid., 47.

[89] Ibid.

[90] Ibid., 48.

[91] Ibid., 55.

India was untouched by Islamic influences[92] and <u>therefore</u> retained the 'purity' of the culture of India. The general consensus among the middle-class elites of Madras was that current music traditions and quality were declining and in order to revamp the system, institutionalized music learning and performance (patronage) had to be established. To take this forward, All India Music conferences were conducted in the early 20ᵗʰ century; in 1926, the University of Madras established an intermediate course for music and in 1927, after the Madras session of the Indian National Congress, the Madras Music Academy was created.

A major aspect of revamping music involved rewriting the identity of music by rewriting the history of music. This involved transforming audiences from listeners to *rasikās* (lit. connoisseurs), a term that is used even today to refer to the audiences of Karnatic Music concerts. Karnatic Music was established as 'religious' and specifically 'Hindu' music thereby classifying other genres as 'non-religious' and 'secular.' Particular strands of history were deliberately chosen by the colonial elites of Madras to structure a narrative of history of Karnatic Music. The argument was made that Karnatic Music had always existed and had always been 'religious' music, but had lost its divinity due to practices such as the *devadāsi* tradition, which was deemed 'immoral' and 'debauched' (as discussed in detail in Chapter 4). However, more importantly, aesthetic preferences were re-defined by eliminating these aspects of music

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[92] While the Persian empires (such as the Delhi Sultanate) ruled most of North India until the British invasion, their reign did not spread to all of South India, especially to Tamil Nadu. Tamil Country was at that time divided into princely states ruled by chieftains under the Vijayanagara Empire or the Tanjore Kingdom. After the fall of these two monarchies, these smaller chieftains either became semi-autonomous or were under the rule of the British or the French. For instance, the only princely state to have been an Islamic state was Arcot in Tamil Nadu; they came to power with the support of the Mysore Kingdom (Haider Ali and later, Tippu Sultan), which was under the support of the French (in rivalry to the British who were supporting rest of the surrounding smaller kingdoms in Tamil Country). In reality, Vijayanagar court was known to have invited Muslim musicians and some Karnatic Music *rāga* (tunes) were influenced by Islamic music.

(and dance) performances. Every aspect of music performance, experience and learning, moving forward, was meticulously chosen to reflect what they deemed 'superior' aesthetic preferences of a specific group involved in the project. What this essentially did, as Bourdieu argues, was turn the signifying condition of a social class to a classifying practice, thereby making it a "particular class condition of existence."[93] Thus, those groups who did not conform to such newly defined aesthetic preferences were marginalized as in the case of *devadāsis*. Efforts were taken to abolish the *devadāsi* tradition in the early 20th century, which finally succeeded in 1947. What this did was to re-define gender identities as a part of the larger project of defining a national identity.

1.3   *Re-defining Morality and Re-situating Gender Identities*

Transforming narratives on the aesthetic preferences and artistic tastes led to the simultaneous 'revival' of music and dance after which music was re-defined as Karnatic Music and dance as Bharatnatyam. This thesis specifically discusses Karnatic Music and the historical developments surrounding this performance art. Whilst I do not neglect related dance history, the primary focus here is Karnatic Music, and dance history is discussed only insofar as it relates to the development of Karnatic Music. This includes, for example, discussion of the *devadāsi* tradition, which played a significant role in both music and dance history; I also show how the *devadāsi* tradition impacted contemporary understandings on gender identities and questions of morality.

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[93] Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinctions: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste*, trans. R. Nice (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1984), 175.

Devadāsis were traditional communities who were exponents in music and dance; they were patronized by courts, temples and private patrons.[94] Although there were musicians attached to the royal courts, *devadāsis* were trained in both music and dance, and they constituted a main group of performers in various settings within the Indian medieval kingdoms. This group consisted of *nattuvanars* who were male performers who conducted and composed dance performances, which were in turn performed by *devadāsis*. Soneji argues that popular understanding of *devadāsis* collapses regional and caste variations of similar traditions, which is a result of colonial understandings and writings as such.[95] He adds that *devadāsis* whilst belonging to the upper or middle in the caste hierarchy, *jogitis* are Dalit women who go through dedication ceremonies and are often misrepresented as "the last *devadāsis*."[96]

The early 20th century music 'revival' project was also a simultaneous dance 'revival' project. Both followed a similar process. Music re-definition was about strengthening the 'inner' sphere of spirituality that would eventually spread to the 'outer' sphere of politics not only to take over the outer sphere but also to remain as the representative of Indian culture and the nation-state. Thus, music as a representative and exhibit of this culture had to be purified and strengthened to represent 'Hinduism,' and doing so involved colonial narratives on 'inner'/'outer' spheres, 'religion'/'secular' spheres and 'Hinduism' as discussed on p. 51ff in this chapter and in Chapter 3. However, the re-definition of dance was more complex because whilst the methodology

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[94] See Chapters 2 and 4 for more on patronage to music and dance, specifically to *devadāsis*, in the late medieval kingdoms of Vijayanagara and Tanjavur.

[95] Davesh Soneji, *Unfinished Gestures: Devadasis, Memory and Modernity in South India* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012), 6.

[96] Soneji, *Unfinished Gestures*, 7-9. Morcom, whilst writing on North Indian hereditary dancing girls, argues that they come from nomadic tribes and communities and therefore, are not part of the caste-hierarchy. See, Anna Morcom, *Illicit Worlds of Indian Dance: Cultures of Exclusion* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013). Forthcoming.

was the same, that is to say, it was about defining what Indian dance would constitute, the re-defining of music and dance removed them from their traditional communities of *devadāsis* and situated them within the newly emergent middle-class Brahmin community. This impacted particularly upon women, who were re-imagined as guardians of the private, the 'spiritual' sphere within the newly emerging nationalist patriarchy.[97] However, such gendering of performance arts was a result of transforming perceptions of morality according to which monogamy and sexuality expressed within marriages took precedence. *Devadāsi* communities were seen as 'immoral' because their traditions did not conform to the newly defined monogamous conjugal morality: *devadāsis* traditionally had multiple sexual partners who were their patrons. In the new dispensation they were therefore seen as 'moral deviants' and a threat to 'Indian culture.'[98] Plans among Indian nationalist feminists were underway to 'rehabilitate' *devadāsis* and 'reintegrate' them into the middle-class.[99] On the legislative side, this meant defining them as 'prostitutes' and banning the *devadāsi* tradition.[100]

Transforming perceptions of morality, monogamous conjugality and obscenity among Indian colonial elites resulted in re-defining Indian masculinity but more importantly, a hyper-feminine Indian woman who would represent the 'authentic Indian culture' in the public and private sphere through dance and music. However, this was a result of the appropriation of colonial perceptions of morality, newly emerging ideas on Indian mysticism

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[97] Partha Chatterjee, *Nation and Its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1993), 73.

[98] Soneji, *Unfinished Gestures*, 120.

[99] Ibid., 198.

[100] Kunal Parker, "'A Corporation of Superior Prostitutes' Anglo-Indian Legal Conceptions of Temple Dancing Girls, 1800–1914," *Modern Asian Studies* 32, no. 3 (1998), 566.

through an emphasis on *Vēdanta* philosophy, and colonial laws that repressed sexuality in the public sphere much like in Victorian Britain.[101] In addition, institutions such as the Madras Music Academy provided a newer 'purified' space for dance (and music) to be performed that was now removed from traditional communities and settings. Thus, not only did the notion of morality underpinned by notions of what 'Hinduism' and a 'Hindu' change, but also the art itself and the iconography of art used newly constructed notions of 'Hinduism' to pertain to that morality. In doing so, Bharatnatyam's constructed connection to 'Hinduism' was affirmed. Here again, similar to the music-'revival' movement, deliberate connections were made to ancient texts that would reify Bharatnatyam as divine dance.[102] Furthermore, the construction of 'Hinduism' used in the music-'revival' strongly aided the dance-'revival' project as well. For instance, iconography associating dance to temple settings and the divine were incorporated to signify the sacredness of Bharatnatyam.[103] These historical developments surrounding Karnatic Music (and Bharatnatyam) as the nodal point correspond to the religion/secular dichotomy and the colonial construction of 'Hinduism.'

1.4 Constructed Categories: 'Religion,' 'Secular' and 'Hinduism'

According to Oddie, pre-British usage of the term 'Hindu' in reference to India did not have the 'religious' connotation that it was later awarded; it

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[101] Ronald Hyam, *Empire and Sexuality: The British Experience* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1992), 64.

[102] For instance, *Nātyasastra* believed to have been written by Sage Bharata (and hence, the name Bharatnatyam) before 200 C.E. was (and is) used as a principle text on dance theory on aesthetics, performance styles, etc.

[103] Avanthi Meduri, "Temple Stage as Historical Allegory in Bharatnatyam: Rukmini Devi as Dancer-Historian," in *Performing Pasts: Reinventing the Arts in Modern South India* eds. Indira Viswanathan Peterson and Davesh Soneji (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 141.

simply referred to people living in a particular geographical location.[104] Whilst tracing the historical origins of the term 'Hinduism,' Oddie argues that during Mughal invasions and subsequent settlements in India, there was a heightened sense of common identity among the 'residents' or 'insiders' and the invading outsiders.[105] Following European expansion, idol practices came to be seen by early travellers and missionaries[106] as 'paganism' or 'heathenism.'[107] The specific nature of idolatry practices in India was beginning to be termed as 'Hindu idolatry' or 'Indian paganism.'[108] Oddie argues that the first time the term 'Hinduism' was used was in 1787, and that the term first appears in writings of Indian nationalists in 1816.[109] Thus, he argues, Indian nationalists then appropriated this European construct called 'Hinduism' to unify a diverse country during nationalist movements.[110] This was certainly true in the case of the colonial elites of Madras who specifically imagined Karnatic Music as 'Hindu' music with mystic origins (as discussed on p. 45ff above). Oddie adds that the notion of a unified idea of 'Hinduism' stemmed from the perception that there existed a unified common practice that could be called a 'religion' and could be compared with other world 'religions' such as Christianity, Islam

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[104] Geoffrey A. Oddie, "Hindu Religious Identity With Special Reference to the Origin and Significance of the Term 'Hinduism', c. 1787–1947," in *Rethinking Religion in India: The Colonial Construction of Hinduism*, ed. Esther Block, Marianne Keppens and Rajaram Hegde (Oxon: Routledge, 2010), 42.

[105] Oddie, "Hindu Religious Identity," 44.

[106] For more on missionary history and how Christian missionary work became a central feature of the British colonial government in India, see Penelope Carson, *The East India Company and Religion, 1698-1858* (Suffolk: The Boydell Press, 2012).

[107] Oddie, "Hindu Religious Identity," 44.

[108] Ibid.

[109] Ibid., 45.

[110] Ibid., 47.

and Judaism;[111] the idea was that 'Hinduism' had those common characteristics that made it comparable to Christianity.[112]

However, according to King a unified essence of 'religion' cannot or could not have existed historically because it assumes that there was a common, unified characteristic to the concept of 'religion' that could be found everywhere. He adds that it is purely a Western construct that every culture should have a 'religion' and that the unified idea is "common sense."[113] Fitzgerald argues that historically 'religion' referred to Christian Truth but "deists since at least the eighteenth century have . . . attempted to transform the meaning of religion, reduce its specifically Christian elements, and extend it as a crosscultural category."[114] While critiquing the assumption of a universal and ahistoric 'religion,' Nongbri points out that the *Khasi* language (spoken in the North-eastern part of India) does not contain a word for 'religion.'[115] Nongbri's arguments prompted me to explore varied terms referring to 'religion' in Tamil, my first language. For instance, the terms (normatively) used to refer to 'religion' are *samayam* or *madham*. According to the University of Madras Tamil Lexicon, both these terms, *samayam*[116] and *madham*,[117] refer to each other as a meaning for the term 'religion.' However, these terms also refer to other ideas such as opinion, belief, agreement, and teaching. What this indicates is not quite

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[111] Ibid., 45.

[112] Ibid.

[113] Richard King., *Orientalism and Religion: Postcolonial Theory, India and 'the Mystic East'* (London: Routledge, 1999), 40, 143.

[114] Timothy Fitzgerald, *The Ideology of Religious Studies* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 5.

[115] Brent Nongbri, *Before Religion: A History of a Modern Concept* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2013), 1.

[116] "Camayam," University of Madras: Tamil Lexicon. Accessed May 17, 2013, http://dsalsrv02.uchicago.edu/cgi-bin/philologic/getobject.pl?p.4:103.tamillex. One other common meaning of Camayam is time or opportune moment.

[117] "Matam," University of Madras: Tamil Lexicon. Accessed May 17, 2013, http://dsalsrv02.uchicago.edu/cgi-bin/philologic/getobject.pl?c.10:1:837.tamillex.347060.

dramatic as Nongbri notes, rather that in Tamil the equivalent of 'religion' has multiple meanings in different contexts and do not refer only to what we now understand or identify as 'religion.' This includes contexts within which rituals are performed. For instance, when the word *samayam* is used in conjunction with *sāngyam* (lit. rituals), it refers to a context that we identify as 'religion.'[118] Yet, *samayam*, as indicated above, can also mean belief in any doctrine. This makes sense within the context of India where there are diverse sets of beliefs and faiths and corresponding rituals.

In line with both King's and Fitzgerald's arguments, Oddie argues that the idea of 'religion' itself was a Western construct, which started with the Romans and was further developed by Christianity.[119] This, Fitzgerald adds, "had the effect of reifying religion as though it is a distinct universal category fixed in human nature and common to all peoples in languages and all historical periods."[120] According to Fitzgerald, until the late 17th century, the commonweal in England was conceived as God's hierarchy and that the "commonweal and all 'politic' order and governance, were encompassed by religion."[121] A similar set-up is apparent in the way kingship operated in the two empires that are the focus of this thesis — the Vijayanagara Empire (14th–16th centuries) and the Tanjavur Kingdom (15th–19th centuries) — where according to *rājadharma* (lit. king's rule of law), the king was the center of the universe and a representative of the divine embodying divine nature. Thus, the king's duty was to uphold

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[118] Samaya-sāngyam- "Sāngyam," University of Madras: Tamil Lexicon. Accessed May 17, 2013, http://dsalsrv02.uchicago.edu/cgi-bin/philologic/getobject.pl?p.4:103.tamillex.

[119] Geoffrey A. Oddie, *Imagined Hinduism: British Protestant Missionary Constructions of Hinduism, 1793-1900* (New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2006), 13.

[120] Timothy Fitzgerald, *Religion and Politics in International Relations: The Modern Myth* (London: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2011), 68.

[121] Timothy Fitzgerald, "Encompassing Religion, Privatized Religions and the Invention of Modern Politics," in *Religion and the Secular: Historical and Colonial Formations,* ed. Timothy Fitzgerald (London: Equinox Publishing Ltd., 2007), 223.

dharma (lit. rule of law): that involved the righteous administration of the kingdom, which we might distinctly define as 'politics,' whilst embodying the divine that we might call 'religion.'

Pertaining to performance arts, the king's patronage to performance arts reified his legitimacy to kingship because gift giving and patronage were intrinsic aspects of upholding *rājadharma*. Also, as Subramanian shows, music performances in kingdoms in Tamil Country until the late 19th century consisted of two types: *periya mēlam* (lit. big band) that comprised a band of wind instruments with *nāgaswaram*[122] in the lead accompanied by *tavil*[123] and *thālam*[124] as percussions; *chinna mēlam* (lit. small band) comprising dancing girls, called *devadāsis*, accompanied by male musicians and other instrumental accompaniments.[125] Whilst *periya mēlam* and *chinna mēlam* performed in temple and royal courts during daily worship and festivals, *chinna mēlam* performances were also part of daily court activities. These ritualistic aspects of kingship further reified the legitimacy of the king but also show the non-existent distinction between the 'religious' and 'secular' spheres, as we now see. This is merely an introduction to these concepts. Chapter 2, however, looks into the details of patronage to music and dance, and its significance to the royalty. This argument however is not a comparison between the medieval kingdoms and the commonweal. To do that would be to argue a point that I am looking to critique: construction of an ahistorical 'religion' category. What I am doing here is to give examples of how 'religion' and 'secular' (read: politics) were embedded in social relations with the kingship deriving authority and

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[122] A long pipe-like wind instrument.

[123] A drum-like percussion instrument.

[124] A percussion instrument consisting of two palm-sized disks; it resembles palm-sized symbols. Incidentally, rhythmic cycles in Karnatic Music are also called *thālam*.

[125] Subramaniam, *From the Tanjore Court to the Madras Music Academy*, 27.

legitimacy from diverse sources such as the temples, patronage, rituals, etc. Rituals in these kingdoms gave legitimacy to the kings but the temples, as one of many centres of rituals, also derived legitimacy simultaneously since the king represented the divine and therefore, to be accepted of the honours presented during the rituals by the king meant that the divine accepted the honours. Thus the ritualistic nature of the kingship problematizes our modern understanding of 'religion' and 'secular' as separate spheres and understanding of Karnatic Music as 'religious' music and historical patronage to music and dance as a 'religious' aspect of the kingdoms.

As Fitzgerald argues, imagining 'religion' as a category applicable across diverse cultures that renders the category 'ahistorical' is " . . . a wider historical process of Western imperialism, colonialism and neocolonialism."[126] As an ahistorical category, a normative understanding of 'religion' reflects the notion that it relates to the 'spiritual' and the 'super-natural.' Such a narrative is common when describing Karnatic Music performances by prolific musicians as discussed on p. 37 above. Such an understanding posits 'non-religious' as being 'secular,' thereby producing the religion/secular dichotomy in which 'religion' belongs to the 'inner' sphere and the 'secular' to the 'outer' sphere (represented as politics and economics). But, such a distinction (between religion/secular as 'inner'/'outer' spheres) historically developed against the all-encompassing role of the Church.[127] This was further reified in the writings of the 17th century philosophers John Locke and William Penn,[128] who emphasized the importance of the separation between the Church and the State. The American constitution made "religion a private and personal right"

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[126] Fitzgerald, *The Ideology of Religious Studies*, 8.

[127] Fitzgerald, *Religion and Politics in International Relations*, 81.

[128] Fitzgerald, "Encompassing Religion," 219.

thereby, "establishing centrality and rationality of the non-religious state and politics."[129] The early 20th century Indian nationalist developments ensured that Karnatic Music was deliberately re-defined along the definitions of the 'inner'/'outer' spheres dichotomy, wherein it was defined as 'spiritual' music that was different from 'other' music genres, specifically what was later called 'light music.'[130] The newly defined Karnatic Music was 'purified' by excluding those compositions that expressed eroticism, which under newly defined nationalistic morality, was re-defined as obscene. Also, compositions for and about the divine that expressed *shringāra rasā* were re-constructed as 'divine love.' Thus, for instance, *devadāsi* erotic compositions for and about patrons were defined as obscene, whilst erotic compositions for and about a deity were defined as 'divine love' – and therefore acceptable.[131]

Although the South Indian kingdoms did not function on these distinctions, the early 20th century nationalists appropriated the distinction between 'inner' (spiritual) and 'outer' (political) spheres in order to posit themselves as a culture with a 'stronger' 'inner' sphere and <u>therefore</u> superior to the 'outer' sphere. This was essential in confronting the colonizers in the 'outer' sphere to establish their legitimacy to self-government, denied due to what Chakrabarty calls 'waiting-room' versions of history,[132] in which 'development' was measured as an ahistorical event and therefore, colonies were deemed 'not yet ready' for self-government. However, positing 'religion' and 'secular' in binary

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[129] Ibid., 213.

[130] Stephen P. Hughes, "The 'Music Boom' in Tamil South India: Gramophone, Radio and the Making of Mass Culture," *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television* 22, no. 4 (2002): 463.

[131] *Jāvalis* and *padams* (fast-paced erotic poems) were considered unacceptable in Karnatic Music performances, whilst poems by the only female *ālvār*, Āndāl, expressing her desire for Hindu god Krishna are part of performances (both Karnatic Music and Bharatnatyam).

[132] Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2000), 8.

opposition is not only a historical development. This is prevalent in contemporary understanding of Karnatic Music, as well. For instance, whilst historically temples were traditional performance spaces, contemporary historians refer to non-temple settings such as the *sabhās* as 'secular' spaces,[133] whilst marriage halls and temples are seen as 'religious' settings because of the presence of the divine or representation of the divine in one form or another. This, however, is problematic not only because 'religion' itself is a problematic term, but also because these spaces do not conform to the categories they are defined with: for instance, a *sabhā* might be a non-temple setting, yet, if the musician is seen as embodying the divine and the music embodies the divine and <u>the performance</u> is a showcase of the musician's devotion, then the <u>entire context</u> is deified. The absence of the divine in the form of idols would not affect the perceived sacrality of the space.

The principle issue with understanding 'religion' as a cross-cultural category that is ahistorical is that, very similar to what Chakrabarty argues about the 'not yet' version of history, indigenous faiths and beliefs are understood within the parameters of the 'religion' category (and the associated Christian understandings), and metaphysics are universalized. However, this 'inner'/'outer' dichotomy in which the 'inner' represents the spiritual whilst the 'outer' represents the rational civil society (politics, economics, as such) was the result of specific historical developments during the 17th and 18th centuries during which "a new kind of distinction between the natural and the supernatural as different ontological domains [developed]; and the development in the second half of the eighteenth century of an idea of political

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[133] Lakshmi Subramanian, "The Reinvention of a Tradition: Carnatic Music and the Madras Music Academy 1900-1947," *The Indian Economic and Social History Review* 36, no. 2 (1999): 132.

economy as a secular domain"[134] in which "new ideas about objectivity, time, space and matter"[135] emerged. This notion of objectivity of time as linear and uniform is represented, an obvious example being, in our calendars; King argues rather creatively that *Anno Domini* be called "*Anno Dominati ('in the Year of Our Domination')*" indicating the 15th century European expansion and subsequent colonial domination that has transformed the world.[136] Such linearity of time (or history, as Chakrabarty calls it) further reiterates the religion/secular dichotomy, as Fitzgerald puts it: "all of these aspects of modern ideology . . . were in the process of being formulated . . . on the basis of a number of oppositions, such as that between scientific rationality and religious faith . . . "[137] This particular point is relevant to this thesis in two ways:

a) As Chakrabarty argues, the linearity of time problematizes (and ignores) understandings of ritualistic aspects of labor practices[138] because labor is seen as 'secular' within the framework of capitalism. Thus, these rituals are ignored as 'religious' that are seen as strictly belonging to the 'inner' domain; when accompanying labor practices in the 'secular' 'outer' domain of work, they are re-defined as 'superstitions.'

b) Such disembedded labor practices are then seen as the 'secular' output of an individual that needs to be rewarded monetarily.

Within the context of this thesis, ownership laws in relation to Karnatic Music treat creativity as a product of human labor and thus, promote

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[134] Fitzgerald, "Encompassing Religion," 216.

[135] Ibid.

[136] Richard King, "Colonialism, Hinduism and the Discourse of Religion," in *Rethinking Religion in India: The Colonial Construction of Hinduism*, ed. Esther Block, Marianne Keppens and Rajaram Hegde (Oxon: Routledge, 2010), 96.

[137] Fitzgerald, "Encompassing Religion," 216.

[138] Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe*, 72.

commoditization of shared traditional knowledge by disembedding the contexts within which music is learned, performed and experienced. Whilst historically music was mechanically reproduced through gramophones and radio broadcasts, the contemporary mechanical reproduction of music has brought this issue into even greater prominence.

1.5 'Experiencing' Karnatic Music: Mechanized and Digitized Reproduction of Music

The early 20th century was significant for Indian performance arts besides the music and dance-'revival' movement. The beginning of the century saw an emerging gramophone records market in colonial Madras, initially selling records of European music and eventually of local musicians and drama performers.[139] The popularity of gramophone records catapulted many musicians into prominence. For instance, renowned musician M.S.'s career began with the gramophone industry. However, the Indian colonial elites of Madras involved in re-defining music and dance during the early 20th century were initially reluctant to embrace this new technology. Having emphasized the importance of *bhakti bhāvā* in performances as the true virtue, they perceived mechanical reproduction as disembodying music from the performer.[140] However, as Weidman points out, by the 1930s, the mass production of gramophone records was common, and records of famous Karnatic musicians such as M.S. had music critics themselves.[141] In addition to gramophone records, other technological aides, such as microphones and radios, were also

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[139] Hughes, "Music in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," 5. See Chapter 5 for history of mechanical reproduction of music in Tamil Nadu.

[140] Narayanaswami Aiyar, "The Mechanization of South Indian Music," *Journal of Madras Music Academy* 4, no. 1-4 (1933): 156.

[141] Weidman, *Singing the Classical, Voicing the Modern*, 465.

gaining popularity. However, the Indian colonial elites of Madras expressed concerns about how these new technologies were distorting Karnatic Music from the way it was <u>meant</u> to be performed. For instance, the use of microphones in *sabhās* was deeply unsettling for many musicologists and critics who argued that microphones diminished the authenticity of the human voice.[142] However, this anxiety seems to have emerged due to the challenge that mechanical reproduction posed to the specific contexts within which Karnatic Music was constructed by the Indian colonial elites. For example, radio and gramophone records <u>physically</u> removed the audiences from the presence of the musicians; such disembodiment, to them, problematized expressions of *bhakti* since *kucchēri* was constructed as a communal spiritual experience. Also, these technologies, they argued, increased the propensity for the distortion of performances. [143]

Contemporary Karnatic musicians raise similar (and yet, different) concerns over protecting their performances, and these concerns seem to have heightened due to the availability of music on the Internet, as Ms. Raghunathan argued.[144] This new technology, in addition to traditional mechanical reproduction such as audiocassettes, CDs, and mp3 files has caused anxiety among musicians namely that their performances will be subjected to unauthorized recordings and made available on the Internet. The Internet, thus, has become a newer way of subverting the 'norms' of the Karnatic Music community. The 2012 amendment specifically targets this issue, as quoted on p. 17 above. Therefore, whilst historically colonial Indian elites moved towards reiterating the sacrality and tradition of Karnatic Music by attempting to curtail

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[142] Ibid., 91.

[143] Ibid.

[144] "Artists and Musicians Told to Come Together to Safeguard Their Work."

the music within specific communities whilst encouraging and organizing performances that would serve as models for their efforts, contemporary musicians are moving towards copyright laws as a way of protecting their works in an age when the dissemination of works can occur instantly. Hence, the 2012 amendment to the copyright law specifically protects performers under a section called 'Moral Rights.' Fundamentally, certain specific aspects of Karnatic Music reveal complexities that problematize the application of copyright laws. For example, *manodharmasangeetham* (as discussed on p. 39 above), a session in which creativity in Karnatic Music is measured based on a certain level of distortion of what is learned by the *sisyas*, exemplifies this issue because such distortions are meant to be spontaneous and are seen as dependent upon divine inspiration in that particular setting. Thus, in addition to the context within which Karnatic Music emerged, as discussed above, contemporary practices of performing and experiencing Karnatic Music problematizes treating performances as an <u>individual's</u> artistic expression that can be copyrighted and owned. In this thesis, I look at the potential implications of copyright laws on Karnatic Music and the Internet as a way of subverting such implications. This particular issue has not been dealt with previously, although considerable amount of works exist on copyright laws and indigenous music. Here again, some works have focused on copyright laws as having the potential to protect indigenous music. Most works look at copyright laws is being inadequate in being able to protect indigenous music. I depart from that argument and look at the benefits of the Internet's subversion on music learning and experience and on Karnatic Music community itself.

Copyright laws themselves are fundamentally problematic, as I discuss above but in greater detail in chapters 5 and 6. Copyright law assumes a position of inherent 'secularity' that rewards owners for their creativity, and the

expression of such creativity, by ignoring traditions and disembedding musicians who embody the traditions and the music they perform. Chakrabarty, invoking Marx, discusses the 'secularizing' function of abstracting labor brought about by modern capitalism by creating analytical categories for interpreting modern history. Accordingly, the first, History 1, is "a past posited by capital itself as its precondition"[145] and the second, Histor(ies) 2(s), is "the past that does not belong to the capital's life process."[146] Chakrabarty defines History 1 as the "universal history of capital"[147] (or rather, the history of capital that has been rendered universal through historicism) that abstracts labor as a function that is removed from its contexts. It might be helpful to think of History 1 (Capital) as a definitively 'modern' process of disembedding 'economy' and 'markets' from local traditional practices (Histor(ies) 2(s)). Accordingly, he argues that in India, "it [labor] often entails, through rituals big and small, the invocation of divine or superhuman presence"[148] and that "secular histories are usually produced by ignoring the signs of these ['enchanted'] presences."[149] He thus theorizes Histor(ies) 2(s) as "numerous other tendencies in history that did not necessarily look forward to the telos of capital but could nevertheless be intimately intertwined with History 1 in such a way as to arrest the thrust of capital's universal history and help it find a local ground."[150] This thereby problematizes the meta-presence of History 1. This particular theorizing of capital, labor and history by Chakrabarty forms the core

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[145] Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe*, 63.

[146] Ibid.

[147] Dipesh Chakrabarty, "In Defense of Provincializing Europe: A Response to Carola Dietze," *History and Theory* 47 (February 2008), 92.

[148] Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe*, 72.

[149] Ibid.

[150] Chakrabarty, "In Defense of Provincializing Europe," 92.

argument of this thesis, pertaining to copyright laws. Thus, copyright laws are very good examples of History 1, which is pushing towards disembedding those practices and contexts, which can be seen as what Chakrabarty calls Histor(ies) 2(s), which lends meaning to Karnatic Music, as a performance art and a tradition. However, in contemporary music practices, another Histor(ies) 2(s) is the audience who enable sharing dialectic spiritual experience of a *kucchēri* through the Internet to wider audience, thereby adhering to Karnatic Music tradition but simultaneously subverting copyright laws.

What I am <u>not</u> arguing is that historically there was an 'authentic' tradition that has somehow been re-constructed by the early 20th century developments in colonial Madras and further problematized by contemporary music practices through copyright laws. Rather, what I am specifically pointing to in this thesis is how dichotomizing the religion and the secular is reflected in shifts in pedagogy, performance and experience of Karnatic Music, and its relation to copyright laws. Therefore, I am primarily focussing on the discourses surrounding these shifts that have reflected nostalgia for 'authentic' tradition that they have sought to establish that was built on the religion/secular dichotomy. In order to answer the central question of this thesis, whether Karnatic Music, which was constructed within a specific historical context and is understood as a shared divine experience, can be copyrighted, I trace the historic paradigmatic shifts from the 'religion' and 'secular' non-distinction in the pre-British colonial India, to the ways in which the categories 'religion' and 'secular' were defined, appropriated and transformed within the context of the nationalist movements in the early 20th century, leading in turn to the re-definition of music as Karnatic Music.

1.6   Conclusion

In summary, the thesis contains the following chapters:

Chapter 2 looks at the historical and thematic context of music patronage in the medieval and late medieval kingdoms of South India, specifically, the Vijayanagara Empire and the Tanjavur Kingdom. Although Karnatic Music became associated only with Tamil Nadu by the early 20th century, histories of the empires of South India show that empires spread over most of South India and that modern state borders were absent. Therefore, to talk of the history of Tamil Country (as Tamil Nadu was generally called), is to talk of a region in South India, which was a part of a kingdom whose centre of power was in the present day state of Karnataka. All South Indian states share histories of empires, conquests and performance arts. I discuss the history of music patronage from the late 17th century (with a brief history of developments before the 17th century, in order to give context) to the early 20th century pertaining to royal patronages, the centrality of the temple in these kingdoms, and the absence of division between institutions that we now see as representing religion/secular categories. Courtly and temple patronages were a pivotal part of music (and dance) history in South India.

Chapter 3 discusses the spatial shift that occurred in the early 20th century when music performances moved from royal courts to colonial Madras resulting in paradigmatic shifts that occurred in understanding and experiencing performance arts within the context of Indian nationalist movements. However, this 'nation-building' 'culture-defining' project was complex. Subaltern studies scholars such as Gayathri Chakravorthy Spivak, Partha Chatterjee and Dipesh Chakrabarty have shown how nationalist discourses saw the emergence of Others, indeed multiple Others, that

challenged the meta-narrative of these discourses. Thus, the project of re-defining Karnatic Music, an offshoot of the larger nation-building exercise, was also contested and challenged. Thus, this thesis explores how Indian nationalists used the religion/secular categories to re-construct or redefine music into an ideological operator that in turn served their nationalistic purpose, but <u>also</u> reinforced the hegemonic discourse on national identity/nationalism/the Indian subject and equally importantly, caste-based ownership of music by Brahmins and upper-class Non-Brahmins who constituted the middle-class in colonial Madras. The newly constructed cultural identity called Karnatic Music saw its contexts reconstructed. This meant that the performers, teachers, students and the audiences had new parameters within which they learned, performed and experienced Karnatic Music. In exploring these historical developments, I also look at some of the counter-movements of the Others who were marginalized by this 'culture-defining' exercise. Thus, the project was contested by the Tamil Music Movement that challenged what was perceived as overtaking of the Tamil culture by Brahmins, the hegemonic group.

Chapter 4 discusses the production of multiple Others during the nation-building exercise. The 'national culture' building exercise involved emerging ideas of feminity and masculinity, with influences from Victorian Britain on morality in the public sphere, which resulted in abolishment of the *devadāsi* tradition. This chapter, therefore, focuses largely on performers: how traditional performers were re-situated in spaces that deprived them of the opportunity for performances of music and dance, whilst new performers (upper-class Brahmin women) were both performing and experiencing music and dance within the newly defined patriarchal contexts. In these two chapters, Ch. 3 and 4, what I show is the contexts within which Karnatic Music (and Bharatnatyam) were

constructed that give meanings to these performance arts. This is particularly important to explore because these are the histories that copyright laws ignore while arguing for the rights of individuals to 'own' their creativity and seek monetary compensation, should those rights be infringed upon.

Chapter 5 discusses the transformations mechanical reproduction brought to performance arts into an industry that enabled Karnatic Music to be labelled as 'religious' music, and film and folk music as 'secular' and entertainment music. Mechanical reproductions of music through gramophone records, digitized recordings and the Internet have transformed the way musicians perform and consequently, transformed the way the audiences experience music. In such transformations newer understandings of Karnatic Music as experiencing the divine and newer approaches to aesthetics have emerged. Equally significant is the transformation mechanical reproduction has brought to the teacher-student relationship, a context that is very important in Karnatic Music for the 'complete experience' of the divine. Using Chakrabarty, I discuss how the idea of private property and ownership of what until then had been collective knowledge, eased, re-situating music from a shared experience to the marketplace where expression of creativity is seen as labor that requires validity and acknowledgment through monetary compensation. In this chapter, I will give a brief historical account of mechanical reproduction of performance arts and copyright legislations in India. I discuss how copyright law functions in terms of the religion/secular dichotomy, which problematizes its applicability to Karnatic Music.

Chapter 6 concludes the thesis by first, summarizing the main themes and arguments of this thesis and second, by looking at contemporary understandings of the religion/secular dichotomy through modern understandings and practices of Karnatic Music and copyright laws. I argue

that copyright law disembeds Karnatic Music from its historical contexts thereby furthering the religion/secular dichotomy that colonial intervention in India encouraged. This has resulted in the transformation of Karnatic Music into a kind of Bourdieuian cultural capital that makes it an aesthetic marker for a particular caste and class. Copyright law is only the most overt manifestation of this. I argue that, Karnatic musicians and the new virtual audience members challenge and attempt to subvert the meta-narrative of copyright laws. The Internet thus offers Karnatic Music with subversive ways of overcoming and negating the religion/secular dichotomy that is enforced by copyright laws, and therefore, practitioners of Karnatic Music need to engage with these questions as a matter of urgency.

2   'Religion' And 'Secular' In South Indian Kingdoms

2.1   Introduction

This chapter is a historical overview of the patronage of performance arts in two important kingdoms of South India. However, I show how the history of patronage was related to other aspects of the society. Here, I have focused specifically on two kingdoms: the Vijayanagara Empire, which was in power between the 14th century and the 16th century in what is present day South Indian state of Karnataka and spread to rest of South India, specifically Tamil Country; and the Tanjavur Kingdom (Tanjore, in English), which until the 15th century was under the rule of chieftains but came under the Vijayanagara Empire in the 15th century and became semi-autonomous after the fall of the Empire in the 16th century until ceding their authority to the British Government in the late 19th century. I have specifically chosen the Vijayanagara Empire and the Tanjavur Kingdom for the following reasons:

a) Although, pre-Vijayanagara Empires in the Tamil Country extensively patronized performance arts (as in the case of most empires in India), these two kingdoms have been significant for the development of the performance arts through patronage: many music treatises were written in these kingdoms that later became 'canonical' texts for redefining Karnatic Music.

b) During the nationalist movements in the early 20th century, the Indian colonial elites in Madras, and contemporary scholars of music have

referred to these two kingdoms as the 'true' past of Karnatic Music whilst simultaneously claiming for its superior religiosity.[1]

Using the history of the Vijayanagara Empire and the Tanjavur Kingdom, I argue that the 'religion' and 'secular' domains were intertwined; furthermore, politics and economics that we now understand as 'secular' sciences were embedded in the social relations in which ritualistic traditions (a category we now call 'religion') were an important part. Thus, I show how the 'religion' and 'secular' domains were not distinct, as it is understood in the West. Within this tradition production, consumption, exchange and authorities were embedded. Market economy existed within this set-up but was significantly different from the universalizing capitalistic economy that we now understand as belonging to the 'secular' domain. Also, performing arts were an integral part of this set-up. Music and dance were intertwined and performance arts were patronized collectively. More importantly, as I explain below, patronage to performance arts was a very important part of the legitimization of the sovereignty of the kings that in turn maintained the set-up described above. Music did not yet belong to the 'religious' domain; such a definition being a 20th century construct by Anglicized Indian nationalists who appropriated constructs of modernity, specifically the distinction between 'religion' and 'secular' domains, to define 'Indian culture' and therefore, the Indian subject.[2] Thus, I look at the economics of music and its place within the contexts of royal courts, temples and patronage tradition. Using the history of these kingdoms in addition to the role of music patronage, which is central to this thesis, I argue that the modern

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[1] V. Raghavan, "An Outline Literary History of Indian Music," *Journal of Madras Music Academy* XXIII, Part I-IV (1952): 71. Any account of history of Karnatic Music begins with placing its origins in the empire. Many articles in *Journal of Madras Music Academy* contain such a historical account. See Chapter 3, p. 125ff.

[2] See Chapter 3.

imaginary distinction between 'religious' and 'secular' domains is problematic. This directly relates to how copyright laws, the idea behind copyrighting creativity by Karnatic musicians, and contemporary Karnatic Music itself, by showing that neither kingdom perceived performance arts the way Indian nationalists later constructed; rather, music performance and patronage were embedded in social relations that we now differentiate as 'religious' and 'secular' or 'political.' I do not argue that these categories existed and that there were certain aspects of the society that indicated fluidity between them; rather, I argue that these categories are constructs of modernity. This issue is pervasive in the works of contemporary historians who have written about these kingdoms, which I highlight in this chapter.

An important example to illustrate my argument is the role of temples and performance arts in these kingdoms. The relationship between the royals, the temples and performance arts was symbiotic. Legitimacy of the kingship was derived from the king's relationship to the temples and the king's benefaction, displayed by acts of generosity through gifts to Brahmins and the patronage of performance arts. The kings built and patronized temples; in turn, they received legitimacy to the throne through rituals such as *tulāpurusadāna*,[3] which involved weighing of the king against gold or grains that were later donated to the temple, invoking the divine. These rituals served, sometimes, as a proof of status particularly when the subjects or rivals questioned the king's sovereignty. The king patronized musicians and dancers by awarding titles and giving gifts; the performers in turn exhibited their talents through performances praising the king. It was a measurement of the superiority of his kingdom (in

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[3] Nicholas Dirks, *The Hollow Crown: Ethnohistory of an Indian Kingdom* (Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 1993), 37.

comparison to his neighbouring kingdoms) for the king through patronage to the performers and the temples (specifically, building temples). In addition, the temples were spaces for the performances of arts; therefore, temples patronage sustained the performers as well.

Thus, as long as the king maintained cordial relationships with the temples and the performers, the king's sovereignty was unquestionable. If conquests through wars were important to broaden the king's authority and his kingdom's power, patronizing temples and performance arts solidified and maintained this authority. Temples, in addition to being the centres of worship, also functioned as 'economic' centres through the redistribution of grains from cultivated lands and the selling of 'consecrated' food to the wealthy patrons, thereby contributing to the local economy, and finally, as spaces for performance arts.[4] Thus, in the context of these kingdoms of South India, the temples performed multiple functions that are understood now as both 'religious' and 'political' thereby problematizing our contemporary understanding as distinct categories and suggesting that this imagined distinction is a colonial construct. Similarly, the kings performed the functions of the 'political' but derived legitimacy from the 'religious' domain in order to perform those functions. Thus, the two categories did not function independent of each other in the society; rather, what constitutes as 'religious' and 'secular' were embedded in other social relations of the society so much so that there were no distinctions between these categories.

The early 20th century definition of music and dance as 'religious' arts seems to have risen out of the fact that in these kingdoms (both Vijayanagara and Tanjavur), temples were the performance spaces for arts; thus, since temples

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[4] Karl Polanyi, *The Great Transformation*. 3rd ed. (Boston: Beacon Press, 2001), 55.

came to be perceived as 'religious' spaces, so were performance arts. However, the temples were not simply 'religious' (if we go by the modern understanding of the 'religious' domain). In addition, if patronizing performance arts was significant to the king's sovereignty, something that we now understand as 'political', one cannot define performance arts as solely 'religious.' Thus, I attempt to show how the kingly court, the temples, the performing arts functioned together and were significant in the <u>totality</u> of this structure; neither were they categorized as distinct domains nor could they function in singular.

Until the late 15th century, present day Tamil Nadu, then called the Tamil Country, was under the rule of smaller chieftains who during pre-Vijayanagara times were serving under the empires of Cērā, Cōla, Pāndyan and Pallava. The Vijayanagara Empire, who came to power after the Hoysalas in the present day state of Karnataka, spread to Tamil Country during the late 15th century, taking over the smaller chieftains. Thus, the Tanjavur Kingdom was a colony of the Vijayanagara Empire; however, after the fall of the empire, and even under the Marāthas, Tanjavur became increasingly autonomous. The last of the semi-autonomous Tanjavur kings, before ceding their administrative powers to the colonial British government in the late 1800s, was King Serfoji II. Historically, he is known as an illustrious patron of performing arts for bringing some 'modern' changes to the performance arts, firstly introducing notating music, a practice that was followed by some musicians until then, but not all.[5] Under his reign, comparative study of Indian music notations and the Western music notations, and composing Indian music using Western notes were encouraged.

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[5] King Serfoji II is also credited with the founding the Saraswati Mahal Library in Tanjavur, scientific research into modern medicine (his famous medicine cabinet is on display at the library). See, Indira Viswanathan Peterson, "The Cabinet of King Serfoji of Tanjavur: A European Collection in Early Nineteenth-century India," *Journal of the History of Collections* 11, no. 5 (1999): 71-93.

It is useful to note that King Serfoji II was a student of Danish missionary Rev. Christian Friedrich Schwartz, who was appointed by the colonial British government to tutor and mentor the young king;[6] thus, he was anglicized in his approach towards the performance arts.[7] In the early 20th century, especially during the Indian nationalist movement of redefining music, his contributions were hailed as developments that signified superiority of Karnatic Music because it could be studied as 'science.'[8] These new practices were in the 20th century hailed as a proof that Indian music is suitable for scientific enquiry, and therefore, comparable to that of Western music in its quality. In the late 1800s, the Tanjavur Kingdom ceded their administrative powers to the colonial British government. This affected their sovereignty, but also had a great impact on the state's patronage to arts and temples, something that was inherent to the kingdoms' autonomy. Hence, during the early 1900s, performance arts were forced to move from Tanjavur to Madras, the new urbanized colonial capital.

In the next section, I give a brief introduction to the history of the Vijayanagara Empire and the Tanjavur Kingdom. I then discuss how 'religious' and 'secular' domains were intertwined in these kingdoms by discussing how royal authority functioned, as well as the different roles of the temples and the patronage of performance arts. Thus, I discuss different functions of the temples in these kingdoms from being a space for worship to being a domain from

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[6] It was a tactical move by the British government who were facing intense pressure from the Muslim kingdoms backed by the French in South India. Thus, King Serfoji II was trained to be ally and supported of the British government. It, ultimately, paid off when after his coronation most of his kingdom was annexed to the colonial government and he could retain autonomy only within the castle. See Amanda Weidman, *Singing the Classical, Voicing the Modern: The Postcolonial Politics of Music in South India* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2006), 61.

[7] Weidman, *Singing the Classical, Voicing the Modern,* 61. I discuss the details of King Serfoji II's contribution to music in this chapter in the section on music patronage in the Tanjavur Kingdom on p. 109ff.

[8] Ibid., 63. See Chapter 3, p. 125ff.

where kings derived their sovereignty to being a space for arts performances and patronage. Next, I examine the role of arts patronage and performances in problematizing the distinction between 'religious' and 'secular' domains. The final section will briefly look at the spatial shift of arts performance and patronage from royal courts and temples to colonial Madras in the early 20th century.[9]

2.2   *The Foundation of the Empires*

2.2.1   The Vijayanagara Empire (14th–16th Centuries)

The Sangama Brothers (five brothers) where the founders of the Vijayanagara Empire; they were initially captured by the Delhi Sultanate when Kampili (in present day state of Karnataka, South India) was conquered in 1327;[10] the brothers became lieutenants of the Sultanate.[11] They were later sent to Kampili to assist Malik Mohammed, whose administration was facing resistance from the locals. The brothers, however, abandoned the mission of the Sultanate to establish their own empire Vijayanagara, by initially assisting the Sultan, then conquering more territories and finally claiming independence.[12] They founded a new city Vijayanagara (lit. 'City of Victory') near modern day city of Hampi, which became the capital of the empire. According to Sastri, the inscriptions record the coronation of Harihara I, the oldest of the five brothers, on 18 April 1336.[13] Historically, the Vijayanagara Empire has been referred to as

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[9] Such a shift aided in redefinition of music as Karnatic Music, that is, 'religious' 'Hindu' music by appropriating colonial discourse on this dichotomy. See Chapter 3.

[10] Nilakanta Sastri, *A History of South India: From Prehistoric Times to the Fall of Vijayanagar* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1955), 228.

[11] Sastri, *A History of South India*, 228.

[12] Ibid., 229.

[13] There is a certain amount of lack of clarity with regard to the timeline of Vijayanagara Empire. Although, Sastri argues that inscriptions date Harihara I's coronation in 1336, other

the 'true' origins of Karnatic Music.[14] There is a rationale to this belief because many music treatises were written during the empire's period in South India. However, music had not acquired the name 'Karnatic' until the early 1900s; therefore, calling Vijayanagara one of the seats of Karnatic Music (the other being Tanjavur) is problematic. Rather, Vijayanagara should be addressed as seat of the performance arts, because dance and music were collectively patronized and encouraged by the empire.

2.2.1.1 'Hindu kingdom'?

Historical and contemporary scholars have referred to the Vijayanagara Empire as a 'Hindu' kingdom. For instance, Sastri writes, " . . . the history of Vijayanagar is the last glorious chapter in the history of independent Hindu South India."[15] In order to legitimize the idea that the Vijayanagara Empire was indeed a 'Hindu' kingdom, historical narratives argue that the Sangama Brothers converted to Islam to serve the Sultanate as lieutenants but converted again to 'Hinduism' to found the empire. Also, while founding the empire, the Sangama Brothers sought the advice of Vidyāranya, an exponent of *advaita* (non-dualism branch of *Vēdanta* philosophy), who became their patron saint and a minister in the administration. However, such a narrative, Stein argues,

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studies such as that of Dirks have dated the ascension to be around 1350 and the end of the empire around 17th century. However, Sastri has pointed out that there were several battles taking place during those centuries, and therefore, to give precise dates is problematic. See, Sastri, *A History of South India,* 227-252; Nicholas Dirks, "The Pasts of a Pālaiyakārar: The Ethnohistory of a South Indian Little King," *The Journal of Asian Studies (pre-1986)* 41, no.4 (1982): 659. Also, although the last emperor of the kingdom Aliya Rama Raju lost the Battle of Talikota in 1565 to the Deccan Sultanates, the dynasty survived and ruled over the residual territories, albeit weakly; therefore, the demise of the empire might have been dated to be much later than the year of the battle, by some studies.

[14] V. Raghavan, "An Outline Literary History of Indian Music," 71.

[15] Sastri, *A History of South India,* 253.

forms the "mythical core of the origin of Vijayanagara."[16] Yet, even Stein, when writing about the "ritual sovereignty,"[17] sees commonalities between ritual practices of the Vijayanagara Kings and the other kingdoms, which he calls the 'Hindu' kingdoms. His categorization of these kingdoms as 'Hindu' appears to be because rituals were an integral part of the king's sovereignty, as if 'rituals' were synonymous with 'religion,'[18] and specifically, 'Hinduism.' Similarly, while the Empire was in battle with the neighbouring Turkic Kingdoms for almost entirety of its existence, the warriors of Vijayanagara were credited to have "restor[ed] . . . temple-worship (alleged to have been interrupted or destroyed by the Muslims)."[19] This seems to be another rationale for labeling the Vijayanagara Empire as a 'Hindu' kingdom. This holds true for the Marātha rulers as well who, after the fall of the Vijayanagara Empire, expanded to the south and fought neighboring Muslim empires: they too have been, historically, labeled as a 'Hindu' empire. Here again, because the temples are perceived as 'religious' spaces, specifically 'Hindu' 'religious' spaces in this context, restoring them has automatically rendered the Vijayanagara warriors and the kingdom, 'Hindu.'

However, there has been a debate among scholars that 'Hinduism' as a unified religion was a colonial construct and that prior to it, rituals and practices in India were so diverse that they were not seen as being a part of a monolithic religion. This essentialized construct has been worked on by a

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[16] Burton Stein, *The New Cambridge History of India: Vijayanagara* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 20.

[17] Stein, *The New Cambridge History of India*, 62-63.

[18] Timothy Fitzgerald, *The Ideology of Religious Studies* (Oxford University Press, 2000), 4.

[19] Arjun Appadurai, "Kings, Sects and Temples in South India, 1350-1700 A.D." *Indian Economic Social History Review* 14, no. 1 (1977): 57.

number of scholars.[20] Scholars against this argument have pointed out that 'Hindu' as a 'religious' identity was well developed prior to introduction of the Christian missionaries from Europe. In fact, Lorenzen argues that poems of the 15th century poet Kabir comprise of the terms 'Hindu' and 'Musalman' (Muslim) thereby showing that these 'religions' pre-existed the British colonial period, and that there was a distinction between their respective ritualistic practices.[21] But as Stein argues, South India had Muslim settlers even before the Vijayanagara Empire's foundation; and the Hoysala Kingdom, which preceded the empire, employed them as warriors for their military prowess.[22] Therefore, it is not altogether surprising that Kabir used the terms 'Hindu' or 'Musalman' in his poems. Whether that <u>itself</u> amounts to the contention that 'Hinduism' existed as a unified 'religion,' as we now understand is debatable.

We need to acknowledge the opposition and animosity among indigenous groups towards the Turkic Sultanate, who was already colonizing parts of South India and who were seen as outsiders. That position, to distinguish between themselves and the colonizers does not amount to the existence of a category called 'religion,' and a unified 'religion' called 'Hinduism.' As King argues, while Islamic invasions might have heightened a sense of a shared identity through common faiths and rituals among locals against the

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[20] See for example Esther Block, Marianne Keppens and Rajaram Hegde, ed., *Rethinking Religion in India: The Colonial Construction of Hinduism* (Oxon: Routledge, 2010); Richard King, *Orientalism and Religion: Post-Colonial Theory, India and" The Mystic East"* (New York, Routledge, 2002); Geoffrey A. Oddie, *Imagined Hinduism: British Protestant Missionary Constructions of Hinduism, 1793-1900* (New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2006).

[21] David Lorenzen, "Hindus and Others," in *Rethinking Religion in India: The Colonial Construction of Hinduism*, ed. Esther Block, Marianne Keppens and Rajaram Hegde (Oxon: Routledge, 2010), 32.

[22] Stein, *The New Cambridge History of India*, 20.

'newcomers,' it cannot amount to a shared identity called 'Hinduism.'[23] He adds "'Hinduism' was framed initially by European observers of Indian cultural traditions and emerged out of the colonial encounter between Indian and Europeans (particularly the British)."[24] This becomes apparent with the 20th century Indian nationalists who appropriated colonial discourse on 'Hinduism' to redefine music.[25] However, going a step further into Lorenzen's argument, the assumption is that not only 'Hinduism' pre-existed the British colonialism but also that it existed as a category called 'religion.' Thus, rather than being treated as an ethnic marker (as Kabir's poetry indicates in Lorenzen's examples), 'Hindu' and 'Hinduism' is given an affiliation to a domain that modernity has re-defined to be independent of 'non-religious' 'secular' sphere. Fitzgerald critiques this assumption by arguing that whilst there existed coherent sets of beliefs and rituals, to categorize them as 'religion' is problematic.[26] Thus, in the contexts of the on-going conflict between empires, the term 'Hindu' seems to have defined the invaders' Otherness that described the collective identity of the locals, in other words, an ethnic marker. Also, historically ministers like Vidyāranya performed administrative functions and in addition to being adviser on matters of maintaining the king's sovereignty through rituals, patronage and beneficence, in many cases, as warriors as well. Therefore, to call the empire as a 'Hindu' empire <u>mainly because</u> Vidyāranya was their patron saint seems to be a modern narrative according to which

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[23] Richard King, "Colonialism, Hinduism and the Discourse of Religion," in *Rethinking Religion in India: The Colonial Construction of Hinduism*, ed. Esther Block, Marianne Keppens and Rajaram Hegde (Oxon: Routledge, 2010), 102.

[24] King, "Colonialism, Hinduism and the Discourse of Religion," 102. Emphasis original.

[25] See Chapter 3, p. 158ff.

[26] Timothy Fitzgerald, "Who Invented Hinduism? Rethinking Religion in India," in *Rethinking Religion in India: The Colonial Construction of Hinduism*, ed. Esther Block, Marianne Keppens and Rajaram Hegde (Oxon: Routledge, 2010), 127. See Chapters 3 and 4.

'Hinduism' is a unified 'religious' tradition in which *Vēdanta* philosophy represents the fundamentals of 'Hinduism.'[27]

During the reign of the Vijayanagara Kings in South India, Telugu warriors migrated towards the south (to Tamil Country) initially to assist the kings in the Tamil Country, but later to occupy princely states under chieftains such as Tanjavur.

2.2.2   The Tanjavur Kingdom (16th–19th Centuries)

Until the 15th century, small chieftains of the Chōla Empire of the 14th century ruled the Tamil country. During the reign of the Vijayanagara King Sāluva Narasimha (of the Sāluva dynasty) from 1486–1491, the empire expanded to the entire of South India. The Tanjavur Kingdom was an important conquest for the Vijayanagara Empire in the Tamil country because the city in the banks of river Kaveri was fertile for irrigation and agriculture. The Telugu warrior-farmers, who had previously migrated from Telangana in present day Andhra Pradesh to what became the core territory of the Vijayanagara Empire, began to migrate towards the south not only to occupy the regions but also to assist the Nāyaka lords installed in those regions through land grants by the Vijayanagara Kings.[28] Tanjavur, like Ramnad and Madurai were princely states where their respective kings were under the administration of Vijayanagara overlords.

By the 16th century, the Nāyakas had established their rule in Tanjavur under the reign of Sēvappa Nāyaka (1532–1580)[29] instated by the Vijayanagara King Achyutadēva Rāya (1530–1542) of the Tuluva dynasty.[30] The Telugu warriors

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[27] King, "Colonialism, Hinduism and the Discourse of Religion," 100.

[28] Stein, *The New Cambridge History of India*, 46; Nicholas Dirks, *The Hollow Crown*, 49-50.

[29] V. Vriddhagirisan, *The Nayaks of Tanjavur*. 2nd ed. (New Delhi: Asian Educational Services, 1995), 24.

[30] Sastri, *A History of South India*, 229.

were called *Vatukās* (northerner) in the Tamil country who became *pālayakkarars* (Poligars in English) because they became the chieftains of little countries (*pālaiyams*) under the Nāyaka of Tanjavur. Indeed, Dirks points out that these *pālayakkarars* were local chieftains "who provided protection in exchange for shares of village production and the position and perquisites of local leadership" who existed even during Cōla empire,[31] but retained their position along with newly migrated Telugu warriors. Thus, the Nāyaka of Tanjavur formed the "upper tier"[32] under the Vijayanagara kings, and *pālayakkarars* under the Nāyakas. They became an important instrument for the success of the Nāyakas because of

> . . . [t]heir [the pālayakkarars] military capabilities . . . consolidated their own forms of locality control over areas that had only recently undergone substantial settlement and asserted increasing forms of pressure on the central regions, ultimately reducing the regional social and political forms of the core areas to village level forms.[33]

With the fall of the Vijayanagara Empire in 1565, the Tanjavur Kingdom declared its independence from the Vijayanagara overlords. However, Stein argues that this independence did not occur only after the demise of Vijayanagara. Rather, the centrality of Vijayanagara power has always been contested by the smaller kings, who were put in place by the Vijayanagara overlords.[34] The Nāyaka rule of Tanjavur came to an end with Vijayarāghava Nāyaka in 1673 when he lost the kingdom to Tirumala Nāyaka of Madurai who sought the help of the Marāthās of Bijapur who later kept Tanjavur to themselves, thus establishing Marāthā rule in Tanjavur in the early 1675[35]

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[31] Dirks, "The Pasts of a Pālaiyakārar," 659.

[32] Dirks, *The Hollow Crown*, 44.

[33] Ibid., 35.

[34] Ibid., 70.

[35] Vriddhagirisan, *The Nayaks of Tanjavur*, 14.

under Ekoji I of the Bhosle dynasty. The Marāthās ruled Tanjavur for approximately 200 years; King Serfoji II was the last semi-autonomous king of Tanjavur, having signed a treaty with the colonial British Government that helped him to the throne, but severely restricted his administration to the Tanjavur Fort and the surrounding areas. After his death in 1832, his son Sivaji II ruled Tanjavur until his death in 1855, after which the kingdom was annexed as a British colony.

Principal markers of sovereignty of both the Vijayanagara and the Tanjavur Kings were their relationship with the temples and patronizing the performance arts. In the following section, I illustrate this complex relationship, between the temples, the royals and the performance arts, showing that 'religion' and 'secular' domains were not distinct in these kingdoms.

2.3   *Temples, Sovereignty and Legitimacy*

By the 14th century, the temples in South India had become important centres for what we now differentiate as 'religious,' 'social,' 'political,' and 'economic' functions of the kingdoms. Temple construction became an important project undertaken by the kings of both Vijayanagara and Tanjavur. The temples served as the space where kingship was initiated, legitimized and functioned through invocation of the divine. For instance, the first king of the Vijayanagara Empire, Harihara I's coronation was conducted in the Virupaksha Temple at the presence of *Virupaksha* (Siva), the kingdom's tutelary deity. It was essential for the kings to perform rituals or coronations in the presence of the deity (in the temples or in the presence of the processional form of the deity) to give legitimacy to their kingship in the presence of the divine. Such a ritual signified the descending of the divine upon the king after which he embodied the divine. Kings took on the names of the tutelary deities as titles reiterating their position

as an embodiment and representative of the divine.[36] Thus, rituals were key to rite to passage to claim or reclaim legitimacy to the royal throne, and most rituals were performed in the spaces built for specific purposes closer to the temples. However, some festivals such as *navarāthri* (see below) involved rituals that were conducted in both temples and royal palaces. Thus, modern understanding of 'political' and 'religious' realms as distinct was not present historically since the function of the temples and the kingly courts were intertwined; rituals acted as a conduit between these two seats of power aiding each of these appropriate authority and legitimacy from the other.

2.3.1 Legitimizing Kingship through Rituals

Rituals had an important role in the Vijayanagara Empire and the Tanjavur Kingdom. The rituals were performances with symbolism that reiterated the king's 'unquestionable' right to rule the kingdom. More importantly, such reiteration was done through symbolisms used in the rituals to show that the deity has bestowed the power on the king or the king, himself, as a reincarnation of the deity. For example, Sastri says that Krishnadēvarāyā celebrated his coronation on the birthday of the Hindu deity Krishna, to "convey the suggestion that the king was an incarnation of the Lord."[37]

Historically, the kings with the help of Brahmin priests[38] performed rituals according to the *āgamic* tradition (traditions mentioned in the *Vēdas*) in order to attain or justify one's kingship. Thus, rituals such as *asvamēdha yāgam*[39] (lit.

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[36] Stein, *The New Cambridge History of India*, 56.

[37] Sastri, *A History of South India*, 266; Stein, *The New Cambridge History of India*, 56.

[38] In some cases, the Brahmin priests performed rituals on behalf of the king.

[39] It is an elaborate ritual of horse being selected for sacrifice and let to roam the country freely for 30 days protected by the king's warriors; on the 31st day, the horse is sacrificed to the tutelary deity after which the queen plays the role of a widow for a night grieving over the dead

'horse sacrifice') were common during the Pallava period before the 14th century. Titles praising the king and indicating the relationship between the king and the divine (such as the king being a descendant of the tutelary deity) were bestowed upon him. Whilst discussing the ritualistic nature of the Vijayanagara Empire, Stein uses the term "ritual sovereignty"[40] to explain the relationship between the anointed king and his chieftains. Thus, he says:

> . . . sovereignty in the Vijayanagara Kingdom was conceived of as divided or shared. Its kings claimed to rule the whole of the peninsula . . . a claim which is dominated here as ritual sovereignty, distinguishing, thereby, between the political authority that numerous ruling families enjoyed . . . and the recognition by all of these *utaiyar* [ruling families] of the special status of the king.[41]

What he does here is to not only distinguish between sovereignty attained through rituals and political power, but also to define sovereignty initiated and legitimized through rituals as a category that is distinct from non-ritual sovereignty (to mean 'non-religious' sovereignty). However, as I show in this section on rituals and the next section on legitimacy of kingship through giving gifts and titles, in both Vijayanagara and Tanjavur, there was no distinction between sovereignty through rituals and political power. In addition, all legitimate ends of power were subordinated to the cosmic principle of *dharma*. Whilst *dharma* is often translated as 'law' in English, it encompasses several aspects: rituals, the king's sovereignty (cosmic law of which the king is the protector and administrator) but also the hierarchy in the society that is in part a division of labor but also permeates all aspect of life. This cosmic principle encompasses *varnāshramadharma.*

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horse. There are different modern interpretation of the rituals in modern understanding, one such being *mēdha* to mean not sacrifice but worship.

[40] Stein, *The New Cambridge History of India*, 62.

[41] Ibid., 62-63. Emphasis original.

It is important to briefly discuss *varnāshramadharma* here to understand how the king was seen as the center of the universe administering the divine law or *rājadharma*. *Manusmriti* is a text that describes *varnāshramadharma* as

> social obligations and duties of the various castes (*varna*) as well as of individuals of different stages of life (*asrama*), the proper forms of kingship, the nature of social and sexual relations between men and women of different castes, ritual practices of many kinds but mostly those connected with life-cycle transitions and domestic affairs, as well as procedures for the adjudication of different kinds of everyday quarrels and disputes.[42]

Manusmriti is generally translated in English as the Law of Manu.[43] However, the Sanskrit term *smriti* translates as tradition and not law. Therefore, *manusmriti* is a text that assigns various *dharmas* to people based on their castes. Most medieval and late medieval kings discussed here followed the prescription in the text in order to maintain 'the divine order' in their kingdom and also to ensure that their authority would not be challenged or lost by straying away from these *dharmas*. Castes were hierarchized based on various principles of which division of labor was <u>one</u>. However, as Dirks argues, understanding the caste-system of India in its entirety within the framework of *varnāshrama* and hierarchy was a colonial construct specifically of the British.[44] Thus, the caste-system was not a static system of substances in a fixed

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[42] Nicholas B. Dirks, *Castes of Mind: Colonialism and the Making of Modern India* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2001), 34. This has equivalents in, for example, Jewish and Muslim contexts: understandings of 'law' as about the whole of life, governing different relationships between different aspects of life.

[43] One of the specific reasons for such mis-translation of *smriti* is the understanding that *Manu* (generally understood as progenitor of mankind and <u>therefore</u> the creator Brahma) was handed down set of laws for the humankind by the divine. To have laws handed down by the divine is then understood as laws and not just a tradition. It must be noted that Brahma is the first *Manu* whilst there are several *Manus* in different periods of time.

[44] Dirks, *Castes of Mind*, 14. I specifically do not elaborate on this except to indicate how this hierarchy worked within these kingdoms because that would be beyond the scope of this thesis. Modern, Western understanding of caste-system is problematic, which is mirrored in Indian understanding of the same. Thus, caste-system is seen as a race-based stratification of the society, a vocation-based stratification of the society or as a necessary divine order as mentioned in the *Vēdas* and the *Bhagavad Gita*. For more on caste-system as systematized understanding of India as a colonial construct, see Dirks, *Castes of Mind,* 14. On how this was dealt within nationalist politics in the early 20th century, see Partha Chatterjee, *Nation and Its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1993).

mechanical order, but more a dynamic system of hierarchical relations between castes, subcastes, clans, and does not refer, in the Indian case, to fixed essences but strategically deployed statuses.

Rituals enabled the king to achieve sovereignty, but also signified the authority of the king to conduct those rituals, thus reiterating the king's power. Thus, rituals and the king's authority shared a symbiotic relationship. Moreover, on the one hand, the king's authority to bestow titles upon the chieftains signified his authority. On the other hand, the chieftains' relationship to the anointed king was not merely ritualistic as Stein argues. Rather, through the rituals and by receiving gifts and titles from the king, the chieftains' sovereignty over the lands they were ruling was recognized. Thus, there was no distinction between ritual sovereignty and political power; rather, both were one and the same.

According to Dirks, during the Vijayanagara period, the most common rituals (or gifts, as he calls) were "Tulāpurusadāna (or [T]ulabhāra), the weighing of the king against gold [on a scale], and the hiranyagarbha, or the birth from a golden embryo)."[45] That gold was then donated to the temple to be made into jewelry for the tutelary deity. Thus, rituals were important to maintain *dharmic* rule over the land as prescribed in the *manusāstra* or *manusmriti*; but specific actions or objects used in the rituals represented specific meanings: horses signified the military prowess and valor of the king and gold was the most precious of metal during that time. The most appropriate term to describe this symbolic gesture, of the king gifting gold to be melted and made into jewelry to be worn by the God, is *arpanippu* in Tamil which means that the

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[45] Dirks, *The Hollow Crown*, 37.

king attains oneness with God, not in the sense of *nirvana*[46] but to have given up himself as a gift (or an object that represents him in weight) to the divine represented by a specific deity. These gestures were important for his kingship, like a performance that was mandatory to acknowledge his power and relationship to the deity. In addition, these rituals elevated the status of the king to that of the tutelary deity, but also declared him a sovereign king of an independent state.[47] The latter was very significant at a period of constant invasions from powerful neighboring empires.

It would be helpful to understand the conduction rituals as performativity, a performance of a constructed identity. There is mutuality in this performativity: rituals are <u>performed</u> by the priests, the king and the chieftains to solidify each other's power, sovereignty and prestige. Such a performance constructed the identity in which the king is in the center with absolute power as an administrator of *dharma* and embodying the divine whilst the chieftains, temples, priest and artists derive (<u>at the same time</u>, grant) legitimacy to him. Butler, albeit in a different context, emphasizes on the imperativeness of repetition for performativity to 'take place.' Thus, she says, "Performativity is a matter of reiterating or repeating the norms by which one is constituted."[48] In addition, this repetition was a norm, as Inden says, the king underwent *pattābhishekam* (lit. royal unction) every year to "renew the king's sovereignty."[49] *Navarāthri* was one such ritual-laden festival that was celebrated every year that solidified the king's authority.

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[46] According to yogic traditions, *nirvana* is described as the transcendental state of being (or non-being) when soul is in oneness with the divine.

[47] Stein, *The New Cambridge History of India*, 37-38.

[48] Judith Butler, "Critically Queer," *A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 1, no. 1 (1993): 22.

[49] Ronald Inden, *Cultural-Symbolic Constitutions in Ancient India* (Mimeo, 1978), 20, quoted in Dirks, *The Hollow Crown*, 40.

In the Vijayanagara Empire, the *navarāthri*[50] festival was an important part in invoking the king's and his family's relationship to their tutelary deity.[51] *Navarāthri* (also called *mahānavami*) literally means nine nights, a festival with different rituals on each day including temple processions and special *puja* (lit. rituals surrounding worship) showcasing the king's solemn authority to rule over the land and to "stimulate the cosmic flow of gifts and fertility."[52] Verghese argues that celebrating public festivals such as *navarāthri* and giving gifts to the temples were ways to legitimize the Vijayanagara Kings' authority because they began their empire usurping the throne from associates of the Delhi Sultanate (as discussed on p. 76ff above).[53] Also, as Breckenridge points out, Sētupati of Ramnad, another princely state as Tanjavur, chose to reify his kingship through grand rituals at the time social and economic upheaval in his kingdom.[54]

Navarāthri festival encompassed many symbolisms: firstly, all the smaller kings, subordinates, officials and chiefs assembled in the city where the king celebrated the festival thereby, signifying the wholeness the king embodied and the centrality of his power in the empire. In other words, the sovereignty of the king was acknowledged in relation to his chieftains. But the celebrations took

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[50] For more detailed historical description of the festival and celebration, Robert Sewell, *A Forgotten Empire: Vijayanagar; A Contribution to the History of India* (London: Swann Sonnenschein & Co., Ltd., 1900), accessed April 08, 2013, http://archive.org/stream/aforgottenempir00paesgoog#page/n16/mode/2up chap. 1. This festival is still celebrated in North and South India but with different rituals corresponding to those parts. Thus, whilst *navarāthri* in Brahmin households in Tamil Nadu entails ritual of displaying clay dolls for nine days with the ninth day involving worshipping books and tools, in Andhra Pradesh and North India, it entails rituals for nine days, different ones for every day. In Northeast India, the festival is called *durga pooja*. See Carol Breckenridge, "From Protector to Litigant–Changing Relations Between Hindu Temples and the Raja of Ramnad," *Indian Economic Social History Review* 14, no. 75 (1977): 75-106.

[51] Stein, *The New Cambridge History of India*, 132.

[52] Anila Verghese, "Deities, Cults and Kings at Vijayanagara," *World Archaeology* 36, no. 3 (2004): 428.

[53] Verghese, "Deities, Cults and Kings at Vijayanagara," 429.

[54] Breckenridge, "From Protector to Litigant," 100.

place in the vicinity of the temple of the tutelary deity, which meant that the king was the representative-center of the deity, who was the absolute center. It also showed that the smaller kings acknowledged his authority while the king bestowed gifts and titles upon them.[55] Secondly, rituals were performed both by the king and the Brahmin priests (on the king's behalf) indicating that the king, the arbiter of *dharma*, also has the authority to transcend *varnāshramadharma*. In other words, there is an interesting movement between the *varnas* or caste-hierarchy here: the Brahmins as 'twice-born' were placed on top of the hierarchy, and the king would belong to a caste called Kshatriya (or warriors). Yet, within the *dharmic* principle, the king, on the one hand, as a divine-incarnate, transcends *varnāshramadharma*, but on the other hand also upholds the *dharma* when the Brahmin priests perform the rituals.

In Tanjavur Kingdom, the practice of celebrating *navarāthri* began after the decline of the Vijayanagara Empire in the mid-16th century. By this period, Tanjavur and other princely kingdoms were becoming "independent polities."[56] Nevertheless, the purpose of celebrating this festival was to mirror the kingship of the Vijayanagara overlords and to claim the same legitimacy of kingship as them. Breckenridge describes a particular *navarāthri* celebration in 1892 in the Kingdom of Ramnad, another princely state like Tanjavur[57] that included the anointment of the king before he performed rituals for the tutelary deity. His royal sword and sceptre were placed at the feet of the deity and returned to the king after the worship to symbolize the deity's blessings and power restored to

[55] John M. Fritz, "Vijayanagara: Authority and Meaning of a South Indian Imperial Capital," *American Anthropologist* 88, no. 1 (1986): 49.

[56] Stein, *The New Cambridge History of India*, 131.

[57] Dirks, *The Hollow Crown*, 79.

the king.[58] According to Breckenridge, in Tamil Nadu, a tenth day was added to the festival of nine nights during which an event called *āyudha pūja* (lit. 'worshipping tools') was added, which, she says "[f]or the king, meant honouring his weapons, and for the clerk his stationery."[59] The celebrations were significant for princely states such as the Tanjavur and Ramnad Kingdoms. After the demise of the Vijayanagara Empire, princely states such as the Tanjavur and Ramnad that became increasingly autonomous mirrored these celebrations to signify that their sovereignty equalled that of their former Vijayanagara overlords. In fact, Dirks points out that smaller chieftains under the Tanjavur Kings emulated them for the same effect[60] in relation to the center. Thus, there was a synergistic relationship between the metropole and the periphery which ensured functioning and sustenance of legitimacy of each other that was solidified through rituals. However, each of these peripheries was a center of their own smaller kingdoms, which functioned mostly by mirroring the practices of the metropole.

Thus, while the kings' authority spread through conquests, it originated from the temples and rituals that are, in a modern sense, understood as belonging to the 'religious' sphere, coronation being a prime example. It would be impossible to understand the power of the kings only as 'secular' and 'political.' That being one aspect of the relationship between the kings and temples, the second aspect that both proves and affirms the kings' sovereignty was giving gifts to the temples, Brahmins, smaller kings and chieftains and performers. In doing so, a king became an incarnation of the divine and possessed the ability to perform deeds according to "dharma (the rightful order

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[58] Ibid., 82-84.

[59] Breckenridge, "From Protector to Litigant," 82.

[60] Dirks, "The Pasts of a Pālaiyakārar," 676.

of things; rājadharma, the duty of the king, is the protection of this order)."[61]

Gifts included lands, jewellery, and titles; and the ability to donate to a temple

raised the status of the donor in society and in relation to the king.[62]

2.3.2 Legitimizing Kingship through Gifts and Titles

The appropriate term to describe gift giving is *inām* to mean tax-free lands;

terms such as donation do not deliver the meaning because of the context

within which *inām* is given and what it represents within the cultural context of

the then Tamil society. Land gifts called *brahmadēya* were given to Brahmins to

create settlements called *agrahāram*.[63] These settlements were closer to the

temples thus making temple management easier. Lands to Brahmans were

extensive during festivals such as *navarāthri*; they were the priests and

performed the rituals for the king. However, they were also the medium

between the king and the deity; therefore, to honour them is to honour the

deity. Thus, the Vijayanagara and the Tanjavur Kings and their chieftains

followed the practice to be recognized as *dharmic* rulers because it meant that

the king was upholding "the observances of all castes and orders

[varnāshramadharma]."[64]

Additionally, the kings gave tax-free lands as grants called *maniyam* that was

a part of the revenue system.[65] As Dirks explains, these lands were given to

various parties in the village with multiple occupations who could then

contribute to the revenue system.[66] Land grants to the temples were "made to

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[61] Dirks, *The Hollow Crown*, 36.

[62] Stein, *The New Cambridge History of India*, 65.

[63] Dirks, *The Hollow Crown*, 103.

[64] Ibid., 37.

[65] Ibid., 120.

[66] Ibid.

fulfil kingly dharma, to sustain the dharma of Brahmans, to earn merit, and to bring prosperity to the kingdom."[67] Land grants as *inām* or *maniyam* meant that often, full ownership of land was transferred to receiver. Ownership here meant freehold of the land. Furthermore, such ownership of land then became an inalienable right because it indicated the sovereignty of the king, that his grant transcended the laws because he represented the divine. In other cases, especially in the case of temples, land was (what we now understand as) leased to mean that the agricultural produce from the land sustained the temples. In the case of Brahmins, lands given as *inām* were used for agriculture for which people belonging to the lower rank in the caste hierarchy were hired. Moreover, giving tax-free lands to the temples was an essential role of the king in terms of endowment. Dirks says

> [O]ne of the fundamental requirements of Indic kingship was that the king be a munificent provider of fertile lands for Brahmans . . . perform sacrifices and provide ritual services for the king so as to ensure and protect his prosperity and that of his kingdom; for temples, which were the centers of worship; for festivals such as Dasara which renewed the sovereignty of the king and regenerated the king . . . [68]

In addition to *brahmadēya*, the kings gave gifts, titles, and emblems honoring the subjects, the chieftains and Brahmins. In most cases, the recipients were smaller kings and chieftains who received them for either performing some valorous deeds or upholding *dharma*. The gift giving was central to the relationship between the Vijayanagara overlords and the smaller kings for "all those who were given (and who accepted) gifts became parts of the whole king, and by implication of the king's realm."[69] In the case of smaller kings such as Nāyakas and Marāthās, their ability to bestow titles on the chieftains and to

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[67] Ibid., 128.

[68] Ibid., 121.

[69] Ibid., 129.

receive emblems and titles from the Vijayanagara overlords legitimized their kingship. As Dirks says

> the relationship is always one of periphery to center, and of part to whole; the periphery (*pālayakkarars*) is always oriented to the center (great kings), even as the metonymic part (emblems) only derives meaning from its relation to the whole (the sovereignty, and the full set of emblems of a great king.[70]

Also, according to Dirks, donation to the temples and Brahmans, imitating their overlords, elevated their status to smaller kings.[71] There was thus reciprocity in giving gifts and titles but also mutuality in receiving legitimacy from each of these seats of power.

In these kingdoms, the ownership of land was threefold: by the temples, by Brahmins and other citizens, and individual ownership. The first two were granted by the king, whilst the final meant that the individuals had the right to own lands but still came under the purview of the king. In the Vijayanagara and the Tanjavur Kingdoms, the titles had more <u>value</u> if not the same as the lands. Also, the titles were valued based on honor and respect, and so were the lands. Thus, when a chieftain rose to the occasion by raising troops to help the king of the princely state of Ramnad, he was bestowed with title incorporating the king's own name, banners and palanquin;[72] it was the greatest honour the chieftain could have received — recognition from his king. However, as Dirks argues, the practice of giving lands as *inām* must be understood in relation to the prevailing social contexts.[73] To the king, it was an honor marking his sovereignty and authority, and to the receiver (Brahmin or priest or village

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[70] Dirks, "The Pasts of a Pālaiyakārar," 671.

[71] Dirks, *The Hollow Crown*, 52.

[72] Ibid., 105.

[73] Ibid., 116-120.

headman), the gift signified the king's honor and recognition of him or his deeds.

However, Appadurai points out that mere donation to temples did not constitute the king's power. In addition to donation, the king had to provide protection[74] for which *pālayakkarars*[75] (especially the maravars, who belonged to the warrior-clan) helped in protecting villages and agricultural produce from burglary and looting. They, in turn, received land grants from the king for their services thus representing an integrated revenue system. Finally, a king's sovereignty and its legitimacy also depended on his relationship with the leaders of *ashramic* traditions and their institutions called *matam*.

2.3.3 Legitimizing Kingship through Association with '*Vēdantic* Institutions'

Historically, *Vēdantic* institutions played a crucial role in reiterating the power of the king through his association with the leaders called *matādhipati* (lit. 'leader of the *matam*'[76]) and the patronage they received towards their *matam*. These *matams* were specialized extensions of the temples, as Appadurai puts, "Temples were fundamental for the maintenance of kingship; [D]ynamics sectarian leaders provided the links between kings and temples; [I]n a specific ethnosociological sense, kingly action re: temple-conflict was not legislative but administrative."[77] Verghese illustrates the relationship between the Kings of Vijayanagara and *matādhipati* by saying " . . . while the Deities, cults and kings

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[74] Appadurai, "Kings, Sects and Temples in South India," 52.

[75] Especially, the maravars who belonged to the warrior-clan helped in protecting villages and agricultural produce from burglary and looting.

[76] *Matam* in Tamil refers to a space where rituals are performed in front of a gathered group of people. In this context, *matam* refers to both such physical space and also association or a group that identifies with a specific *Vēdantic* philosophy such as *Dvaita, Advaita* or *Vishistadvaita*.

[77] Appadurai, "Kings, Sects and Temples in South India," 48.

at Vijayanagara temples and sectarian leaders bestowed honours and blessings on the sovereign, the ruler in turn conferred on them protection and riches."[78] She also argues that the kings patronized and fostered various cults and their deities as well.[79] Also, an important aspect of patronizing a *matam* and enhancing association with *matādhipati* was to build temples for those sects. Conflict between Saivism and Vaishnavism was rife in Tamil country during the periods of the Vijayanagara and the Tanjavur kings. Therefore, in order for the kings of Vijayanagara, and specifically the Nāyaka and the Marāthā of Tanjavur who were from the north to get legitimacy from the Tamil people, they aligned themselves with the *matādhipati* of either Saivism or Vaishnavism and endowed to local temples through these leaders.[80] The Sangama and the Sāluva (first two dynasties of the Vijayanagara Empire) were Saivites (worshippers of Siva); the last dynasty, however, (the Tuluva) 'converted' to Vaishnavism (worshippers of Vishnu).[81] This meant increase in patronage to Vaishnavite temples (through temple building and support) and *matam*. Thus, the Kings of Vijayanagara undertook the task of building temples for the deities Siva and Vishnu depending on the *matam* they patronized. Appadurai argues that these complex relationships between the kings and the *matams* strengthened their stability in the Tamil Country.[82] These *matams* were supported by *ināam* land, as Stein puts it,

> Temples and sectarian (matha) [*matams*] centers were supported by those in political authority through their donations of money revenues from that income enjoyed as a political right . . . kings and other great men of the Vijayanagara age exchanged material

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[78] Verghese, "Deities, Cults and Kings at Vijayanagara," 428-429.

[79] Ibid., 429.

[80] Dirks, *The Hollow Crown*, 47; Stein, *The New Cambridge History of India*, 66.

[81] Valarie Stoker, "Polemics and Patronage in Sixteenth-Century Vijayanagara: Vyāsatīrtha and the Dynamics of Hindu Sectarian Relations," *History of Religions* 51, no.2 (2011): 134.

[82] Appadurai, "Kings, Sects and Temples in South India," 47.

resources which they commanded for temple honours through the agency of sect leaders in order to gain control of political constituencies that might otherwise have proved refractory.[83]

In addition to the patronage, the kings were involved in dispute-arbitration between the temples. Thus, the kings derived their authority by patronizing and protecting the *Vēdantic* institutions. Appadurai argues that this dispute arbitration was central to asserting the power and authority of the king much as the relationship between the kings and the temples that was negotiated by leaders of these institutions.[84]

This raises an important question: what were the conflicts between different *Vēdantic* schools and whether conflict between these different schools problematized the 'whole' (although typically means 'Christian Truth,'[85] here to warrant to use of the term 'sect' to refer to these schools)? In his essay on conflict within *Vēdantic* schools specifically between two sub-schools within *vishistadvaita*, Appadurai points to certain fundamental differences between these schools that caused several conflicts, which he calls "scholastic fission"[86] and "intellectual difference."[87]

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[83] Stein, *The New Cambridge History of India*, 65-66.

[84] Appadurai, "Kings, Sects and Temples in South India," 50. According to modern understanding of Vēdanta schools, leaders of the ashramic institutions that represent different schools of *Vēdanta* philosophy, such as *dvaita*, *advaita*, *visistadvaita*, belong to the 'religious' sphere. Thus, they are consistently referred to as 'sects,' their leaders as sectarian leaders and power struggle between different *Vēdanta* institutions as 'sectarian politics' by scholars (as Stein quote above shows). However, Fitzgerald argues that the term 'sect' has a pejorative connotation in Christian history with reference to "the impact of divisions within the totality of 'religion' understood as Christian truth." See, Fitzgerald, "Who Invented Hinduism?," 115. In response to Lorenzen's argument that Catholic missionaries used the term 'sect' to refer to Muslims and Vaishnavas, he adds that "It [sect] has been mainly used as a negative, perhaps deriving from the implication that when a part of the whole is emphasized or given greater important, then it is destructive of the unity of the whole." See, Fitzgerald, "Who Invented Hinduism?," 124.

[85] Ibid.

[86] Appadurai, "Kings, Sects and Temples in South India," 55.

[87] Ibid., 56.

Thus, whilst the *Advaita* School emphasized "metaphysical severity,"[88] *visistadvaita* emphasized "popular devotionalism"[89] that gave less importance to *Vēdic* rituals and more temple-centered worship. Historically, conflicts between the schools arose due to not just the importance of specific rituals but also the doctrines that supported these rituals. Importantly, except for the *Visistadvaita* School founded by Ramanuja, other schools followed *varnāshramadharma*.[90] However, the popularity of a school was deemed on the patronage received from the king through temple building. Thus, these schools received their support and legitimacy in the region from the kingly court. Yet, conflict-arbitration between schools, as indicated above, was a significant mark of the king's sovereignty. In addition, the king received support from the leaders of these *matams*. However, it is doubtful whether these conflicts were seen as necessarily disrupting the 'whole,' which in this context did not refer to 'Hinduism' (as I have argued so far that such a unified notion of a 'religion' is a colonial construct) but rather to the king himself as the administrator of the *dharmic* principle and the kingdom, the spatial representation of his administration. In other words, these conflicts were not seen as denying the legitimacy of the 'whole' (as opposed to the case of different doctrinal disputes within Christianity in the 17th and 18th century Europe that were cast as 'dangerous heresy') because here again both kings and the leaders of these schools shared a symbiotic relationship depending on each other for the legitimacy of power and sustenance.

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[88] Ibid., 55.

[89] Ibid.

[90] Ibid., 58. This, historically, is true. A popular anecdote from Ramanuja's biography is that his *gurus* traditionally taught a specific Vishnu *mantra* (that when chanted repetitiously, led to *moksha*) only to the pupils and that this *mantra* was regarded as a secret. When Ramanuja learned the *mantra*, he shouted to the world atop a *gopura* (a tall tower-structure at the entrance of temples in India) because he believed that tools to worship Vishnu must be available to everyone irrespective of their caste or class.

Another category that is set off as distinct from 'religious,' which contemporarily is understood to represent the 'secular' realm, is 'economics.' However, in these kingdoms of South India, one of the multi-facet roles of the temples was to sustain the local economy.

2.4   Substantive Economics of Temples

Another aspect of the myriad roles the temples played in these kingdoms was their contribution towards the revenue system through agriculture and irrigation using *maniyam* received from the state. According to Stein, the patronage towards temple development was a strategy to cater to the agrarian economy. Vijayanagara was situated in a dry zone that was heavily dependent on tank irrigation;[91] this was perhaps the main reason for the Vijayanagara Kings to capture the Tanjavur Kingdom, which was situated in the fertile region of the Kaveri delta. However, more importantly, temple tanks played the role of irrigation tanks in these regions. The temples were large landholders who "deploy[ed] . . . money endowments as investments in irrigation works in 'temple villages' in order to increase the income upon which temples had a claim."[92] According to Dirks, historically *brahmadēya* was given to Brahmins, who in association with the local agrarian groups, established their influence over agricultural production, distribution and consumption.[93] "Lands were given away . . . when insufficient cultivable land was available for such grants, the king gave grants of forest land to be brought under cultivation or embarked upon predatory warfare for honor, fame, booty, and new lands."[94]

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[91] Stein, *The New Cambridge History of India*, 21.

[92] Ibid., 24.

[93] Dirks, *The Hollow Crown*, 30.

[94] Ibid., 53.

Thus, the temples played a critical role in transforming dry zones into mixed agricultural lands[95] and the Vijayanagara Kings gave lands to the temples to be utilized for agricultural purposes. Moreover, the food offered to the deity, called *prasādam*, was either gifted or sold, thus contributing to the larger revenue system.[96] While the selling of *prasādam* contributed directly to the temple revenues, gifting *prasādam* was a crucial aspect of honoring royal temple patrons. The right to receive *prasādam* was first a symbol of honor, a title bestowed by the kings. *Prasādam* was sacred because it was food blessed by the deity.[97] However, when returned by the king and received by others, it was an honor for it was an extension of the king himself, the king embodying the deity. Even today, *prasādam* is an integral part of temple economy. The food was (and is) produced in large scale, a portion is offered to the deity, and the rest is sold. In smaller temples, the food is distributed to the people free of charge to perform the *dharmic* function of feeding the hungry and poor. There was, therefore, a system of distributive economy, the temple sustaining itself through agriculture and *prasādam* but also the region through irrigational tanks.

However, towards the end of 19th century, the colonial government restricted land grants towards temples by introducing the Permanent Settlement Agreement. According to this agreement, the colonial government created *Zamindars* (Persian word for landlords) who were permanently settled on estates for which they had to pay revenue to the government. According to Dirks, the British government was convinced that this agreement would

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[95] Stein, *The New Cambridge History of India*, 25.

[96] Ibid., 96.

[97] An interesting saying in Tamil describes the exact nature of *prasādam*. '*āvi unakku; amudhu enakku*'- literally, 'the aroma is for you, the food is for me.' Addressing the deity, it means food is offered (Tamil-*padaitthal*) to the deity but as an idol, the deity can only take in the aroma; the food that is left is for the worshipper; *amudhu* has two meanings: food or nectar of immortality, which is any food blessed by the deity.

redirect the local chiefs' focus from local warfare to agricultural management.[98] However, the lands as gifts and grants signified more than merely a part of revenue system; it was a mark of honor, prestige and authority. Moreover, the temples played multi-faceted roles one being sustaining the local economy. Restricting land grants to the temples indicates that the colonial government saw temples as 'religious' spaces[99] and lands as a part of 'economics' that is 'secular' and somehow, these two categories cannot be merged. However, as I have shown so far, historically, these categories were not distinct; the temples, royals, and their sovereignty were embedded in the totality of social relations of which patronage to performance arts was one.

2.5   *Patronage of Performing Arts*

Pre-Vijayanagara Tamil empires such Cērā, Cōla, Pāndyan and Pallava patronized arts and literature extensively. I look at the patronage in Vijayanagara Empire to give context to the patronage in Tanjavur because the latter drew, to a larger extent, examples from the former. In both the Vijayanagara Empire and the Tanjavur Kingdom, music and dance were intertwined; therefore, performance arts were patronized collectively.

2.5.1   Temples: Space for Worship, Space for Performance

As a space for performance and in many cases residence for performers, patronage to the temples was patronage to the performance arts. Music bands often resided within the temple complex or closer to the temples and were involved in the daily worship. Performance in the temple consisted of two types of bands: a) *chinna mēlam* (small band), comprising of dancing girls, also

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[98] Dirks, *The Hollow Crown*, 23.

[99] Ibid., 120.

known as *devadāsis*,[100] percussionists and *nattuvars* (dance masters), and b) *periya mēlam* (large band) that consisted of musicians who played called *nāgaswaram* (a wind instrument) and were accompanied by percussion instrument called *tavil* (a small drum). *Devadāsis* performance was a part of the daily ritual of offering food to the deity. Because the performance of the bands was part of daily worship at the temple, patronage to the temples also supported the bands. In the kingly court, whilst *devadāsis* were a part of regular performances, *mēlam* performed during special occasions such as the *navarāthri* festival.

Accounts on music patronage describing the temples built and patronized by both the Vijayanagara Kings and the Tanjavur Kings mark a similarity between the two. For instance, the king's gifts to the temples were used to support the performers; and the kings built temples that provided a performance space and livelihood for them. Saletore quotes the Portuguese traveller Paes' description concerning temple ritual, kingship and performing arts as: "They (i.e., the Brahmans) feed the idol every day . . . when he eats women dance before him who belong to that pagoda . . . and all girls born by these women belong to the temple."[101] Thus, daily rituals of the temple accompanied performing arts, dance and music, which the deity enjoyed. During the *navarāthri* festival (described earlier), *devadāsis* were a prominent part of the celebrations, performing along with other spectacles such as gymnastic races and other performances by military battalions.[102] Both *chinna mēlam* and *periya mēlam* were integral parts of the daily temple rituals and festivals that involved processions.

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[100] *Dēva-* God; *dāsi-* Servant. See Chapter 4 on how gender and sexuality were regulated in the public sphere through performance arts.

[101] Bhasker Anand Saletore, *Social and Political Life in the Vijayanagara Empire* (A.D. 1346-A.D. 1646) (Madras: B.G. Paul & Co., 1934), 409.

[102] Breckenridge, "From Protector to Litigant," 84.

Subramanian says that "the mēlams had a repertoire that suited the requirements of the temple-propitiatory as well as entertainment."[103] As I show in the forthcoming sections, *devadāsis* also performed in the royal courts. According to Soneji,

> In precolonial South India, devadasis . . . performed in three contexts: the temple, the court, and the private home of a patron. The temple performances could be further sub-divided according to the sites where performance took place: the temple sanctum, the temple pavilion (mandapa) and the temple procession.[104]

The poets and the kings composed songs for *devadāsis* to learn and perform in the court and in the temples, thereby underscoring that dance and music, as performance arts, were inter-twined; *devadāsis* were both singers and dancers and were trained in both arts. Temples were also often used as centers for performing dance-dramas.[105]

However, contemporary understanding of Karnatic Music and Bharatnatyam as two distinct categories (even though Bharatnatyam performances are always accompanied by Karnatic Music) was constructed in the early 1900s, when music and dance were re-defined. While patronage to the temples supported music and dance performers, the king awarded privileges of the temple services to these performers as a form of honor or title. As illustrated in the sections above, the temples and the so-called 'religious' sphere had a more complex relationship with kingship and royal courts through patronage of the performance arts. Like temples, the royal courts were ritual institutions,

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[103] Lakshmi Subramanian, *From the Tanjore Court to the Madras Music Academy: A Social History of Music in South India* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 28.

[104] Davesh Soneji, "Living History, Performing Memory: Devadāsī Women in Telugu-Speaking South India," *Dance Research Journal* 36, no. 2 (2004): 33; also, for courtesan tradition in North India, see Jennifer Post, "Professional Women in Indian Music: The Death of the Courtesan Tradition" in *Women and Music in Cross-cultural Perspective* ed. Ellen Koskoff (Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 1989): 97-109.

[105] V.S. Radhika, "Development of Sadir in the Court of Raja Serfoji-II (1798-1832) of Tanjavur," (master's thesis, U of Hyderabad, 1996), 77.

which acted as centres of sacred order and power, and for the redistribution of goods, blessings, wealth and produce. Thus, like temples, the royal courts had multiple significant functions encompassing what modern understanding separate into distinct domains.

2.5.2 Kingly Patronage of Music and Dance[106]

2.5.2.1 Vijayanagara Empire (14th–16th Centuries)

The Vijayanagara kings patronized music by donating lands, endowing titles and gifting jewellery to the musicians and the dancers. In addition to patronizing arts, the kings themselves were composers and poets, much like the Tanjavur Kings. According to Saletore, in the Vijayanagara Empire, *devadāsis* were supported by the endowment provided by Brahmins and artisan communities.[107] Saletore gives examples from inscriptions of the kings who themselves were proficient in music,[108] thereby enabling them to patronize the performance arts. Oftentimes, *devadāsis* were trained to perform compositions of the king in the royal court. As Subramaniam puts, " . . . under the patronage of these rajas, many scientific treatises in music came to be written in order to reconcile the gap between the theory (lakshana) and practice (lakshya). In most

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[106] There are downsides to the type of patronage set-up I discuss in this chapter. Class-markers cut across these patronages due to hierarchical set-up of chieftains and smaller kings in these princely states. I do not discuss this in detail here due to the focus of the chapter being the embedding of arts patronage in the society as a case in point to show the lack of distinction between religion/political spheres in pre-British colonial period. However, see, Regula Burckhardt Qureshi, "Mode of Production and Musical Production: Is Hindustani Music Feudal?" in *Music and Marx: Ideas, Practice, Politics*, ed. Regula Burckhardt Qureshi (London: Routledge, 2002), 81-105.

[107] Saletore, *Social and Political Life*, 362-363.

[108] Ibid., 413; Krishnaswami Ayyangar, *Sources of Vijayanagar History* (Madras: The University of Madras, 1919), 190, 267, 194, 252.

cases, the kings themselves were the authors of many a standard lakshana grantha"[109] (lit. book of music theory).

During the 14th century, when the Vijayanagara Empire was at its inception, the *Haridasa* movement based on *dvaita* philosophy of Madhvācharya spread to rest of South India. The composers of the movement, called the Haridasas used poems, music compositions and music performances to spread the philosophy. Vidyāranya, the minister of the Vijayanagara Empire and a composer, wrote *Sangitasara* in the 14th century, that "la[id] the theoretical foundations of Karnatic Music."[110] Also, under the rule of Immadi Devaraya II, his patron scholar Kallinatha wrote the first ever commentary on Sarangadeva's *Sangitaratnakara*, a work on music written during the 13th century. The court promoted literary and music compositions in vernacular; and an important genre patronized by the Vijayanagara court was the *prabandham*, which was the forerunner for the Dhrupad style of compositions in the north and *kriti* in the south.[111] Patronage of a particular king was also 'measured' in terms of works on music written by scholars. As with the example of Vidyāranya, in the court of the Vijayanagara King Krishnadevaraya, Bandam Lakshminarayana wrote *Sangitasuryodaya* and "dedicated [it] to the king."[112] Krishnadevaraya himself, not unlike the Tanjavur kings, had learned music and played the *vina* (a string instrument).[113] The king, in turn, awarded titles such as "Abhinavabhatacharya,[114] Rayabayankara,[115] Todaramalla[116] and Sukshma

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[109] Seetha Subramaniam, *Tanjore as a Seat of Music During the 17th, 18th and 19th Centuries* (Madras: University of Madras, 1981), 14.

[110] Subramaniam, *Tanjore as a Seat of Music*, 31.

[111] Ibid., 32.

[112] Ibid., 70.

[113] Gowri Kuppuswamy and M. Harihara, *Royal Patronage to Indian Music* (Delhi: Sundeep, 1984), 70.

[114] *Abhinavabhatacharya*- lit. young great learned Brahman or a teacher.

Bharatacharya[117]" honouring the musician.[118] These titles carried prestige and honor for the musicians and also signified the level of patronage the royal court awarded to performance arts, which as I have argued before, signified the sovereignty of the king and his kingdom. During the 16th century, in the court of the last ruling dynasty of the Vijayanagara Empire, i.e., under Aliya Rama Raya, Ramamatya authored *Svaramekalanidhi*, a treatise on music that was the forerunner for the *rāga* (lit. tunes) and *mēla* (lit. grammar) based classification used in contemporary Karnatic Music[119] that was used as an inspiration by 17th century composer Venkatamakhi for his work. Ayyangar writes that Deva Raya II patronized Vennelaganti Siddamantri and his son. Siddamantri was awarded typical awards such as *chamara* (lit. fan), *chhatra* (lit. umbrella) and the palanquin by the minister of Deva Raya II. [120] Thus, the patronage was extensive in the Vijayanagara Empire that saw writing of some important music treatises that were later used in the early 20th century to classify music as Karnatic Music. Also, because of such rich patronage history, the early 20th century musicians saw Vijayanagara as the home of Karnatic Music.

The Tanjavur patronage of performing arts emulated that of the Vijayanagara; after all, they looked up to their overlords for ritual legitimacy of their authority. Because the ability to patronize signified the sovereignty of the king, the Tanjavur Kings followed similar system to that of the Vijayanagara Kings in patronage.

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[115] *Rayabayankara*- lit. admirable prince or king of music.

[116] *Todaramalla*- lit. talented in music.

[117] *Sukshma Bharatacharya*- (note: *Sukshma* has varied meanings) in this context, lit., precise or someone who gives attention to details.

[118] Kuppuswamy and Harihara, *Royal Patronage to Indian Music*, 70.

[119] Ibid., 72.

[120] Ibid., 63.

2.5.2.2 Tanjavur Kingdom (16th–19th Centuries)

The Tanjavur Kingdom has, historically, been perceived as a cultural capital of the Tamil Country. Tanjavur was the capital of the Cōla Empire, where they built the Brahadeesvara temple, also known as the Great Temple, for their tutelary deity Shiva.[121] Accounts on the history of the patronage of performing arts in Tanjavur are inscriptional, except in the case of King Serfoji II records of whose contribution to arts are preserved in the Saraswati Mahal Library in Tanjavur. In some cases, descriptions by travelling writers and Christian missionaries have been used to construct a narrative of this history. This is more evident for the Vijayanagara Empire, on whose history Nuniz and Paes wrote extensively, which was then consolidated by Robert Sewell in 1900. Also, texts on the patronage of performing arts generally list the works of each king with a general description. Most accounts of patronage consist of embellished accounts of the patron and his performer(s) and their contribution to the growth of the art, but do not specifically describe how the performers were patronized. Also, most texts discuss the patronage of music as separate from the patronage of dance even though these two performing arts were intertwined. Of course, many musicians performed exclusively music at the royal courts and the temples; however, with regard to performers such as *devadāsis*, both arts were inter-dependent and so, was their patronage.

Nevertheless, there seems to have been a pattern in patronage: the kings authored books on music and dance, composed poems and *kritis*, and of course, patronized the performers financially. The different ways the Kings of Tanjavur patronized music were through establishment of performance centers such as

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[121] Subramaniam, *Tanjore as a Seat of Music*, 11.

Saraswati Mahāl [the library established by the Nāyakas of Tanjavur, later used by the Marāthās as well], Sangita Mahāl [music halls] and Nātaka Sālās [dance centers] in the royal palace . . . holding periodic concerts . . . honoring of musicians with valuable presents…Govinda Diksita and Sonti Venkaramanayya had the unique privilege of sharing the 'ardha simhāsana' [royal throne] with Raghunātha Nāyaka and Tulaja II respectively . . . free gifts of lands, villages, houses and founding of colonies for inhabiting musicians, dancers and artistes . . . study of the different system of music . . . patronage extended to the art of manufacturing musical instruments . . . creation of new posts to supervise the musical activities . . . endowments to temples for the maintenance of oduvars and araiyars to sing the sacred hymns . . . [122]

During the reign of Nāyakas in Tanjavur (16th-17th centuries), the patronage system of music and arts mirrored that of the Vijayanagara Kingdom. Achutappa Nāyaka, the second king of Tanjavur, appointed Govinda Dikshitar, an exponent of *advaita* as his minister. Dikshitar, as the minister of Raghunātha Nāyaka (1600-1634), patronized temples and promoted the education of Tamil and Sanskrit texts. According to Subramaniam, Raghunātha Nāyaka was an accomplished *vina* player and was well-versed in *lakshana* and *lakshya*; he composed new *rāga* and *tālā*, and wrote *Sangitasudha* at the request of his *guru*,[123] Govinda Dikshitar, who "describes in the introduction to Sangita Sudha, the extraordinary talents"[124] of the King. Raghunātha Nāyaka and his son Vijayarāghava (1643-1673) patronized musicians, poets and composers by performing *kanakabhishekam* (lit. shower of gold), which involved presenting the artiste with gold in form of jewelry and bestowing titles.[125] According to Radhika, the king also received titles from scholars and poets who visited his courts, praising his patronage to the temples, music, and the people.[126] Raghunātha Nāyaka also patronized two sons of Dikshitar, Yagnanarayana and Venkatamakhi. The latter is credited with systematizing music using the 72-

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[122] Ibid., 26-28.

[123] Ibid., 31-32.

[124] Ibid., 31.

[125] Radhika, "Development of Sadir," 20-22.

[126] Ibid., 19-20; Ayyangar, *Sources of Vijayanagar History*, 291.

melakartha system of *rāga* in his work called *Chaturdandiprakasikha*.[127] His work was written on the request of his patron Vijayarāghava Nāyaka and has been used as a premise for systematizing music during the early 20th century. Vijayarāghava himself composed *yakshagānā*, on the lives of historical characters, which incorporated dance[128] set to music; the court dancers were then trained in these compositions and they performed for the king.

At the end of Vijayarāghava Nāyaka's reign, the Marāthā rule of Tanjavur began under King Ekoji (1675–1683) of the Bhosle family. His son King Shahaji II was prolific with his patronage toward arts and literature. Records of his works and that of the preceding dynasty of Nāyakas have been preserved in the Tanjavur Saraswati Mahal Library. The king himself composed dramas and poems,[129] and is said to have collected and compiled all *gitās* and *rāgas*.[130] Sāhaji, his son, patronized musicians in his court by founding a "brahmanical colony on the banks of the river Kaveri for the perpetual performance of religious ceremonies . . . the village was named after him as Sāhajirājapuram and grew to be a centre and stronghold of Sanskrit learning, sciences, art and letters."[131] Peterson quotes *Kuravanji* composed by Saptarsi, one of Sahaji's court poets, who praised his king as: "The Lord of the Bhosala lineage, the king of the earth, he whose radiant form puts the Love god to shame, sole abode of the arts and sciences, eldest son of Ekoji . . . "[132] One can find such praises of patrons in poems by the court poets of King Serfoji II. While the Nāyakas encouraged arts,

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[127] This particular work classified and systematized *rāga* based on their grammar.

[128] Radhika, "Development of Sadir," 24.

[129] Kuppuswamy and Harihara, *Royal Patronage to Indian Music*, 92.

[130] Ibid.

[131] Ibid., 66-67.

[132] Indira Viswanathan Peterson, "Multilingual Dramas at the Tanjavur Marāthā Court and Literary Cultures in Early Modern South India," *The Medieval History Journal* 14, no. 2 (2011): 304.

Marāthās took up the task of systematizing and notating music. Thus, under their reign, the "articulation of a definite canonical standard for sampradāya or traditional music"[133] took place. "It covered the critical areas of composition and melody and rhythm structures while projecting a new normative model for the devout performer-musician, immersed in his practice."[134] Marāthās, especially King Serfoji II, focused on the *sampradaya* (lit. traditional) music, and wrote texts attempting to bridge the gap between *lakshana* (lit. music theory) and *lakshya* (lit. music practice).

2.5.2.3 King Serfoji II (1798–1832)

Among the Kings of Tanjavur, King Serfoji II (Sarabhoji in Tamil) (1798–1832) occupies a prominent position in the history of the patronage of performance arts. The predecessor to the throne, King Tulajaji II, adopted him; Tulajaji's death prompted his brother Amarsimha to usurp the throne. The British colonial government intervened and appointed the Danish Christian missionary Christian Friedrich Schwartz, who was Tulajaji's friend, as young Serfoji's mentor and tutor under the services of the British Government. The government then helped Serfoji II to regain his throne in 1798 in return for a treaty that rendered him semi-autonomous. With the ascendance of Serfoji II to the throne, the colonial government had gained more influence in the administration of Tanjavur than before; the treaty severely restricted the king's governance. As Radhika says "By this treaty, the King was to receive annually a sum of one lakh pagodas (3-1/2 lakh company's rupees) and one fifth of the net

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[133] Subramanian, *From the Tanjore Court to the Madras Music Academy*, 36.

[134] Ibid., 37.

revenue of the state; and retaining the governance of only the Fort of Thanjavur and certain areas around the Fort."[135]

Serfoji is prominently known as a king generous in his patronage to the performance arts and literature because of his general interest and training in music and literature. According to Kuppuswamy and Harihara, "Music was the main activity for Serfoji Maharaja and . . . it is said that more than 360 musicians were attached to his court."[136] Additionally, he patronized Mutthuswamy Dikshitar (later known as one of the 'Trinity of Karnatic Music.').[137] The court poets and the king himself composed many *natakas* (lit. dramas) in *kuravanji* style (described on p. 33) that were taught to *devadāsis* who then performed for the king. Through these *natakas*, the poets praised their patron for his generosity.[138] Serfoji II also patronized the Tanjavur Quartet (Cinayya, Ponnayya, Sivanandam and Vadivelu), who were known for their significant contribution to music and dance; their restructuring of dance among dancing girls went on to be incorporated into Bharatnatyam during the early 1900s. Serfoji II founded "Music, Dance and Bhagavatamela (Nātaksāla) departments . . . to execute various administrative activities such as remuneration to artists, purchase, repairing and tuning of musical instruments and also for their safe maintenance."[139]

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[135] Radhika, "Development of Sadir," 43.

[136] Kuppuswamy and Harihara, *Royal Patronage to Indian Music*, 107.

[137] Within the Karnatic Music community, Tyāgarājā, Mutthuswamy Dikshitar and Shyama Sastri were and are known as the 'Trinity' because their compositions and style marked a new era in music pedagogy and performance. Their status as the 'Trinity' was solidified during the early 20th century music 'revival' movement that saw the three composers are exemplars of *bhakti* movement based on which music was being re-defined as 'Karnatic Music.'

[138] In one such composition, the heroine extols the greatness of her hero to her friend, which extolled the praise of King Serfoji II. See, Radhika, "Development of Sadir," 211-213.

[139] Kuppuswamy and Harihara, *Royal Patronage to Indian Music*, 82.

Serfoji II's reign marked a paradigmatic shift in the approach towards performance arts. In the 19th century, Subramanian says " . . . under the active patronage of the Tanjavur court, that certain core segments of the musical tradition were systematically identified and promoted as 'pure music' . . . "[140] Trained in Western music and Indian music under Rev. Schwartz, Serfoji had an anglicized approach towards South Indian music. For example, he introduced Western notes to South Indian music and the practice of notating compositions. South Indian music had, until then, already seen the influence of Persian music when the Vijayanagara and the Tanjavur Kings invited Persian musicians to perform in their royal courts. However, Serfoji introduced *nottuswarams* (lit. Western notes) that were typically considered to fall outside the realm of South Indian music into his music compositions. According to Weidman, Serfoji II purchased instruments such as 'Irish Pipes,' French horn and harp.[141] In addition, he hosted a band consisting of Indian and Western instruments in his royal court for which he composed tunes himself, in addition to other court poets.[142] Some musicians patronized by him, such as Mutthuswami Dikshitar and his brother Baluswami Dikshitar, incorporated these Western notes in their compositions. The latter is credited for introducing the violin, until then considered a Western instrument unsuitable for Karnatic Music, to music performances. Also, predominantly, compositions until then were passed from teacher to student orally; only some students such as those of Tyāgarājā (one of the music Trinity) chose to write down his compositions. Serfoji however introduced notating compositions. The practice of notation

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[140] Subramanian, *From the Tanjore Court to the Madras Music Academy*, 28. Indian nationalists seized this idea of 'pure music' in the early 1900s to define Karnatic Music as 'religious' music and Bharatnatyam as 'religious' dance.

[141] Weidman, *Singing the Classical, Voicing the Modern*, 62.

[142] Ibid.

became mainstream towards the end of the 19th century and beginning of the 20th century, and was referred to by the Indian nationalists re-defining music as a proof that South Indian music can be (and was worthy of) scientific study. Serfoji II was one of the first kings to have patronized his friend and poet, a Christian by the name Vedanayakam Pillai. Both the patron and his poet showed immense interest in using Western scientific methodologies by incorporating European cosmological concepts in their poetry. Here, I am not making an argument of a before and after scenario of Serfoji's reign. Rather, Serfoji's Western education prompted him to take an anglicized approach towards certain aspects of his kingdom over which he still retained sovereignty. Underlying his approach is a crucial but gradual ideological shift to colonial categories, an example of which was the approach towards South Indian music. These categories took shape in the earlier part of the next century (20th century) when the Indian nationalists appropriated the categories to shape the nationalist discourses.

After the death of Serfoji II, the heir to the throne Sivaji II, patronized music like his father it seems in order to retain the legacy although his activities were severely restricted by the colonial government. The Tanjavur Saraswati Mahal Library was expanded under his reign.[143] However, with reduced sovereignty due to the gradual takeover of his kingdom by the colonial government, by the mid-1800s, the colonial government abolished court performances. Towards the end of King Sivaji II's reign, patronage to art and literature was severely restricted by the colonial government, which was gaining control over the kingdom. Breckenridge describes the *Zamindari* system introduced by the colonial government that reduced the king to a landholder with local

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[143] Subramanian, *From the Tanjore Court to the Madras Music Academy*, 83.

administrative capacity, paying taxes to the colonial government;[144] in other words, local administrative agent of the government. "In converting local royal figures into zamindars, however, the Madras Government undermined the kingship of such people."[145] After the death of Raja Sivaji II, "the Tanjavur Raj under the rule of Marāthās came to an end and the decline of royal patronage to art had a devastating effect on the art and its practitioners. The wages for the devadasis recruited to [sic] the temples maintained by the royalty, was stopped . . . "[146]

The measure included restricting land grants to musicians and performers. In 1855, the British Government annexed the kingdom.

2.6 Conclusion: From Tanjavur to Madras

Changing colonial policies towards kingship, patronage and the temples resulted in spatial shift of performers from Tanjavur to Madras. The colonial laws transformed all the above seats of power. Land grants to the temples were severely contested and restricted by the colonial British Government during the late 19th century because the colonial government distinguished between 'religious' and 'non-religious' grants; thus, grants to Brahmins were restricted, as well.[147] Consequently, these former royal figures became "semi-autonomous agent[s] for the Government of Madras . . . responsible for insuring a continuous flow of revenue to the Government."[148] Additionally, Dirks argues that the colonial government misunderstood *brahmadēya* (land given tax-free to Brahmins) and *maniyam* (tax-free land) to mean that Brahmins were exclusive

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[144] Breckenridge, "From Protector to Litigant," 76.

[145] Ibid., 76-77.

[146] Radhika, "Development of Sadir," 230.

[147] Dirks, *The Hollow Crown*, 120. See Chapter 3, p. 149ff.

[148] Breckenridge, "From Protector to Litigant," 77.

recipients of tax-free lands from the kings.[149] The government believed that the kings did not have rights over the lands because of their lack of private proprietary rights. However, as Dirks points out, "these maniyams reveal that royal grants sustained the entire structure of local village ritual."[150] Furthermore, because of the emphasis on property rights of lands, the colonial government had misconception of the ideas of 'property' and 'ownership' in relation to kingship in these kingdoms. As Dirks argues, there was a principal distinction between *pangu* (lit. share) and *kani* (lit. heritable entitlement).[151] Whilst *pangu* meant a horizontal share of the land or the temple rights across a family or village of a particular dominant caste, *kani* meant land ownership was handed down by a king or king's agent (as a gift or honor). However, in both cases, the king was the arbiter because, as Dirks says, the king as the center of the structure, had mastery over lands. Thus, *kani* was gifted by the king to a specific group of people, a family to hold *pangu* of land in the village can happen only so with the king's sanction.[152] Arguably, the colonial government saw it differently. To them, the king was not the <u>owner</u> of the property (land) and therefore, did not have any rights over it. That he had judicial power over the lands did not account for much because once temple economy and land arbitration was transformed, the king's authority was destabilized.

By the mid to late 19th century, the authority of the royal figures was confined to limited land ownership that could be leased for farming and occasional temple patronage within their means. This mean that land could no longer be *inā128m*, rather had to have some revenue for the royal figures'

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[149] Dirks, *The Hollow Crown*, 120.

[150] Ibid., 121.

[151] Ibid.

[152] Ibid., 125-126.

sustenance. However, cessation of temple patronage severely undermined their kingship because of the integral role temples played to emphasize their kingship. For instance, in 1864, in Ramnad, the court ruled

> The powers they [the royals] enjoyed as sovereigns, <u>whatever they may have been</u>, have now passed to the British Government and the present zemindar [Sētupati] can have no rights with respect to the pagoda [temple] other than those of a private and proprietary nature, which they can establish by evidence to belong to them.[153]

The colonial government intervened in the temple economy and disrupted the relationship between the temples and the king in the pretext of preventing misappropriation of temple funds.[154] However, they intended on keeping the temple ceremonies, as they were keen "to insure the contentment of the people."[155] Thus, they misconstrued the relationship the king and the temple had through these temple ceremonies, instead seeing them as festivals that only the public participated in, whilst the king's participation as being <u>only</u> ceremonial. That these rituals reified the king's relationship, to the temple and his people, was overlooked as is clear from the judgment cited above which emphasizes the need for <u>proprietary</u> rights. This meant actual ownership of the temple as either an owner or a caretaker in order to have any limited authority over the temple. By this point, the colonial government had already assigned the temple, representing the 'religious' realm, to the private sphere; accordingly, the temple rights belonged to <u>private</u> patrons and a king could embody <u>both</u> the judicial authority ('political') <u>and</u> the temple ('religious') rights,[156] thereby distinguishing between the 'religious' and 'secular' spheres in

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[153] *The Revenue Register* 6, no. 8 (1874): 171-178, quoted in Breckenridge, "From Protector to Litigant," 96. My emphasis.

[154] Breckenridge, "From Protector to Litigant," 96.

[155] Ibid.

[156] It is these distinctions, between religious/secular and inner/outer spheres, that Indian nationalists appropriated to construct Karnatic Music as 'religious' music. See Chapter 3.

a set-up where there were no such distinctions historically (as discussed above). While the kings were already denied of the judicial powers including conflict arbitration, which now rested with the colonial government and the magistrate, losing temple rights severely undermined their patronage to performance arts and <u>therefore</u>, their kingship. These concepts, the religion/secular dichotomy and the emphasis on property rights, played a central role in the construction of Karnatic Music in the early 20th century and contemporary practices of Karnatic Music that are discussed in the forthcoming chapters. Importantly, colonial emphasis on proprietary rights over lands and refusal to acknowledge *inams* and *brahmadēya* set the stage for transforming understandings on property rights and ownership rights pertaining to performance arts in the early 20th century and contemporary period, which is the central focus of this thesis. Whereas lands, gifts and titles were seen as a representation of the symbiotic relationship between royal courts, temples and royal patronage to arts in these kingdoms, colonial government insisted that property rights meant proprietary rights; this, historically, has permeated into what is now called 'Intellectual Property' wherein creativity can be copyrighted, owned and monetarily represented. This particular issue is discussed in Ch. 5.

By the mid 20th century, the colonial government prohibited all court performances by abolishing patronage in Tanjavur[157] and princely states were abolished in 1952.[158] An additional reason to such a ban may have been the perception that patronizing *devadāsi* was immoral: *devadāsis* were born into their tradition and after being trained in music and dance throughout their

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[157] Weidman, *Singing the Classical, Voicing the Modern*, 63.

[158] Regula Burckhardt Qureshi, "Female Agency and Patrilineal Constraints: Situating Courtesans in Twentieth-Century India," in *The Courtesan's Arts: Cross-Cultural Perspectives*, ed. Martha Feldman and Bonnie Gordon (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 312.

childhood, were 'donated' to the temple where they performed; the colonial government perceived the practice as 'prostitution.'[159] Thus, the authority to patronize artistes was reduced or in some cases completely abolished. According to Radhika, towards the end of King Sivaji's reign the Tanjavur Quartet lost the privileges to perform their dance numbers (having trained *devadāsis* in the same) in the royal court and appealed to the king for an intervention,[160] but the king did not have much say in these matters as his sovereignty was reduced to the position of land owners earning revenue from leasing lands for agriculture under the *Zamindari* system. With the abolishing of royal court patronage of the temples and the performance arts in the early 1900s, the performers moved to the newly emerging urbanized colonial city of Madras. Such a shift of performance arts demanded changes in its composition that would suit the new audiences and performance space. Yet, the growing nationalist movements saw a need for an identity to represent and unite the colonized peoples, and an identity to hold onto, which would reflect their traditions amongst what nationalists saw as increasing Westernized environment. The idea was that music originated from the *Vēdas* and was therefore divine.[161] However, somewhere in the history, music had become 'impure.' It was, thus, the responsibility of these Indian nationalists to 'purify' music through various measures (discussed in Chapter 3). However, as educated elites, their engagement with ideas of modernity was inevitable

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[159] Such a perception stemmed out of notions of morality in Victorian Britain and nationalist movements in India. See Chapter 4.

[160] Radhika, "Development of Sadir," 229.

[161] Schofield discusses similar movement in Mughal India pertaining to Hindustani music between 17th and 18th centuries. See Katherine Butler Schofield, "Reviving the Golden Age Again: "Classicization," Hindustani Music, and the Mughals," *Ethnomusicology* 54, no. 3 (2010): 484-517.

during the redefinition of performance arts into a 'cultural identity' they envisioned as urbanized and modern and yet uniquely 'Indian.'

In the early 20th century colonial Madras, performances were both public in music halls called *sabhās* and the temples, and at private events such as birthdays and wedding.[162] In Tanjavur, during the period of Nāyakas, Telugu became the court language and the language of poets and composers. In the 17th century, when the Marāthās succeeded the Nāyakās, they brought with them their language Marathi to the court; however, Telugu still prevailed. In fact, the Marāthā court, as Modi documents show, was multi-lingual, with Tamil and Sanskrit being used beside Telugu and Marathi. Thus, language as an expression of music was a non-issue until after colonial Madras became the new urban performance space. By the mid 1920s, Tamil nationalists protested against what they perceived as under-representation of the indigenous language of Tamil country, which was Tamil. In the next chapter, I discuss the transition of center of performance arts from Tanjavur to Madras and how the colonial Madras elites re-defined music as Karnatic Music, i.e., 'religious' music. What resulted was the birth of a domain called Karnatic Music with a new, 'rewritten' history and structure, significant changes to music pedagogy, caste-based ownership of music by the elites and designated gender roles in this new domain. However, this restoration of indigenous hegemony was not uncontested: it was questioned and protested by groups that were subjugated.

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[162] Subramanian, *From the Tanjore Court to the Madras Music Academy*, 42.

3   Music 'Lost' and Music 'Gained': 'Renaissance' In Colonial Madras

"Music like dhyanam, [meditation or prayer] takes a man out of his material surroundings and nearer to God. Indeed the function of music is unique."

— Zamindar of Seithur at the Madras Music Conference, 1929.

3.1   Introduction

By the early 1900s, most of the performers from Tanjavur had moved to the new urbanized colonial capital of Madras. Performance arts were, therefore, removed from struggling patrons who were losing their sovereignty and placed in the hands of powerful elites who had the means to act as patrons and 'purify' the arts. However, such a shift demanded changes made to the structure of the performance arts. In other words, what performances of music and dance would entail pertaining to the space where they are performed and whom they are performed for? Lakshmi Subramanian, Raymond Ries, and Jon Higgins[1] in their works have argued that the Karnatic Music and what it encompassed as a genre was embedded in social relations. Therefore, when music was re-defined as Karnatic Music in colonial Madras, the compositions that musicians performed were modified to suit the needs of the audiences and the social milieu. Thus, Subramanian rightly argues that the nationalistic movements and Anglicized attitudes of Western educated Indian nationalists played an important role in re-constructing Karnatic Music.[2] However, I go a step further and argue that the Indian nationalists (specifically, in colonial Madras) appropriated very specific ideas on the constructed distinction between

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[1] Lakshmi Subramanian, "The Reinvention of a Tradition: Carnatic Music and the Madras Music Academy 1900-1947," *The Indian Economic and Social History Review* 36, no. 2 (1999): 131-163; Raymond Ries, "The Cultural Setting of South Indian Music," *Asian Music* 1, no. 2 (1969): 22-31; Jon B. Higgins, "From Prince to Populace: Patronage as a Determinant of Change in South Indian (Karnatak) Music," *Asian Music* 7, no.2 (1976): 20-26.

[2] Subramanian, "The Reinvention of a Tradition," 132.

'religious' and 'secular' domains and colonial construction of 'Hinduism' as a unified 'religion' (and furthermore, Brahmanism as a representation of 'Hinduism') to aid this process. Such an appropriation is glaring when, as discussed in Chapter 2, pre-1900s the distinction between 'religious' and 'secular' realms were practically non-existent. Thus, in this chapter, I look at the transformation of South India — from an ideology of a holistic and hierarchical kind, to one that appropriated the constructed distinction between the 'religion' and 'secular' to redefine the Indian subject and Indian culture. The spatial shift of performance arts from Tanjavur to Madras acted as a catalyst of such a paradigmatic shift.

As discussed on p. 113ff above, brewing nationalist movements in urban India played an important role in transforming music from a performance art to Karnatic Music as a 'cultural identity.' The Madras intelligentsia, consisting of educated Brahmins and upper class Non-Brahmins, saw a need for a 'cultural identity' not only to unite diverse groups of people against the colonizers but also to establish and emphasize their cultural distinctiveness and superiority against that of the colonizers. In order to do so, the Indian elites of Madras appropriated colonial categories 'religion' and 'secular.' This chapter, thus, discussed how specific identity called Karnatic Music was born as a result of a dialectic relationship between colonial discourses on modernity and national consciousness by expanding on previous works but also looking at the transcripts of early music conferences held in colonial Madras.

In an interesting way, the Indian elites of Madras put forth this idea that Karnatic Music was somehow untouched by the colonial history of India, that it has preserved its uniqueness that is the 'Indianness' and therefore, is superior to 'materialistic Western culture.' The extent to which the 'collective' identity contributed directly to the nationalist movement is illustrated by the

involvement of Indian National Congress in revamping performance arts and establishing The Madras Music Academy (also know as The Music Academy or just the Academy). Institutionalizing music made it possible to identify and define Karnatic Music as a 'pure' representation of Indian culture on multiple levels:

a) Music was meticulously analyzed and redefined

b) Music pedagogy was regulated and organized

c) Mystic aura was constructed around historically popular composers to emphasize on the religiosity of music

d) Certain practices were deemed 'profane' and were weeded out at music conferences.

Whilst, as Schofield shows, institutionalizing and systematizing music itself is not a new process,[3] the premise for this particular process was that 'religious' realm was separate from that of 'secular,' and that Indian culture represents the 'religious' realm that is superior to that of the 'secular,' which is represented by the 'materialistic West.' Also, music belongs to the 'religious' sphere, which represents 'Hinduism.' History of Karnatic Music reconstructed by the colonial elites in the early 20th century was, in many ways, a task of creating a memory by essentially choosing particular strands of history put together to form a cogent and favorable memory for the future generations of performers and learners. This history was a mysticized and 'sacralized' view of what Karnatic Music should be or should have been. It was also what posited Karnatic Music as superior to European classical music. A look at the speeches at early music conferences conducted to establish these ideas and writings of music scholars

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[3] See Katherine Butler Schofield, "Reviving the Golden Age Again: "Classicization," Hindustani Music, and the Mughals," *Ethnomusicology* 54, no. 3 (2010): 484-517.

and Indian nationalists published in the *Journal of Madras Music Academy* shows meticulous but fascinating efforts to re-construct the history of music as the history of Karnatic Music and that of Indian culture. However, these categories were not used in an ideology-free process, as a mere figure of speech. These categories and their appropriation were powerful tools to establish a collective identity. They also served as a process to maintain the hegemony for the elites representing high caste in the hierarchy. What resulted was production of multiple Others. The primary Other in these discourses was the colonized; however, as a means to maintain the hegemony of the elites through caste-based ownership of music and dance, the process marginalized people belonging to the lower caste in the hierarchy for instance, the dancing girls and the other types of music that were deemed 'non-Karnatic' and therefore unimportant. However, as I discuss below this 'restoration' of hegemony was questioned and protested by groups that were subjugated.

The next section discusses the spatial shift of performance arts from Tanjavur to Madras. I then discuss the inception of Madras Music Academy and their central role in institutionalizing, organizing and eventually defining performance arts as Karnatic Music and Bharatnatyam. Using Partha Chatterjee's work on similar development among the Bengali intelligentsia, I discuss the different aspects of 'classicization'[4] process of performance and marginalization of certain groups. I go into the premise of these developments, which is the categories of 'religion' and 'secular,' and idea of a unified 'Hinduism.' Finally, I discuss one of the multiple Others namely the Tamil

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[4] Schofield argues that this process of 'classicization' also took place during the Mughal period between 17th and 18th centuries in Northern India with regard to Hindustani music. This process had similar developments that of the early 20th century—both involved nostalgia for a mystic past, 'scientizing' and systematizing music pedagogy and performance. See Schofield, "Reviving the Golden Age Again," *Ethnomusicology* 54, no. 3 (2010): 484-517.

Music Movement, while Chapter 4 discusses the rest. Historically, dance and music were intertwined both in relation to patronage and during the early 20th century music-'revival' movement. Thus, in this chapter, I discuss the dance-'revival' movement <u>in relation to</u> the music-'revival' movement, and how that transformed gender identities within the newly evolving national patriarchy in Chapter 4.

3.2   *From Tanjavur to Madras: A Spatial Shift*

After the colonial government abolished royal court patronage of the temples and the performance arts in the early 1900s, the performers moved to the newly emerging urbanized colonial city of Madras looking for patrons. Development of trade and commerce had encouraged members of the upper non-Brahmin castes such as Mudaliar and Vellālar, who were traditionally landowners and businessmen, to set up businesses and flourish in Madras. They, in turn, were looking to support and provide patronage to the performers who were moving from Tanjavur to Madras, which, as an industrializing urban space, was seeing an increase in educated middle-class population. It is during this shift in space that music was 'revived' and its history re-drafted. As patrons and audiences of music, the Madras intelligentsia took up the task of defining the music that represented their 'prescribed' aesthetic preferences, in other words, they transformed the audiences from mere listeners to *rasikās* (connoisseurs), as Subramanian puts "[T]he appreciation of the city notables became synonymous with taste and refinement."[5]

Understanding the make-up of colonial Madras is important to see how class and caste shaped aesthetic preferences, which in turn, shaped what Karnatic

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[5] Lakshmi Subramanian, *From the Tanjore Court to the Madras Music Academy: A Social History of Music in South India* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 43.

Music would represent. Subramanian gives insight to the 19th century Madras where "European traders worked in close collaboration with the Indian dubashes who facilitated their commercial transactions and the supply of produce from the artisan communities settled in parts of the town."[6] Many of these Indian dubashes were landowners in their ancestral villages, which meant that they belonged to Brahmin or upper class Non-Brahmin communities. In addition to having business holdings in Madras, these landowners also controlled lands in rural areas through ancestral property ownership;[7] and they paid visits to their rural holdings as patrons to participate in the temple celebrations and festivities. Thus, "the interplay between ritual position, wealth, and colonial urban status was an important and distinguishing feature in the growing prestige of the Madras dubashes."[8] Consequently, they attempted to replicate their position in the city, by building temples, and patronizing performing arts, and charities.[9]

Increasing the popularity of and demand for music prompted musicians to take permanent residence in the city.[10] To the elites in Madras, consisting of learned Brahmins and upper caste Non-Brahmins – Mudaliars, Pillais and Vellālārs,[11] holding positions in the colonial government, patronizing music became, in addition to being marker of aesthetic taste, a marker of their status in the society. Furthermore, 'purity' of music translated to superiority of their culture as opposed to that of the colonizers. In fact, Subramanian argues that for them, music became a cultural identity they held onto in the face of colonial and

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[6] Subramanian, *From the Tanjore Court to the Madras Music Academy*, 24.

[7] Ibid., 25.

[8] Ibid.

[9] Ibid.

[10] Ibid., 42.

[11] Ibid., 25.

urban development in the city.[12] Thus, as what Subramanian calls "self-reflexive exercise," they began scrutinizing their culture and its consumption.[13] This scrutiny led to questions about Indian and 'Hindu' identity, and what 'pure' Indian culture meant. With growing nationalism, the urban middle-class felt the need to create <u>a</u> collective identity for them that would be "extraordinarily Indian . . . set it off against the materialist and extroverted dimensions of Western culture."[14] The urban middle-class was exposed to the notions of modernity through colonial education, and their effort to make music into Karnatic Music and as their own shows not only how they appropriated these notions to re-define music, but also used the newly defined Karnatic Music to showcase what was 'ancient' and 'sacred' and therefore, 'superior' about Indian culture. However, in doing so, they adopted colonial categories 'religion' and 'secular' to classify music as 'religious' and <u>therefore</u> 'Hindu' music, a problematic classification that was until then non-existent, as discussed in Chapter 2. In the next section, I describe multiple phases of the process of constructing Karnatic Music as classical music; in the section after this, I focus on the premise by which the 'classicization' process was undertaken.

3.3 "Renaissance"[15] in Colonial Madras

Growing interest in music in colonial Madras reflected a need for that version of music, which would reflect the 'true' nature of Indian culture. Also, it was clear to the Indian elites of colonial Madras that there was an overwhelming need for a cultural identity to unite Indians against the

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[12] Ibid., 14.

[13] Ibid., 67.

[14] Ibid., 16.

[15] M.S. Ramaswami Iyer, "Music Performances, Teaching of Music etc.," *Journal of Madras Music Academy* (1929): 31.

colonizers. What Chatterjee defines as 'classicization,'[16] pertaining to similar developments in colonial Bengal, was a process involved in explaining why and how Karnatic Music in its 'original' version was/is pure; the elites compared themselves to the colonizers and the West, who to them represented materialism. Under the counsel of Indian National Congress (INC), the nationalist politics behind the Indian Independence Movement, the first music conference was conducted in Baroda in 1916.[17] In Madras, the Indian National Congress (INC) organised an All India Music Conference in 1927 where a resolution was passed. This resolution emphasized the need for an authoritative body to help the cause of Karnatic Music and to prune practices that defile the art and institutionalizing music as the solution to such defilement. Here, systematizing music pedagogy and grammar in similar ways to that of Western classical music, was emphasized.

3.3.1 Reification through Institutionalization: The Madras Music Academy & the University of Madras

In 1928, the Madras Music Academy was founded " . . . as a stable organization, to promote among other things, the study and practice of music and restore it to its blissful state of yore in India . . . "[18] Till date, the Academy functions as the principal organization for Karnatic Music education and performance in South India. While universities and colleges in Tamil Nadu offer degree programs in Karnatic Music, the Academy offers its own degree programs in music instruction. In addition, performance at the Academy

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[16] Partha Chatterjee, *The Nation and Its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1993).

[17] Subramanian, "The Reinvention of a Tradition," 132.

[18] U. Rama Rao, "Welcome Speech," *Journal of Madras Music Academy* (1929): 23.

anytime during the year, and especially during the December Music Festival, is considered a milestone in young musicians' career. The Academy adheres to the standards that it set in music performances by allotting evening slots (that draw large crowds) to professional and famous musicians while designating morning slots to amateurs. The Academy also gives awards and honours to musicians for their contribution to the field. Beginning from the first music conference in 1927, and after its inception, the Music Academy began conducting yearly music conferences, publishing the reports in addition to essays on music pedagogy and grammar in its journal.

During the second and third decades of the 20th century, the participants at the conferences were prominent performers and members of the society who were considered connoisseurs of music, who could voice their opinions on the culture of or lack thereof the contemporary music practices. In 1930, Dr U. Rama Rao, the then President of the Music Academy, during the Annual Music Conference, emphasized the importance of opening music colleges in Tamil Nadu to promote " . . . scientific control, which is badly needed in music instruction. There are musicians yearning for higher scientific study in music."[19] Here, 'science' seemed to have referred not to the *Vēdas* but rather to the Western methodology of study that was seen as systematized and rational. Thus, 'science' here referred to the ability to express music numerically through notations, theory and scale measurements. By then, the University of Madras had introduced exams and conferred diplomas in music. The Music Academy also began the Teachers' College of Music and conducted music competitions. Other prominent institutions established included a music department at the

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[19] U. Rama Rao, "Welcome Address," *Journal of Madras Music Academy* II, no. 1 (1931): 68.

University of Madras in 1932, and music classes for women in Queen Mary's College in 1933 and Kalakshetra in 1935.[20]

Journal of Madras Music Academy's digital archives contain volumes from the time of the Academy's inception, thus documenting the diligent work of the colonial Madras intelligentsia towards a coherent idea called Karnatic Music that would establish what Indian culture was. They were able to do this by institutionalizing Karnatic Music under prominent musicologists of the day. More importantly, the prominent members involved in the Music Academy and conferences were the likes of Dr U. Rama Rao and Raja Sir Annamalai Chettiar who, in addition to belonging to castes high up the hierarchy, were also well-educated elites familiar with philosophies of modernity. Thus, they reiterated the idea that Karnatic Music belongs to the 'religious' domain, and that current practice is polluting the art and that it has to be purified by returning to the fundamentals. However, interestingly, they also emphasized that even though Karnatic Music was 'ancient' and divinely inspired, it also possessed the qualities worthy to be studied scientifically, thus making it not only at par with Western Classical music, but also superior. This kind of rhetoric is common among people of India, even today, when faced with the challenge to defend their perceived archaic rituals and traditions; they would argue that these rituals explained in the *Vēdas* or the *Upanishads* can be put through scientific experiments to prove their compatibility to the modern world and thus, worthy of practice. For example, the Zamindar of Seithur said the following:

> It [music] is a soul food for the higher man . . . In the emotional, mental and higher planes, music soothes a man's soul, transforms his being and makes him realize his

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[20] Amanda Weidman, *Singing the Classical, Voicing The Modern: The Postcolonial Politics Of Music In South India* (North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2006), 82.

divinity. The Shastras say that through knowledge of music you can reach God. It is therefore our bounden duty to revive the art of music . . . We must give this divine art its place in the national life . . . [21]

Emphasizing the scientific study of Karnatic Music (as indicated in Rao's quote above) and analysis of medieval-period music treatises described in Chapter 2, the Madras intelligentsia echoed the same sentiment. Their narrative was that Karnatic Music was spiritual music and an expression of 'Hinduism' but had fallen into decay because of infusion of European cultures. They therefore saw a strong need to revive the treasure and restore its purity. This was seen auspicious because of its ancientness. Take the following part of a speech given by Dr U. Rama Rao at the Second Music Conference in 1929, a year after the inception of the Academy.

Then came a series of foreign invasions [in India], the Mohmedans, the Moghuls, the Greeks, the Portuguese, the Dutch, the Danes, the French and the English and India thereafter became the scene of battles and bloodshed. All progress in art and science was thus given a set-back and Music also suffered along with the rest . . . [22]

Kings as patrons, ensured music remained sacred; however, somewhere, music structure has gone awry due to colonization by the Europeans and the wayward practices of performances arts by musicians who have defiled the art. Thus, it was their duty to re-establish its superiority and purity. This was done through music pedagogy approved by the institutions set up by the colonial elites involved in this process.

The *Journal of Madras Music Academy* has documented painstaking yet fascinating efforts of the Madras elites, especially comprising of musicians in determining what 'purer' form of Karnatic Music meant. During every music conference (held annually since 1930) conducted by the Academy, the members

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[21] The Zamindar of Seithur, "Opening Address," *Journal of Madras Music Academy* (1929): 25-26.

[22] Rao, "Welcome Speech," 23.

deliberated over the prevailing structure of every *rāga* in Karnatic Music, debating on what its *ārōhanam* and *avarōhanam* (lit. the ascending and descending notes of a *rāga*) should consist of, various *tālā* systems, *sruthi* (the pitch) systems. This dialectic process also included prescribing how performances should be, as Subramaniam puts it, "in terms of time, selection of compositions, and presentation,"[23] in order to reflect the musicians' theoretical knowledge and music prowess. One has to understand the magnitude of this project: every *rāga* has seven notes; there are 72 such *mēlakarthā rāgas* that act as 'mother' *rāga*. In addition, offshoots for these 72 *rāgas* were created using different combinations of the seven notes of each 'mother' *rāga*; thus, the members looked at hundreds of *rāgas*, one at a time. Following are excerpts of such a process:

The Principal of College of Music, Chidambaram commenting on notes of the then *rāga* structures by saying " . . . the Janya *rāga*s are in great confusion . . . there is a great difference of opinion with a particular *rāga*, it is our first duty to determine that . . . and thus regenerate the karnatic music which appears to be declining . . . "[24] In fact, practicality and usage of even the *melakartha* system was debated on, as there were other systems of *rāga* classification, before agreeing through resolutions during the conference. A principal aspect of such discussions was that in order to systematize Karnatic Music, it must be approached as a scientific study. For instance, during his speech as the president of the Music Academy, T.S. Sabhesa Aiyar in 1935 emphasized the important of research in musical science.[25] To be able to analyze and

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[23] Subramanian, *From the Tanjore Court to the Madras Music Academy*, 103.

[24] T.S. Sabesa Iyer, "Rāgalakshana," *Journal of Madras Music Academy* (1929): 4.

[25] T.S. Sabesa Iyer, "The Presidential Address," *Journal of Madras Music Academy* (1935-1937): 151.

standardize *lakshana* (lit. grammar) and *lakshya* (lit. practice) of *rāgas* was a proof that Karnatic Music is worthy of scientific study.[26] This was further reiterated by conference speakers emphasising on the health benefits of music. Speaking in 1931, Dr U. Rama Rao, the then president of the Academy, argued that due to the divine origins of music, it has the "qualities of healing, soothing and softening the distressed minds and bodies . . . For the musician it is a form of breathing or Pranayama [a type of yoga] exercise."[27]

Furthermore, they persistently raised concerns about their perceived lack of *bhāvā* and *layam* (lit. melody) in the performances during that time; the former due to lack of *bhakti* among the performers and latter due to lack of commitment towards the art, which was divine in and of itself. In this context, *bhāvā* always referred to *bhakti* (as discussed on p. 35 above); music was seen as an expression of *bhakti* only and no other emotions, and *bhakti* was seen as a supreme emotion that every musician <u>must</u> possess whilst performing. In 1931, the famous musician G.V. Narayanaswamy Iyer wrote an article in the journal criticizing the lack of *rāga-bhāvā* (lit. tunes and relevant emotions) and *sruthi bhedha* (lit. pitch error) in the performances of musicians who do not perform 'pure' music anymore, rather resort to mixing Hindustani (North Indian music) and Karnatic Music, and add more embellishments to the performance that rendered "the *rāga* dead."[28] Colonial Madras elites emphasized on performing art for art's sake, which was *bhakti,* the deep commitment to the divine of which music was a vehicle and condemned performing Karnatic Music as an 'entertainment.' (Even today, the Academy organizes annual music conference

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[26] Rao, "Welcome Speech," 23.

[27] Rao, "Welcome Address," 69.

[28] Narayanaswamy Iyer, "The Soul of South Indian Music-Rāga Bhava," *The Journal of Madras Music Academy* 2, no. 1 (1931): 15-16.

that coincides with the music festival in December during which musicologists conduct lecture-demonstrations on various aspects of Karnatic Music).

Now that the properties of Karnatic Music were identified and systematized, the next step was to emphasize the uniqueness of such properties. They did this by juxtaposing Karnatic Music to Western music, which was becoming popular owing largely to gramophone records and public radio, and emphasizing the 'spiritual' aspect of Karnatic Music, which they argued was superior to the seeming 'secularity' of Western music that they equated with Western 'materialism.'

3.3.2   Classical, Superior 'Inner' Domain

The fundamental argument involved in the construction of Karnatic Music as 'religious' music was its perceived connections to the *Vēdas* and *Purānic* texts, and to the *kathākālakshepam* repertoire. This performance typically comprised of a series of compositions (by different composers) in addition to the narration set to multiple tunes, performed usually by a male singer accompanied by percussionists. Most stories are on life of deities and their incarnations. Deliberate connections were made to the *Sāma Vēda* (one of the four *Vēdas*) to emphasize on the religiosity of Karnatic Music; consequently, mystic aura was created around Karnatic Music to permanently fix it in the 'religious' domain. For instance, during the 9th Madras Music Conference in 1936, Sir P. S. Sivasvami Aiyar said " . . . music unalloyed by words is capable of transporting you to the realm of the spiritual, to communion with the Infinite and filling you in a deep and undefinable sense of the mystery of the universe."[29] The immemorial property of Karnatic Music, perceived as its eternal nature,

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[29] Sir Sivasvami Iyer, "The Opening Address," *Journal of Madras Music Academy* (1935-1937): 172.

(because of its connection to the *Vēdas*) solidified its sacredness. Such an aura established the purity of Karnatic Music; however, such an aura was created around the lives of composers as well, which I discuss below. In addition to defining the 'inner' domain as 'religious,' conscious comparisons were made with the Western culture and music to strengthen the 'inner' domain as 'Indian,' sacred and superior while the outer domain as 'secular' and materialistic. For instance, during a talk in Edinburgh, the text of which was published in the *Journal of Madras Music Academy* 1935-37 issue, Mr. V. K. Narayana Menon said the following: "The Eastern mind is transcendental, speculative; the Western, critical. The East has always insisted on emotional sincerity; the West on intellectual sincerity . . . The Western singer is mainly a vehicle . . . The Eastern voice is free from harmonics."[30]

Thus, to him and to those being a part of this cultural project, a Western musician did not embody the music they performed. Karnatic Music however comes from within; it is an expression of devotion, the 'inner' realm of the performer. It is therefore more authentic and purer. Speakers at the music conferences repeatedly addressed the "inner" domain[31] in order to stress that Karnatic Music was greater than any art produced by the Western culture. Many times, proponents of Karnatic Music 'revival' juxtaposed European classical music to Indian classical music to argue for the superiority of Indian classical music. During the Eleventh Annual Gathering of the School of Indian Music, Bombay in 1937, the Maharana Saheb of Dharampur said this:

> . . . the comparative study of the musical heritage of the world which has fortunately recently started has revealed the vast cultural wealth of India which could offer melodies

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[30] Narayana Menon, "Talk on Indian Music in Edinburgh," *Journal of Madras Music Academy* 7 (1936): 134-135.

[31] Chatterjee, *The Nation and Its Fragments*, 6.

of a character inconceivable by other nations, hitherto even inaccessible to other nations and enriching the cultural wealth of every nation of the world[32]

Thus, Karnatic Music belonged to the 'inner' domain called 'spirituality' that needed strengthening. But when Karnatic Music was merged with the nationalist politics, we see a merging of the 'inner' domain of spirituality with the 'outer' domain of politics and nationalism through the project of moderation.[33] Thus, whilst expression of spirituality seemed to belong to the 'inner' domain and therefore, private for the colonizers, Madras elites called for a need to strengthen these domains and expressing them in public for that was their 'true' identity. "The material domain, argue[d] nationalist writers, lies outside us — a mere external that influences us, conditions us, and forces us to adjust to it. Ultimately, it is unimportant. The spiritual, which lies within, is our true self; it is that which is genuinely essential."[34]

Additionally, this domain had to be protected from the Western influence of 'materialism' and strengthened through renaissance of arts like Karnatic Music. In addition, even appropriating colonial discourse on these categories was justified as ways to "match their [colonizers'] strengths"[35] to "ultimately overthrow" them.[36] Therefore, whilst the European Enlightenment thinkers defined 'inner' domain as 'private' domain where one can express their religion, the elites in Madras appropriated this category, re-shaped it to mean a strengthened domain and claimed it as their 'true' identity. Additionally, important aspects of the process was:

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[32] The Maharana of Dharampur, "News and Notes," *Journal of Madras Music Academy* Vol. VI-VIII (1935-1937): 133.

[33] Chatterjee, *The Nation and Its Fragments*, 72-73.

[34] Ibid., 120.

[35] Ibid., 121.

[36] Ibid.

a) To purify music performance and practice, which I discussed in the previous section on the Madras Music Academy

b) To forge a sense of community with Karnatic Music as their identity – a community that would share aesthetic tastes

c) To identify and label certain practices as 'tasteless' and 'crude,' which was not the 'true' Indian way and encourage specific types of aesthetic preferences.[37]

For example, musicians wrote about the erosion of taste in Karnatic Music due to what they perceived as dominance by instruments accompanying a vocalist during concerts. They claimed that the 'true' Karnatic Music was melodious and gave prominence to *bhāvā* of the composers expressed in their compositions; to deviate from that and to give importance to improvisations that increase the role of percussionists in a concert was a disgrace to the art. "The age of Melody is gone; that of the Drum, the Morsing and the Kanjira has succeeded"[38] argued one editorial in the *Journal of Madras Music Academy* published in 1933.

The nationalists talked about 'preserving the originality intact' in order to weed out what they deemed as pollutants of Karnatic Music – musicians who did not learn or perform the music and songs in the 'right way,' which was the method prescribed by those involved in this project. For example, talking about greatness of Tyāgarājā, Nemam Natarāja Bhāgavatar wrote the following in his article in the *Journal of Madras Music Academy* in 1931.

> Many of the Kirtanas [sic] of Sri Tyāgarājā, as they are sung at present, have undergone considerable modification at the hands of unsympathetic musicians ... And what is worse, the words of the songs [composed by Tyāgarājā] have been mutilated in many

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[37] Ibid., 163.

[38] "The Decline of Taste," *Journal of Madras Music Academy* 4, no.1 (1933): 1.

cases and changed beyond recognition. Even within the lapse of a century since the life-time of the master . . . we had not been able to preserve their form in tact.[39]

Most essays in the journal during this period echoed the opinion that music had experienced a period of downfall and that 'pure' music needed to be revived. In fact, Bhāgavatar opened his essay on Tyāgarājā on classification of styles of music, a) *mārgi-* traditional and indigenous style and b) *dēsi-* the exotic style[40] and said that "Carnatic Music, is prominent among various schools of Indian Music and represents the true Mārgi style"[41] and that *dēsi* style was a mixture caused by foreign culture. Given the nationalist activities at that time, readers can understand that Bhāgavatar referred to the 'Western' culture brought to India by the British. Schofield, whilst describing similar developments in the 16th-17th century Mughal India, argues that the "*mārgi-dēsi* compares well conceptually with the various classical—non-classical binarisms in European cultures from the Renaissance onwards that placed such priority on the classical."[42]

Matthew Allen[43] eloquently argues about the problems with classification of music in South India based on classical/non-classical dichotomy. However, although Schofield argues that the dichotomy was present in the 16th and 17th century music treatises in Sanskrit,[44] specifically in South India, pertaining to Karnatic Music, this dichotomy was arrived at when divisions within South Indian music arose due to popularity of talkies and gramophone recordings of

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[39] Nemam Nataraja Bhāgavatar, "The Art of Sri Tyagaraja Swami," *Journal of Madras Music Academy* II, no. 1 (1931): 21.

[40] Bhāgavatar, "The Art of Sri Tyagaraja Swami," 18.

[41] Ibid.

[42] Schofield, "Reviving the Golden Age Again," 492.

[43] Matthew Harp Allen, "Tales Tunes Tell: Deepening the Dialogue between "Classical" and "Non-Classical" in the Music of India," *Yearbook for Traditional Music* 30 (1998).

[44] Schofield, "Reviving the Golden Age Again," 492-493.

film and devotional music. During the first decade of 20th century, the gramophone companies recorded performance by *devadāsis*, and compositions that were later classified as Karnatic Music.[45] By the 1920s, the drama artists were recorded extensively due to growing demands for different types of music.[46] Thus, when gramophone record companies were taping the non-Karnatic Music compositions to attract diverse audiences, Karnatic musicians used the category to define Karnatic Music as classical music, more clearly.[47] These were <u>simultaneous</u> historical developments in terms of both timeline and paradigmatic shifts in performance arts. The question that ought to be explored here is how Karnatic Music was perceived to be classical music that was superior in culture and aesthetics in comparison to non-classical music. As Allen argues, in the process of strengthening the 'inner' domain, by "emphasizing the pure classical-ness of Karnataka music, other forms of . . . musical expression had to be made less so."[48]

Pierre Bourdieu, in his text *Distinctions: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste*, discusses the role of aesthetic preferences that mark the characteristics of a class or classes that perform the function of stratifying a society based on such tastes and preferences.[49] He thus argues that social contexts give rise to a certain system of tastes and preferences that are then used to legitimize social differences.[50] Thus, he argues "a work of art has meaning and interest only for someone who possess the cultural competence, that is, the code, into which it is

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[45] Stephen P. Hughes, " The 'Music Boom' in Tamil South India: Gramophone, Radio and the Making of Mass Culture," *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television* 22, no. 4 (2002), 450.

[46] Hughes, "The 'Music Boom' in Tamil South India," 450.

[47] Ibid., 463.

[48] Allen, "Tales Tunes Tell," 26.

[49] Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinctions: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste*, trans. R. Nice (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1984), 1.

[50] Bourdieu, *Distinctions*, 7.

encoded."[51] It is this 'code' that Indian colonial elites attempted to construct by emphasizing the purity of Karnatic Music. Thus, 'classicization' of Karnatic Music through moderating aesthetic preferences helped in making other music forms unclassical and profane. For instance, by insisting on 'pure' music and high tastes in Karnatic Music-*mārgi* style in order to elevate themselves, the Indian elites deliberately alienated those who enjoyed *dēsi* style of music. In addition, musicians insisted that there should be a clear distinction between Karnatic Music and light music, fearing that a lack thereof would undo decades worth of work of constructing a cultural identity.[52] Bourdieu argues that this is a part of stratifying a society based on aesthetic tastes and preference in which "popular taste" refers to those that " . . . performs a systematic reduction of the things of art to the things of life."[53] In doing so, a distinction was made between *mārgi* and *dēsi* styles in which the latter represents ordinariness of life whilst the former represented "pure gaze,"[54] a condition that signifies "a break with the ordinary attitude towards the world."[55] This mundane aesthetic preference was represented as 'light music,' or folk music, which was marketed as such by gramophone record companies.[56] Thus, the category 'non-classical' was derived out of 'light' music, which was really profane in comparison to Karnatic Music.

While attempting to establish purity of their culture, the colonial Indian elites of Madras went a step further to establish their purity against cultural mixture brought by the pre-British colonizers, especially the Mughals. Therefore, they began to claim themselves superior to the music and culture of North India that

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[51] Ibid., 2.

[52] Subramanian, *From the Tanjore Court to the Madras Music Academy*, 148.

[53] Bourdieu, *Distinction*, 5.

[54] Ibid.

[55] Ibid.

[56] See Chapter 5.

had lost its purity owing to the Mughals' rule until the British took over. The idea that South Indian music is 'Hindu' music and that North Indian music has been corrupted by Islamic music brought to India by the Mughals were expressed by the 19th century colonial writers such as Col. French and C. R. Day. They wrote about degeneration of pure music due to Islamic invasions in North India while, "isolation of the peninsula from the excesses of Muslim rule was responsible for its preservation against alien influences and for the higher social status of the practitioners."[57] The Madras elites appropriated this colonial discourse, that whilst North India had been mixed with Islamic culture, an alien culture and non-Indian 'religion,' kingdoms in South India were able to maintain their purity by resisting the invasion of Islamic rulers and influence of the Islamic culture. Thus, whilst the Indian elites of colonial Madras tried to establish Karnatic Music as 'Hindu' music and 'Hindu' as Indian, an indigenous 'religion,' they felt that it was their duty to cleanse the art and return it to its original form of 'Hindu' music. However, Subramanian argues that, historically, musicians and inventors of systems classifying *rāgas* have been influenced by Persian music.[58]

Another important aspect of constructing cultural identity superior to that of the colonizers was not only to claim its perpetual existence but also to demonstrate its adaptability to modern times. By showing *Vēdic* connections of Karnatic Music, its 'ancientness' and superiority had been established; but in order not to be dismissed as 'outdated' by the young population in whom nationalist identity had to be instilled, Karnatic Music had to be shown to be

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[57] C. R. Day, *The Music and Musical Instruments of Southern India and the Deccan* (London: Novello, Ewer & Co, 1891), 24, quoted in Subramanian, *From the Tanjore Court to the Madras Music Academy*, 60-61.

[58] Subramanian, *From the Tanjore Court to the Madras Music Academy*, 31-33.

adaptable to values of modernity that: a) that Karnatic Music can be written and notated as opposed to being only oral; b) Karnatic Music can be studied 'like sciences' at higher education institutions. European models were actively used to illustrate these two values. The next section looks at these particular aspects of music 'renaissance.'

3.3.3   Notation and Music Pedagogy

Historically, the 19th century kings of the Tanjavur Court were known to have emphasized notating music; therefore, musical formats produced by Purandara Dasa and the Trinity, especially, Tyāgarājā — who was one of the first composers to compose *kritis* in a format that is followed in contemporary Karnatic Music, with *pallavi* (introduction), *anupallavi* (second section) and *charanam* (end section-can be one or more) — were well received and gained more popularity than conventional court music of the time. Purandara Dasa was one of the first composers to design a teaching methodology. "He fixed the basic scale for a number of musical exercises and a graduated course of vocal compositions that came to be regarded as basic training for musicians."[59] Through his *gītams*, he "had an abiding influence on later practitioners both in his setting out definite guidelines for melody and rhythm and in his deriving rudimentary pedagogic techniques to facilitate transmission."[60] An important aspect of purifying Karnatic Music was to prune current teaching and learning methods. It soon became apparent to the Madras intelligentsia that notating was an obvious way of achieving it. For instance, in an essay title "A Plea for a Rational System of Simplified Musical Notation," Pandit S. Subrahmanya Sastri

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[59] Ibid., 34.

[60] Rangaramanuja Ayyangar, *Musings of a Musician: Recent Trends in Carnatic Music* (Bombay: Wilco, 1977), 142-144, quoted in Subramanian, *From the Tanjore Court*, 34.

argued that notation was the <u>only</u> way to record music (the other being, he argued, recording <u>all</u> compositions on gramophone records).[61] More importantly, he argued that the Western music tradition followed notation, which ensured <u>correct</u> rendition of music and that Indian musicians ought to follow the idea. He also suggested that such notation system for Indian music be tri-lingual involving Tamil, Sanskrit <u>and</u> English because he argued that English captures certain notes more clearly that Tamil or Sanskrit.[62]

However, notating music was a contentious issue amongst musicians and scholars. Music had, historically, been taught orally and through *gurukulavāsam*, and notating music would mean challenging the authority of the oral tradition. During the late 19th century, when the project of notating began, with encouragement from European enthusiasts of Karnatic Music, many musicians were against it. While notation was argued to be the only way to preserve 'authenticity' of the compositions, musicians argued that oral tradition is the authentic tradition.[63] However, as Subramanian states,

> . . . influenced by European enthusiasts who promoted ideas of modernization in which notation would serve as a scientific means of introducing order into the existing system, Indian 'reform' publicists responded by an emphatic plea for notation, which they saw as a potentially invaluable aid in the understanding and teaching of Indian music.[64]

Orientalists such as Sir William Jones, C. R. Day and Lord Mark Kerr insisted the importance of notation that would lead to scientific study of Karnatic Music.[65] When musicians and musicologists analyzed *tālā* cycles and *sruthi* measurements, one could feel the necessity they were showing to study

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[61] Pandit S. Subrahmanya Sastri, "A Plea for a Rational System of Simplified Musical Notation," *Journal of Madras Music Academy* II, no. 4 (1931): 192.

[62] Sastri, "A Plea for a Rational System," 192.

[63] Weidman, *Singing the Classical, Voicing the Modern*, 202.

[64] Subramanian, *From the Tanjore Court to the Madras Music Academy*, 94.

[65] Ibid., 59-61; Weidman, *Singing the Classical, Voicing the Modern*, 202.

Karnatic Music not only as aesthetics but also science. In fact, they prided in the nature of Karnatic Music to appeal to aesthetics while adhering to scientific concepts of time and measurement.

Two problems arose in this process: a) finding the correct form of notation to incorporate notes; b) how to notate embellishments. While the Indian nationalists insisted on using Indian notation, some scholars wanted to use European notation so that Karnatic Music would be readable and understandable to the colonizers. The rationale for such an argument was that, since colonizers were prejudiced against Karnatic Music, scholars like A. M. Chinnaswamy Mudaliar wanted to make Karnatic Music understandable to Europeans. They hoped that this understanding would mean that the colonizers would come to respect and appreciate this indigenous art. Also, they argued that European music was more accessible across the world because it was notated. Similarly, Karnatic Music would become available to the rest of the world to be learned and understood if only it was notated. The effort to notate Karnatic Music demonstrated the need to systematize and structuralize a cultural marker in order to shed the image of disorganization and therefore, irrationality in the eyes of the colonizers. Also, Karnatic Music, as a 'cultural identity,' was being constructed as juxtaposed to Western classical music and since, latter had systematic notation, it felt natural for the nationalists to notate Karnatic Music.

Notating Karnatic Music led to the second problem of dealing with *gamakās* (lit. embellishments of a note of a *rāga* or a phrase of a composition). The nature of the music was such that embellishments were added to compositions by the performers whilst performing <u>spontaneously,</u> in order to show their prowess in the compositions and the *rāga* it was set to. Therefore, *gamakās* cannot be understood as being part of the original compositions. Yet, *gamakās* are original

in that it is a specific rendition of a composition learned from a teacher and improvised by the students. During the music revival, many music scholars tended to consider such embellishments 'unnecessary' because it eclipsed the *bhāvā* of the composition and the beauty of the tune. Therefore, the question of notating embellishments also led to question of authenticity. While notations were undertaken primarily to preserve authenticity, notating *gamakās* of performers and not the original composer defeats the purpose. Thus, it was decided that notating *gamakās* came down to judgment of the person notating, descendants of the composers and musicians who belonged to the particular music tradition, to judge the original embellishment and the 'spurious' ones.

The Madras Music Academy encouraged the projects of notating Karnatic Music and emphasized the importance of 'proper' music education in colleges and universities. In 1929, during the opening address at the Music Conference, Zamindar of Seithur called for founding of music institutions and scholarships to encourage students to pursue the subject.[66] The same year, during the 'Welcome Speech' at the Music Conference, then president of the Music Academy, Dr U. Rama Rao extolled the therapeutic nature of Music and the need for music to be "enjoy[ed] in the realm of science."[67] By 1931, the Academy had established Teachers' College of Music and by 1932 the University of Madras had introduced courses and examinations in music. Much like moderating music performances, the Academy also discussed proper music instruction and emphasized on identifying the 'god-given rhythm' in a student and encouraging that rhythm.[68] The Academy discussed how to systematize music pedagogy in order to retain the tradition and yet cater to needs of

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[66] Zamindar of Seithur, "Opening Address," 25-26.

[67] Rao, "Welcome Speech," 24.

[68] Ibid., 25.

modernity, for the musicians at the conferences acknowledged that there was growth in the number of *sabhās* patronizing Karnatic Music. While many musicians lamented the lack of *bhāvā* among current musicians due to improper learning techniques, patrons like Dr Raja Sir Annamalai Chettiar emphasized the importance of good teacher-student relationship and setting up good standards of music.[69] Thus, the Academy set standards for music pedagogy by analyzing and debating what rudimentary exercises should be taught, at what point the teacher ought to permit the creativity of the student to flourish, etc. Consequently, the task of purifying music also meant modernizing in that terms that was understandable to the colonizers.

Now, Karnatic Music tradition follows notation system for preparatory and rudimentary exercises up to the stage of *varnams* (set of compositions that contain to-be-sung notes, texts with *tālā* cycles serve as rudimentary exercises and warm-up compositions at the beginning of performances). Notations for compositions are used only in colleges and universities with systematic music courses. Learning Karnatic Music outside the institutions with private teachers entails adhering to the teachers' *sampradāyam* (lit. learning tradition) and oral tradition; notations for compositions in this context are less significant. As Weidman clearly puts it, while describing her experience of learning music from an Indian teacher, unlike Western classical music notation in Karnatic Music is not an "authoritative text," rather it is "a trigger for memory."[70] In the end, notating compositions while learning Karnatic Music from these teachers become a dialectic process.

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[69] Raja Sir Annamalai Chettiar, "Opening Address," *Journal of Madras Music Academy* IV, no. 1-4 (1933): 84.

[70] Weidman, *Singing the Classical, Voicing the Modern*, 232.

The mystic aura of purity constructed around Karnatic Music extended to re-constructing the biographies of composers who were addressed as 'saints' who performed miracles, which was seen as an attestation of their religiosity.

3.3.4 'Mystic' Composers

Popularity of *kathākālakshepam* (discussed on p. 132 above) enabled the argument that Karnatic Music encompasses *bhakti-bhāvā*. However, in order to legitimize the need for *bhakti* as the <u>only</u> emotion in the art form, it was necessary to relate to its history. Other *rasās* were intrinsic to music compositions but being deemed as the 'purest' of all emotions, *bhakti* transcended them all. The Bhakti Movement of the 5th to 8th century[71] had seen the rise of different *Vēdāntā* philosophies such as *advaita* and *vishistadvaita* by Ādi Sankarā and Ramanuja respectively; for Indian nationalists, this seemed like a relevant place to start, especially because Ramanuja had introduced " . . . formal recitation of devotional songs (*Ālvār* compositions) in temple liturgies . . . "[72] The Bhakti Movement also saw a rise in popularity of Saivism and Vaishnavism through compositions of twelve *ālvārs* (Vaishnavite poet-saints) and sixty-three *nāyanmārs* (Saivite poet-saints). The Vijayanagara Empire and the Tanjavur Court encouraged composers like Purandara Dasa (1484-1564) and Tyāgarājā (1767-1847), Mutthuswāmy Dikshitar (1776-1835) and Shyama Sastri (1762-1827) who were later named 'the Trinity' of Karnatic Music and imagined as 'saints.'[73] Whatever knowledge the Madras elites had about the composers was acquired from the saints' biographies written and popularized

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[71] Subramanian, *From the Tanjore Court to the Madras Music Academy*, 26.

[72] Ibid.

[73] It is important to acknowledge that 'saints' and 'Trinity' have a Christian connotation. Yet, the Trinity (and many others) are regularly addressed 'saints' to indicate their proximity to the divine due to their *bhakti*.

by their disciples in the 19th and 20th centuries. Also, these composers were believed to have been inspired by the Bhakti Movement due to the similarities between their *bhakti* philosophies and of the Saivite and Vaishnavite saints.

There is a certain rationale for associating these composers and Karnatic Music to what is called the Bhakti Movement of the 5th-8th century. The movement saw rise of *Vēdanta* philosophies. The term *Vēdanta* literally means 'end of the *Vēda*' thereby indicating a shift from *Vēdic* rituals that centered on scripturally prescribed rituals as in the case of *Vēdic* practices to *āgamic* rituals that centered on temples and idol-worship. As discussed in Chapter 2, these philosophies, specifically, *vishistadvaita* transcended caste-hierarchy. Transcending caste-hierarchy was not, of course, uninterrupted. It was complicated and many Vaishnavites were opposed to it. These historical developments do not mean caste-hierarchy is non-existent in contemporary Vaishnavism; it prevailed and indeed is still prevalent. However, by adopting Tamil compositions and making temples and idols as centre of these rituals, *bhakti* and performance of *bhakti* was made more accessible to Non-Brahmin communities as well. This particular aspect of the Bhakti Movement was found in the compositions of 'the Trinity.' The compositions, specifically Tyāgarājā's compositions, were in colloquial Telugu, or Sanskrit and was not bound by the rules of music treatises. In addition, Purandara Dasa, Mutthuswāmy Dikshitar and Shyama Sastri enjoyed a prominent place in Karnatic Music history for the teaching methodology and " . . . artistic conception that transcended the more conventional and ornate forms of court music."[74]

However, it was Tyāgarājā in particular who has been central to Karnatic Music's identity as 'religious' music as a composer "who cared for neither

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[74] Subramanian, *From the Tanjore Court to the Madras Music Academy*, 37.

power nor gain but chose personal devotion as the only moral choice for salvation."[75] According to his biographies, Tyāgarājā was a composer who earned his living through *bikshā* (lit. begging/public donation). Hearing about his popularity, King Serfoji II offered to patronize him. Tyāgarājā, however, refused by composing a poignant *kriti* (in Telugu). The first verses read the following way:

Nidhi Chāla Sukhamā
Rāmuni Sannidhi Sēva Sukhamā
Nijamukha Balgu Manasa

[Does money give supreme happiness?
Or does service at Lord Rama's presence
Tell me truth, my heart][76]

Thus, his life as a composer who refused 'material' wealth in order to serve Lord Rama earned him the title 'saint' and served as a perfect and a prominent example for the mystified view of Karnatic Music as filled with 'devotion' against the 'materialism' promoted by the Western culture in colonial Madras. Some of his disciples such as Wallajapet Venkatramana Bhagavatar[77] popularized his compositions by recording on palm leaves. Musicologist T.R. Subramaniam, during a conversation in Chennai in January 2011, recounted how Bangalore Nāgarathnammāl, a temple dancer and one of his disciples, used all of her life's earnings to organize festivals honoring him after his death.

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[75] Ibid., 16.

[76] My translation.

[77] Descendants of Bhagavatar began (and are still) celebrating his *Jayanthi* (anniversary), which was the forerunner for *Tyāgarājā Ārādhanā* that celebrates his death anniversary in Tiruvayyār, his birthplace on the banks of river Kāvēri. Karnatic Musicians from all over the world participate in the celebration that goes on for five days. His compositions are sung at his *samādhi* (grave), especially, his *Pancharatnam* (lit. five jewels)- consisting of five songs set in same style on Lord Rama. Within the Karnatic Music community, it is seen as a great honor to participate in the festival. Every year, musicians from all over the world travel to Tiruvayyār to participate in the celebrations.

Mysticism surrounding 'the Trinity' and especially Tyāgarājā was emphasized at the Music Conferences to stress the importance of 'classicization' of Karnatic Music. Nemam Natarāja Bhagavatar wrote about the genius behind Tyāgarājā saying that for Tyāgarājā, music held a unique significance in his life: that it was the "mysterious power"[78] that connected man to God and gave him the peace that he could not find in this material world.[79] What is interesting here is, while extolling Tyāgarājā, Bhagavatar called his compositions "gospels" and went on to write that "he [Tyāgarājā] harmonized art with religion and he infused a spiritual vitality into music."[80] He also wrote about a popular story in Tyāgarājā's life, as retold by his disciples, in which *Purānic* divine sage Nāradhā appeared before him as a monk and bestowed him with a few works in music.[81] Such stories embellished and mystified 'the Trinity' with sainthood and sanctity, thus sanctifying the musical form.

Biographies and works on these composers, in addition to their compositions, served as evidence of the *bhakti* tradition in Karnatic Music and of historic existence of 'pure' Karnatic Music. Additionally, these composers were credited with systematizing and organizing their compositions, which was much needed for the Indian colonial elites to present Karnatic Music as an art form that was worthy of study like its European counterpart. In addition to written biographies, retelling the stories from the biographies in journals and newspapers strengthened the mystic status of these composers and made them the face of 'true' Karnatic Music, which was 'religious' music. Similar to finding connections to the *Vēdas*, connections were made to Hindu deity Saraswati,

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[78] Bhāgavatar, "The Art of Sri Tyagaraja Swami," 19.

[79] Ibid.

[80] Ibid., 19, 22.

[81] Ibid., 20.

sage Nāradhā, Anjaneya, a Hindu deity and sage Matanga to reiterate the idea that Karnatic Music had divine origins. However, more importantly, the mysticism of these composers created an importance of *guruparamparā* according to which, musicians who have followed the lineage (not only biological but also through teacher-student association) of 'the Trinity' were regarded as performing the purest form of music. As Ries says "If any classical and purely secular music had developed it failed to survive, and the Karnātic tradition was borne by the disciples and students of Tyāgaraja into the present century."[82] Contemporary musicians do not always possess a degree in music from institutes set up by the elites in the early 1900s. However, being a part of a particular teaching lineage (music families that has produced musicians for centuries, independent of these institutes) is still considered very important.[83] Most contemporary professional and popular musicians belong to a particular lineage.

3.4   Religion/Secular — Classical/Non-Classical

Two premises were fundamental to the 'classicization' of the Karnatic Music process: that the domain 'religion' was distinct from the domain 'secular' and that 'Hinduism' was a unified religion of which Brahmanism was a representation.

3.4.1   'Religion,' 'Secular' and Colonial Categories

The pivotal idea behind redefining Karnatic Music was to distinguish a particular 'type' of music from 'others' and establish the 'type' as classical that

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[82] Ries, "The Cultural Setting of South Indian Music," 28.

[83] In addition to performance, much recognition my music teacher, Vijaya Nagarajan, receives owes to the fact she learned music under prolific Karnatic musician D. K. Pattammal. My teacher recounted that learning period as *gurukulavasam* during which she did household chores at her *guru*'s house in return for learning music.

best represents the 'purity' of Indian culture. Matthew Allen argues that the origin of distinction between classical music (to mean Karnatic Music) and non-classical music (which comprises of all the other types) "owes much to the influence of colonial European categories of thought . . . [and] one flowing from indigenous Indian thought."[84] The birth of re-definition of Karnatic Music has to do with the 'religion' and 'secular' dichotomy that in turn influenced the nationalists' take on 'inner' and 'outer' domains, as discussed on p. 132ff above. In addition, the definition for 'classical,' in other words, what would 'classical' mean to the nationalists was born out of their understanding of these categories. The Madras intelligentsia defined 'inner' domain to represent 'spirituality,' and that protecting and strengthening the domain preserved its sacredness. The 'outer' domain consisted of their nationalistic activities. However, they emphasized on strengthening the 'inner' domain because to them, strong 'inner' domain represented superiority of their culture. Also, through Karnatic Music, the 'inner' domain was expressed in the public sphere in order to not only strengthen the 'inner' domain that represented spirituality but also to regain the control of the 'outer' domain represented by politics dominated by the colonizers. In order to do so, deliberate associations were made to those particular connections that music had with 'religious' movements in the past. For example, the rise of Tamil saints during the Bhakti Movement or tracing the origins of Karnatic Music in *Sāma Vēda* or *Upanishads*[85] were used to make such a case as discussed in the sections above.

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[84] Allen, "Tales Tunes Tell," 23-24.

[85] This particular idea was contested by a Karnatic Music scholar, Mr. Balasubramaniam, who said that *Sāma Vēda* has melismatic schemes that resemble that of Karnatic Music, which is the only connection between them, while music described in Tamil literature to have been practiced in Tamil Nadu during the Sangam Period (between 3rd B.C.E. and 3rd C.E.) has had more influence on Karnatic Music, with regard to *rāga* (tunes) and *tālā* (cyclical rhythm)

Some scholars have pointed out that the argument that religion/secular dichotomy and 'Hinduism' were colonial constructions that transformed the colonized society deprives the colonized peoples of their agency.[86] However, this is an example that the Indian nationalists were well aware of what categories they were appropriating, which they did selectively to put forth their argument as I have shown so far. It also shows another ideological position: that 'religion' is an object of empirical evaluation. Thus, there is an assumption of inherent neutrality or 'secularity' whilst looking at 'religion.' In other words, 'religion' as a distinct category is being analyzed from a 'secular' and neutral position, as if to argue that such a position is intrinsic to the argument. However, casting 'inner' domain as 'religious' and the 'outer' as 'secular' and the idea that 'religious' sphere is distinct from the 'secular' sphere is, Fitzgerald argues, a modern category and "is a fundamental part of modern Western ideology."[87]

According to Fitzgerald, up to the 18th century Enlightenment, 'religion' stood for Christian Truth, but 'secular' or 'politics' domain were not different from each other, either.[88] In Chapter 2, I made similar arguments about South Indian kingdoms that well into the late 19th century kingship, temples and performing arts had symbiotic relationship. However, the 18th century philosophers such as John Locke and William Penn deliberately separated the

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structures, compositions, and *rasās* (expression of moods). Discussions through e-mails in April 2011.

[86] Marianne Keppens and Esther Bloch, "Introduction," in *Rethinking Religion in India: The Colonial Construction of Hinduism*, ed. Esther Block, Marianne Keppens and Rajaram Hegde (Oxon: Routledge, 2010), 9.

[87] Timothy Fitzgerald, "Introduction," in *Religion and the Secular: Historical and Colonial Formations*, ed. Timothy Fitzgerald (London: Equinox, 2007): 6.

[88] Timothy Fitzgerald, "Encompassing Religion, Privatized Religions and the Invention of Modern Politics," in *Religion and the Secular: Historical and Colonial Formations*, ed. Timothy Fitzgerald (London: Equinox, 2007): 214.

'religion' and the 'state' (representing the 'secular') in their writings.[89] An authoritative acknowledgement to this idea was being incorporated in the American Constitution in the 18th century and through colonization spread to the non-European world. The result of such a process was the idea that capitalism is fundamental and universal but "obscured by the irrational practices of the natives and savages in the non Euro-American world."[90] Fitzgerald describes two distinct discourses on 'religion' and 'religions,' which need to be analytically distinguished:

a) Religion as encompassing Christian truth, most often Protestant Christian truth, in the context of the organic, hierarchical Christian Commonwealth in which what later came to be separated as politics and the state were embedded in a holistic formation. Since there can only be one truth, there can be no other true religion, only pagan irrational substitutions for truth.[91]

b) The second is where 'religion' is distinguished from non-religious secular domains such as the state and politics along the binaries religion/secular, private/public sphere, faith/secular reason, etc.

It is within the authorizing parameters of this modern discourse that the idea of 'religions' as multiple and ubiquitous in all societies at all times of history, and requiring 'secular' science for its or their study, becomes intelligible. These two senses of 'religion' are typically conflated, providing flexibility and ambiguity of deployment, required acting as an ideological operator. It needs to be noted that the uncertainty between these discourses is evident, as Sugirtharajah has shown in her study of the Indologists who constructed the idea of 'science of religion' and yet also spoke of the irrational and barbaric

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[89] Fitzgerald, "Encompassing Religion," 214.

[90] Fitzgerald, "Introduction," 7.

[91] Fitzgerald, "Encompassing Religion," 234-235.

practices of India. In this thesis, I have been illustrating this point by arguing that the history of music and dance in South India shows the transition from: a symbolic universe and ideology of order in which the temples and the royal courts were centres of what modernity would now distinguish as 'religious,' political and economic functions to a construction of 'religion' as an 'inner' essence distinguished from the 'outer' public domain. However, with the 'classicization' process I have described so far, we see appropriation of this ideology: here, 'religion' is the 'inner' domain but it is not irrational. Rather, it represents the superiority of the Indian mind to be able to be closer to the divine. Hence, it needs to be strengthened and projected on the 'outer' domain to force the dominating 'materialistic secularity' of the colonizers out. Thus, the colonial Indian elites appropriated colonial discourses in ways that would fit their agenda of nation building, and defining Indian culture and the Indian subject. Thus, for instance whilst Karnatic Music was superior to Western classical music because of its divinity, it had to be notated <u>like</u> Western music to preserve its authenticity. One can see similar paradoxes in the arguments of the Indian colonial elites: on the one hand, they argued that Karnatic Music is religious and belonged to the 'inner' domain, while the 'outer' domain represented the 'secular' that represented Western 'materialism.' On the other hand, they also emphasized studying Karnatic Music as a 'science' and that quality of Karnatic Music to be sacred and belong to the realm of 'science' reiterates its superiority.

Multiple understandings of 'science,' 'materialism' and more broadly, 'secular' emerge here that indicates a shifting understandings of these categories. There is a certain <u>selective</u> appropriation of European notions of 'science,' as I have shown in this chapter so far, to juxtapose Karnatic Music to Western classical music. That is, an emphasis on studying Karnatic Music as a

'science' seems to indicate the notion that the art is 'worthy' of empirical and 'objective' evaluation much like 'science' in the West, thus, indicating that the colonial elites' acknowledgment of 'superiority' awarded to science. For instance, some speakers at the Music Conferences emphasized on the therapeutic nature of Karnatic Music <u>in connection to</u> its compatibility with science.[92] To them Karnatic Music is, therefore, modern in this sense. Thus, if Western classical music could be systematized through notation and theories and institutionalized through instruction in educational institutions and research (as in the field of musicology), then so could Karnatic Music be. Additionally, indicating its capacity to be modern was essential because the Indian colonial elites feared that the art might be dismissed as archaic and therefore, outdated especially given the colonial discourses at that time on 'superstitious' practices in India.

However, <u>at the same time</u> deliberate connections were made to the *Vēdas* and the *Upanishads* to indicate the 'religiosity' of Karnatic Music: it originated from these sacred texts and such an origin gave Karnatic Music a mystic quality[93] that transcended the 'outer' domain where the music contested with colonial 'materialism.' Thus, Karnatic Music is superior to Western classical music because although it is 'religious' music, it can also be studied as 'science.' This quality is derived from its mystical origins situated in the sacred texts. Karnatic Music transcends the limiting ability of being either 'religious' music or 'science' as in the case of Western classical music, which was seen as 'lacking' 'religiosity.' Additionally, <u>it is</u> its origin from sacred texts and the mystical quality that marks the capacity of the music to transcend 'materialism' that was

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[92] Sir C.V. Raman, "Opening Address," *Journal of Madras Music Academy* 5, no. 1-4 (1934): 97-100.

[93] See Chapter 1, p. 25 for some examples.

seen as reflected generally in Western culture and specifically, in Western classical music. 'Materialism' in this context indicated desire for ownership and consumption of material possessions and wealth. This particular understanding of 'materialism' poses translation issues between Tamil and English. Within the context of Karnatic Music, 'materialism' specifically meant material possessions but is understood as indulgence in senses. A term in Tamil *aimpulan* (lit. *aim*-five, *pulan*-sensory organs) is used to refer to this understanding of 'materialism.' The five senses are touch, feel, smell, vision, and hearing. To indulge in them (*unarvu*- lit. feel or in this context, indulge) is seen as 'materialism' as these create desire for wealth, sex, material possessions, etc. Desire-free life is a pre-requisite for achieving *moksha*.[94] Karnatic Music, by its inherent sacredness, is seen as a conduit to achieve such a state. This notion of 'non-materialism' or anti-materialism was articulated using Tyāgarājā, (one of 'the Trinity') who was seen as an embodiment of such renunciation, using examples from his compositions, one of which is described on p. 147 of this chapter. Similarly, the narrative that Karnatic Music was influenced by the Bhakti Movement had a similar idea behind it: biographies of saint-poets of the Bhakti movement contained stories of such similar renunciation, specifically in the case of King Kulasekara who renounced his kingdom, kingship and wealth to serve the Hindu deity Vishnu. Eventually, he came to be known as Kulasekara Alvār. Therefore, in this particular context, 'secular' as in 'materialism' seems to be a signifier whose meaning is fluid an ideological operator, the meaning of which is difficult to pin-down. Within the dialectic

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[94] Therefore, *sanyasis* (lit. ascetics) are described in Tamil as *thuravi*, which comes from the root word *thuravu* that literally means to open or give up. Therefore, *thuravi* means one who has given up. It is closely related to the term *nirvanam* in Tamil (*nirvana* in Sanskrit), which means naked; giving up ones desires and material possession is to be naked of these emotions.

process of defining Karnatic Music, 'secular' seems to have multiple understandings within multiple discourses.

However, even after careful attempts of the Indian colonial elites to define Karnatic Music as 'religious' music, what is interesting is the ambiguity in defining what the categories 'religious' and 'secular' mean. What this indicates to is the chaotic process of culture building of the time. For instance, contemporary scholars look at the spatial shift from Tanjavur to Madras as relocation of music from 'religious' to 'secular' space.[95] The idea is that because temples were places of worship and because music moved out of the temples to the music halls in Madras, music has been made available to larger audiences in a 'secular' setting. However, there is inconsistency in what 'secular' entails in this argument as well. For instance, whilst Subramanian says that performance arts moved out of the temples and the royal courts to a 'secular' setting of music halls[96] because for her, the temples are 'religious' space, Raymond Ries whilst writing on Tyāgarājā, says that the composer resisted 'secularization' of music by refusing to be patronized by the royal court. Thus, to him the royal courts and their encouragement of music as an entertainment is performance in a 'secular' setting.[97] However, in the same text, Ries writes that one of the origins of Karnatic Music is the 10th century Bhakti Movement in the Tamil Country (as discussed on p. 162ff) during which a series of philosophies developed which critiqued *Vēdic* rituals and emphasized the devotees' personal relationship with the divine. Thus, he says that music is a form of one's devotion.[98] For Ries and

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[95] Subramanian, "The Reinvention of a Tradition," 132, 150.

[96] Ibid., 132.

[97] Ries, "The Cultural Setting of South Indian Music," 27.

[98] Ibid., 23.

Higgins,[99] the fact that the court performances in the medieval kingdoms involved performances (mainly, vocal music) extolling the praises of the kings seemed to qualify that genre of music as entertainment or not 'devotional' music as the music does not pertain <u>directly</u> to the divine.

What these arguments signify is that studies on Karnatic Music, whilst problematizing its history in relation to the nationalist movement as I have done in this chapter, do not problematize the categories or binaries that have risen out of these developments, rather employ those same binaries. Thus, pertaining to the arguments on the 'religious' or 'secular' space where Karnatic Music is performed, if the content of music (that is the composer's devotion towards the divine, the meaning of the *kriti*, etc.) is what determines its 'religiosity,' surely the music would transcend and transform the nature of the setting it is performed in, be it temple or the royal court. Moreover, as discussed in Chapter 2, the king represented both 'religious' and 'secular' (political) realms; he was the ruler, but also a representation (and in many cases incarnation) of the tutelary deity of the kingdom. Temples and royal courts as performance spaces have represented both, as shown in Chapter 2, what we now understand as separate spheres, 'religious' and 'secular.' With regard to compositions dedicated to the king, many such compositions incorporated titles that could refer to both the deity and the king.[100] However, this particular feature in compositions was not unique to the court composers; most composers used *mudra*, which is a phrase or a term that indicates the work is indeed their composition. In addition, most of these *mudras* refer to the

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[99] Ibid., 27; Jon Higgins, "From Prince to Populace," 21.

[100] Indira Viswanathan Peterson, "Multilingual Dramas at the Tanjavur Marāthā Court and Literary Cultures in Early Modern South India," *The Medieval History Journal* 14, no. 2 (2011): 304.

composer's *ishtadevatha* (lit. favourite deity).[101] As argued in Chapter 2, historically, the categories did not exist as distinct from each other. Rather, they were embedded in the overall social relations such that they were meaningful within those contexts. Thus, modern arguments that Karnatic Music moved into more urbanized and 'secularized' setting mirrors the rhetoric of the Madras intelligentsia who appropriated the notions of modernity that the 'religious' realm is distinct from the 'secular' realm; this was in fact the premise of the culture-defining exercise carried out by them to render music as Karnatic Music, that is 'religious' music and thus, classical music.

3.4.2   Constructed and Appropriated Unity: 'Hinduism'

The speakers at the music conferences conducted by the Madras Music Academy repeatedly emphasized the connections made to Karnatic Music history. While writing about Tyāgarājā in the journal in 1931, famous musician Nemam Natarāja Bhāgavatar wrote,

> one of the important characteristics of Indian Music is its antiquity. The germs of our music are to be found in the Sama Veda; and through a continuous process of evolution which subsisted for centuries these have developed into the various musical systems of our country."[102]

In the same journal, Appa Rao Pantulu Garu wrote, " . . . In India, in particular, it has been, for time immemorial, associated with religion and religious devotion or Bhakti."[103] Almost every speaker and writer expressed the same idea that the strength of Karnatic Music was its timelessness and ancientness and that present day art needs to be restored to its original and

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[101] Thus, Tyāgarājā's *mudra* was his name; Mutthuswami Dikshitar's was *guruguha*; Shyama Sastri's was *Shyama Krishna*.

[102] Bhāgavatar, "The Art of Sri Tyagaraja Swami," 18.

[103] Appa Rao Pantulu Garu, "The Flutes and its Theory," *Journal of Madras Music Academy* 2, no. 1 (1931): 2-7.

purer form that expresses only *bhakti*, a higher emotion that leads to *moksha*. The obvious references to Karnatic Music *Sāma Vēda* and other ancient Hindu literatures advanced the idea that Karnatic Music was Hindu music.

The idea, that a unified religion called 'Hinduism' existed as a pre-colonial category, is contested. Indeed, Oddie argues that the term 'Hindu' did not have any original meaning, but only indicated the people of the region.[104] Moreover, he argues that the term 'Hindooism' was first used by an Evangelical and later on, the director of the East India Company, Charles Grant in 1787.[105] Raja Rammohun Roy, the first well-known Indian reformer used the term in 1816.[106] Colonizers' formative ideas about religion(s) in India were based on travel logs and accounts of Christian missionaries. Also, according to Sweetman, Jesuit missionary Roberto Nobili asserted that there were several different religions in India. In fact, Tranquebar missionaries in Malabar, in South India, or the Tamil region, found that Malabarians had different opinions and were divided into many 'sects.'[107] To the colonizers who adhered to one church, diversity of religious practices was incomprehensible.

> Convinced as they were that distinctive religions could not coexist without frequent antagonism, the doctrinal liberality of Indian religions remained a mystery without the postulation of an overarching religious framework that could unite the Indians under the flag of a single religious tradition.[108]

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[104] Geoffrey A. Oddie, "Hindu Religious Identity with a Special Reference to The Origin and Significance of the Term 'Hinduism', c. 1787-1947," in *Rethinking Religion in India: The Colonial Construction of Hinduism*, ed. Esther Block, Marianne Keppens and Rajaram Hegde (Oxon: Routledge, 2010), 42.

[105] Oddie, "Hindu Religious Identity," 45.

[106] Ibid.

[107] Geoffrey A. Oddie, *Imagined Hinduism: British Protestant Missionary Constructions of Hinduism, 1793-1900* (New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2006), 61.

[108] Richard King, *Orientalism and Religion: Postcolonial Theory, India and 'The Mystic East'* (London and New York: Routledge, 1999), 105.

King argues that a unified essence of 'religion' cannot or could not have existed because it assumes that there is a common, unified, characteristics to the concept of 'religion' that could be found everywhere. "Indeed, the modern category of 'religion' itself is a Western construction that owes a considerable debt to Enlightenment presuppositions."[109] He also argues that it is purely a Western construct that every culture should have a religion. As Fitzgerald points out, the unified idea is a "common sense,"[110] a model derived from Christianity, the idea that every state has a national religion within which individuals are assigned a role in the hierarchy, which is all encompassing, was reflected in the early colonial travel writings.[111] In the case of Malabarians, their divisions were compared with the different sects among Christians and therefore implied that Malabarians had one overall system within which these 'sects' existed.[112] Subsequently, what the colonizers witnessed in India was practices that they could not comprehend such as idol worship and thoroughly despised such as the *sati*. They also witnessed what they perceived as enormous power, which Brahmins had, as priests and the educated caste, in the society. Brahmins had a central presence in every ritual; and every aspect of the life of people of India was ritualistic, as King puts "elitist communities within India (notably the scholarly Brahmin castes) exerted a certain degree of influence upon the Western Orientalists, thereby contributing to the construction of the modern, Western conception of 'Hinduism'."[113] Thus, the colonizers concluded that 'Hinduism' was a pagan religion with barbaric and irrational practices <u>and</u>

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[109] King, *Orientalism and Religion*, 11.

[110] Ibid., 40.

[111] Fitzgerald, "Encompassing Religion," 235.

[112] King, *Orientalism and Religion*, 61.

[113] Ibid., 102.

a 'Brahmanical' religion. Thus, diverse faiths were perceived to be far more uniform.

For the nationalists, this served as a banner to unite the country against the colonizers. In doing so, by appropriating colonial narratives on modernity, they condemned superstitions and 'irrational' practices and promoted modern values of 'Hinduism' to show its adaptability to modernity by basing their objectives on ideas of the 19th century reformers such as Raja Rammohun Roy, Dayanand Saraswati, and Swami Vivekananda. In the late 19th century, in colonial Madras, Orientalists such as Sir William Jones and C.R. Day wrote specifically about 'Hindu' music when referring to South Indian music and Islamic music as North Indian music. They wrote about the superiority of Hindu music.[114] C.R. Day in fact wrote that the music in South India was superior to that of the North India because the former was being "confined to Brahmin families who combined ritual status and functions with knowledge of scriptures and Puranic texts, and who participated in the musical activity."[115] In fact

> [I]n Madras, the middle-class project was further revitalized by inputs from the Theosophists who exulted the Hindu past, celebrated the vigour and merits of the Brahmin caste and viewed music and performance as an extension of collective religious expression.[116]

Thus, the cultural project of re-defining music was "an attempt to project an authentic Hindu past."[117]

Spatial shift from the royal courts to the urban middle-class Madras popularized Karnatic Music; however, what this spatial shift did to Karnatic

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[114] Day, *The Music and Musical Instruments of Southern India and the Deccan*, 24, quoted in Subramanian, *From the Tanjore Court to the Madras Music Academy*, 58-59.

[115] Ibid., 61.

[116] Ibid., 16.

[117] Ibid., 67.

Music was to make it exclusive to certain groups of audiences, specifically Brahmins and upper class Non-Brahmins. Karnatic Music was also given an exclusive position separate and 'purer' than other kinds of music. The Madras Intelligentsia was able to assume the role of cultural-crusaders to protect the sacrality of Indian culture through Karnatic Music. However, the process created multiple Others, who were marginalized by the elites. One such group were the Tamil Nationalists in Tamil Nadu, who felt that the Madras Intelligentsia along with the Indian National Congress were restoring the dominance of Brahmins and marginalization of lower castes by rendering Karnatic Music exclusive to certain groups. The Tamil Isai Iyakkam (Tamil Music Movement) and its parent movement the Dravidian Movement represented the fragmentation within Indian nationalist movement showing that appropriating colonial notions of unified 'Hinduism' or Karnatic Music as a cultural market did not go unopposed. In the next section, I discuss the context within which Tamil Isai Iyakkam emerged.

3.5 Conclusion: Lost Land of Tamils: Tamil Isai Iyakkam (Tamil Music Movement)

Mānida sevai dhrōgamā,
Kalaivāni nīye sol
Vīdhiyil nindru thavikkum parāriyai pārpadhum pāvamā?

[Is service to humanity a betrayal [to music],
O goddess of arts [Saraswati]! Tell me
Is it a sin to attend to an untouchable who is hurt on the road?][118]

This song appeared in a 1988 Tamil film called *Unnal Mudiyum Thambi* (lit. you can, brother!). The film portrayed (among other social issues) the complex

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[118] My translation.

relationship between Karnatic Music community and the 'rest of the society.' More importantly, how the latter views the former as a community consisting of self-absorbed artistes who glorify caste-system (and the discrimination of people seen as belonging to the lower orders in the caste hierarchy) and the divinity of the art whilst being apathetic towards the problems of the larger society. The former was portrayed by a character, Bilahari Marthandam Pillai, a patriarch and a prolific musician and the latter, by a character Udayamurthy, his son and the hero of the film, who respects his father's knowledge of music but detests his lack of concern for the society. In the scene leading up to the song cited above, Pillai and his son are travelling in a car to get to a performance whilst on the way they witness a worker who is hurt and is in need of urgent medical attention. While Udayamurthy intends on helping the worker, Pillai refuses on the account that he would be delayed for his performance. During the performance, on stage, Udayamurthy is upset at his father's lack of empathy and refuses to sing along with Pillai (a practice that is common for *sisyas* accompanying their *gurus*). At one point, noticing Udayamurthy's resentment, Pillai pauses while performing a *kriti* in Telugu as Udayamurthy sings the above song expressing his anguish. In the next scene marking a fallout between the father and the son, Pillai argues that his life and identity as a musician resides within the parameters (*vēli*-lit. boundary/fence) or the community in which life's ultimate commitment is to music and the divine <u>only,</u> whilst Udayamurthy argues that a true artiste should see himself/herself <u>in relation to</u> their social contexts and that involves speaking and working for the welfare of the humanity.

Albeit released in 1988, the movie and the two scenes described above mark a pivotal aspect of the early 20th century music-'revival' movement and prevailing ideas about the movement and the Karnatic Music community in

general. That Karnatic musicians believed in their own *moksha* through music and that they did not have much concern about the larger society; by practising Karnatic Music and maintaining the exclusivity of the art within a community, they were adhering to caste-system, which rendered them hypocritical to their commitment to the divine, whilst juxtaposing Tamil music and Tamil identity as a counter-culture to such hypocrisy.

The Indian nationalist movement spearheaded by the Indian National Congress under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi garnered opposition in some parts of the nation, specifically in Tamil Nadu, after a series of controversies that led the party to be perceived as advancing Brahmin-dominance agenda. For instance, in the early 1920s, controversies emerged when the 'untouchable' caste members were refused entry to the temples and a segregated dining system was organised for Non-Brahmins in a school run by the Congress party (by a Brahmin member of the party) in colonial Madras.[119] These caught the attention of nationalists who later went onto become Tamil Nationalists, a distinction that is still very important in contemporary Tamil Nadu. Specifically, E.V. Ramasamy Naicker (also known as Periyar- lit. 'the great one'), a member of the Congress party who supported the rights of 'lower-caste' groups, left the party in order to fight for their rights since he saw these incidents and the party itself as reinstatement of caste-system and discrimination of minorities, which he solely attributed to Brahminism and 'Hindu' identity.[120] This led to the emergence of a Non-Brahmin movement, a

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[119] Nicholas Dirks, *Castes of Mind: Colonialism and the Making of Modern India* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press), 258.

[120] Dirks contends that there were similar movements in Maharashtra involving B. R. Ambedkar as well. See, Dirks, *Castes of Mind*, 231. Also see, S.M. Michael, *Dalits in Modern India: Visions and Values.* 2nd ed. (New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2007); D.C. Ahir, *The Legacy of Dr. Ambedkar (Bharat Ratna)* (Delhi: B.R. Publishing Corporation, 1990).

multi-faceted movement that had been brewing during the early 20th century,[121] opposing Brahmin dominance and the oppression (on different fronts). As a first step towards such perceived dominance of Hindus, which then became synonymous with Brahmins, the Justice Party, a political party, was founded in 1916 in opposition to Annie Besant's (of Theosophical Society) alliance with Brahmins during the 'Home-Rule League,' that was organized by Indian nationalists, specifically Besant, to demand for self-rule from the British Government. The Justice Party campaigned on anti-Brahmin sentiments and pushed for legislative reforms for proportional representation for 'lower-caste' communities to acquire employment with the government.[122] In the following decades, Periyar became an important figure in these movements. When Periyar left the Congress party, he claimed "no god; no religion; no Gandhi; no Congress; and no [B]rahmins,"[123] since he saw all these as reasons for inequality in the society. Following his exit, he began the *Suyamariyadhai Iyakkam* (lit. Self-Respect Movement) which, although it shared similar sentiments with the Justice Party, was ideologically different. Whilst the Justice Party ran on anti-Brahminism, Periyar's movement, which eventually became a political party called the Self-Respect Party, was intent on abolishing caste-system[124] and 'religion,' specifically, 'Hinduism'[125] and imagined an egalitarian Tamil Nadu.

Central to such an imagination was Periyar's avowed 'atheism,' anti-Brahmanism and emphasis on 'reason' and 'rationalism' in opposition to the ritualistic nature of 'Hinduism,' which he believed was synonymous with

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[121] Subramanian, *From the Tanjore Court to the Madras Music Academy*, 151.

[122] For more, see Dirks, *Castes of Mind*, 261.

[123] Periyar, *Kudi Arasu*, (1925) quoted in Dirks, *Castes of Mind*, 259.

[124] Dirks, *Castes of Mind*, 261.

[125] Weidman, *Singing the Classical, Voicing the Modern*, 166.

Brahmanism. He believed the faith in the divine was intrinsic to being 'religious,' and ritualistic, which he saw as 'superstitious.' This, he argued, was the principal cause for the inequality in the society through caste-system. This notion, that 'Hinduism' is Brahminism and rituals are 'superstitious,' was present in the colonial narratives on India, especially in the early missionary writings on India. Arguably, Periyar's emphasis on rationality as the path towards egalitarianism away from the dominance of the priestly castes had influences from the European Enlightenment.[126] His party introduced 'non-ritualistic' marriages and encouraged 'inter-caste' weddings[127] but also organized dramatic demonstrations such as "burn[ing] sacred texts such as the Manusmriti . . . beat priests and idols with shoes, and marched on temples and seminaries in mass demonstrations."[128] However, what became the core of Periyar's party and movement that would set the tone of the political landscape of Tamil Nadu for the rest of the century (and till today) was the idea of Dravidian identity.

Periyar's movement began by emphasizing the importance and superiority of the Dravidian (Tamil) identity that they argued were native to India, while Brahmins were Aryans who invaded India and drove the Dravidian population to South India. Thus, as Krishna Manavalli argues, his party sought to "build a lower caste Dravidian nation that not only excludes the North Indians and

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[126] Some of these ideas became core themes of films of the early Tamil film industry in which followers of Periyar and Tamil Nationalism acted. For instance, *Parasakthi* (Goddess, 1952), *Rattha Kaneer* (Tears of Blood, 1954).

[127] These 'inter-caste' weddings had specific impact on the *devadāsi* system in that, it forced *devadāsis* into marital relationships by placing emphasis and legitimacy on conjugality of women. See Chapter 4.

[128] Dirks, *Castes in Mind*, 261. This particular incident, of placing a garland made of shoes on an idol of Rama, was often mentioned in my family as a testimonial for being victimised by the members of the non-Brahmin movement as recently as in the 1970s.

Aryans, but also the Brahmins of the South."[129] Tamil language became an important symbol of such identity. Periyar and his party articulated Dravidian identity by unifying under the Tamil language. Thus, to him and to his party, devotion to Tamil language was synonymous with devotion to Tamil Nadu and Tamil cause, which was establishing a Dravidian nation.[130] It was this devotion to Tamil language that caught the attention of the Dravidian Movement on the on going 'cultural project' of re-defining Karnatic Music. For an avowed 'atheist,' ironically, devotion towards Tamil language seemed acceptable for Periyar.[131] Particularly, what provided impetus to their movement was a work by a 19th century missionary Robert Caldwell (1814-1891) called *Comparative Grammar of Dravidian Languages*. Caldwell came to the Tamil Country to work among communities belonging to the 'lower castes' but took interest in the Indian languages and the indigenous ritualistic practices. He, therefore,

> followed Muller's idea of a race divide between the Aryans and Dravidians . . . established the idea of a pre-Aryan Dravidian past . . . claimed that the lower caste people in South India were the original inhabitants of India, and the Brahmins were . . . Aryan outsides."[132]

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[129] Krishna K. Manavalli, "Invented Traditions and Regional Identities—A Study of the Cultural Formations of South India—1856-1990s" (PhD diss., Michigan State University, 2008), 99.

[130] Tamil nationalists (who were supporters of the Dravidian movement) believed and wrote about nostalgic mystical Tamil land called *Lemuria* believed to have been submerged in the Indian Ocean. See, for example, Sumathi Ramaswamy, "En/Gendering Language: The Poetics of Tamil Identity," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 35, no. 4 (1993), 683-725. This Tamil cause and loyalty to Tamil language and anti-Brahmin sentiment is a platform of contemporary political parties in Tamil Nadu such as the Dravidian Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) and Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (ADMK). It is practically impossible to win an election in contemporary Tamil Nadu without pledging allegiance to the land and more importantly, the language. This avowed 'devotion' to language has a complicated relationship with politics and Tamil cinema. See Selvaraj Velayutham, ed., *Tamil Cinema: The Cultural Politics of India's Other Film Industry* (New York: Routledge, 2008).

[131] For instance, this Tamil language was personified as *Tamil Thāi* (lit. Tamil Mother) as counter to *Bharatmātha* (lit. Mother India). See, for example, Sumathi Ramaswamy, "En/gendering Language: The Poetics of Tamil Identity," 683-725.

[132] Manavalli, "Invented Traditions," 8.

As discussed above, redefining Karnatic Music was not ideology-free or seamless, rather, as Weidman says "the staging of 'classical' music involved the creation of an audiences, a group of concertgoers considerably more homogenous in terms of caste and class than attendees at earlier temple or street performances."[133] The growth of print medium increased the popularity of these 'modern' concerts in *sabhās*. Brahmins had natural dominance on the use of print medium to their advantage, since traditionally they have been the educated caste.

> Thus, even if it was the rich and influential magnate-patron . . . provided the necessary sponsorship for arts, temple management and other cultural markers, it were the Western educated Brahmin publicists who appropriated the tradition initially as a means of defining an exclusive social identity for themselves . . . and subsequently extending it to serve as part of the nation's unique cultural inheritance.[134]

In the cultural project of the urban middle-class in colonial Madras, works of 'the Trinity' were promoted as the purest form of divine music; and these compositions were in Telugu and Sanskrit. This became an issue among musicologists and scholars. The perceived Brahmin-dominance theory was further evidenced by musicologists' repeated emphasis of Karnatic Music's connection to the *Vēdas* and *Upanishads*. The scenes from the 1988 Tamil film described on p. 162 clearly illustrate this issue: Pillai performs a <u>Telugu</u> *kriti* and Udayamurthy registers his criticism of his father's attitude through a <u>Tamil</u> song performed to the <u>same tune</u> of the Telugu *kriti* as if to reiterate the exclusivity of the music, the community and that particular *kriti* (which can be understood <u>only</u> by Telugu and Sanskrit-knowing audiences) enjoyed by the likes of his father and rebut such exclusivity through a Tamil song to indicate openness through the text and the language of the song.

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[133] Weidman, *Singing the Classical, Voicing the Modern*, 55.

[134] Subramanian, *From the Tanjore Court to the Madras Music Academy*, 47.

Although, Periyar initially refused to be a part of any music movement, which he saw as promoting 'religion,' which to him was the root of caste-system, he raised concerns about the lack of importance to Tamil compositions and Non-Brahmin Tamil composers. By the 1930s and 1940s, the issue became significant and resulted in the foundation of Tamil Isai Iyakkam in 1943. Musicians in Madras were wary of the movement because while they were supportive of the inclusion of Tamil compositions, they were worried that ignoring the rest of the compositions (like that of Telugu and Sanskrit by 'the Trinity') would be a compromise of aesthetics[135] and *bhakti*. Members of the Tamil Isai Iyakkam believed that by insisting on Telugu and Sanskrit compositions, Karnatic musicians were enjoying exclusivity of *kritis* through the power of language, and that they regarded the art with much secrecy. In fact, in the late 19th century, Chinnaswamy Mudaliar, a Christian, wrote (in relation to notating music compositions) about making music available to everyone in the society and condemned the "secrecy and competition among Indian musicians, and the money-mongering of *guru*s."[136] During the presidential address at the 1934 Music Conference, Kumaraja Muthiah Chettiyar specifically addressed this issue by requesting the Music Academy to encourage and give prominence to Tamil compositions.[137] Dr Raja Sir Annamalai Chettiar, a philanthropist, a patron and a strong supporter of music education in Tamil Nadu, spoke in favour of including Tamil compositions and established Tamil Isai Iyakkam in 1943. This was the same year the first Tamil Music Conference was held.

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[135] Ibid., 156-157.

[136] Chinnaswamy Mudaliar, *Peculiarities of Oriental Music* (1892), 29, quoted in Weidman, *Singing the Classical, Voicing the Modern*, 212.

[137] Kumararaja M. A. Muthiah Chettiyar, *"Presidential Address," Journal of Madras Music Academy* nos. 6-8 (1935-1937): 151.

Musicologists and musicians involved in the Tamil Isai Iyakkam sought support to their cause from the works of Abraham Pandithar, a Christian musicologist who, influenced by Robert Caldwell's work on South Indian languages, proposed the theory of lost land of Tamils called *Lemuria*. Pandithar used biblical evidences to support his arguments.[138] He argued that Tamil language has fallen into despair from its original form during the *Sangam* period. It is this period that musicologists refer to when tracing the history of Karnatic Music to Tamil music, as an alternative argument to Karnatic Music connection to the *Vēdās*. Indeed, *Sanga Ilakkiyam* (lit. *Sangam* literature) contains description of music and musical instruments that have been used during the later centuries in Karnatic Music. Thus, both music-'revival' movement and its apparent counter-movement, the Tamil Isai Iyakkam, focussed on the nostalgic glorious past that they wanted to restore in their language and music.

In 1941, the Madras Music Academy passed a resolution stating that its goal was to uphold excellent music standards and that language should not be an issue,[139] since music transcended languages. This notion of giving prominence to Tamil compositions was supported by prolific musicians such as D.K. Pattammal and M.S. who often performed Tamil compositions during the movement.[140] With the Tamil Isai Iyakkam, national identity became a site of struggle for subaltern identity, and much as Karnatic Music, the musicians became an ideological construct, as well.[141] Nationalists such as Kalki Krishnamurti, C. Rajagopalachari and musicians such as Tiger Varadhachariar came in support of the inclusion of Tamil language compositions in Karnatic

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[138] Weidman, *Singing the Classical, Voicing the Modern*, 170-177.

[139] Ibid., 183.

[140] Ibid., 186-187.

[141] See Chapter 6.

Music. Some musicians, such as Ariyakudi Ramanuja Iyengar, criticized the movement for politicizing music.[142] But the movement raised the larger question of importance of language and lyrics in music. While musicians claimed the importance of *bhāvā* in music performances has to be *bhakti* and has to remain 'pure,' the Tamil Isai Iyakkam argued that if musicians do not understand the language of the compositions they perform, the argument for the need for *bhakti-bhāvā* becomes meaningless.

Several themes have risen out of both music-'revival' movement and the counter-movement, the Tamil Isai Iyakkam. Firstly, much as Karnatic Music was being redefined as 'religious' music, it was a medium of nationalist movements that transformed the political landscape of Tamil Nadu, thereby blurring the distinction between 'religious' and 'secular' (that is generally understood as 'political') spheres. Secondly, Periyar insisted on 'atheism' and rationalism. Even though he showed initial reluctance to participate in the music movement, his party's Dravidian identity was founded upon unquestionable devotion to the Tamil language personified by the deity *Tamil Thai* and the notion that there was a perfect past that they needed to return to. Here, the Tamil language was deified which he and his party 'worshipped.' Also, whilst it was the *Vedic* period for Karnatic musicians, it was the land of *Lemuria* and the *Sangam* Period for Periyar and his party. Thus, both movements had similar goals <u>even though</u> they were essentially in opposition to the other. Fourth, the anti-Brahmin movement, which was the precursor for the Tamil Isai Iyakkam, functioned on different fronts to advance their goal of upsetting the perceived Brahmin dominance in the Tamil society: one was to oppose to the caste-system and fight for equal opportunity for people seen as

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[142] Subramanian, *From the Tanjore Court, Voicing the Modern*, 157.

belonging to the lower section of caste-hierarchy, for which the platform was 'atheism' and rejection of any 'religion;' yet, the other was to participate in the music movement to argue for inclusion of Tamil compositions into a sphere, which was most certainly seen as 'religious.'[143]   Thus, the anti-Brahmin movement was not a homogenous historical development; rather it contained strains and contradictions especially when combined with the music movement. Finally, an important task of the anti-Brahmin movement was not only to reject the caste-system but also everything that was seen as being remotely pertaining to the system: traditions, rituals, etc. One such was the *devadāsi* tradition. Birth of Karnatic Music marginalized *devadāsi* tradition, who were traditional communities performing music and dance. However, such marginalisation intersected with newly emerging ideas on morality, sexuality and gender roles in the public and private spheres. In addition to this, the perception, that *devadāsi* tradition is a Brahmin tradition that reiterated their superiority in the society, persuaded anti-Brahmin movement participants' involvement. Within these complex historical developments, *devadāsis* were rendered as the Others but not quite in the same way as Tamil music. Whilst perceived marginalisation of Tamil music resulted in the Tamil Isai Iyakkam, *devadāsis* were rendered 'voiceless.' The next chapter will look at *devadāsi* tradition and these complex historical developments.

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[143] In addition, some of the sub-movements involved alliance with Muslim and Christian groups in Tamil Nadu who were seen as being marginalized by the caste-system, which now became synonymous with Brahmins. Thus, anti-Brahmin platform somehow morphed a movement that began as an 'atheist' movement into one that appropriated themes that they were opposing, such as association with any 'religious' identity.

4   Performing Gender and Sexuality in the Public Sphere

"Orientals are aware that the period of especial feminine devilry is between the first menstruation and twenty when, according to some, every girl is a possible murderess. So they wisely marry her . . . "

— Sir Richard Burton[1]

4.1   Introduction: The Devadāsi Tradition

In 1983, a commercially successful Telugu film called *Sāgara Sangamam* (lit. sea unites) later dubbed in Tamil as *Salangai Oli* (lit. music of the anklets) was released. The movie was about a young man named Balakrishna (Balu), a passionate Bharatnatyam dancer wishing to dedicate his life to Bharatnatyam, who rejected commercialization of the art and moral lax of the performers. In a scene that defines the core message of the movie, Balu's friend finds him a job as a dance assistant with a choreographer in the film industry. On the first day of his job, he is asked to choreograph a composition on divine love between Hindu deity Krishna and his lover Radha (the permitted level of eroticism in performance arts and in the public sphere).[2] Balu choreographs the song as a Bharatnatyam performance, which is rejected by the choreographer, who instead asks his female assistant to teach Balu sexually charged dance moves (appropriate for films, a commercial venture), which Balu is forced to perform. He performs despite detesting the (then) current state of the divine art form. It pains him to see that the female assistant prostrates before the choreographer as her *guru*; Balu quits the job the same day. That night, Balu dances all night at a temple in anger and frustration as if to cleanse himself of the moral corruption he experienced. Closely related to this theme is another storyline of the movie:

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[1] Rana Kabbani, *Imperial Fictions: Europe's Myths of Orient* (London: Pandora, HarperCollins Publishers, 1994), 52.

[2] See Chapter 3, p. 132ff, and p. 198ff.

Balu falls in love with a married woman (the heroine of the movie) who, separated from her husband, also falls in love with him. Balu, however, protects the sanctity of marriage by forgoing his love when the husband wants to get back together with her. As a committed artiste, embodying the divine art of Bharatnatyam, he has to do so. Themes of this movie such as a nostalgia for a 'pure' cultural past, glorification of monogamous conjugal relationships as the 'true' Indian culture, and regulated gender roles in the public sphere, reflects the narratives of the early 20th century dance-revival movement. This movement saw re-construction of the divine, of dance as Bharatnatyam (lit. dance of Bharat/India) and also ensured that dance as a representative of Indian culture was removed from traditional performing communities and re-assigned to Brahmin communities who were deemed to be the true representatives of respectable Indian middle-class and the saviours and protectors of Indian (read: Hindu) culture. Both Karnatic Music and Bharatnatyam share a similar, if not identical, history of how they were re-constructed during nationalist movements in the early 20th century colonial Madras.

It might be asked: what does the *devadāsi* history has to do with my larger enquiry in this chapter on copyright law and Karnatic Music. This chapter is relevant to this thesis in the following ways: In this chapter, I discuss a culture re-defining exercise similar to that of the construction of Karnatic Music, discussed in the previous chapter, undertaken for dance around the same period. The music-'revival' movement influenced the dance-'revival' movement by ensuring that dance, like music, was situated in the spiritual domain by restricting what compositions the dance would be performed to, thereby transforming traditional dance practices and formats. More importantly, both movements gendered performance arts within the public sphere, but the dance-

'revival' movement redefined Indian femininity specifically as middle-class women in monogamous conjugal relationship. Such a re-definition of feminity aided music-'revival' movement in that Karnatic Music was now being taken-up by middle-class women with encouragement from colonial Indian elites and the Madras Music Academy.[3] Therefore, discussion about music-'revival' and construction of Karnatic Music draws us automatically towards the history of construction of Bharatnatyam. Chatterjee explains that the project of 'classicization' as one of moderation and 'cleaning up'[4] of those practices that supported the colonial narrative of rendering the colonized as irrational and immoral: the *devadāsi* tradition or (later called) the *nautch* (lit. dance) system was seen as one such practice, in which girls were 'dedicated' to the temples or the royal courts where they performed music and dance. These historical developments point us to how traditional communities were removed to from the arts they embodied to be 'owned' by different communities with newer aesthetic preferences making the claims of ownership of creativity of contemporary musicians hypocritical. These are the histories that give meaning to what we now understand as Karnatic Music. As it becomes apparent in the previous and this chapter, removing these historical developments renders Karnatic Music meaningless.

The dance-'revival' movement focussed on a specific aspect of *devadāsi* tradition: *devadāsis* were allowed to have multiple sexual partners who were

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[3] Works of Soneji, Meduri and Srinivasan specifically focus on these historical developments. See, Davesh Soneji, *Unfinished Gestures: Devadāsis, Memory and Modernity in South India* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2012), Avanthi Meduri, *Nation, Woman, Representation: The Sutured History of the Devadāsis and Her Dance* (New York: New York University Press, 1996); Amrit Srinivasan, "Reform or Conformity? Temple Prostitution and the Community in the Madras Presidency," in *Structures of Patriarchy: State, Community and Household in Modernising Asia,* ed. Bina Agarwal (Delhi: Kali For Women, 1988).

[4] Partha Chatterjee, *Nation and Its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 73.

their patrons. The reformers saw *devadāsis* as 'prostitutes' and therefore, as 'immoral' and abolished the tradition (through legislation), which rendered them destitute. Thus, dance-'revival' movement redefined the art form based on the constructed distinction between the divine and the erotic, and reconstituted these categories into spaces with definitive boundaries. On many levels, the anti-*devadāsi* movement was, thus, the dance-'revival' movement. Both the music-'revival' and the dance-'revival' movements resulted in emergence of multiple Others; whilst it was the Tamil Music Movement (discussed in Chapter 3) when Karnatic Music was re-defined, it was the abolition of the *devadāsi* tradition for the newly defined Bharatnatyam. However, there was an overlap of participants of the Tamil Music Movement playing role in marginalizing the *devadāsi* tradition, which is discussed further below. In doing so, I argue that the politics of morality and (gender) identities, as a part of larger nationalist project and that of defining Karnatic Music, was based on religion/secular dichotomy. However, in the case of *devadāsis* the dichotomy was defined along the constructed categories of the divine/the erotic and thus sacred/profane.

Let me clarify as to what my central arguments in this chapter are going to be about. It is perhaps easier to briefly note what I will not be doing. I do not want to paint a picture of pre-'reform'/post-'reform' *devadāsi* communities (although I inevitably highlight those aspects of the society as they become relevant to my argument) indicating the former as the epitome of women's rights while the latter as having robbed women of their agency.[5] I also do not want to make a case against the 'reform' as if to say it had been a complete failure and that such

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[5] But, for more on the effect of the reform and lives of *devadāsis* post-reform, see Davesh Soneji, *Unfinished Gestures: Devadāsis, Memory and Modernity in South India* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2012), 189-222.

an idea was European to begin with and therefore, not compatible with Indian society. The 'reform' gave agency to some women who did not want to belong to the tradition. For instance, some women who participated in the 'reform' were from the tradition; also, Karnatic musicians such as M.S. Subbulakshmi (about whom I discuss at the end of this chapter), could establish herself as a prolific musician because the 'reform' lead to *devadāsis* looking for alternative sources of livelihood in the newly emerging film industry and mechanical reproduction of music. The 'reform' also focused on women's health. However, not all women were as successful as M.S was. Additionally, the premise of the 'reform' and definition of agency were based on a different sense of morality, a sense emerging from the new nationalist patriarchy, as an attempt to become compatible with the on-going nation-building exercise. However, such a project involved selective appropriation of colonial narratives on gender, sexuality and morality. These narratives were then tailored to fit the historical contexts within which they were made to function. Finally, and more importantly, try as I might, I cannot 'give a voice' to *devadāsis*. I do not attempt to do so. I am acutely aware of my position as a woman, a Karnatic musician (a product of the 'reform') from a Brahmin community (a community that were colonial elites and patrons of *devadāsis* and eventually, the music and dance 'revival' movements) when I make my arguments.

However, what I am attempting to do in this chapter: as a larger point, I emphasize that anti-*devadāsi* movement and 'birth' of Bharatnatyam was not as seamless as we now understand. In other words, it is common among Karnatic Music and Bharatnatyam communities to look at 'birth' of Karnatic Music and Bharatnatyam simply as a straightforward chronological historical developments during which Indian elites of colonial Madras decided to rescue

music and dance from 'degeneration' through social movements and laws.[6] It was complex, uneven and more importantly, very problematic to the community it was targeted at as some works on this topic have highlighted.[7] Thus, my focus is primarily on the developments surrounding communities within the *devadāsi* tradition in the late 19th century and the early 20th century, though I give a very brief history of dance performances in the Tamil Country. It is important to focus on how Victorian notions of 'morality,' women's place in the society and the Purity Campaign of 1880s Britain, as well as how Indian nationalists appropriated these discourses in order to be rid of the communities such as the *devadāsi* tradition. However, them and contemporary historians and scholars, I argue, work(ed) under the pretension that *devadāsis* had agency within their tradition specifically by being outside the definition of monogamous conjugal relationships. This became a central point of criticism for the nationalists, which I would like to question in this chapter. In fact, the movement, which branded *devadāsis* as 'prostitutes,' drove them fully into prostitution as their only source of livelihood after the 'reform.' I argue that while the 'reformers' branded the *devadāsis* as victims, the patriarchal society branded itself as the victim (see the next argument) thus, resulting in failure of the movement with regards to integrating *devadāsis* into the society (which was the primary objective of the 'reform') by not being able to be rid of the social taboo. My interest here is: then, whose narrative was it that *devadāsis* had free

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[6] Such simplistic views of historical developments were common on narratives on Indian colonial period and the struggle for independence from the British. Of course, Subaltern Studies scholars have since challenged those ideas.

[7] See Davesh Soneji, *Unfinished Gestures: Devadāsis, Memory and Modernity in South India* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2012), Avanthi Meduri, *Nation, Woman, Representation: The Sutured History of the Devadāsis and Her Dance* (New York: New York University Press, 1996); for historiography of *devadāsi* performances in Tamil Country, see Saskia C. Kerserboom, *Nityasumangalī: Devadāsi Tradition in South India* (New Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publications, 1998).

agency to have multiple sexual partners? I want to go a step further and ask this question: how do we understand free agency with regard to *devadāsis*? After all, they were dancers and musicians. In the ethnographic evidences that Soneji gives on *devadāsis* who lived through the movement, there was pride and ownership in the narratives of the *devadāsis* whilst talking about their performances in the past.[8] They certainly embodied the music and dance: embodiment being a central property of performances such as these. Therefore, perhaps *devadāsis* felt empowered whilst they were performing because their performance was a part of them; the poem might be someone else's; the interpretation nattuvars'; the performance, and presentation theirs.

The 'reform' had a 'victimhood' dimension to it; 'reformers' claimed that in addition to women who were pushed into these professions (through familial pressure), many were 'knowingly' prostituting and were victims of social evils. According to this argument, *devadāsis* did not realize that they were victims of the tradition they belonged to; they were made to believe that their lives were normal; now, they had to be rescued, rehabilitated and integrated into respectable middle-class lives. Using Chandra Mohanty's essay "Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses,"[9] I critique the notion of 'victimhood.' As much as *devadāsis* had limited agency over their sexual lives, this particular aspect of the 'reform' is strikingly similar to the 'civilizing-the-natives' project the British undertook towards the colonized. The reform also treated all *devadāsi* as a homogenous community: this was highly problematic. I argue that this was another factor that contributed to a general failure of the 'reform' on multiple levels, which I go into detail below. Finally,

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[8] Soneji, *Unfinished Gestures*, 215.

[9] Chandra Talpade Mohanty, "Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses," *Feminist review* 30 (1988): 61-88.

and importantly, how did majority of *devadāsis* remain(ed) in the fringes of the society while some became not only successful but also icons of Karnatic Music and Bharatnatyam? What was the diverting factor that transformed the lives of these women from the same tradition but rendered them as two different categories? Did they have any 'voice'? These are complex issues, but *devadāsi* traditions were complex and so were the lives of these women.

Several works have looked into the reform movement in the early 20th century in colonial Madras.[10] However, in addition to the arguments I have outlined above, in this chapter, I want to pick up on some crucial aspects of the movement that shared commonalities and influences with music-'revival' movement and the larger project of nation building. These arguments, I build on along the course of this chapter. Firstly, the ideas that underpinned dance-'revival' were similar to ideas of morality used in music-'revival'; however, this was done by making specific connections to ancient texts that would reiterate the arguments of the 'reformers' that dance, like music, represents the divine but defiled by *devadāsis* and was in need of 'revival.' Thus, the Indian colonial elites appropriated the ideas of religious/secular, (and 'inner'/'outer' spheres) — discussed in the previous chapter — albeit in a subtler way than the music-'revivalists,' to define Bharatnatyam. Secondly, this was achieved using traditional icons of Hindu deities to reaffirm, again subtly, the connection dance had with only 'religion' and spirituality. Thirdly, connections made to 'religious'/'inner' spheres enabled the 'reformers' to remove eroticism

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[10] To name a few, see Indira Viswanathan Peterson and Davesh Soneji, ed., *Performing Pasts: Reinventing the Arts in Modern South India* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008); Davesh Soneji, *Unfinished Gestures: Devadāsis, Memory, and Modernity in South India* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012); Avanthi Meduri, *Nation, Woman, Representation: The Sutured History of the Devadāsis and Her Dance* (New York: New York University Press, 1996); for historiography of *devadāsi* performances in Tamil Country, see Saskia C. Kerserboom, *Nityasumangalī: Devadāsi Tradition in South India* (New Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publications, 1998).

altogether from the dance performances as immoral and determining the allowed measures of eroticism to 'divine love' (the definition of which is altogether very ambiguous). This, they did, by re-defining the modern Indian woman and her sexuality by assigning both to the 'inner'/private/'religious' sphere; the 'outer'/public/'political' sphere belonged to men whose duty it was to protect Mother India from the grasps of moral defilement. Finally, much like the music-'revival' movement, the dance-'revival' having removed the art from its traditional performers, made the art form exclusive to the Brahmin communities; much like the music-'revival' movement, the 'reformers' who were involved in the *devadāsi* abolishment measures were Brahmins, and therefore, it is not altogether surprising that the art form henceforth belonged to Brahmins.

4.2   History of Devadāsi system[11]

Throughout the history of the Tamil Country, *devadāsis* were patronized, specifically and famously by King Rajaraja Chola; the *Sangam* literature (a body of classical Tamil literature) notes several courtesans such as Mādhavi in *Silappadikāram*. However, according to Soneji, it was under the Nāyaka period in the Tanjavur Kingdom, starting from the 16th century that scattered history and presence of courtesans was forged into the identity of *devadāsi* and institutionalized.[12] Soneji argues that the court encouraged focus on the *bhōga*[13] (lit. erotic) aspect, which blurred the distinction between court performers and

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[11] For history on *tawa'if* (courtesans and *nautch* girls) in North India, see, Shweta Sachdeva, "Courtesans, Nautch Girls and Celebrity Entertainers in India (1720s-1920s)" (PhD Thesis, School of Oriental and African Studies, 2008), 5-377.

[12] Soneji, *Unfinished Gestures*, 31.

[13] There is a crucial distinction made between *bhōga* and *shringāra* even though both literally mean eroticism. Whilst *bhōga* indicates erotic longing, *shringāra* was re-interpreted in the early 20th century as to mean divine-love, thereby constructing a distinction that *bhōga* indicates embodied eroticism, whilst *shringāra* is divine-love pertaining to the devotee's soul or mind.

the temple performers, to be imagined together as concubines and mistresses.[14] Thus, they came to be associated with "sophisticated articulations of courtly eroticism."[15] As a part of a larger pattern of patronage to the performance arts (as discussed in Chapter 2), the Nāyaka court encouraged the courtesans to compose poems and musical works, although it was far more common for male musicians to compose songs to be performed by the courtesans. Thus, Kshetrayya's famous *padams* (erotic poems) were composed during the Nāyaka period.[16] We will soon see that performing these compositions became contentious and one of the defining aspects in labeling *devadāsis* as 'prostitutes' with lifestyle of 'sexual impropriety,' because as Soneji says "many of these songs express[ed] female [sexual] desire and are completely unabashed in their representations of the corporeality of sexual experience."[17] By the 17th century, the Marāthas had begun their rule in the Tamil Country; they were warrior-kings from North West India; they integrated Tamil, Telugu (from the Nāyaka) and Marāthi languages into the court's lives and music compositions.

4.2.1 *Devadāsi* Performances and Performing Spaces

Common perception of *devadāsi* derives from an etymological understanding of the terms as *deva-* god and *dāsi-* servant (therefore, 'servants of gods'), indicating that *devadāsis* were attached to temples. As we shall soon see, this, in addition to their tradition being outside monogamous conjugality, led to the understanding of *devadāsis* as 'temple prostitutes.' Also, *devadāsis* were referred to as a 'community' instead of a 'tradition' by the Indian colonial elites, thereby

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[14] Soneji, *Unfinished Gestures*, 31.

[15] Ibid., 30.

[16] Ibid.

[17] Ibid., 31.

homogenizing what Soneji argues is a diverse group of communities under a common tradition. Thus, according to Soneji, historically, *devadāsis* performed in three different settings:[18]

- As courtesans who were part of the royal court performances; they occasionally performed outside the court with permission. However, they also performed at festivals.

- As courtesans who were professional dancers who were part of the *chinna mēlams-* dance troupes (comprising of *devadāsis*, *nattuvanars*-their male dance master and other instrumentalists). These courtesans were part of the temple performers.

- As professional dancing girls in colonial Madras where they performed in salons (*nautch* or *sadir*) for colonial elites (both Indian and British) who were also their patrons. [19]

It is important to understand the exclusivity of *devadāsis* as exponents in music and dance. These arts were exclusively performed by *devadāsis* during a period when women in general were not allowed to learn those art forms or given access to education. However, such a set-up was due to the perception of *devadāsis* as a tradition. Thus, dance, music and education were exclusive to women born or adopted into this tradition.

Courtesans attached to the royal courts were 'dedicated' to the king through a ritual called *katthikalyanam* (lit. dagger marriage) by which they were inducted into their roles as concubines.[20] Interestingly, the term *kalyanam* here refers to marriage- of being married to the king for the rest of their lives and not just the

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[18] Ibid., 7-9.

[19] Homogenizing *devadāsi* communities is a historical and contemporary issue. See, p. 49 for more on this.

[20] Soneji, *Unfinished Gestures*, 36.

ritual for which the appropriate term would be *thirumanam* (lit. wedding). The ritual signified that the women were the king's concubines who were guaranteed the status of the wives but not the title Queen.[21] Similar to this ritual was the one involving *devadāsis* attached to the temples in which professional dancing girls traditionally born into the *devadāsis* tradition were 'given' to the temples; that is, courtesans underwent a ritual called *pottukattudhal* (lit. tying the pendant)[22] after which they were attached to the temples, performing during everyday rituals and festivals. Because of such a ritual, they have been referred to as *nityasumangalī* (lit. forever 'auspicious') meaning that they can never be widowed because they are 'married' to the deity.[23] Also, wearing of the pendant after the *pottukattudhal* ritual is symbolic of women in India wearing a pendant called *thāli* to signify their status as married. This is, perhaps, why *devadāsis*' presence was considered auspicious at weddings and festivals, for they were *nityasumangalī*. In addition, whilst it was a great honor to go through *pottukattudhal*, not all *devadāsis* went through the ritual, rather some merely performed at the festivals as part of *chinna mēlam* as their profession. In other words, the ritual *pottukattudhal* gave *devadāsis* a social-status as being the deity's wife or the king's concubine; but the ritual was not a pre-requisite for performing as a *devadāsi*.

Devadāsis lived in a matrilineal set-up. Srinivasan describes it as:

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[21] Ibid., 34. There was hierarchy within this set-up with older *devadāsis* (who performed music and dance) in addition to other concubines being caretakers of the younger *devadāsis*.

[22] Ibid.

[23] Ibid., 7. Traditional notion pertaining to widows was that loss of husband's life rendered the woman 'inauspicious.' By marrying a deity, who would unlike mortals transcends birth and death, *devadāsis* were also called *nityasumangalī*, someone who would never be widowed. This tradition, of dedicating women to the deity, is prevalent among Dalit women such as *jogitas*. But, Soneji argues that <u>because</u> these are Dalit histories with not much historical contexts known, they are falsely associated with the *devadāsi* tradition discussed in this chapter.

> The person 'in charge' in the dasi [short for *devadāsi*] establishment, the taikkizhavi or 'old mother', was the senior most female member who was normally one of the more renowned dancers of her time who, after retirement, exercised control over the younger members. The strict discipline of this old lady over both the private and professional lives of her relatives, her control over joint income, its pooling and expenditure, provided the fundamental source of unity for the dasi household.[24]

Thus, within the matrilineal set-up that functioned within the general patriarchal society, *devadāsi* tradition ensured certain rights that were otherwise unavailable to women under the 'Hindu Law.' For instance, *devadāsis* had the right to education, while the already existing laws in India (although referred to as 'Hindu Law') prohibited women's education. *Devadāsis* had the right to full inheritance and the right to perform funeral rights; closely tied to the right to inheritance was their right to adopt girls,[25] while according to the existing laws, men could adopt only boys and women could adopt boys only on behalf of their husbands. Also, under the patronage of Nāyaka and Marāthā kings, *devadāsis* received land, gifts and titles;[26] thus, in addition to being patronized by the kings and temples, they were also landowners who donated to the temples. This particular right and ability — to donate land to temples — signified their higher status in the society. As discussed in Chapter 2, to receive lands and titles from the king meant not only recognition for their expertise in performance arts but also recognition of their status by the king. To be recognized by the king who represented the divine was the highest honor.

In addition to dance performances, the presence of *devadāsis* had another significance. According to Puri, while *devadāsis*' exhibition of superior skills in performance arts was a testimony to the sovereignty of the royalty and the

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[24] Amrit Srinivasan, "Reform or Conformity? Temple Prostitution and the Community in the Madras Presidency," in *Structures of Patriarchy: State, Community and Household in Modernising Asia,* ed. Bina Agarwal (Delhi: Kali For Women, 1988), 188.

[25] Srinivasan, "Reform or Conformity?" 188.

[26] Stine Simonsen Puri, "Between Jesus and Krishna: Christian Encounters with South Indian Temple Dance," *Review of Development and Change* 14, no. 1&2 (2009): 292.

patrons, their presence at the temple processions and festivals was to "protect them [village people] from the divine forces of village deities."[27]

Historically, *devadāsis* were considered to be the patrons of performance arts and *nattuvanars* the male dance masters in producing these performances. However, Soneji points out that activities and performances of *devadāsis* attached to the royal courts were severely restricted. *Devadāsis* and *nattuvars* needed to seek permission to perform outside the royal court, and as concubines they were also subjected to slave trade that was in common with other slaves of the royal court.[28] Additionally, the court restricted their clothing and accessories and that of the *nattuvanars*.[29] I explore the issue of limited agency of *devadāsis* further below.

Tanjavur under the Nāyakas and later the Marāthās was the capital for *devadāsi* repertoire. Marāthā kings Serfoji II (1798-1832) and his son Shivaji II (1832-1855) were prominent patrons of dance, much like music. Among other *nattuvanars* that the kings patronized the Tanjavur Quartet[30] and their family occupy a prominent place in the dance history for transforming and integrating new dance styles. They regularly recruited, trained and presented dancers at the court.[31] In addition to poems on the deity and the patron king, they also composed erotic poems, which during the dance-'revival' movement became contentious as a representation of 'immorality.' These compositions, including genres such as *jāvalis* and *padams*, were dedicated to the Hindu deity Krishna, and contained lyrics explicitly describing *bhōga* (lit. erotic longing) aspect. The

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[27] Puri, "Between Jesus and Krishna," 291.

[28] Soneji, *Unfinished Gestures*, 37.

[29] Ibid., 36.

[30] Four brothers-Cinnayya (1802-56), Ponnaiya (1804-64), Civānantam (1808-63) and Vativēl (1810-47); for more on the role of the Quartet, see Ibid., 55-66.

[31] Ibid., 61.

performances involved "gestural interpretation and nonrepresentational dance,"[32] that involved the literal enactment of eroticism through gestures. Much like music patronage, dancer patronage dwindled after the death of Shivaji II, the last Marāthā king. *Devadāsis* and their troupes were forced to move to Madras or to smaller kingdoms under feudatory chieftains such as Pudukkotai and Ramanathapuram.[33]

By the 19th century, in colonial Madras, salon performances (*nautch*), *padams* and *jāvalis*[34] genres became increasingly popular among colonial native and European elites. Unlike *padams* that were composed by 17th century poets in pilgrimage cities such as Tirupati, urban composers who held positions in the colonial government composed *jāvalis*. Soneji notes that *padams* and *jāvalis* as genres are indistinguishable in that both expressed *bhōga*. However, whilst *padams* were technical in composition, *jāvalis* were more playful. He describes *jāvalis* as: "Unabashedly erotic, sometimes sarcastic, and always upbeat . . . are also songs of the volatile, sexually charged space of the salon, one that was diametrically opposed to the contained, private sexuality of the conjugal home."[35] Often, wealthy patrons composed poems that were performed by *devadāsis* indicating the sexual relationship between the two.[36] It is worth noting

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[32] Ibid., 64.

[33] Hari Krishnan, "Inscribing Practice: Reconfigurations and Textualizations of Devadasi Repertoire in Nineteenth and Early Twentieth-century South India," in *Performing Pasts: Reinventing the Arts in Modern South India*, ed. Indira Viswanathan Peterson and Davesh Soneji (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 71.

[34] Some of these genres were integrated in the court performances in the 19th century under Serfoji II and Shivaji II. As we understand, there was 'movement' between various courts and salon in Madras owing to the Tanjore Quartet who left the Tanjore court for few years before returning. Thus, it is fair to assume that with regards to their transformations to the genres at the court, they were influenced by different performances in other courts and salons. Also, some of their disciples went onto other performance spaces, which meant that not only did they take the Quartet's performance styles with them but also acquired new styles.

[35] Soneji, *Unfinished Gestures*, 95.

[36] Ibid., 102. For instance, composers such as Mysore Vasudevacharya, Patnam Subramania Ayyar and Dasu Sreeramulu were some of late 19th century *jāvali* composers whose lyrics

that compositions were in both Telugu and Tamil in addition to performances of compositions in Marathi. Interestingly, these compositions almost always describe the emotions of the female dancers, although mostly written by male composers.[37] Urban salon performers had more than one patron mainly because the urban patrons were individuals who did not have the financial might of Tanjavur or Vijayanagara. Similar to that of new music formats, *devadāsis* had to adopt new genres of performances that included acrobatics in accordance with the preference of the urban audiences for their urban audiences.

4.3   Perceptions of Devadāsis

Much as the new genres were popular among the colonial elites, colonial representation of salon performances and *jāvalis* was quite complex ranging from objection towards such acrobatic performances to a further sexualized view of *devadāsis*.[38] According to Soneji, colonial written accounts of *devadāsis* indicated references to their physical beauty; but overwhelmingly, both lyrics of the poems performed and the repetition of embellishments in the performances were quite incomprehensible to the colonizers.[39] How, then, towards the end of the century, were native perceptions of *devadāsis* transformed from celebrated performers to personification of 'immorality'?

While the early colonial representations of *devadāsis* showed no understanding of the native performance arts, with the advent of print media, in the mid 19th century, there appears to have been transformations in the

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encompassed *bhōga* expressed towards her patron by the *nāyaki* (lit. heroine) represented by *devadāsi* dancer.

[37] For more specific examples of *jāvalis* and *padams* by the 20th century composers with English translations, see http://www.sangeetasudha.org/othercomposers/dasusreeramulu.html.

[38] Soneji, *Unfinished Gestures*, 78-79.

[39] Ibid., 78-84.

narratives on *devadāsis*. Print medium provided an outlet for many *nattuvanars* to publish their works.[40] Traditionally, *nattuvanars* were dance masters for *devadāsis* and an integral part of the dance troupes. They also wrote treatises on *devadāsi* traditions. In the late 18th and early 19th century, it was a common practice between the British military stationed in India to take native mistresses. In fact, Hyam argues that the company encouraged "a deliberate policy of intermarriage."[41] However, between mid and late 19th century, specifically, after the 1857 Rebellion, several developments in the legal and social discourse on *devadāsis* began to emerge. Around the mid 19th century, salon performances were becoming popular among colonial elites, both native and European. Increasingly, these salon performances had to transform their styles to cater to the new urbanized audiences, resulting in the introduction of *jāvalis* composed not by poets from earlier centuries but by the urban elites working for the colonial government. Unlike *padams*, which were more a technical repertoire, *jāvalis* were less technical in renditions that catered to the diverse audiences in the urban centres. In his very interesting work, Ronald Hyam writes that the British military personnel in the mid century wrote about *devadāsis* as 'prostitutes' who had the skills to entertain with music and dance.[42] One can notice the change in perceptions of *devadāsis*: their sexual practices had begun to be used to define them, while their performance skills were counted as an added 'bonus.' However, such a perception was an example of the general colonial attitudes towards 'Oriental' women, as Kabbani argues, who were seen

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[40] Ibid., 86-87.

[41] Ronald Hyam, *Empire and Sexuality: The British Experience* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1992), 118.

[42] Hyam, *Empire and Sexuality*, 88-89.

as possessing qualities such as "unbridled sexual ardour."[43] Using Orientalist writings on the 'East' as examples, Kabbani argues that the 'Orient' was seen as being pre-occupied with sexuality and as "peopled by nations who were content to achieve in the erotic domain alone."[44] This notion, of Oriental women and specifically *devadāsis*, was reified during post-rebellion increase in the presence of the military personnel in India.

4.3.1   From *Devadāsis* to 'Prostitutes': Legal Definitions

Perhaps the most obvious testimony, for reification of the colonial perception of *devadāsis* as 'immoral' and 'prostitutes,' was a series of Anglo-Indian laws that was passed defining them as such. The mid to late 19th century saw an increase in the British military presence, and a rise in prostitution with new brothels opening up across India[45] around the same time the colonial government legislated brothels and 'prostitutes' by passing the Contagious Diseases Act, modelled after similar laws in Britain, in 1864 and again in 1868. It was imperative for the British to station healthy soldiers especially after the rebellion; and, they were concerned about the spread of venereal diseases among the soldiers. Kunal Parker discusses how the newly legislated Anglo-Indian law forged a change in the colonial perceptions of *devadāsis*, from 'prostitutes' whose tradition [of multiple sexual partners] were acceptable to 'prostitutes' who were a moral drain on the society.[46] However, identifying *devadāsis* as 'prostitutes,' to begin with, as Parker argues, seems to have risen out of the attempts by Anglo-Indian courts to understand *devadāsis* within the

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[43] Rana Kabbani, *Imperial Fictions*, 8.

[44] Ibid., 54.

[45] Hyam, *Empire and Sexuality*, 122-123.

[46] Kunal Parker, "'A Corporation of Superior Prostitutes' Anglo-Indian Legal Conceptions of Temple Dancing Girls, 1800–1914," *Modern Asian Studies* 32, no. 3 (1998), 566.

legal framework of the wider patriarchal society that was seen as the 'correct tradition' and 'way of life.' These were problematic on different levels: typically *devadāsis* did not fall under the purview of these laws of the wider society that was called 'Hindu Law' by the British, because theirs was a distinct tradition with a matrilineal set-up.

Thus, for instance, whilst women in general did not have access to education, *devadāsis* were educated and exponents in music and dance. Also, whilst women in general did not have inheritance and adoption rights, *devadāsis* did. Thus, the matrilineal system of *devadāsi* tradition was in contradiction to these laws, as was the traditional concubinage of *devadāsis* to multiple sexual partners in addition to adoption and inheritance rights. Therefore, the case of *devadāsi* tradition became a complicated issue to classify in social, and more importantly, legal terms (as discussed on p. 225ff below). However, because the courts refused to recognize the distinctiveness of the *devadāsi* tradition and understood them within the framework of the 'Hindu Law,' according to these laws, any sexual deviance by a woman was defined as 'prostitution,' which rendered them ineligible for property rights.[47] Therefore, within the parameters of the these laws, the newly legislated Anglo-Indian law defined *devadāsis* as "degraded Hindu women,"[48] with, "originary degradation from caste."[49] Thus, their tradition was perceived as being contradictory to the indigenous laws and 'way of life.' Also, their sexual lives were addressed in terms of 'sexual deviance' by assuming monogamous conjugal relationship as a norm. Judicial measures casting them as 'prostitutes' were intended to 'bring them back' to the 'Hindu way of living,' through monogamous conjugal relationships. Soneji

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[47] Parker, "'A Corporation of Superior Prostitutes'," 566.

[48] Ibid.

[49] Ibid.

shows that the late 19th century colonial visual representation of *devadāsis* in paintings and photographs contained crafted poses that showed them in 'respectable' postures that excluded photographing them in a temple setting.[50] This strengthened a glaring distinction between the space where the 'divine' resided and the performers who embodied eroticism. The need to compose such images in a setting with poses that were understood as respectable and moral shows the colonial perception towards *devadāsis* as sexually arduous Oriental women whose bodies must be controlled by the colonizers, who saw themselves as morally superior and whose work would appeal to Victorian audiences back in Britain.[51]

What Mohanty calls "bureaucratisation of gender and race,"[52] constituting *devadāsis* as 'prostitutes' by the colonial government brought them under the purview of the Contagious Diseases Act. This meant *devadāsis* had to present themselves for regular medical examinations that were mandatory for 'prostitutes' catering specifically to the British soldiers. In some instances, *devadāsis* petitioned to the colonial government to remove their names from the list of 'prostitutes.'[53] Josephine Butler, who campaigned for abolishing the Act in Britain, protested against the Act being passed by the colonial government in India, which was later suspended in 1888.[54] The judicial definition of *devadāsis* as 'prostitutes' encouraged their perceived association with 'moral deviance.' Moreover, colonial attitudes towards native women characterizing them as

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[50] Soneji, *Unfinished Gestures*, 76.

[51] Kabbani makes similar arguments on Orientalist writings and paintings on women in the East, specifically on *harem*. See, Kabbani, *Imperial Fictions*, 53-54, 76.

[52] Chandra Talpade Mohanty, "Introduction," in *Third World Women and the Politics of Feminism*, eds. Chandra Talpade Mohanty, Ann Russo and Lourdes Torres (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991), 17.

[53] Soneji, *Unfinished Gestures*, 117.

[54] Hyam, *Empire and Sexuality*, 125.

driven by their innate sexual desires which made them prone to become 'prostitutes'[55] coupled with notions of disease, identified them as "amalgam of [all] four—filth, vice, disease and rebellion."[56] Embodying such fears, these women were perceived to be evading the British law through "clandestine prostitution."[57] In addition, going a step further in connection to Hyam's reference to the colonial attitudes towards *devadāsis*, the embodiment element of *devadāsi* performance was vilified and rejected. Whereas their performances encompassed the divine and the erotic in explicit portrayals of eroticism in *jāvalis* and *padams* performed within and outside of temple settings, these developments distinguished their bodies from their performances subjecting both to scrutiny. Thus, the dance-'revival' or the anti-*devadāsi* movement (for they became one and the same) re-constructed not only the divine but also the erotic. During the reform both were re-defined to reflect the newly constructed 'Indianness' in the public sphere. Underpinnings of the colonial narratives on *devadāsis* were that of morality and questions on how to constitute female sexuality, issues that arose during the 'Purity Campaign' in the 19th century Britain.

4.3.2   The Purity Campaign and the Contagious Diseases Act

The so-called 'Purity Campaign' in Britain began in the mid 19th century due to increasing concern about venereal diseases among the British armed forces. The British Government passed the Contagious Diseases Act in 1864, 1866 and

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[55] Ratnabali Chatterjee, "The Queen's Daughters: Prostitutes as an Outcast Group in Colonial India," Report: Chr. Michelsen Institute: Department of Social Science and Development, December, 1992, accessed July 04, 2013, http://bora.cmi.no/dspace/bitstream/10202/380/1/R%201992_8%20Ratnabali%20Chatterjee-07122007_1.pdf.

[56] Chatterjee, "The Queen's Daughters," 11.

[57] Ibid., 8.

1869, similar to those passed in the colonies, especially in India. Accordingly, women identified as 'prostitutes' if found to have the diseases, were to sent to Lock Hospitals "for up to three months under the first CD [Contagious Diseases] Act, or nine months under the third CD Act."[58] However, the Act singled out women as 'carriers of venereal diseases' by subjecting them to examinations. Also, the general attitude towards prostitution leading up to the 'Purity Campaign' was that it was immoral and evil.[59] The Act was opposed by newly formed organizations such as the Ladies' National Association (LNA) under the leadership of Josephine Butler[60] for obvious violation of women's dignity. With mounting opposition to these measures, the government officially suspended the law in 1883 and repealed in 1886.[61] But as Chatterjee and Hyam argue, prostitution was seen as immoral and sinful and even more importantly, as what destroys the purity of imperial race and national life.[62] Thus, "extramarital female sexuality was [seen as] a sign of degeneracy of families . . . "[63] Restrained female sexuality along with sanitary hygiene and purity of race were associated with evangelical values of respectability and self-

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[58] Jo-Ann Wallace, "A Class Apart": Josephine Butler and Regulated Prostitution in British India 1886-1893" in *The Body in the Library*, eds. Leigh Dale and Simon Ryan (Netherlands: Rodopi, 1998), 75; also see Philippa Levine, "Rereading the 1890s: Venereal Disease as "Constitutional Crisis" in Britain and British India," *The Journal of Asian Studies* 55, no. 3 (1996), 585-612.

[59] For instance, as early as 1842, during a lecture delivered at Glasgow (a text of which was published later that year) on the 'immorality' of female prostitution, Scottish Presbyterian clergyman Ralph Wardlaw talked about the physical (medical) evils and moral evils arising from prostitution; but, the lecture focused entirely on female 'prostitutes' arguing that it is an act of violation and sin in the eye of God. See Ralph Wardlaw, *Lectures on Female Prostitution: Its Nature, Extent, Effects, Guilt, Causes and Remedy* (Glasgow: James Maclehose, 1842), 34.

[60] Hyam, *Empire and Sexuality*, 64; Jo-Ann Wallace, "A Class Apart," 75.

[61] Ibid.

[62] Ibid., 65; Chatterjee, "The Queen's Daughters,"9.

[63] Judith Whitehead, "Community Honour/Sexual Boundaries: A Discursive Analysis of the Criminalization of *Devadāsi* in Madras, India, 1920-1947" in *Prostitution: On Whores, Hustlers and Johns* ed. James Elias, Vern L. Bullough, Veronica Elias, Gwen Brewer & Joycelyn Elders (New York: Prometheus, 1998), 95.

improvement,[64] as Wardlaw had argued in his lecture. The 'Purity Campaign' resulted, therefore, in severe restrictions on sexual behaviors.[65] However, the campaign re-defined ideal female sexuality as normatively middle-class women in monogamous relationships who "abhorred all sexual pleasures."[66] Simultaneously, masculinity was re-defined, as Hyam says, as " . . . not sexual prowess and maturity but sexual restraint and 'cleanness.'"[67] In the following sections, we will see how the narratives of participants and supporters of the *Devadāsi* 'Reform' movement were remarkably similar to the ones discussed above. Even more remarkable is how they appropriated colonial narratives on the colonized peoples themselves to apply to *devadāsi* as a form of subjugation and eventual marginalisation.

4.4 *Devadāsi 'Reform' Movement*

In the last two decades of the 19th century, ideas on female sexuality and anti-*devadāsi* stance, casting them as scheming 'prostitutes,' began to emerge. Print medium provided a forum for those who took anti-*devadāsi* stance during the period leading up to the reform. With the already established notion that *devadāsis* were 'prostitutes,' some of the earliest texts and works on communities within the *devadāsi* tradition portrayed them as 'prostitutes' seducing and 'stealing' innocent men from respectable middle-class families. It must be noted that these texts were written predominantly by Indian men.[68] Interestingly, many of these texts contained vivid descriptions of sexual acts between the male protagonist and a courtesan who seduced him, but had same

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[64] Whitehead, "Community Honor/Sexual Boundaries," 95.

[65] Hyam, *Empire and Sexuality*, 66-70.

[66] Chatterjee, "The Queen's Daughters," 10.

[67] Hyam, *Empire and Sexuality*, 71.

[68] Soneji, *Unfinished Gestures*, 86.

storylines, in which the male protagonist then loses his fortune, ruins the relationship with his family, and in the end contracts venereal diseases. We must note that these texts condemning the *devadāsi* tradition used similar sexually explicit narrations as those condemning *devadāsis* in portraying of their performances and *jāvalis* and *padams*. Another text on anti-*nautch* stance was by an Indian social reformist Kandukuri Veershalingam who in 1887 criticized a work by a Telugu poet and courtesan for its "crude depiction of sex."[69] He later became an important participant in the dance-'reform' movement along with the head of the movement, Dr Muthulakshmi Reddy. Much like Britain's effort, the focus was on sex for procreation and eugenics. In addition, much like Britain's effort to legislate prostitution, the colonial government's focus on prostitution in India seems to be concern over child exploitation. During the last decade of the 19th century, questions about child exploitation, child marriage and marriageable age were dealt with by the colonial government due to specific cases involving child marriages that resulted in the rape and death of the children. Thus, the colonial government passed the Age of Consent Act of 1891 that raised the age of consent for sexual intercourse from ten to twelve years. In addition to their perceived role as 'prostitutes' due to the practice of having multiple sexual partners, another aspect of *devadāsi* tradition came under the scrutiny of the law: a common practice among *devadāsis* to 'dedicate' young (pre-pubescent) girls into the profession. Thus, by the first decade of 20th century, *devadāsi* tradition began to face mounting pressure from people protesting against the tradition. For instance, in 1912 Maneckji B. Dadabhoy, a

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[69] Charu Gupta, *Sexuality, Obscenity, Community: Women, Muslims and the Hindu Public in Colonial India*, (New York: Palgrave, 2002), 31-32.

banker and a legislator, proposed a legislation to outlaw *devadāsis* from adopting girls and criminalize the dedication of girls.[70]

The anti-*Devadāsi* movement was a complex issue with <u>simultaneous</u> historical developments with multiple dimensions. For instance, while the Madras Music Academy was codifying and institutionalizing Karnatic Music, it also participated in re-defining *devadāsi* dance traditions as Bharatnatyam, even though the premise of the 'reform' was set within the politics of Indian national movement and the Dravidian Movement. It is helpful to think about the dance-'reform' as a two-pronged approach: a) *devadāsis* were disembodied from the art they performed in specific contexts in order to regulate their bodies and sexuality; b) the disembodied art was then re-defined to represent 'pure' Indian culture, much like Karnatic Music. The main player for the first approach was Dr Muthulakshmi Reddy. Dr Reddy came from a *devadāsi* community and although her relatives practiced the art, her family seems to have moved away from it. She, for one, went to school and medical college instead of being trained in music and dance. Becoming the first woman legislator and the first woman doctor to graduate from the Madras Medical College in 1912, she was also a prominent member of the All India Women's Conference.[71] As someone being vocal about women's issues, her involvement in the Anti-*Devadāsi* Movement seemed to have been informed by a perspective on women's health and hygiene that was influenced by her medical degree. As one of the few women medics at the time, she felt the need to raise awareness on health and hygiene among women. Moreover, she was concerned about young children being dedicated to the *devadāsi* tradition through lineage or adoption. The

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[70] Soneji, *Unfinished Gestures*, 120-121.

[71] Ibid., 121.

movement took an organized shape in the 1920s when Dr Reddy introduced a resolution to abolish *devadāsi* tradition by claiming that it was 'immoral.'[72] In the 1930, the resolution was adopted as a bill. Seventeen years later, the *Devadāsi* (Prevention of Dedication) Act was passed in 1947 in the Madras Presidency (present day Tamil Nadu). It was to be in 1988 that the tradition was outlawed in the rest of India.[73]

4.4.1 Disembodying *Devadāsi*: Re-defining Female Sexuality

Much like re-defining Karnatic Music, the dance-'revival' took place simultaneously by appropriating the colonial perceptions on sexual propriety, female sexuality and eugenic notions on the purity of race. Early century saw an increase in nationalist activities along with self-conscious questions on 'true Indianness' and 'Indian culture.' As discussed in Chapter 3, the primary method for negotiating these questions was to appropriate colonial discourses on the issues of morality, sexuality and culture. Nationalism in this case was nostalgia for 'Hindu' civilization that was 'pure' and 'sacred.' Increased focus on nationalism and 'Hinduism,' in conjunction with transforming perceptions of *devadāsis*, resulted in the *Devadāsi* 'Reform' Movement that would re-define female sexuality in the public sphere by drawing distinction between the divine and the erotic, and repressing expressions of the erotic, specifically, by women and of female sexuality in the public sphere. This also meant re-defining the erotic as 'obscenity' and 'sexual impropriety.'

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[72] Ibid.

[73] The tradition is still prevalent in that there are *devadāsi* presence in Southern states such as Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka, and in Maharashtra and Orissa. Arguably, they are considered to be living 'outside' of the law.

The early 20th century saw native criticism of 'obscenity' and 'pornography' in the public sphere.[74] Charu Gupta cites the example of a work by an 18th century Telugu courtesan Muddhupalani, which was published in 1911. The work "place[d] the sensuality of Radha (Krishna's lover) at its center."[75] The British government banned the book on the charges of obscenity.[76] Questions on sexual propriety began to rise and works parodied 'vulgarity' in poetry.[77] Gupta notes that in *devadāsi* performances, which colonial elites — both British and Indian — assumed always contained 'religious' element, they selectively approved aspects of what they saw as 'Hindu' pasts.[78] Thus, texts and poems such as *Gita Govinda* by Jayadeva that depicted love between Krishna and Radha, and sculptures and carvings in temples that portrayed eroticism were criticized.[79] Poetry and works that expressed eroticism were severely criticized for being published; this meant that there was considerable criticism towards works such as *jāvalis* and *padams* that were performed by *devadāsis*. More specifically, *jāvalis* and *padams* were re-defined from 'erotic' to mean 'obscene' and 'immoral.' For instance, here is a typical padam by Kshtreyya, the 17th century composer:

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[74] This is similar to the ban enacted on bar girls in Mumbai in 2005. What remarkable about the ban on bar girls was the similarities in the rhetoric of 'moral custodians' and narratives on *devadāsis* and the bar girls. See, for example, Anna Morcom, "Indian Popular Culture and Its 'Others': Bollywood Dance and Anti-*nautch* in Twenty-First-Century Global India," in *Popular Culture in Globalised India*, eds. K. Moti Gulsing and Wiman Dissanayake (Oxford: Routledge, 2008): 125-138.

[75] Gupta, *Sexuality, Obscenity, Community*, 31. For English translation of one of Muddhupalani's works, see Velcheru Narayana Rao and David Shulman, *Classical Telugu Poetry: An Anthology* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 293-296. Available at http://publishing.cdlib.org/ucpressebooks/view?docId=kt096nc4c5&chunk.id=ch24&toc.depth=1&toc.id=ch24&brand=ucpress.

[76] Ibid.

[77] Ibid., 45.

[78] Ibid., 34.

[79] Ibid., 34-36.

A Woman to Her Lover[80]

If your mind is like mine,
my prayers will be answered.
As if sugarcane should begin to bear fruit,
my pleasures would be doubled many times
*   if your mind is like mine*

If aimlessly I doodle with my fingernail,
it's your shape that appears.
The moment I wake from sleep,
it seems you're close to me.
You know such is my love, Varada.
To whom can I say
*   your mind is like mine?*

If I turn
as I go upstairs
and see my shadow,
I feel you're coming with me.
When I sing with the tambura drone,
it feels like you are singing along.
The very sound of what I say
sounds like your reply.
There's nothing like my love, Varada.
You know that: to whom can I say
*   your mind is like mine?*

I'm always filled with joy,
and the joy is always
of holding you.
Even if I think your name,
O Varada with the goddess,
it's as if we're making love.
It pleases me
when all my girlfriends
say you're my friend.
You alone
know the secret of my longing.
Whom can I ask
*   if your mind is like mine?*   *(Padam 62; Title: "Na Manasuvantidi")*

Or an example of a more sexually explicit poem:

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[80] A.K. Ramanujan, Velcheru Narayana Rao, and David Shulman, *When God is a Customer: Telugu Courtesan Songs by Ksetrayya and Others* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 120-121. Available at http://ark.cdlib.org/ark:/13030/ft1k4003tz/; translation provided by the authors.

A Woman to Her Lover[81]

How soon it's morning already!
There's something new in my heart,
*   Muvva Gopala.*
Have we talked even a little while
to undo the pain of our separation till now?
You call me in your passion, "Woman, come to me,"
and while your mouth is still on mine,
*   it's morning already!*

Caught in the grip of the Love God,
angry with him, we find release drinking
at each other's lips.
You say, "My girl, your body is tender as a leaf,"
and before you can loosen your tight embrace,
*   it's morning already!*

Listening to my moans as you touch certain spots,
the pet parrot mimics me, and O how we laugh in bed!
You say, "Come close, my girl,"
and make love to me like a wild man, Muvva Gopala,
and as I get ready to move on top,
*   it's morning already!   (Padam 175; Title: "Cellabo Yentavegame")*

Most poems tend to be of the second kind rather than the first. The second poem would generally be seen as being sexually explicit because it describes sexual acts openly in addition to the gestural meanings added by the performer. However, in both poems, the woman (courtesan) expresses her desire and longingness towards her lover, Varada (in the case of the first poem) or Muvva Gopala (in the case of the second poem), who is a patron deity who Kshetrayya's poems (generally) address.[82] *Padams* also expressed emotions of longing and desire that either a courtesan expresses to her friend or a matron. The lyrics in addition to the dance moves (later called *abhinaya* within the framework of Bharatnatyam) conveyed the sensual nature of the poetry. Thus,

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[81] Ibid., 129.

[82] These are called *mudra* (lit. stamp)- a phrase or a word that composers used to indicate their authorship. See Chapter 3 on p. 132 for role of *mudra* with regard to the Trinity in and with regard to authorship and ownership in Chapter 1 on p. 33.

the poems represented the divine and the erotic by addressing the deity through descriptions of both the emotions of longingness and desire, and the explicit sexual acts. However, by the early 20th century, the central focus on *jāvalis* and *padams* became the explicitness of the sexual acts described and performed, the more 'graphic' (visible) aspects of the performance. Explicit erotic movements portrayed in these performances, such as the second poem, were classified as 'immoral' because they were seen as an exhibition of one's sexual acts, which belonged within the private sphere, and should consequently be behind closed doors. This, having already established that *devadāsis* were 'prostitutes' and that their bodies represented 'sexual impropriety' by dis-embodying them from the arts they performed and disembedding the poems from their contexts, transformed the meaning of the erotic to 'obscenity' thereby making explicit distinction between the body and the mind. Thus, the former denoted 'defilement,' whilst the later represented the divine. I discuss this the dichotomy in the forthcoming sections.

In 1925, colonial government passed the Obscene Publications Act banning publications of materials that were considered 'obscene' or 'vulgar' or 'immoral.' However, as Gupta argues, the definition of obscenity or vulgarity or immoral remained vague.[83] The working definition seems to have included any work vaguely connected to *shringāra rasā* (lit. erotic emotion) such as Kshetrayya's poem above. However, Gupta erroneously concludes that the charges of obscenity did not pertain to only female sexuality by saying "charges of obscenity cut across gender lines; many works which were to become equally controversial were written by men, signifying that it was perhaps the issue of

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[83] Gupta, *Sexuality, Obscenity, Community*, 31.

obscenity that was central."[84] However, as I have argued above, the central issue with the definition of 'obscenity' seems to have been pertained to expressions of <u>female</u> sexuality in the public sphere, which was seen as 'immoral' such as of *devadāsis*. The banned works may have been by both male and female authors. However, these works were expressions of female sexuality, much like Kshetrayya's *padams*, in which women explicitly described their sexual desires and fantasies. This seems to be the issue: obscenity was seen as any explicit expression of female sexuality. These notions were particularly reified within the context of the nationalist movements and the newly emerging patriarchy, which Chatterjee describes, was a part of the project of 'classicization.'

According to Chatterjee, for the Indian nationalists, the nation-building exercise meant that the 'inner' domain of spirituality had to be strengthened to subvert the 'outer' domain of politics that was taken over by the colonizers.[85] In separating social roles, the 'outer'/material world belonged to men while the 'inner'/spiritual world was 'assigned' to women, which had to be protected and nurtured. This new patriarchy defined 'new woman' as being different from 'common woman' who was seen as being "coarse, vulgar . . . sexually promiscuous . . . maidservants, washer women, barbers, peddlers . . . prostitutes."[86] This specific allusion to a particular class (and caste) of women indicates that the 'new woman' belonged to the upper-class (and caste) communities. This 'new woman' of the emerging middle-class was seen as being modest and spiritual with "godlike virtues."[87] These notions helped to

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[84] Ibid., 32.

[85] Chatterjee, *Nation and Its Fragments*, 73.

[86] Ibid., 127.

[87] Ibid., 125.

frame the nation as 'Mother India,' with *Bhārat Mātā* (lit. Mother of India) as the idolized feminine representation of a nation who was seen as 'pure' and 'motherly' (interpreted to mean protective, nurturing and caring) and <u>therefore</u>, 'modest,' broadly defined.[88] Chatterjee notes that the new feminity was laid out with specific rules such as

> ... The spirituality of her [the new woman] character had also to be stressed in contrast with the innumerable ways men had to surrender to the pressures of the material world ... they must maintain the cohesiveness of the family life ... assertion of spiritual purity on the part of women.[89]

These specific sets of attributes were advocated as a new social responsibility for women during increasing nationalist activities.[90] The measure, at the outset, seemed to empower women — them being responsible for strengthening and nurturing India at a crucial juncture of nationalist politics. But it repressed women by binding them to a sphere out of which they were not allowed to emerge; rather they could emerge only within certain contexts.

It is important to focus on certain aspects of the discourse here: the new nationalist middle-class marked the distinction between 'promiscuous' and 'modest' women, the former being 'common' women and the latter, 'new women.' This dichotomy is remarkably similar to the ones expressed during the 'Purity Campaign' in Britain where 'prostitutes' were seen as belonging to a lower class. But even more striking is the similarity between this dichotomy and the colonial narratives on the colonized as Kabbani has argued. Colonized peoples, especially in the East, were seen as uncouth and coarse with voracious sexual appetites coupled with fondness for violence, whilst the colonizer was

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[88] Such imagery is very commonly prevalent in the narratives of the Bharatiya Janata Party (the right-wing political party) and Rashtriya Swayam Sevak (a right-wing Hindutva group) in contemporary India.

[89] Chatterjee, *Nation and Its Fragments*, 130.

[90] Ibid.

portrayed moral and honourable.[91] As discussed above, this positioning aided the colonial definition of *devadāsis* as 'prostitutes,' which was eventually adopted by the Indians. Hence, whilst historically *devadāsis* embodied the divine and the erotic through their performances (such as *jāvalis* and *padams*), now a *devadāsi* was removed from her performance arts; now, she represented <u>only</u> the 'sexual impropriety.' By contrast, the new middle-class woman was removed from her sexuality for she embodied the 'spiritual' now. This type of embodiment was used to define the subject and the personhood of women <u>in relation to</u> the state.[92] These 'Gandhian women' were then accountable for both 'inner' <u>and</u> 'outer' spheres,[93] as guardians of spirituality whilst being responsible for domesticity of the household, that now was conscious of permeating into the outer sphere and consciousness on medical knowledge and hygiene being advocated by the likes of Dr Reddy.

There are two types of 'inner'/'outer' spheres dichotomies at play here: the first is the binary opposite of the 'outer'/politics sphere that men were responsible for. This was the 'inner' sphere that women were assigned as custodians of. However, in this dichotomy, the 'inner' sphere is the mind/body dichotomy. Arguably, one could draw parallels between the two sets of binaries, thus the body represents the political sphere whilst mind represents the 'inner'/spiritual sphere that needs strengthening by women. However, with women as the subject, the second dichotomy, mind/body, becomes even more problematic than the first because in this, it has already been established through obscenity laws and *devadāsi* vilification, that women's bodies are

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[91] Kabbani, *Imperial Fictions*, 67-68.

[92] Lila Abu-Lughod, "Introduction," in *Remaking Women: Feminism and Modernity in the Middle East* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998), 8.

[93] Abu-Lughod, "Introduction," 8-9.

'impure' and home for 'moral deprivation.' The only way to overcome this issue is to repress women's sexuality represented by their bodies in both public (political) and private (spiritual) (applying the first binary here) spheres by strengthening the mind. Thus, a woman transcends her body for she represents the 'spiritual' and *devadāsis* had to do so, in order to fit into the newly emerging definitions of feminity of nationalist patriarchy. In this way, both *devadāsis* and the new middleclass women were disembodied and their position as a subject ignored. Having juxtaposed *devadāsis* and the new-middleclass women as polar opposites, the anti-*devadāsi* movement aimed at purging *devadāsi* of her 'impropriety' to belong to the respectable middle-class. At the same time, her presence was important in the society to make a clear case and definition for the 'new woman' in her re-defined female sexuality.

However, not only was feminity re-defined, but also masculinity. Persisting along the lines of 'inner'/'outer' dichotomy, men were to be the guardians of the 'outer'/political sphere that was engaged in colonial politics. Thus, after the body was re-defined as impure, the mind was defined as the 'real' core where the mind/body dichotomy represented the feminine/masculine dichotomy. The body now represented the erotic that needed to be trained to aid to achieve the 'higher' purpose of the mind. This particular idea was specifically adopted by Mahatma Gandhi to re-define masculinity in colonial India. To him, the colonizers were feminine and <u>therefore</u> irrational; and if they were to be overthrown, the men of India must train themselves to achieve true masculinity through celibacy, involvement in the public (read: political) sphere. Classical notions on *brahmacharya*, one of the four stages in a man's life according to *manusmriti* that emphasized celibacy, became an aid to make these arguments. Sexual restraint and celibacy were seen to be the source of healthy bodies and fitness. Mahatma Gandhi argued that such men were "indispensable to a

modern masculine nation,"[94] where the public sphere had to be taken back from the colonizers. The emphasis was placed on focusing on activities such as wrestling and other undertakings that were believed to control the sexual urges, thereby separating the erotic from the body. Much like the new colonial middle-class women, the middle-class men had severe restrictions on their lifestyle that would control sexual urges.[95] They were to have sex only for procreation and more importantly, within marriage. We must pay attention to an important underlying discourse here: that the nation is feminized has been established; she is *Bharat Mātā*; she is nurturing and pure. However, it is the duty of the <u>Indian men</u> to protect her from being exploited by the foreign powers. She might be the divine but she still needs the shelter of men because she is defenceless.

Dr Reddy made her case, much like her supporters, for abolishing *devadāsi* tradition using ideas of pure 'Hindu civilization.' For instance, when Dr Reddy's resolution was faced with considerable opposition from communities within the *devadāsi* traditions and wealthy Brahmins who were their patrons arguing that the legislation threatens the 'Hindu' way of life, Dr Reddy countered by arguing that *devadāsis* represented "a blot on Hindu civilization."[96] These notions were formerly echoed by Orientalists such as C.R. Day and Colonel Meadows Taylor who believed that *devadāsis* did not represent 'pure' South Indian performance arts.[97] Dr Reddy received support from theosophists, specifically Annie Besant who argued that true *devadāsis* origins were in ancient 'Hindu' past in which they performed at temples and maintained religiosity as

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[94] Gupta, *Sexuality, Obscenity, Community*, 68-69.

[95] Ibid., 66-72.

[96] Soneji, *Unfinished Gestures*, 120.

[97] C. R. Day, *The Music and Musical Instruments of Southern India and the Deccan* (London: Novello, Ewer & Co., 1891), 58.

"pure virgins."[98] Dr Reddy appropriated this idea to argue that contemporary

devadāsis had hijacked a 'sacred' tradition and were mere corrupt influence on

the youth.[99] She also argued that *devadāsis*' greed over the material wealth they

received through patronage and refusal to live a simple life of poverty and

simplicity rendered them incapable of rescinding their 'immoral' ways. Dr

Reddy in the capacity as the editor wrote extensively in a magazine called Stri-

Dharma (lit. 'Rules for Women') to make her case. She called for action against

the tradition that "defiles sacred temples, that contaminates the youth of the

country."[100] She almost always made her case from eugenics and medical health

perspectives. How far Dr Reddy saw herself as restoring the 'true Hindu' past

is doubtful in the light of her membership with the Justice Party that ran on

anti-Brahmin and anti-Hindu platform (discussed in Chapter 3) and rejected the

Indian National Congress on the grounds of representing the interests of

Brahmins. However, she received support from both Congress and Gandhi.

Nevertheless, the notion that 'Hindu' past must be revived and that,

contemporary social evils were a 'fall' from this true spiritual past were

prevalent during the music-'reform' and dance-'reform.'

The nationalist politics had created the new hyper-feminine middle-class

woman by focusing specifically on monogamous conjugal relationships as the

'Hindu' way of life. One way of strengthening the 'inner' domain was to

emphasize the conjugality as a 'moral' and 'religious' responsibility.

Monogamous conjugal relationships would ensure the health of the race and

therefore create a healthy nation. As Annie Besant argued "India needs nobly

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[98] Annie Besant, 1919, as cited in Soneji, *Unfinished Gestures*, 122.

[99] Soneji, *Unfinished Gestures*, 122.

[100] Muthulakshmi Reddy, *Stri-Dharma*, 103, quoted in Whitehead, "Community Honor," 98-99.

trained wives and mothers, wise and tender rulers of the household . . . helpful counselors of their husbands, skilled nurses of the sick, rather than girl graduates, educated for the learned professions."[101] This idea was modelled after the Victorian British middle-class ladies who were dutiful wives, sexually dormant serving the needs of their husbands.[102] To them, clearly, *devadāsis* were deviant from this prescribed female sexuality. Dr Reddy, through the 'reform,' argued that *devadāsis* needed education and guidance to be purged of their immorality and accepted to the mainstream society. Mahatma Gandhi, who had a consistent abolitionist attitude towards the tradition, suggested that *devadāsis* needed to be 'purified' and 'domesticated' by taking up handicrafts.[103] In fact, when *devadāsis* wanted to present Gandhi with gifts, he refused to accept these insisting that they display their *thāli* (pendant worn by married women in India) to prove that they have lived a 'respectable' life.[104] The argument was that this new 'recreation' would keep them distracted from the 'immoral' business of prostitution. Moreover, the 'reformers' argued that marriage was a permanent solution to the problem of *devadāsis*.

4.4.2   The Dravidian Movement and the Anti-*Devadāsi* Movement

Cutting across these developments was the Self-Respect Movement founded by E.V.R. Ramaswami Naicker, famously known as Periyar (lit. the elder one) discussed in Chapter 3. An avowed 'atheist,' he broke away from the Indian National Congress in 1924, and began to express reformist ideas on caste-

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[101] Annie Besant, *Speeches and Writings of Annie Besant* (Montana: Kessinger Publishing, 2004), 73.

[102] Kabbani, *Imperial Fictions*, 67.

[103] Soneji, *Unfinished Gestures*, 134.

[104] S. Anandhi, "Representing *Devadāsi*: "Dasigal Mosavalai" as a Radical Text," *Economic and Political Weekly* 26, no. 11-12 (1991): 209-210.

hierarchy, 'Hinduism,' nationalism — specifically, Tamil nationalism — that received much support and traction in Tamil Nadu. He strongly believed that 'Hinduism' was the root-cause for social evils such as the caste-system, which in turn subjugated women. What was interesting about this movement in relation to the on-going *devadāsi* 'reform' movement was that, the Self-Respect Movement eventually morphed into the Dravidian Movement specifically focusing on Tamil nationalism. This movement was organized as an opposition to the music-'revival' movement by arguing that the newly defined Karnatic Music community consisted of Brahmins thereby reifying the caste-hierarchy. They thus protested the Karnatic Music community by focusing on the perceived lack of Tamil compositions in performances thereby founding the Tamil Music Movement, as outlined in the previous chapter. Arguably, the Self-Respect/Dravidian Movement was the Other born out of the music-'revival' movement. However, in the case of the newly emerging Other within the nationalist patriarchy and the dance-'revival' movement, Periyar's organization supported abolition of the *devadāsi* tradition, which they argued, was an example of Brahmin hierarchy, since Brahmins were the patrons of most *devadāsis*. Their argument was further strengthened when some Brahmin-patrons argued against the 'reform' movement saying that it challenged the 'Hindu way of life.' To them, it was further proof that Brahmins were a power-hungry hegemonic group that was the root-cause for all social evils. Their focus on Brahmin community as the root of *devadāsi* tradition and other forms of subjugation of women highlights an important dimension to the ongoing 'reform,' which was the caste-system. Most *devadāsis* seemed to have belonged to various Non-Brahmin castes, thus the caste hierarchy cut across the tradition. However, Brahmins were the patrons and therefore, it was only after the music-'revival' and dance-'revival' movement that led to displacement of *devadāsis*

from their performance spaces that Brahmin women seemed to have taken up these arts.

Anandhi points out that Periyar's organization fought for women's empowerment and equal rights[105] by rejecting caste-system and speaking out against patriarchy represented through monogamous marriages.[106] However, what is interesting is that, as a form of subverting what they perceived as the rigidity of 'Hinduism', Periyar's organization resorted to marriages. They performed widow-remarriages, 'inter-caste' weddings and weddings that did not involve any rituals or the presence of the priests.[107] Thus, they resorted to conjugal relationships to legitimize the role of women in the society. Many of the participants in the anti-*devadāsi* movement were inspired by Periyar's ideology. Dr Reddy, herself, was a member of the Justice Party, the political party wing of the Self-Respect Movement. Another reformer Ramamirthammal arranged several 'inter-caste' weddings for *devadāsis* in 1927, for she, like others, argued that marriage would keep the girls away from prostitution. In this line of 'reformers,' Moovalur Ramamirthammal needs a special mention. As an activist in Periyar's Justice Party, she was vocal against the *devadāsi* tradition. Her novel 'Dāsigal Mosavalai Alladhu Madhi Petra Minor' (lit. web of deceit of *devadāsis* or the minor grown wise[108]) as the title suggests described *devadāsis* as deceiving 'prostitutes' who swindle money from wealthy young men. This narrative was not altogether new (as discussed above); however, her novel was

[105] S. Anandhi, "Women's Question in the Dravidian Movement c. 1925-1948," *Social Scientist* 19, no. 5/6 (1991): 24.

[106] Ibid. It would be worth to point out that Periyar himself was in a bigamous conjugal relationship; this, however, is a less acknowledged fact due to the increasing importance given to monogamy within his party ranks in the later decades.

[107] Ibid., 28-30.

[108] 'Minor' in colloquial Tamil refers to young men from wealthy influential families often such as village headmen. They are usually cast in popular culture as promiscuous young men who get away with their promiscuity owing to their wealth and status in the village.

published in 1936, at the height of anti-*devadāsi* sentiment and became very popular. It gave much momentum to Dr Reddy's efforts, which culminated in the abolishing dedication of girls to the tradition in 1947. This legislative development effectively ended practicing the tradition in public. Most *devadāsis* were driven to clandestine practice of their tradition. It, however, was in 1988 that the Indian government abolished the tradition altogether.[109]

What is significant about these developments is: a) *devadāsis* like 'prostitutes' in Britain were treated as a class that women were born into; but more importantly, Indian narratives on *devadāsis* were remarkably similar to that of colonial narratives on the colonized, as Kabbani shows.[110] Orientalists' narratives on women in the East portrayed them as seductively powerful but also possessing the cunning devilry to bring about the downfall of men;[111] b) notion prevailed that through education and 'rehabilitation' *devadāsis* could be 'rescued' and (re-) integrated into the mainstream society; c) more importantly, these narratives were similar to the colonial mission of 'civilizing-the-natives' through evangelization and education. Chatterjee argues that the colonizing mission in India was justified on the grounds of emancipating women in India from "barbaric institutions" of canons and scriptural laws that subject them to *sati*, widowhood.[112] Also, Sugirtharajah has shown how missionaries and later the colonial administration saw that it as their role as "the chosen nation

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[109] It must be noted that both dedication of girls to the deity and the tradition itself continues to be practiced in many Indian states. See, Soneji, *Unfinished Gestures*, 8-10.

[110] Kabbani, *Imperial Fictions*, 16.

[111] Ibid., 8, 51- 52. These narratives are, of course, common on Cleopatra. See Ibid., 20-22.

[112] Partha Chatterjee, "Colonialism, Nationalism, and Colonized Women: The Contest in India," *American Ethnologist* 16, no. 4 (1989): 622. James Mill wrote extensively on subjugation of women in India. Missionaries had similar arguments in the late 18th century. See, James Mill, *The History of British India* vol. 2 (London: James Madden, 1848), accessed July 11, 2013, http://archive.org/stream/historybritishi03millgoog#page/n6/mode/2up.

entrusted with the task of evangelization" to civilize the natives.[113] Education and returning to 'Hindu' roots were seen as the solutions to 'rehabilitating' *devadāsis*. Another reformer, Yamini Purnathilakam argued that the best way to do this would be educate *devadāsis* so that they would see error in their ways. She opened rehabilitation centres called *saranālayam*[114] where *devadāsis* were taught middle-class etiquette on prescribed clothes, food and speech.[115] Pro-reformers addressed Dr Reddy as "mother" of all young girls in the *devadāsi* tradition and as an incarnation of goddess to "redeem these women and ensure they live a respectable life."[116]

Legitimacy awarded to marital relationships is common among both 'reformers' and contemporary historians who look to legitimize the role of *devadāsis* in history as a way of giving them agency. However, Soneji critiques contemporary historians' arguments that assign a theological symbolism to the 'dedication' ceremonies of *devadāsis* by labeling them as marriage. He argues that these rituals were "a lifecycle ritual that [bound] a woman to the sexual economy of the courtesan lifestyle . . . "[117] because "both ceremonies mark[ed] women set aside for nonconjugal sexual roles, primarily as concubines."[118] The basis of legitimizing marriage as respectable lifestyle was influenced by moral codes that were nostalgically associated with India's past as 'Hindu culture.' Thus, by drawing a 'theological' connection to rituals, scholars are overlooking

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[113] Sharadha Sugirtharajah, "Colonialism and Religion," in *Rethinking Religion in India: The Colonial Construction of Hinduism* eds. Esther Bloch, Marianne Keppens and Rajaram Hegde (London and New York: Routledge, 2010), 72.

[114] *Saran*- lit. refuge and *ālayam*- lit. shelter. *Ālayam* also refers to temples or places where a deity resides.

[115] Soneji, *Unfinished Gestures*, 198.

[116] Ibid., 141, 148.

[117] Ibid., 36.

[118] Ibid., 34-36.

two aspects of the anti-*devadāsi* movement: a) by addressing rituals as marriages that had spiritual significance, scholars are doing precisely what they aim to criticize — to see historical *devadāsi* tradition within a 'religious' and conjugal framework; b) that dance-'revival' movement was deliberately constructed to represent 'Hinduism,' the newly constructed unified category were chosen thereby making connections to the spiritual/'inner' sphere that nationalists were attempting to strengthen, as discussed below. However, Soneji's criticism seems to indicate that these rituals pertain <u>only</u> to sexual economy of *devadāsis*, and therefore is non-'religious.' In fact, elsewhere he also describes a work of a *devadāsi* as 'secular' because the work was about a male and a female protagonist (a courtesan), and not about any particular deity.[119] However, such an argument is problematic not because any ritual would indicate some 'religious' significance. Rather, *devadāsis* entered the concubinage of the king, who represented the presiding deity in medieval India, through *katthikalyanam*. Thus, if in Soneji's perspective, this ritual is 'non-religious' due to absence of a deity, then, its <u>equivalent</u> ritual was *pottukattudhal*, after which *devadāsis* were 'dedicated' to the deity. In fact, every aspect of *devadāsis* lives were embedded in various social relations that also encompassed the divine through their presence at the temples, festivals or private ceremonies. Thus, as I have discussed in Chapter 2, distinguishing between 'religious' and 'secular' in these contexts is very problematic.

By removing the erotic from the performance arts and by focusing on 'distractions' that would control their supposed primal, sexual urges, a newly defined dance tradition was emerging that could solely focus on the divine. In this second phase of the 'reform,' the distinction between the divine and the

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[119] Ibid., 88.

erotic was made apparent and the 'divine' was re-constituted to indicate 'Hinduism.'

4.4.3 'Dialectic Collaborative Enterprise':[120] Re-defining Dance

In the late 19th century, Orientalist Captain C.R. Day argued that what Europeans encountered as South Indian music from *devadāsis* was neither 'good' nor 'classical.'[121] He also argued that degradation of music as a form of employment was due to *devadāsis* whom he attributed to the 'Mohamedan' influence.[122] The 'new' Karnatic Music was defined as a self-expression within the parameters laid by the Madras intelligentsia. This was reflected in their approach towards music as an expression of certain chosen *bhāvā* and *rasā* that excluded eroticism. Yet, even this definition of eroticism was subjective, in that, certain forms of expressions were defined as 'divine love,' while the rest were classified as sacrilegious. Similar to Karnatic Music, dance, now removed from the contexts of *devadāsis*, was re-defined as self-expression of 'Hinduism' and Indian culture. The premise was that *devadāsis* had 'taken over' a sacred art and corrupted it through their ways. Now that the art has been 'saved,' its sacredness had to be restored. A central figure in this movement was Rukmini Devi Arundale. While many other dancers participated in the movement,[123] Arundale was uniquely positioned in the society to forge changes to *sadir* tradition into what we now understand as Bharatnatyam.

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[120] Marianne Keppens and Esther Bloch, "Introduction," in *Rethinking Religion in India: The Colonial Construction of Hinduism*, ed. Marianne Keppens, Esther Bloch & Rajaram Hegde (London and New York: Routledge, 2010), 5.

[121] C. R. Day, *The Music and Musical Instruments*, 58.

[122] Ibid., 4.

[123] Matthew Harp Allen, "Rewriting the Script for South Indian Dance," *The Drama Review* 41, no.3 (1997), 64.

Rukmini Devi was born in 1904 into an elite Brahmin family; her father was a Sanskrit scholar and a theosophist with deep involvement in the Theosophical Society in colonial Madras. In 1920, Rukmini Devi married a prominent fellow (British) theosophist and protégé of Annie Besant, Dr George Arundale. She became a disciple of Besant, and her husband was appointed as the President of the All India Federation of Young Theosophists in 1923, and of the World Federation of Young Theosophists in 1925. With the support of Besant she rose to become the leader of the World Mother Movement.[124] She returned to India (after her world tour) in the thick of the anti-*devadāsi* movement in the 1930s. When *devadāsi* associations objected to the efforts of Dr Reddy, the Madras Music Academy sponsored dance recitals by *devadāsis* as a counter-argument to Dr Reddy[125] as discussed below. Arundale attended one such recital in 1933 and was inspired to learn the dance and became involved in the 'reform' movement. By then, *sadir* tradition had been stigmatized due the prevailing social perceptions on *devadāsis*. Arundale became the first Brahmin woman to learn the dance, thereby removing dance from tradition communities and (with the help of Madras Music Academy) giving it a profile in the eyes of Brahmins who became the patrons of newly constructed Karnatic Music and Bharatnatyam by encouraging Indian middle-class women (read: Brahmin) to learn and perform these arts.

Arundale like the music-'reformers,' made connections to specific 'Hindu' texts and icons to emphasize the idea that Indian dance was indeed 'originally' spiritual and classical in nature. Specifically, the 'reformers' argued that dance

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[124] Avanthi Meduri, "Temple Stage as Historical Allegory in Bharatnatyam: Rukmini Devi as Dancer-Historian," in *Performing Pasts: Reinventing the Arts in Modern South India* eds. Indira Viswanathan Peterson and Davesh Soneji (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 136.

[125] Meduri, "Temple Stage as Historical Allegory in Bharatnatyam," 137.

and music originated from the same text called *Nātyasāstra* believed to have been written by Bharata Muni, between 200 B.C.E to 200 C.E. (Sage Bharata- and hence, Bharatnatyam). It would, perhaps, be helpful to note that Arundale was strongly influenced by the Theosophical Society she was associated with. For instance, in her debut performance of which Meduri gives an account, Arundale invoked the divine and the association of the dance to *Nātyasāstra* by "having a group of young men chant Sanskrit verses in praise of the cosmic dancer."[126] She argued that dance was an expression of one's soul and spirituality going as far as to say that "In India, religion and classical dance are combined because both express the idea of creation, of rhythmic movement, of the influence of spirit upon matter . . . Religion, is Divinity expressed inwardly; Art is Divinity expressed outwardly."[127]

We must pay attention to how Arundale distinguishes between body/matter- the 'outer' sphere and the soul/spirit- the 'inner' sphere; that the divine belongs to the 'inner' sphere where the soul resides is detached from the erotic that is represented by the body and the art is a conduit through which the 'inner' soul (the divine) influences the body (the erotic). She also argued that art in India had a cosmic connection.[128] On the performance stage, she represented this cosmic connection and invoked the divine using the icon of Nataraja, an incarnation of Siva in his form of "cosmic dancer."[129] During her performances, the icon was placed on a pedestal with oil lamps and flowers, thus making the deity the central focus of the performance. Her performance typically began

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[126] Ibid., 141.

[127] Rukmini Devi Arundale, *The Culture of India*, 220-223, quoted in Meduri, "Temple Stage as Historical Allegory in Bharatnatyam," 144. My emphasis.

[128] Arundale, *The Culture of India*, 118, quoted in Meduri, "Temple Stage as Historical Allegory in Bharatnatyam," 146.

[129] Meduri, "Temple Stage as Historical Allegory in Bharatnatyam," 145; Allen, "Rewriting the Script for South Indian Dance," 75.

with a short prayer and the dancer paying respects to the deity.[130] In contemporary Bharatnatyam performances, these scenes are ubiquitous. Meduri also notes that Arundale choreographed new Tamil songs, "which extolled the beauty and grandeur of Nataraja's cosmic dance."[131] However, Allen argues that there was more to using Nataraja deity than merely connecting with a perceived 'Hindu' past. *Devadāsi* repertoire in the late 19th and the early 20th centuries contained, as I have mentioned earlier, *padams* and *jāvalis* that portrayed eroticism and these compositions and *devadāsis* performance of these compositions came under severe criticism during the reform movement. By adopting a "cosmic dancer" deity, however, Allen argues that Arundale placed her performance beyond such criticism.[132] He was a cosmic dancer, in his *ānandha thāndavam* (lit. blissful dance), but he, as an incarnation of Siva, was also the deity of destroyer of impurity. Also, in the place of *padams* and *jāvalis*, Arundale introduced compositions by 'the Trinity.'[133] For example, compositions of the Vaishnavite saints *ālvārs* in which the saints took the role of Vishnu's wife/lover (*nayaka-nayaki bhāvā-* lit. hero-heroine emotion), not very different to that of Krishna and the gopikās,[134] were treated as divine-love while compositions such as *jāvalis* were treated as vulgar. While using *kritis* of Tyāgarājā to discuss his *bhakti*, Bhagavatar wrote, "His [Tyāgarājā's] great message of love or Bhakti is revealed throughout this

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[130] Meduri, "Temple Stage as Historical Allegory in Bharatnatyam," 144.

[131] Ibid.

[132] Allen, "Rewriting the Script for South Indian Dance," 82.

[133] Kimiko Ohtani, "'Bharata Nātyam", Rebirth of Dance in India," *Musicologica Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 33, no. 1 (1991): 306; Allen, "Rewriting the Script for South Indian Dance," 80.

[134] Gopikās refer to the female devotees of Krishna who are traditionally believed to have lived in his village. The story of Krishna's childhood revolves around his charisma and the flirtatious relationship he shared with these women.

works,"[135] in essence emphasizing that any expression of love in Karnatic Music would <u>only</u> be *bhakti*, and thereby regarding even compositions with *nayaka-nayaki bhāvā* solely as 'divine love.' A similar approach was taken towards the compositions of the 13th century poet Jayadēva whose poems described the love-relationship between Krishna and his lover, Radha. Whilst some of his compositions were rejected as being 'too erotic,' others, specifically *Gita Govindam*[136] (lit. Song of Govinda), were accepted as depicting the 'divine love,' the accepted level of eroticism in Karnatic Music and Bharatnatyam. Similarly, as discussed on p. 198ff, *padams* and *jāvalis*, alongside other works, were classified as erotic, and were eventually banned. Yet, compositions of the 18th century Uththukkādu Venkatasubbaiyar, that contain references to erotic moments between Hindu deity Krishna and gopikās in his neighbourhood, were (and are) treated as expression of 'divine love.' Take, for instance, this particular composition:[137]

> *Bālanendru thāvi anaitha ennai*
> *Mālaittavan pol vāyil mutthamittāndī . . .*
> *. . . atthudan vittānā pārum āthangarai vazhi kēttān*
> *Vitthagamai onru kēttān nānamāgudhey*
> *Mutthathukku vazhi kēttu satthamittāndi . . .*

> [I hugged him because he was a boy
> But, he kissed on my lips like my husband . . .
> . . . did he stop there? He asked the route to the riverbank
> Then, he asked something that is embarrassing
> He asked for a kiss . . .]

This might not be sexually as explicit as some of the *padams* and *jāvalis* discussed in this chapter. Yet, much like those compositions, most of the

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[135] Nemam Nataraja Bhagavatar, "The Art of Sri Tyagaraja Swami," *Journal of Madras Music Academy* (1931): 19.

[136] Govinda being one of many names of Vishnu.

[137] My translation. For more compositions by the same composer, see http://archive.org/stream/OothukkaduVenkataKaviLyricsTamil/OothukkaduTamil.pdf#page/n49/mode/2up. For a more popular composition, *"alaipāyudhey"* (lit. my mind is distracted), see p. 22. This composition again expresses longingness for Krishna and anguish when he spends more time with other women.

compositions by this composer portrayed a state of longingness expressed by gopikās about Krishna.[138] Thus, how historically these compositions were deemed <u>different</u> and acceptable compared to *padams* and *jāvalis* is unclear. How the distinction between 'obscene' and 'divine love' and how compositions were classified based on this distinction is ambiguous. One clue perhaps is that compositions that were later called 'divine love' (invariably between Krishna and gopikās) were deemed so because of the presence of a deity, but *padams* and *jāvalis* generally referred to the kings and other patrons. Albeit kings and other patrons were addressed using names of deities such as '*muvva gopala*,' deification of certain compositions may have contributed to such distinction. Yet the fact that kings and patrons in the medieval kingdom were themselves deified <u>because</u> of their ability to patronize *devadāsis* and the titles and honours they received from the kings above them, as discussed in Chapter 2, seems to have been ignored in the early 20th century whilst criticising *padams* and *jāvalis* as being erotic. Here again, de-contextualizing compositions has led to transformation in meaning and understanding of these compositions.

Arundale also re-constructed the performance stage to give prominence to the dance master. Perhaps the two most interesting aspect with regards to her 'reform' were: a) her early dance training obtained from best *nattuvanars*, the traditional dance masters in *devadāsi* troupes, even though, as Allen notes, her aim was to learn the art and train the next generation of masters in her (that is, Brahmin) community;[139] b) Arundale adopted temple settings of her performance stage by means of a portable temple background set, to deify the performance space, despite *devadāsi* repertoire having previously been removed

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[138] This is common in compositions by *Meera* and *ālvār* Āndāl, both now being part of Karnatic Music and Bharatnatyam repertoire.

[139] Allen, "Rewriting the Script for South Indian Dance," 65.

from temple settings because of perceived immorality in eroticism. Now that dance had been 'sanitized' and de-eroticised, it was permitted to go back to temple settings where <u>a Brahmin</u> embodied it. However, such embodiment was re-situated within the terms of the newly emerging nationalistic patriarchy. Within this, music and dance are embodied but by the 'new woman' of India, whose body is the home of the spiritual. In this body, the sacrality of arts was protected much as sacrality of the nation was protected. But then, as Arundale and others argued, even this embodiment is not that of the body but of the mind because what the new woman possessed is a stronger core, the mind that can safeguard the core of the nation (and the arts). This mind/body dichotomy was deliberately employed to re-define traditional notions of embodiment by shifting focus from the body to the mind.

4.4.4   The Music Academy, and Purification of Dance and Music

I have discussed the role of Madras Music Academy in the music 'revival' movement in detail in the previous chapter. Having been established in 1927 after the first music conference in colonial Madras in the 1930s, the Music Academy was aptly positioned to play a role in dance 'revival.' In fact, Allen notes that the Music Academy played a role that was on par with Arundale's work for dance-'reform.' With increasing opposition to *devadāsi* tradition, Brahmin nationalists E. Krishna Iyer and V. Raghavan attached to the newly founded Music Academy called for 'respectable' middle-class women like Arundale to take up Bharatnatyam. The Music Academy also invited *devadāsis* to perform at the Academy in an effort to redeem the tradition.[140] It was an

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[140] Meduri, "Temple Stage for South Indian Dance," 137.

attempt to "give back to the art the dignity and status that it had lost."[141] Allen shows how Krishna Iyer was opposed to Dr Reddy's effort when she called for a boycott of Raja of Bobilli for hiring a *devadāsi* for a performance.[142] He argued that traditional communities should not be wrenched from their hereditary 'cultural' practices and that they should be provided with 'respectable' venues. Here, he alluded to the *salon* set-up in colonial Madras, which was not the traditional performing space such as the temples or the royal courts for *devadāsis* even though *salons* have been present in Madras since the late 19th century. However, here again, the distinction was made between *devadāsi* bodies and the arts they performed; the arts were always 'pure' and 'divine;' it is the *devadāsi* bodies that 'defiled' them. Such 'defilement' was due to the performance space and some *devadāsis* who chose the 'immoral' ways.

What is interesting about the Academy's approach is that, although they created space for *devadāsis* to perform, their conception of Bharatnatyam was not very different from that of Arundale- that Bharatnatyam has 'Hindu' mystic and cosmic origins. In an article entitled 'Bharata Natya,' V. Venkatarama Sharma claims *Vēdic* connections to Bharatnatyam arguing that *Brahma* (the Hindu deity of creation) bequeathed *Nātyasastra* to Sage Bharata who then staged a performance with God Siva and his consort Pārvati.[143] In the 1932 Music Conference, the Academy deliberated on creating 'respectable' venues for women to perform Bharatnatyam. Muthiah Bhagavatar, a famous singer, argued that "simply because a particular individual develops a particular defect or does not impress the audiences in any particular respect, it is not proper to

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[141] Ibid., 137.

[142] This was another measure taken by Dr Reddy and her fellow reformers: to boycott sponsoring any *sadir* performances and those who sponsor them.

[143] V. Venkatarama Sharma, "Bharata Natya," *Journal of Madras Music Academy*, no. 1(1930): 32-37.

condemn the art itself."[144] In every music conference, speakers reiterated the notions that dance was 'sacred' but has been degenerated and that it could be redeemed by creating better performance spaces. However, the *Devadāsi* Abolition Act was passed in 1947. It banned *devadāsi* performance in temples or any other public spaces and abolished the practice of dedicating girls to the tradition.

4.5 Failure of the Reform: Social Taboo

Both the judicial and the social developments removed *devadāsis* from their contexts and robbed them of their livelihood. Soneji notes various *devadāsi* associations that protested against the 'reform' and the measures taken by Dr Reddy. However, their oppositions were ridiculed and re-articulated as those who did not want to rescind their 'immoral' ways, and practically ignored by Dr Reddy and other 'reformers.' Interestingly, *devadāsis* invoked the connection their tradition had with 'Hindu' civilization, in other words, appropriating the same narrative of the 'reformers' to make their cases,[145] which as Butler calls, an "oppressive discourse."[146] That itself was not particularly different from the Indian colonial elites who appropriated colonial discourses on 'Hinduism' to unite and strengthen the nationalist movements and re-define music. However, the arguments of *devadāsis* were again criticized for seemingly wanting to continue a tradition of social evil. In fact, Dr Reddy insisted that she received

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[144] Muthiah Bhagavatar, "Proceedings of the Sixth Music Conference," *Journal of Madras Music Academy*, no. 4 (1933): 114.

[145] Soneji, *Unfinished Gestures*, 127. In fact, they received support from some Brahmins, who were their patrons.

[146] Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York and London: Routledge, 1999), 24.

support from *devadāsi* women and men (*nattuvanars*) themselves for her 'reform' and published letters she received from such supporters.[147]

I call this section 'failure of the reform' because while the law was passed and the *devadāsi* tradition was abolished successfully, the 'reform' has pushed *devadāsis* into abject poverty and deprived them of their identity. The 'reform' functioned on a premise that at a social level *devadāsis* were 'prostitutes.' Additionally, such a construction of identity had been in the making for at least three decades leading up to the 'reform.' Soneji has written extensively on *devadāsis* in contemporary societies, some of who lived through the 'reform.'[148] While the 'reformers' attempted to 'rescue' and 'rehabilitate' *devadāsis*, the society positioned itself as a victim within the grasps of evil *devadāsis* as discussed using works reflecting such notions on p. 195. Also, much like the British Purity Campaign, the 'reform' functioned on the premise that *devadāsis* (read: prostitution) were ubiquitous in much the same way as castes. That is, women belonged to this specific category and could be 'rescued' but the category itself was ineradicatable. Therefore, during and after the 'reform' even if *devadāsis* moved away from their tradition their status as 'prostitutes' prevailed.

The primary idea of the 'reform' was to provide education to *devadāsis*, which would enable them to see error in their ways. This is ironic given that *devadāsis* already had the right to education within their tradition that was not available for other women. But as early as 1874, girls born to or adopted by *devadāsis* were discriminated against in local schools because the natives felt threatened

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[147] Soneji, *Unfinished Gestures*, 128-129.

[148] Ibid., 169-222.

these children might 'corrupt' the other children.[149] Thus, for calling themselves 'reformers', not much of a 'reform' took place. Rather, the social status of *devadāsis* gradually worsened due to being stigmatized and vilified. For instance, Weidman talks about her Indian violin *guru*'s sentiment towards *devadāsis* that aptly reflects the cultural perceptions of *devadāsis* in the 20th century colonial Madras, as " . . . devadasi, a woman outside the bonds of conventional marriage . . . [perceived] not as an indigenous version of liberated womanhood but an almost unspeakable contrast . . . "[150] Thus, by removing *devadāsis* from their matrilineal sphere within a patriarchal society, the 'reformers,' with the notion of empowering them, pushed them further into the patriarchal society where a woman's position was determined based on her conjugality and sexual morality.

4.5.1 *Jāti* or Profession? Homogenizing *Devadāsis*

When the judicial measures to re-define *devadāsis* as 'prostitutes' were undertaken, during the mid and late 19th century, the question whether *devadāsis* were a *jāti* or a profession emerged. Colonial administrators could not define *devadāsis* as a mere profession because they followed customs and rituals within the tradition; however, they could not be identified as a 'caste' either, for that would give them recognition and protection under the 'Hindu law.'[151] Nevertheless, it was <u>undeniable</u> to the colonial administrators that they were practicing prostitution, the marker for which was multiple sexual partners and living outside of monogamous conjugal relationships. Also, as discussed on p.

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[149] Ibid., 118.

[150] Amanda Weidman, *Singing the Classical, Voicing the Modern: The Postcolonial Politics of Music in South India* (London and Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), 114-115.

[151] Parker, "'A Corporation of Superior Prostitutes'," 563.

190f, *devadāsi* matrilineal system was at odds with the existing indigenous law. Thus, *devadāsis* were constituted as 'degenerated caste' within 'Hinduism.'[152] However, Srinivasan notes that according to *devadāsis*, "there exists a devadasi 'way of life' or 'professional ethic' (vriti, murai) but not a devadasi jati."[153] What both colonial administration and the reformers did was to homogenize diverse groups of *devadāsis* into one group: 'temple-prostitutes.'[154] This reductive approach towards *devadāsis'* multiple identities,[155] from being artistes, *nityasumangalī* and matrons, etc. to only 'prostitutes,' deprived them of their agency and identity. As discussed on p. 181 above, *devadāsis* performed in different set-ups. Homogenizing the groups in to temple-dancing girls made it possible to forge one prescribed identity for them. Importantly, the argument supports that the temple be seen as renewed sacred space and as such should be separated not only from prostitution by dancing girls, which was 'immoral' but also from performing erotic dances (such as *jāvalis*) because the divine should be separated from the erotic.

In the 1920s, during the reform, while *devadāsis* were being ostracized for their tradition, many *nattuvanars*, who were male dance masters requested to be recognized as a caste called Isai Vellalars (lit. cultivators of music). Soneji says that the purpose of such request was:

> [N]ot only to fix the place of men from *devadāsi* communities within the hierarchy of caste but also to define their role in a larger civilizational genealogy . . . in this process, [they] claimed their links to music in a move that provided them with a niche occupation as the

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[152] Ibid., 566.

[153] Amrit Srinivasan, "Reform and Revival: The Devadāsi and Her Dance," *Economic and Political Weekly* 20, no. 44 (1985): 1869.

[154] Soneji, *Unfinished Gestures*, 7-9.

[155] Amartya Sen, *Identity and Violence: The Illusion of Destiny* (London: Penguin Books, 2006), 4-8.

hereditary keepers of music traditions that as early as the 1920s were already understood as "respectable."[156]

Moreover, Srinivasan argues that within *chinna mēlam*, *nattuvanars* had developed their own identity "independent of their illustrious womenfolk"[157] because arguably, they were situated within a matrilineal system that deprived them of property and adoption rights awarded to the womenfolk. This was further evidenced by the fact that whilst demanding a caste-identity, many *nattuvanars* supported Dr Reddy's reform.[158] Such a move had repercussions on *devadāsis*. During the reform Dr Reddy proposed amendments to the Madras Hindu Religious Endowment Act that dealt with giving *inam* lands (lit. tax-free lands) to *devadāsis*. Much as she wished to abolish the tradition, Dr Reddy proposed that hereditary *inam* lands would be given to *devadāsis* without any further obligations from the women in question. For those who were receiving revenue from *inam* lands would continue to receive so for their lifetime.[159] However, after the abolishment of *devadāsi* tradition, although the Endowment Act was still effective, *devadāsis* had no legal recognition as a community or a caste. With their matrilineal system abolished, *devadāsis* lost their property and patronage to men in their community. Soneji documents legal cases in which *devadāsis* have been denied 'spousal' support or inheritance because they do not conform to ideal citizenship of conjugality, which "seems to be unattainable for [them]."[160]

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[156] Soneji, *Unfinished Gestures*, 143.

[157] Amrit Srinivasan, *Temple "Prostitution" and Community Reform: An Examination of Ethnographic, Historical and Textual Contexts of the Devadasi of Tamil Nadu, South India* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1984), 201.

[158] Soneji, *Unfinished Gestures*, 148.

[159] Ibid., 149.

[160] Ibid., 160.

4.5.2 Complete Agency of *Devadāsis*?

It is evident from my arguments so far, that the 'reform' movement and the discourses within the movement were incredibly complex. Such complexity raises multiple questions regarding the agency of *devadāsis* within the context of their tradition, the 'reform' and how contemporary historians approach these historical developments. What I look to do in this section is to problematize prevailing perceptions on the agency of *devadāsis* and look for different ways of understanding agency. For various reasons it is very difficult to 'find' (as it were) the voices of *devadāsis*, in other words, their agency, two of which I would like to draw attention to. Firstly, the sources that are available do not point us precisely to those aspects of the *devadāsi* tradition that would let us argue that they indeed had agency; secondly, doing so from my positionality described in the introductory section of this chapter would undermine what I potentially would like to do: to explore those aspects of politics of *devadāsi* identity to 'report' any signs of agency. Of course, all of this would in part depend on how we define agency. That *devadāsi* tradition gave women access to education, property and adoption rights within the matrilineal set-up has been established. Also, works of some *devadāsis* such as Muddhupalani have been published and were available in the public sphere before being banned in the early 20th century. Thus, arguably, *devadāsis* had limited agency within the larger patriarchal society. Perhaps another instance that affirming the agency of *devadāsi* whilst attempting to subvert the 'reform' was when they voiced their dissent[161] through their newly formed 'associations.' However, what I seek to do here is to see if the *devadāsi* tradition or what we know of the tradition shows

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[161] Ibid., 124.

us different meanings of agency, something that both the 'reformers' and contemporary historians such as myself might have hitherto overlooked, specifically in their performances. Also, in my larger inquiry on how the *devadāsi* tradition and the subsequent 'reform' went onto define the new sphere that was then called Karnatic Music, this aspect of performance and *devadāsi* understanding of the divine and the erotic becomes crucial in understanding their agency.

A recurring narrative on *devadāsis* during the reform was that much as *devadāsi* as a category was ineradicatable, *devadāsis* chose to belong to that category. According to the 'reformers,' young girls being 'dedicated' to the tradition by their matrons and girls adopted by matrons were thought to have been victims of a social evil. However, *devadāsis* (adults) chose to stay in the tradition, that within the tradition they had free will to choose their performances, lives and more importantly, sexual partners. Therefore, they chose to become 'prostitutes' and chose wealthy patrons as sexual partners because of their greed for 'material' wealth. However, contemporary historians have argued that the 'reform' movement was detrimental to *devadāsis* in that it pushed them from being in a matrilineal tradition that allowed 'sexual freedom' (to choose multiple sexual partners) into a 'sexually repressed' patriarchal society. Thus, the perception of *devadāsis'* agency works in one of three ways: a) they were the victims of their tradition and therefore, had no agency; b) that they chose to belong to the 'immoral' tradition thereby choosing to live outside of monogamous conjugality and therefore, had complete agency; or, c) that within their tradition women in these communities were empowered, and embodied women's liberation compared to those outside the communities, and post-'reform' they lost their agency. I take issue with such arguments, not least because it pits pre-reform 'sexual freedom' against post-reform 'sexual

repression.' Such an argument is an oversimplification of a complicated historical development, as I have tried to show in this chapter.

Both the newly defined middle-class women and *devadāsis* (during and post-'reform') were the result of nationalist discourses that did not ensure subjectivity to women, but rather forced norms that were based partially on the colonial construction of the colonized, as well as indigenous appropriation of these constructions. Thus, the middle-class women (and therefore, also 'Mother India') were defined along the lines of what Lloyd describes as 'metaphysics of substance' within gender identities, which is:

> [i]t [metaphysics of substance] is assumed that there is something which is regarded as fundamental to female identity prior to engendering (the acquisition of feminine characteristics): a maternal nature, a specific mode of reasoning, natural passivity, a specific erotic nature, a developmental trajectory.[162]

It is this mystification of women that enabled the Indian colonial elites to confine women to the 'inner' sphere as its guardians. It is also similar to the mystification of Oriental women as perceived by the colonizers.[163] In addition, it is important that we need to acknowledge the performativity of these gender identities. Butler writes: "[performativity] *consists in reiteration of norms which precede, constrain, and exceed the performer and in that sense cannot be taken as the fabrication of the performer's "will" or "choice" . . . "*[164] Looking at the history of the *devadāsi* tradition, it is evident that *devadāsis* had certain rights that women outside the tradition did not, but that they had very limited agency. For instance, courtesans attached to the royal courts were concubines of the king. They (and their *nattuvanars*) were severely restricted in terms of their clothes, travel and where they could perform. The royal courts penalized those who did

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[162] Moya Lloyd, "Performativity, Parody, Politics," *Theory Culture Society* no. 16 (1996): 196.

[163] Kabbani, *Imperial Fictions*, 79-80.

[164] Judith Butler, "Critically Queer," *GLQ* no. 1 (1993): 24. Emphasis original.

not conform to these palatial rules.[165] *Devadāsis* in the other set-ups (*sadir* and the temples) were concubines and mistresses of their wealthy patrons. Thus, their concubinage was an economic decision to sustain their usually large families. Moreover, as Soneji has shown, many times sexual partners were chosen for these women by their parents, mostly mothers, much like grooms were chosen for the girls in traditional 'arranged' marriages.[166] In addition, their performances were composed and orchestrated by *nattuvanars*, their male dance masters. Moreover, *jāvalis* and other erotic poems were composed and choreographed by *nattuvanars*. Thus, the imagination and orchestration behind *devadāsis'* erotic performances originated with male dance masters. Thus, it seems that the 'reform' movement was right, to some extent at least, in arguing that *devadāsis* were victims of their traditions. However, we need to acknowledge that *devadāsis* were educated women, some of whom had the freedom to publish their works; thus, courtesans such as Muddhupalani continued to publish their works until the early 20th century.[167]

On agency, Mahmood writes "[it is] . . . not simply [as] a synonym for resistance to relations of domination, but as a capacity for action that specific relations of subordination create and enable."[168] This, I think, is very important in imagining *devadāsis* as pre-reform subjects and therefore we need to think of alternative ways of understanding their agency. Based on Spivakian approach, it is not only about 'letting the subaltern speak' but also finding newer ways to hear and understand when she does speak. Along these lines, Kabbani

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[165] Soneji, *Unfinished Gestures*, 36.

[166] Ibid., 196.

[167] Gupta, *Sexuality, Obscenity, Community*, 31.

[168] Saba Mahmood, *Politics of Piety: The Islamic Revival and the Feminist Subject* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), 18.

comments on an 19th century Orientalist writer lamenting the lack of romantic attachment of a local woman to him whose services he sought in India,

> . . . the native woman might not have felt attachment for the European for different . . . reasons . . . The European, after all, had occupied her land, oppressed her people, and imposed his personal will upon her. Her emotional detachment was her only defence . . . against total victimisation. He had the power to enslave her, but he could not *make* her love him.[169]

What this argument shows us is that there are different ways to understand agency, and that it can be asserted <u>within</u> certain parameters. A narrow understanding of agency, as only the subversion of hegemonic discourse, can result in overlooking those instances where resistance and acting one's agency occur. Butler emphasizes the repetition of the norms as the imperative aspect of performativity but also argues that such repetition of these norms " . . . are also the resources from which resistance, subversion, displacement are to be forged."[170] This can be seen in the *devadāsi* tradition in two ways: a) their matrilineal set-up was still within the overall patriarchal society; thus, arguably although they were 'performing' the norms of the patriarchal society, their mode of subversion was the matrilineal set-up; b) an important aspect of *devadāsi* performances need to be focused on, which is their interpretation of the compositions they were performing. *Devadāsis* interpreted and embodied their performances — so, whose interpretation was that? For if the interpretation was that of *devadāsis*, then one could argue that within the performance space (encircled by the matrilineal system), *devadāsis* had the agency to perform their interpretation of the compositions, which would affirm the very limited agency they had. Performance was, of course, contained within these specific parameters. However, these performances were embodied. Thus, within the

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[169] Kabbani, *Imperial Fictions*, 47-48. Emphasis original.

[170] Butler, "Critically Queer," 22.

performance space, there was room for limited autonomy. To acknowledge this is important in understanding the personhood of *devadāsis*. Also, to take their performances into account is very important, for they embodied the performance and their bodies represented, essentially, both the divine and the erotic. This was neither a profession nor a *jāti* but a *murai-* a way of living. However, here again, Soneji argues that we must not understand *devadāsi* agency pertaining <u>only</u> to their performances because this was a product of 'male gaze.'[171] He also adds that "limiting the expressive possibilities of performance solely to the effects of the male gaze curtails any potential for the expression of female desire . . . "[172] Soneji correctly argues that what performance was — a construct that conformed to the needs of the male gaze. However, to look at performances exclusively as the dominant representative of their subjectivity is to fall into the same trope as that of the 'reformers.' Rather, we need to understand the complexity of the matrilineal set-up within the patriarchal society that *devadāsis* were embodying; their performances were a part of such embodiment.

Looking at the interpretation of compositions through performances is key to understanding whether both a) the assumed 'victimhood' or b) the category 'prostitute' and the assumption of pre-reform 'free will' is us speaking <u>for</u> *devadāsis*. In arguing against understanding *devadāsis* exclusively in terms of their performance, Soneji quotes Amelia Maciszewski who argues (in relation to courtesans in North India) that in these contexts, a courtesan exercises her agency by "virtue of using the music, texts, and a particular context to elaborate her very own realization of the materials at hand . . . She is both an object of the

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[171] Soneji, *Unfinished Gestures*, 214-215.

[172] Ibid.

(male) gaze and purveyor of her own artistic (and professional gaze) . . . "[173] This approach allows us to recognize the limited agency of *devadāsis* whilst also acknowledging that within these complexities resides her agency, in <u>her</u> performance. This, I think, is crucial to understanding the agency of the *devadāsis.* For instance, the closest to an answer we have is Soneji's work on *devadāsis,* who recall their performances in the temples (before reform banned such performances) with pride;[174] they indicate 'ownership' of their performances. His ethnographic work among contemporary *devadāsis* in coastal Andhra Pradesh also indicates the pride they express whilst performing.[175]

However, we must also acknowledge that there are possibilities for multiple ways in which *devadāsis* acted or performed agency. For instance, whilst Maciszewski argues that performance spaces were also spaces for agency, Soneji quotes contemporary *Kalāvantulu devadāsis*, a community in coastal Andhra Pradesh who were subjects of the reform. They emphasize their pre-reform agency when they could express sexuality in the public sphere through their performances, as opposed to the "middle-class, "respectable women."[176] Albeit both arguments point to performance-oriented exercise of agency, they point to different <u>types</u> of agency: one has to do with having a performance space and the ability to perform sexuality in the public sphere, whilst the other is the ability to perform sexuality in a <u>particular way</u> (interpretation) within that performance space. More simply, these are questions of <u>where</u> the agency is exercised and <u>how</u> it is exercised. In the context of the *devadāsis'* tradition,

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[173] Amelia Maciszewski, "Gendered Stories, Gendered Styles: Contemporary Hindusthani Music as Discourse, Attitudes, and Practice," (PhD diss., University of Texas, Austin, 1998), 88, as quoted in Soneji, *Unfinished Gestures*, 215.

[174] Soneji, *Unfinished Gestures*, 178-179.

[175] Ibid.

[176] Ibid., 215.

both these questions are important because they embody the performance space <u>by</u> embodying the performance. Here again, we need to note that exercising agency in these modes does not necessarily have to be uniform. However, we must not overlook these modes of performing agency simply because they are complex.

It is, thus, difficult to answer question of agency pertaining to *devadāsis* because while historical accounts of *devadāsi* performances exist, neither they nor the works of contemporary historians give us a glimpse on how *devadāsis* <u>themselves</u> interpreted their tradition and their performances. My aim is not to 'give' them or take away their agency; rather, I want to prompt a different way of thinking of agency that might help us understand who *devadāsis* were within their performance space, a space that 'belonged' to them.

4.5.3 'Victimhood': *Devadāsis* and the Society

My arguments in this section would seem quite contrary to those in the previous section. There, I argued that one needs to question how we understand *devadāsis*' agency, and the central approach by the 'reform' movement that portrayed *devadāsis* as victims. The 'reform,' as I have already shown, focused on 'rehabilitation' assuming that *devadāsis* needed to be re-integrated to the 'mainstream' middle-class society. Thus, the assumption was that *devadāsi* tradition, like that of caste, was inerasable; and this reinforced the view that women who 'fell into' the tradition were 'victims' much like *sati* or widowhood. This works under the assumption that *devadāsis* were unaware of their conditions and in need of 'saving.' The Indian colonial elites saw it as their duty to protect them and to 'rescue' them. As discussed, these notions were remarkably similar to the colonial 'civilizing-the-natives' attitude. A typical example of such an attitude can be found in James Mill's extensive work on

oppression of women in India arguing that one of the principal intentions of colonial administration was to 'rescue' Indian women from oppression, which is now well known. What is remarkable is that for the 'reformers' in the newly emerging national middle-class, *devadāsis* represented those oppressed women needing intervention to be 'rescued.' However, seeing this need for rescue involved the Indian colonial elites selectively appropriating colonial ideas on Oriental women as 'damsels-in-distress' who needed to be rescued and protected. Mohanty argues against the "Third World Difference" that she defines as the "hegemonic notion . . . that stable, ahistorical something that apparently oppresses most if not all the women in these [third world] countries."[177]

For both the 'reformers' and the colonial administrators, it was unimaginable that the matrilineal system would award agency to the matrons. Rather, the newly constructed morality operative in the public sphere and its colonial definition of *devadāsis* as 'prostitutes' placed the sexual lives of *devadāsis* at the forefront of the issue. Thus, by defining their entire lives around sexual morality, their agency within the matrilineal system went unrecognized. The newly constructed middle-class women within the restrictions of conjugality somehow seemed more 'proper' than a system whereby unmarried women were ensured the right to inheritance and education (amongst other rights).

Another issue with the 'victimhood' perception is homogenizing all *devadāsis* into one single group that needed to be rescued. *Devadāsi* tradition consisted of multiple identities; however, by homogenizing diverse communities into one identity, they were denied their subjectivity. Mohanty argues that homogenizing groups of women to represent a discursive category of 'women'

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[177] Mohanty, "Under Western Eyes," 61.

who share the 'sameness' of oppression, results in "finding a variety of cases of "powerless" groups of women to prove the general point of women as a group are powerless."[178] She, of course, argues this with regard to Western feminist works pertaining to 'third world women.' However, it is interesting to see that this perception was at work during Dr Reddy's reform efforts. For instance, when *devadāsis*, through the Madras Devadasi Association, protested against Dr Reddy's reform, Dr Reddy wrote the following to the secretary to the Government of Madras:

> . . . it is well known that the very word Devadasi has come to mean a prostitute . . . the fact that one or two devadasis out of hundreds and thousands have made a name in the world of music and dancing does not disprove that 999 out of 1000 are prostitutes and one in a thousand of them the mistress of married men. Exceptions do not make a rule.[179]

Here again, Dr Reddy refuses to acknowledge the *devadāsis*' agency, which was different from the newly constructed idea of middle-class families. That *devadāsis* were always 'prostitutes' and that 'prostitutes' were always oppressive (of others in their own community) and oppressed was the dominant narrative. Here again, there are similarities in the colonial deprivation of subjectivity to the colonized. Kabbani argues that Oriental writings portrayed the colonized as embodying that which the writers wanted them to. Thus, the colonized was a religious fanatic or violent or libidinous.[180] However, that is precisely because singular reductive identity markers were ascribed to them, much like in the case of *devadāsis*. Now that they have been portrayed as only 'prostitutes' and that prostitution had been deemed immoral, their other identities (or even multiple community-associations within the

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[178] Ibid., 337-338.

[179] Soneji, *Unfinished Gestures*, 127.

[180] Kabbani, *Imperial Fictions,* 116.

tradition) were rendered irrelevant. Thus, *devadāsis* were deprived of identity-language that they could employ to assert their agency.

Another dimension, one related to re-constituting the divine, was to treat art as the prime victim of *devadāsi* tradition. Speakers at music conferences reiterated that the pure art of dance had been taken siege by *devadāsis* and that the only way to restore them was to provide the 'moral' *devadāsis* (who were dedicated to their art) a 'respectable' performance space but also encourage the newly emerging middle-class women (who by adhering to prescribed rules, were respectable) who would in turn bring respect to the art, and 'uplift' the art.[181]

While the legislation and the 'reform' put a decisive end to the *devadāsi* tradition, the early 1900s also saw the emergence of mechanical reproduction of performance through gramophone records. In the 1930s, native film industries emerged first in Bombay and then in Madras. Many *devadāsis*, now robbed of their tradition, were given opportunity to work in the gramophone industry. It is on them that I focus in the next section.

4.6   Conclusion: 'Reformed' Devadāsi and Mechanical Reproduction

In this chapter, I have looked at the developments surrounding the dance 'revival', and how these tied into a reworking of the divine and the erotic by grafting their re-definitions onto new platforms such as not only the performance stages but also through mechanical reproduction. Despite the banning of *devadāsi* performances in the temples and *salons* and dedication of girls into *devadāsi* tradition, some musicians born into *devadāsi* families have not only just made a living for themselves as musicians and dancers but also have

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[181] See "Proceedings of the 6th Music Conference," *Journal of Madras Music Academy* no.4 (1933): 98-149.

become icons. This was not necessarily due to the success of the reform. Rather, with the advent of mechanical reproduction, the film and music recording industries provided a different platform away from the ongoing 'reform' movement for some *devadāsis* to flourish as performers. In this section, I briefly discuss how film and music industry absorbed *devadāsis*; I explore the specific aspects of mechanical reproduction music in the next chapter.

The European gramophone companies began their operations in India in the early 1900s; they initially sold European music records to colonial elites in Madras and Bombay. However, by the second and third decade of the 20th century, they expanded their market to include local recording artistes from Tamil stage theatre and *devadāsis*.[182] Yet, even here as Hughes notes, the record companies were aware of the stigma associated with *devadāsis*. Thus, they promoted their recordings as a respectable medium in which the listeners were physically detached from the musician's presence.[183] Perhaps that was precisely the reason for some *devadāsis* becoming popular in Karnatic Music, as these recordings positioned their music skills at the forefront while their bodies, as representation of 'immorality' remained unseen. By contrast, the native film industry emerged in the 1930s; Soneji notes that *devadāsis* were high in demand by the early filmmakers.[184] As he points out though, the social stigma surrounding *devadāsis* could not be avoided; many *devadāsis* in the post-reform film industry played overly sexualized roles.[185] However, here again, *devadāsis* could not sustain their positions with the gradual rising presence of Brahmin

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[182] Stephen P. Hughes, "The 'Music Boom' in Tamil South India: Gramophone, Radio and the Making of Mass Culture," *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television* 22, no. 4 (2002): 450.

[183] Hughes, "The 'Music Boom' in Tamil South India," 451.

[184] Soneji, *Unfinished Gestures*, 107.

[185] Ibid., 22.

women in the film industry.[186] Some *devadāsis*, who began performing Karnatic Music, became performers prominent for their knowledge of traditional music. Thus, it is important to mention *devadāsi*-musicians such as Veena Dhanammal, and her grand-daughters Brinda and Mukta, who were famous for their knowledge of music, especially *padams* and *jāvalis* — knowledge they acquired due to their heritage within a *devadāsi* family where learning *padams* was a part of their tradition. Paradoxically, whilst during the 'reform' movement *padams* were criticized for being erotic, they became acceptable compositions to be performed in the music halls. Thus, without being embodied by *devadāsis* and removed from performance spaces inhabited by *devadāsis*, *padams* came to be seen acceptable 'divine love' with eroticism within the new context.

4.6.1 M.S. Subbulakshmi

Perhaps, the most famous *devadāsi* to have become a successful Karnatic musician was M.S. Subbalakshmi, famously known as M.S. The life and career of M.S. presents a fascinating yet very complex case of how a *devadāsi* transformed into a music icon during a period when *devadāsis* were being vilified and stigmatized. Describing the status she enjoyed in the Karnatic Music community and outside the community is very complex. She had one of the most illustrious careers as Karnatic Musician for six decades; she was awarded the Ramon Magsaysay Award in 1974, and in 1998 she became the first musician to be awarded India's highest civilian award, Bharatratna (lit. 'Jewel of India'). She was, perhaps, the only Karnatic musician to have been recognized outside the community, as well. People of India deified her: she was

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[186] Ibid., 22, 107.

seen as Saint Meera.[187] One would notice frequent references to the divine when speaking about M.S. Therefore, to describe what I call the 'M.S. Phenomenon,' I will use excerpts of essays from a popular magazine called Bhavan's Journal that dedicated its January 2005 issue to M.S. after she passed away in December 2004.[188] In a section titled 'A Global Tragedy' referring to the 2004 Indian Ocean Tsunami and M.S.' passing the same month, the journal's editor wrote, "MS was not just the supreme Goddess of music but the foremost symbol of Bhakti and charity and the embodiment of Indian womanhood."[189] In the same issue, in a poem written by the then President of India, A.P.J. Abdul Kalam (in Tamil and translated in English by the journal), he said " . . . but having lived as a feeling in a millions of hearts, you [MS] will remain the music of the cosmos."[190] She was, thus, seen as 'other-worldly,' a mystified personification of *bhakti* and the Indian womanhood.

M.S. was born to a *devadāsi* Madurai Shanmugavadivu in 1916 in Madurai. Shanmugavadivu, herself a record artiste, brought her daughter to recording sessions and persuaded HMV (His Master's Voice) to record her 13-year-old daughter, thus initiating M.S.' music career. What interesting about her within the context of this thesis is that, she represented the connection between *devadāsis* and music-'reform,' and the ideal Indian womanhood that the dance-'reform' constructed. Writing about M.S. is complicated because for such a remarkable musician with an iconic status, she had almost no media presence. She never spoke to the media and any media exposure (such as coverage of her

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[187] Incidentally, she played the role of Meera in a movie in 1945, in Tamil; the movie still remains as the most popular film version of Meera.

[188] Published by Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, it was first published in 1954, voicing nationalist opinions on the newly formed Independent India. It remains as an important 'Hindu' voice on Indian culture and performance arts in Tamil Nadu.

[189] "A Global Tragedy," *Bhavan's Journal* 51, no. 12 (2005): 11.

[190] A.P.J. Abdul Kalam, "Music of the Cosmos," Trans. *Bhavan's Journal* 51, no. 12 (2005): 15.

kucchēris) was always in the presence of her husband. She never performed without the presence of her husband. In fact, she stopped her public performances altogether after her husband, Sadasivam, passed away in 1997, till her death in 2004. Arguably, that was her choice, however, there are no known interviews of M.S. There are televised performances, but not interviews. Media reports on M.S. are by people who hosted her when she travelled to cities for performances. These accounts unanimously talk about her piety. For many years, the perception that her husband chose what and where she would perform prevailed, which he denied in an interview.[191] However, precisely through these idiosyncratic aspects of her life, she seemed to represent the 'true' feminity that 'reformers' were constructing and striving to achieve. Thus, I would argue that she became an icon because she subscribed to those ideas of feminism. Also, for a remarkable singer, she almost had no 'voice.' Thus, she represented the Indian womanhood as defined by the dance and music 'reformers' on multiple levels. For example, that aspect of her life, her absence in the media, began to signify the 'perfect Indian womanhood.' Thus, here was a woman who is globally popular and deified by the entire country, yet, does not seek any attention to herself. She, thus, remained in the private sphere as it was intended and prescribed. Evidently, as a subaltern she sung, but her song and her voice was that of her husband's, who was a Brahmin nationalist writer in the forefront of the early 20th century music developments. Hence, her status as a wife of a Brahmin nationalist who was in the forefront of the music 'reform' movement seems to have eclipsed her heritage as a musician from a *devadāsi* family. As Weidman argues, "M.S. became a larger-than-life presence not

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[191] "Interview of MS by Mani Krishnaswami," *Sruthi Magazine* 144 (1996), accessed August 21, 2013, http://www.msstribute.org/articles/articles-mani-krishnaswami.php.

simply by her musical talent but also by Sadasivam's careful cultivation of her persona as a singer . . . if the nation had a voice, Sadasivam at least thought he knew what it sounded like."[192] Moreover, Sadasivam and his friend, a prominent writer Kalki Krishnamurthy, were in the forefront during the nationalist movements in Madras and music-'reform' during the early 20th century. While I have already discussed the role of music critics during the music 'reform' in the previous chapter, it is important to note that music critics played a role in constructing M.S.' iconic status as a symbol of Indian culture and womanhood on the international stage; but also what 'pure' aesthetic taste in music should represent: "Good music should "melt" . . . the listener, make the mind "swoon" . . . or the listener "forget himself" (*mei marantu*: lit. forget the body)."[193] That body that represented the erotic was removed (like gramophone records) so that the aesthetic focus remained on the 'mind' as a link to the divine.

In the next chapter, I will discuss the growth of mechanical reproduction in India that successfully disembedded the 'body' from the artistes and the listeners to further redefine what 'secular' and the 'religious' would mean in performance arts as a commercial venture.

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[192] Weidman, *Singing the Classical, Voicing the Modern*, 125-126.

[193] Ibid., 127.

5   Mechanical and Digitized Reproduction & the Divine

"Genius, in whatever sphere it might be, transcends explanation . . .Until we solve the mystery of genius we cannot solve the mystery of music, because one is the creation of the other."

— Sir C.V. Raman[1]

5.1   Introduction

In the previous chapter on reconstitution of Karnatic Music and its redefinition of feminity in the public sphere within the newly developing nationalist patriarchy, I briefly discussed the origins of the gramophone industry and mechanical reproduction of music in South India, specifically in colonial Madras. Growth of gramophone industry provided *devadāsis* with a new performance space, which the *Devadāsi* 'Reform' Movement deprived them of. The preceding chapters (Chapters 3 and 4) looked at a constructed music (and dance) lineage within the context of the Indian nationalist movements during which the Indian colonial elites in Madras felt the need to construct a culture built on nostalgia for a 'pure' past that would serve as a national identity. Such a 'culture-defining' exercise involved re-interpretation of indigenous practices within the terms of the binary distinction between 'religion' and 'secular' spheres according to which, the divine (now re-interpreted to exclude the erotic) represented by priests and temples came to represent the 'religious' sphere, which was the 'inner' sphere, the 'true' Indian culture that had to remain 'pure;' and the 'secular' sphere comprised of colonial politics where nationalist movements were rife. The gramophone industry both reinforced this newly interpreted tradition but also challenged the same: on the one hand, the gramophone industry, by giving performance space to *devadāsis*, reinforced newly emerging ideas on feminity in the public sphere, on the other

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[1] Sir C.V. Raman, "Opening Address," *Journal of Madras Music Academy* V, no. 1-4 (1934): 99.

hand challenged the tradition by introducing new dimensions in music performance and pedagogy that the colonial elites in Madras were meticulously re-constructing, both of which I discuss below. There was, thus, a disconnect or a gap between the Karnatic Music community and this newly emerging industry, and the former responded in different ways ranging from initial resistance to (eventually) adoption. These being historical developments, in contemporary society and within the Karnatic Music community, we see a similar disconnect between Karnatic musicians and mechanical reproduction of music specifically pertaining to the Internet. Here again, new forms of mechanical reproduction of music are challenging the 'traditional' music performance, experience and pedagogy. If gramophone records and radio broadcast challenged the colonial elites to transform their understanding of the divine and Karnatic Music in conjunction with the rapidly popularized medium, contemporary musicians are forced adapt to the changes brought by the Internet. What these issues reflect are a chaotic shift between what was perceived as traditions and modernity, a shift that in contemporary readings of history we assume to be seamless. Importantly, these historical developments witness how musicians (early and contemporary) find ways to adapt to these transformations. I have divided this chapter into three parts.

Section 5.2 will discuss the historical developments of the gramophone industry that set stage for early mechanical reproduction of music; more importantly, how such a development challenged the newly re-constituted divine in Karnatic Music. Colonial elites in Madras defined the 'religious' sphere as the true representation of India and themselves as the true custodians of the sphere thereby clearly (or so they thought) distinguishing and defining 'religious' sphere from 'non-religious' that meant 'secular' sphere. This meant that Karnatic Music now belonged to the Brahmin community resulting in

'caste-based' ownership. What the gramophone industry did was to appropriate this newly constructed distinction between the 'religious' and 'secular' spheres, and to contrive a distinct (or as distinct as it seemed) category called 'secular' music to capitalize on the diverse music markets. By doing so, the industry also appropriated caste-based ownership of Karnatic Music to capitalize on any non-Karnatic Music that now 'belonged' to the Non-Brahmin communities. Thus, the industry reinforced the re-interpreted notions of 'religion' and 'secular' but also challenged these ideas <u>simultaneously</u> by prompting changes to music pedagogy, performance style, space and format. The emphasis here is on the term 'simultaneously' in two ways: a) both re-definition of Karnatic Music and Bharatnatyam, and emergence of gramophone industry occurred in the first four decades of the 20th century; b) gramophone industry reinforced nationalist notions on the 'religion' and 'secular' dichotomy <u>whilst</u> challenging them; all of these I discuss in detail in the forthcoming sections.

Closely related to the issue of caste-based ownership of music are issues on performance, experience and pedagogy. Specifically, how did mechanical reproduction of music transform the performance style and format? How did it transform the experience of the audiences? How did it transform music pedagogy that was specifically focused on by Madras colonial elites who argued that systematized music pedagogy would ensure purity of music? Demonstrably, the changes that mechanical reproduction brought to music performance and experience were not devoid of resistance from the newly claimed traditional communities. For instance, Weidman discusses how the introduction of microphone in *sabhās* faced some resistance from the older

musicians and critics who argued that the new technology failed to reflect the *bhāvā* in the performer's voice and performance.[2]

What is interesting is that the same questions on *bhāvā* and 'authenticity' of the performances prevail in contemporary times among Karnatic Musicians but pertaining to the Internet, which constitutes the next part of this chapter. Thus, in section 5.3, I look at how contemporary musicians adapt to the mechanical reproduction of music in audio-cassettes, CDs and the Internet;[3] how performance, experience and pedagogy are transformed by new mechanical reproduction of Karnatic Music and more importantly, how the divine is reconstituted within this context.

Mechanical reproduction of music in India also prompts us to discuss an important and relevant legislative development that took place around the same time the gramophone industry was growing in India in the early 20th century: music ownership laws, which I discuss in section 5.4. These laws, in colonial India, were adopted based on the British laws on copyright and other intellectual property rights. However, what these laws do is to detach music from its histories and render it a private property. As was shown in Chapter 2, history of music patronage during the pre-British colonial period shows that the music performance and patronage were embedded in the social relations and the sustenance of the local economy using temples as performance space and as patrons. Thus, the patronage temples received from the royal courts towards performance arts, specifically music, was part of a larger role that the temples

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[2] Amanda Weidman, *Singing the Classical, Voicing the Modern: The Postcolonial Politics of Music in South India* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2006), 91.

[3] It is not very uncommon to find Karnatic Music tutorials and performances on the Internet; designated websites such as www.carnatica.net address such specific needs. For example, see "Cyber Music School," *The Hindu*, November 12, 2010, accessed July 04, 2013, http://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-features/tp-fridayreview/article880569.ece.

played in the society.[4] Also, towards the end of the British-colonial period, Karnatic Music became an identity, a centripetal point for the Indian nationalists to unite the country against the colonizers. Thus, what we now understand as Karnatic Music is embedded in these histories. However, as Polanyi argued, the move from substantive economics embedded in social relations to formal economics through self-regulating markets of the modern era have taken economic activity out of these social relations and abstracted labor.[5] Thus, the copyright law attempts to read performances of musicians as their individual creativity rather than a performance that is embedded within these histories. However, what is equally significant is the contemporary approach and understanding of Indian classical music among the musicians that suggests an ideological contradiction: while upholding the notion that Karnatic Music is 'religious' music representing the devotion to the divine and the art, modern market ideas have begun to encourage profit seeking through individual ownership of music. Thus, this section is an exploration of those aspects of Karnatic Music that problematize adoption of ownership laws that many musicians advocate. I do not intend to juxtapose gramophone records and the newly constructed Karnatic Music with contemporary musicians in a before-after scenario. Rather, I want to show how the colonial elites and contemporary musicians have adapted themselves to the changes prompted by modernity by negotiating these changes in very specific ways in these two contexts.

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[4] Burton Stein, *The New Cambridge History of India: Vijayanagara* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 21.

[5] Karl Polanyi, *The Great Transformation: The Political and Economic Origins of Our Time* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2001).

5.2 Gramophones, Broadcasting, and Mechanical Reproduction

5.2.1 History of Public Broadcasting in Colonial Madras[6]

The earliest gramophone company from Europe called *The Gramophone Company* arrived to India in 1900s. According to Hughes, the introduction of gramophone was to promote purchase of mostly European records[7] that consisted of genres such as "opera, comic songs, military band music, marches, waltzes, classical and church music [that] catered primarily to European musical tastes."[8] Early gramophones were pricey and owned only by the Europeans and the elites in South India.[9] However, because the introduction of gramophones in India coincided with other "modern wonders"[10] such as cinemas, and electric lights, the records became increasingly popular among the Indian educated classes, civil servants, and businessmen.[11] Gramophones were marketed as having the "capacity to collapse the spatial and cultural differences between Europe and south India."[12] Specifically, the emphasis was on gramophone's ability to transport [European] music to the "intimacy of the home."[13] However, for long time market prospects, the companies began to record indigenous music in order to target the local population (non-elites) of

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[6] These developments have close association to development of Tamil cinema, politics and film industry. See, Stephen P. Hughes, "Music in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction: Drama, Gramophone, and the Beginnings of Tamil Cinema," *The Journal of Asian Studies* 66, no. 1 (2007): 3-34. Also, see Priya M Menon, "There's Celebration in Air," *The Times of India*, June 16, 2013, accessed July 04, 2013, http://articles.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/2013-06-16/chennai/40006660_1_radio-station-radio-aficionados-air-chennai.

[7] Stephen P. Hughes, "The 'Music Boom' in Tamil South India: Gramophone, Radio and the Making of Mass Culture," *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television* 22, no. 4 (2002): 448.

[8] Hughes, "The 'Music Boom' in Tamil South India," 446.

[9] Ibid.

[10] Ibid.

[11] Ibid.

[12] Ibid., 447.

[13] Ibid.

South India.[14] The Gramophone Company opened its own manufacturing unit in India to cut the production cost and to cater to the South Indian music tastes; within a decade, they established themselves as a leading provider of records, enjoying a monopoly.[15] Its label 'His Master's Voice' (HMV) became one of the most notable brands in South India with the company enjoying monopoly for over half a century.[16]

However, there was a need to cater to the vernacular music market, which was still untapped, to reach wider audiences because of the diversity of the market. In addition, as Hughes points out, although the market was diverse it posed complexity for the companies with its myriad languages, dialects and music types. He also shows that by 1911, the HMV began developing an extensive catalogue of South Indian records ranging from Saivite poems such as *Tēvaram* and *Tirupugazh* (composed by 1 C.E. poet-saints *nāyanmārs*) to instrumental music,[17] as he puts, "the gramophone recording industry embraced the music, musicians, and vocalists of the Tamil stage beginning as part of their efforts to expand their market into south India."[18] Even during the first decade of the 20th century, the newly (and gradually) emerging category Karnatic Music was already becoming an important part of the companies' catalogues to attract the Indian colonial elites.[19] Whilst that type of music had not been defined specifically as 'Karnatic Music' until the late 1920s, the first decade of the 20th century saw the beginning of spatial shift of music performances from royal courts to the *sabhās* in Madras (as discussed in

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[14] Ibid., 448.

[15] Ibid.

[16] Ibid.

[17] Ibid., 449.

[18] Hughes, "Music in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," 5.

[19] Hughes, "The 'Music Boom' in Tamil South India," 449-450.

Chapter 3). We need to remember that, whilst early on the gramophone companies tapped into this music which enjoyed increasing popularity among Indian colonial elites due to the "the appeal of . . . music [to] cut across Tamil, Telugu, Kannada and Malayalam speaking south India"[20] in other words, covering a diverse music market, recordings of this music were met with much anxiety and resistance by the early musicians. However, this important historical development transformed the way Karnatic Music would be learned, performed and experienced, and paved the way for contemporary mechanized forms of music and the changes we now see in contemporary music practices.

Another medium that closely followed the gramophone industry and aided in popularizing the industry was radio broadcasting.[21] The first attempt at public radio broadcast was in 1924 by the Madras Presidency Radio Club with support from the Marconi Company and the Governor of the Madras Presidency.[22] The initial broadcast consisted entirely of gramophone records thereby popularizing the records but also making music easily accessible to the public.[23] The club discontinued its broadcasts in 1927 due to financial difficulties but as Hughes points out, several members of the club went on to help the local Madras Government launch their radio in 1930.[24] The colonial government, in the meantime, began broadcasting in 1927 with its own Indian Broadcasting Company but this failed in 1929 after which the government

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[20] Ibid., 450.

[21] On radio broadcasting as a patronage by the state in North India, see Daniel M. Neuman, *The Life of Music in North India: The Organization of an Artistic Tradition* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1990), 172-186.

[22] H.R. Luthra, *Broadcasting in India* (Delhi, Publications Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Govt. of India, 1986), 6-8, cited in Hughes, "The 'Music Boom' in Tamil South India," 458.

[23] C. V. Krishnaswami Chetty, "Broadcasting in South India: Origin and Progress," The Hindu (14 June 1938), cited in Hughes, "The 'Music Boom' in Tamil South India," 458.

[24] Hughes, "The 'Music Boom' in Tamil South India," 458.

kucchēri. Amplification through loudspeakers exhibited 'coarseness' because Karnatic Music could no longer remain refined; b) In addition, public access to music resulted in demand for more music, which led to gramophone companies experimenting different genres of music as discussed on p. 269ff below. This caused deep anxiety to colonial Indian elites: the parameters within which Karnatic Music was defined were being tested here and therefore its purity challenged.

5.2.2   The Female Body and Mechanized Music

Whilst the popularity of gramophone recordings increased in the 1930s, the early musicians were wary of mechanical reproduction.[29] Musicians were not convinced of the merits of a technology that essentially removed the physical presence of the musician (the embodiment, as discussed in Chapter 4) from the music performance. This, however, was a period when middle-class women were not public performers of music; and male public performers refrained from recordings. So, who were the early performers recording catalogues of music for these companies? As I briefly discussed in the previous chapter, gramophone companies were adept in recruiting *devadāsis* for the recordings.[30] While the companies recruited some male musicians, both vocalists and instrumentalists, the early female recording artists were all *devadāsis*.[31] Thus, as Hughes describes

> . . . as early as 1911, one devadasi performer, Coimbatore Thayi, was given top billing in the HMV catalogues and seems to have recorded the best-selling records of the 1910s. By 1917 another woman from a *devadasi* background, Tiruchendur Shanmuga Vadivoo

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[29] Weidman, *Singing the Classical, Voicing the Modern*, 255.

[30] Hughes, "The 'Music Boom' in Tamil South India," 450.

[31] Weidman, *Singing the Classical, Voicing the Modern*, 320 n17.

emerged as one of the most important and prolific recording artistes in both Tamil and Telugu during the 1920s.[32]

On the one hand, *devadāsis*, as traditional communities trained in the art, were already public performers who knew the nuances of (what later came to be defined as) Karnatic Music. On the other hand, during the 1910s, *devadāsi* tradition was facing increasing pressure from the colonial elites to be abolished. Thus, gramophone recordings became an alternative space for *devadāsis* who could still practice and perform their tradition albeit in a newly emerging social milieu.

The *devadāsi* reform movement was gathering its momentum in the 1920s with Dr Muthulakshmi Reddy introducing a bill in the Madras legislature to abolish dedication of girls to the tradition, as discussed in Chapter 4. The gramophone companies seemed to have been aware of the social stigma attached to the *devadāsi* tradition; they marketed recordings of *devadāsis* accordingly. That is, while recordings of *devadāsis* were most popular, the recordings were specifically marketed as being removed from the physical presence of the artistes. As Hughes points out, for instance, "the Madras branch of the Talking Machine Company of Ceylon promoted one devadasi recording artist by emphasizing that it was 'possible to become acquainted with Kamalamma's powers as a vocalist without any personal acquaintance with the lady'."[33] Thus, *devadāsis*' bodies, which were constructed representation of only the erotic and therefore 'immoral' in the newly emerging aesthetic discourse, were portrayed as being 'removed' from the performance on the gramophone record. The audiences could then focus on the performance without the concern of social stigma attached to *devadāsis*, as Hughes argues, " . . . this advertisement

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[32] Hughes, "The 'Music Boom' in Tamil South India," 450.

[33] Ibid. My emphasis.

promoted their product as being a <u>more respectable medium</u> through which to enjoy *devadasi* performances."[34] An important narrative was being presented: that when disembodied from *devadāsis*, the art (music) by itself was still 'pure,' that it was their bodies that are 'immoral' and that their bodies were irrelevant to appreciating the aesthetics of music; however, re-situated into the domain of upper-class Brahmin women, the embodiment does not defile music because according to the newly defined feminity discussed in Chapter 4, the middle-class Brahmin women (the 'new-women') embody the divine in the 'inner' sphere. This way, the gramophone companies conformed to the then popular discourse on *devadāsis* among the Indian colonial elites, a narrative was certainly central to the music and dance 'reform' movements that were gaining momentum in the 1920s.

However, the presence of women as singers and audience members was important because the gramophone recordings were marketed as best of both worlds: enjoying the music performance, (which until then was only available in the *sabhās* which inhibited the middle-class women from attending the concerts as it would mean they would have to appear in public), within the "intimacy of the home,"[35] a private space whose custodians were women in the newly emerging nationalist discourse.[36] In the late 1920s and early 1930s, with the founding of the Madras Music Academy and the on-going music and dance 'reform' movements, the focus was on removing arts from the *devadāsi* tradition, which the Indian colonial elites argued had defiled the arts, and restoring them to their 'real' custodians, the Brahmins (and upper-class Non-

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[34] Ibid., 450-451. My emphasis.

[35] Ibid., 447.

[36] Partha Chatterjee, *Nation and Its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 125-127.

Brahmins). Musicologists and musicians in colonial Madras argued that *devadāsis* had been a blot on the history and on the performance of arts. Having been 'purified' and restored of its spirituality by the Indian colonial elites comprising mostly of men, the arts were ready to be learned and performed by the respectable middle-class women as the guardians of the 'inner'/spiritual space. They actively encouraged middle-class women to learn and perform Karnatic Music and Bharatnatyam. The newly emerging Karnatic Music and Bharatnatyam were defined as expressions of *bhāvā* (which was always *bhakti*) and the early colonial elites argued that women's voice "inherently possessed the raw material of music"[37] with "natural feel."[38] Thus, the gramophone records served as suitable platform for a dual purpose: not only could women listen to records at home, but likewise they could "sing for the public without appearing in public and jeopardizing their respectability,"[39] perceived as the sign for the superiority of the gramophone records. Thus, the gramophone companies introduced Brahmin musicians such as D.K. Pattammal who later became a prolific singer second only to M.S. Subbalakshmi (hereon, M.S.). Much like Pattammal, M.S's music career began with the aid of gramophone records; while her mother, a *devadāsi,* was a recording artiste in the early 20th century, she persuaded HMV to record her daughter M.S. thus initiating her music career that spanned for more than six decades.[40] A certain aspect of the recording companies in the early 20th century Madras needs our attention: as capitalist enterprises, the companies conformed to the popular discourses on *devadāsis* and Brahmins 'becoming' custodians of Karnatic Music. While earlier

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[37] E. Krishna Iyer, *Personalities in Present-Day Music* (Madras: Rochehouse and Sons, 1933), xvi.

[38] Weidman, *Singing the Classical, Voicing the Modern*, 122.

[39] Ibid., 123.

[40] See Chapter 4, p. 240ff for more on M.S.'s life and career.

recordings gave *devadāsis* a performance space, they were 'removed' from their audiences and performances; however, with more Brahmin women being recorded, *devadāsis* faded into oblivion.[41] Nevertheless, the emergence of this new industry was not seamless; demonstrably, the industry challenged and transformed the newly laid parameters of Karnatic Music.

5.2.3   Transforming 'Traditions'

The colonial elites of Madras debated on the new technology and its suitability to Karnatic Music as a part of a larger argument on 'purification' of music. These debates reflected concerns on transformation brought by mechanical reproduction to music performance, experience and, pedagogy that the colonial elites carefully choose to represent Karnatic Music. Initially, they seemed to be opposed to the new technology questioning its 'detrimental' effect on Karnatic Music. Transcripts[42] of speeches given at the Madras Music Conferences show speakers repeatedly emphasizing the purity of music lost after temple patronages where abolished. They spoke about the absence of *bhāvā*, especially *bhakti* due to lack of proper music education, increasing popularity of instruments, and popularity of the gramophone records. For instance, during the 1934 music conference, the committee at the Madras Music Academy passed a resolution requesting the government to appoint a Board of Censors to regulate gramophone records being released to prevent quality of

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[41] Some *devadāsis* entered the film industry that was emerging in the early 1930s. But, Soneji argues that their presence in the industry was surrounding by social stigma on the notion that they were 'prostitutes.' This, he argues, affected the kind of roles they were cast in. See Davesh Soneji, *Unfinished Gestures: Devadasis, Memory and Modernity in South India* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2012), 22. Generally, stigma surrounding film industry prevails in historical and contemporary Indian society; perceptions are that film industry is 'immoral.' But, to argue whether such perceptions are precisely due to presence of *devadāsis* in early film industry would be beyond the scope of this research.

[42] These transcripts were later published in the *Journal of Madras Music Academy*.

music from deteriorating.[43] The larger issue in the debate was that colonial elites were aware that music once disseminated, through *sabhā kucchēri* or gramophone records, 'belonged' to the audiences; that the meaning of the performance could transform depending on the discursive relationship[44] between the music and the audiences. This discursive relationship between the performer and the audiences is demonstrated in *kucchēri* as discussed on p. 35ff above. However, what concerned the colonial elites of Madras was that *kucchēri* format was prescribed and designed by them whilst control of the gramophone companies and what music they would record did not rest with them.

5.2.3.1 Performers and performances

Part of the re-defining Karnatic Music project involved transforming the audiences from listeners to connoisseurs. The Indian colonial elites believed that this responsibility rested principally on the musicians. Accordingly, they attempted to control the type of music available to the audiences. The audiences, thus, had a passive-active relationship with the performers and their performances. It was the responsibility of the performers to provide the audiences with good quality performance (which in this context meant performance with devotion and authenticity approved by the Indian colonial elites) to elevate the aesthetic preference of the audiences that would then become their cultural capital portraying their "stylization of life,"[45] in other words, the musical product became a signifier of their community's identity. This, they argued, in turn would prompt the audiences to demand good quality

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[43] "Official Report," *Journal of Madras Music Academy* no.1-4 (1934): 119.

[44] Michel Foucault, "What is an Author?" in *Textual Strategies: Perspectives in Post-Structuralist Criticism.* ed. Josuē V. Harari. (New York: Cornell University Press, 1979), 153.

[45] Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinctions: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste*, trans. R. Nice (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1984), 174. See Chapter 3, p. 123ff.

performance in the future. Given the almost complete lack of control of the Indian colonial elites on the process of recording for gramophone records, mechanical reproduction of music initiated questions on 'real' Indian music and the distinction between 'good music' and 'bad music.'

The Indian colonial elites argued that the gramophone companies did not have any control over which musician records for them, implying that European companies did not have knowledge or awareness of 'good' Karnatic Music[46] resulting in recording and promoting 'bad' music that would erode the purity of Karnatic Music. As Narayanaswami Aiyar, a member of the Expert Committee at The Madras Music Academy, wrote, "Englishmen are as much acquainted with our music as a frog with politics."[47] In addition, T. Subba Rao, the editor for the *Journal of Madras Music Academy*, wrote about the declining standards of taste in music due to mechanization of music.[48] In an article, Aiyar wrote on how mechanization of music has brought 'moral' decline taste. He argued then that the music represented the "shattering of old time-honoured traditions, a craze for thrills and amusements rather than enjoyment."[49] He called the gramophone an "imitation of real music"[50] arguing that as a mechanical reproduction, gramophones are prone to 'bad music' because much depends on the recording musician,[51] that is, a 'bad musician' produces 'bad music.' The premise of such debates on 'good' and 'bad' music seems to relate to the re-defining Karnatic Music project insofar as the re-constituted divine

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[46] U. Rama Rao, "Vote of Thanks," *Journal of Madras Music Academy* 4, no. 1-4 (1933): 146.

[47] Narayanaswami Aiyar, "The Mechanization of South Indian Music," *Journal of Madras Music Academy* 4, no. 1-4 (1933): 156.

[48] Subba Rao, "Correct Standards of Taste," *Journal of Madras Music Academy* 3, no. 1&2 (1932): 1.

[49] Aiyar, "The Mechanization of South Indian Music," 155.

[50] Ibid., 156.

[51] Ibid.

that is now represented in Karnatic Music was challenged by mechanized reproduction. When the music and performance style was institutionalized in the Madras Music Academy and rested with the Indian colonial elites, what the divine represented was secure; when the power to disseminate music was shared by the gramophone companies, concerns were raised about who performed, whether the performer lacked the 'requisite' religiosity, whether the performance strayed away from the prescribed method and levels of religiosity. Aiyar's arguments above reflect these anxieties.

Another concern that these musicians had with gramophone records was the issue of embodiment or lack thereof. As Weidman shows, Ananda Coomaraswamy, an art critic and Indologist wrote extensively on the demerits of gramophone recordings of indigenous music.[52] He again raised questions on 'real' music and the 'imitation' that was recorded music. He called gramophones a "fatal facility"[53] because of their nature to 'disembody' the voice of the performer and because the gramophones did not need a "musical master"[54] therefore, did not emphasise "musical sensibilities."[55] He (and others) saw gramophone as interrupting the divine connection that the musicians and their sound shared.[56] This disembodiment produced by gramophone records was deeply problematic as they argued, " . . . it [gramophone records] was no longer a supplement to the voice but a substitution for that voice."[57] At the core of the matter, the concern over the quality of music was a concern for what

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[52] Weidman, *Singing the Classical, Voicing the Modern*, 256-259.

[53] Coomaraswamy, "Gramophone- and why not?" Repr. in *Essays in National Idealism* (Delhi, Munshiram Manoharlal, 1981), 203, quoted in, Weidman, *Singing the Classical, Voicing the Modern*, 258.

[54] Weidman, *Singing the Classical, Voicing the Modern*, 258.

[55] Ibid.

[56] Ibid., 257-258.

[57] Ibid., 258.

Karnatic Music represented in that particular context; as a representation of an ideal Indian culture, that when juxtaposed to Western culture, stood out as superior. The Indian colonial elites thus wanted to set a unique mode of performing this classical music; to adopt gramophone music would be to adopt a <u>Western</u> mode of cultural representation that they have been challenging and protesting to begin with. Devotion to the divine was one principal ground on which they could essentially distinguish between Western and Indian classical music. What Coomaraswamy referred to, as "musical sensibilities,"[58] was <u>that</u>: the emotions — *bhāvā* and *bhakti* — were palpable during the live performances through the performer's body language. Unseen performances thus could not be gauged of their devotion. Gramophone records, by introducing a spatial gap between the performers and the audiences, and themselves and their performances (recorded music as opposed to live performances), disembodied the performers and as a consequence, devotion as well.

This disembodiment seemed to have been a concern in relation to two other new mechanization devices- microphones and the radio.

5.2.3.2 Amplified voice: the radio and the microphone

Although the case of microphones may seem different to that of the gramophone records and the radio because of the absence of recording and repeatability features, according to the early 20th century musicians and music critics, microphones had the <u>same</u> effect on Karnatic Music performances as the other two mediums: they had the capacity to playback an amplified version of the human voice <u>and</u> they were seen as an intrusion between the musicians and their voices, creating a gap between the embodied natural expression of *bhakti-*

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[58] Ibid.

bhāvā. Because of the ability of microphones to amplify the human voice, the musicians had to train themselves and adopt a different voice and body language whilst performing with a mic; this, early music critics argued, transformed the way a *kucchēri* was performed.[59] At the same time, much emphasis was placed on developing the ability to use a mic skilfully. To be <u>in union</u> with the mic was important and was differentiated from relying on it completely.[60]

Radio seems to have raised similar anxieties about the quality of *kucchēri* as gramophones did. Both mediums were similar in that they removed the performers' physical presence of the audiences and used mechanical devices to broadcast music. As discussed on p. 249ff above, because gramophone records and radio sets were not affordable to many, the Corporation Radio set up loudspeakers in pivotal public spaces in the city to amplify and disseminate recordings.[61] According to Hughes, early Karnatic musicians expressed initial reluctance and criticism towards radio,[62] since such mass dissemination of music meant that radio stations needed to cater to the audiences in general and not <u>just a</u> specific community and consequently, might not be able to adhere to high standards in music; in this case, music is no longer confined among the elite groups who were the self-appointed custodians of Karnatic Music.[63] However, radio broadcasting made available to public dissemination made the medium widely popular. Hughes asserts that most programs broadcasted 'light

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[59] Ibid., 91.

[60] Ibid.

[61] Hughes, "The 'Music Boom' in Tamil South India," 459.

[62] Ibid., 467-468.

[63] Ibid.

music,'[64] a category already defined by the gramophone records companies as discussed on p. 269 below, which increased the popularity of these broadcasts among wider audiences. Radio broadcast seems to have gained popularity and acceptance among Karnatic musicians eventually. However, such acceptance was due to two main reasons: a) radio broadcasts widened the audiences for Karnatic Music; whilst that certainly challenged the monopoly of colonial elites on Karnatic Music, it also increased the popularity of Karnatic Music;[65] b) more importantly, the Corporation Radio consulted with the Madras Music Academy to choose musicians who would perform during these broadcasts.[66] The 1932 Annual Report of the Academy delivered during the Music Conference the same year claimed that the Corporation praised the co-operation received from the Academy that enabled them to maintain the standard of music prescribed by the Indian colonial elites.[67] Thus, popularizing Karnatic Music through these mediums still came about with the involvement of the Indian colonial elites. In other words, the medium could not operate independently to broadcast Karnatic Music, whilst it could do so for 'light music.'[68] This is more evident from the fact that the harmonium,[69] an instrument long criticized by Karnatic musicians as being too coarse and loud, was banned from radio broadcasts in the 1930s.[70]

This trend seemed to have lasted post-independence as well. In the 1950s, the government became an arbitrator for the 'classicization' project with the

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[64] Ibid., 460.

[65] Weidman, *Singing the Classical, Voicing the Modern*, 268-274.

[66] "Notes and Comments," *Journal of Madras Music Academy* 2, no. 4 (1931): 249.

[67] "Annual Report 1931-32," *Journal of Madras Music Academy* 3, no. 3 & 4 (1932): 187.

[68] Hughes, "The 'Music Boom' in Tamil South India," 460.

[69] A type of hand-pump organ.

[70] Weidman, *Singing the Classical, Voicing the Modern*, 47.

emergence of the popularity of radio. For instance, in Delhi, as Morcom observes

> In 1952, an attack on Hindu film songs was made from a governmental level, typically representing the socialist-inspired Nehruvian development ideology of 1950s and 1960s India, which sought to raise the standards of the masses and stick conservatively to pure, Indian traditions. B.K. Keskar made a now famous attempt to cleanse India's airwaves of film songs by making restrictions on the broadcasting of film songs on All India Radio (AIR) when he was made minister of Information and Broadcasting in 1952.[71]

All India Radio (AIR) conducted regular concerts and Karnatic Music classes on air. However, until other venues for concerts opened up in the early 2000s, becoming a contracted performer for AIR was a prestigious accomplishment for Karnatic musicians. The selection process involved music performance tests and interviews after which musicians were classified as either Grade A or Grade B artistes. The artistes were assigned early time-slots for performances, and the day and time of performance depended on the Grade they belonged to. Thus, famous musicians who were Grade A were given 'prime time-slots' of weekend evenings or mornings, etc.[72]

5.2.3.3 *Kucchēri* through gramophone records

By the late 1920s and the early 1930s, the popularity of gramophone records among the colonial middle-class increased. With more Karnatic Music catalogues that included musicians with 'credible' religiosity such as M.S., critics of gramophone records were convinced of its other features such as repeatability and portability of music of popular musicians. For instance, in the same essay discussed above, Aiyar praised the gramophone records for making available 'good' musicians' records, which he argued exposed what 'bad music'

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[71] Anna Morcom, *Hindi Film Songs and the Cinema* (London: Ashgate Publishing, 2007), 5.

[72] This is particular preference of professional musicians is a continuing trend although arguably, contemporary audiences do not wait for a particular musician to perform on radio whilst those performances are readily available on certain websites. Also, television channels have increased the number of Karnatic Music broadcasts.

was, and at the same time lauded the gramophone records for freeing audiences from " . . . the unpleasantness of looking at the contortions of artistes . . . "[73] This, the physical contortions of performers during *kucchēri*, was another aspect of Karnatic Music that the Indian colonial elites sought to regulate. As a refined art, *kucchēri* to them had to represent sophistication in not just the performance in singing but also performance in body language that accompanied the singing. Thus Aiyar argued so in support of gramophone records. By 1930s, there were even music critics for gramophone records who revered the repeatability of records as its unique property that live performance did not offer, thus, becoming superior to live performances. In fact, a famous music critic in 20th century South India, Kalki Krishnamoorthy (popularly known as Kalki), while reviewing a recording of M.S., expressed his frustration that the rendition ended too quickly in the record but commended the record for its repeatability of the rendition "until one is satisfied of hearing it."[74] Kalki also wrote how gramophone recordings can aid musicians to attain perfection in their performance through its capacity to playback the performances.[75] Thus, "[W]hat was stored by these new technologies . . . came to be experienced as the 'real'"[76] because "the gramophone and radio do not compensate, they reveal "the true form" of Karnatic Music."[77] Along these lines, Coomaraswamy also argued for the 'real' that gramophone records reveal.[78] For Kalki, the

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[73] Aiyar, "The Mechanization of South Indian Music," 156.

[74] Kalki Krishnamoorthy, "Icai Virutu," Kalki, (1942): 75, quoted in, Weidman, *Singing the Classical, Voicing the Modern*, 262.

[75] Kalki Krishnamoorthy, "Ātal Pādal," Kalki, (1949): 15, quoted in, Weidman, *Singing the Classical, Voicing the Modern*, 263.

[76] Amanda Weidman, "*Guru* and Gramophone: Fantasies of Fidelity and Modern Technologies of the Real," *Public Culture* 15, no. 3 (2003): 260.

[77] Weidman, *Singing the Classical, Voicing the Modern*, 264.

[78] Ibid., 260.

gramophone records revealed the 'real' to mean real devotion: thus, its unique feature of repeatability revealed true devotion of artistes like M.S., but also lack of such devotion in other musicians' records. For Coomaraswamy, along the lines of Aiyar's argument, gramophone records revealed the 'real' in that it did not record human emotions; rather, it recorded performance <u>as such</u>. This, he argued, could be used for 'scientific study' of music and the performances that would otherwise not be possible. Gramophone records could never mimic human voices, but they could certainly record the incongruities that could be studied to improve human voices, he argued.[79] The 'real' therefore was reconceptualised from an embodied performance to a disembodied music recording that could reveal the true quality of the performance, as such. Thus, the 'real' music was in the background while mechanical reproduction acted as a conduit to get to the 'real' music. Accordingly, within the context of gramophone records, the re-constituted divine was not transformed; rather, mechanical reproduction presented itself as a new and unique medium to experience the divine.

5.2.3.4 Learning 'well'

An important aspect of re-defining music as Karnatic Music was to ensure it remained 'pure' and within a specific community of musicians and music critics who were self-appointed custodians. Whilst ensuring the religiosity and 'purity' in the performance rested with the musicians, pedagogy was a concern specifically within the new context of mechanical reproduction of music through gramophone records and radio broadcasting. Transcripts of early the music conferences published in the *Journal of Madras Music Academy* showed the

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[79] Ibid., 256-258.

emphasis laid on setting up music departments at colleges and universities initially in colonial Madras but later in the rest of Tamil Nadu and ensuring teachers were properly trained in music so that musical pedagogy would remain within the new parameters laid out by the colonial elites.[80] Mechanical reproduction challenged those parameters. Here was a medium that could be publicly accessed and could potentially replace a *guru*. P. Sambamoorthy, whilst writing on guidelines for a good teacher, suggested that the teacher has gramophone records and radio at his disposal.[81] Even though he listed both mediums as two among many other tools for teaching, he emphasized the presence of a human voice for good teaching practice.[82] Whilst later music critics saw the benefits of gramophone records only when records were of 'good' musicians, anxieties were expressed about what the audiences or a *sisya* might learn or not learn due to lack of personal presence of a *guru*. For instance, Aiyar whilst writing in the 1931 issue of the journal expressed this anxiety by saying,

> The broadcasting service is very active and large demands are made for the musical talents of the public. So, it is no wonder a musically inclined young man learns a few songs . . . rushes to the Radio, receives his pittance of five rupees, and inflicts his music on the beach audiences, vitiating the public taste, as much as he can . . . I would only remind them [the broadcasters] of the importance of quality in fine arts, in preference to quantity.[83]

More importantly, the mechanical reproduction of music through both gramophones and broadcasting service were seen as a challenge to *gurukulavasam* (lit. living in *guru*'s home), a tradition according to which *sisyas*

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[80] See Chapter 3, p. 126ff.

[81] P. Sambamoorthy, "The Teaching of Music," *Journal of Madras Music Academy* 10, no. 1-4 (1939), 89.

[82] Ibid., 76-89.

[83] Narayanaswamy Iyer, "The Soul of South Indian Music-Rāga Bhava," *Journal of Madras Music Academy* 2, no. 1 (1931): 16.

live with the teacher attending to the household chores and learning the teacher's way of life whilst learning music. This tradition was seen as representing authenticity of the 'pure' past of Karnatic Music by the Indian colonial elites. To them *gurukulavasam* signified the wholesome education a *sisya* received by not just learning the art but also traditions and rituals that go with the performance of the art in addition to understanding what makes the teacher who they are. Central to the importance of *gurukulavasam* was the notion of *guruparamparā*. It refers to the lineage of music teachers a *sisya* belongs to, which in turn shows the perceived authenticity of their music learning and rendition. Thus, a student trained by a respected musician would be understood to have had the right training and education; that the student belongs to the lineage vouches for their authenticity, religiosity and devotion to the art and the divine. Mechanical reproduction of music was seen as a threat to such a tradition because it was seen as disembodying the *guru* from their music but also the *sisya*. There is a paradox here: on the one hand, music emanating from 'within' had to transcend the body because body represented impurity; thus, early *devadāsi* recording artistes were removed from their audiences. But within the newly defined Karnatic Music domain, embodiment through physical presence of the *guru* was imperative, absence of which was seen as diminishing the purity of music precisely because music has been disembodied from *devadāsis* and now resided in the 'moral' bodies of the middle-class musicians. However, this embodiment is the assigned aspect of Karnatic Music approved by the self-appointed custodians of the art. Thus, in this newly defined domain, the absence of a *guru* indicated the absence of a structured religiosity and devotion to the divine. Thus, mechanical reproduction of music both conformed to and challenged the parameters of Karnatic Music by both popularizing the music whilst contesting the constructed learning traditions.

The rise in gramophone records in colonial Madras had another aspect to it. Through Karnatic Music, the middle-class vernacular market was covered. However, the companies wanted to capitalize on diverse music markets.

5.2.4 Karnatic Music and 'Non-Karnatic' Music: Newly Constituted Divine Music

In the second and third decade of the 20th century, gramophones assembled with Japanese and Swiss components flooded the South Indian market lowering the prices.[84] Until then, gramophones were imported from Europe; but the availability of components to be assembled locally lowered the price considerably. This, combined with increasing demand for vernacular records, prompted recording companies to diversify the types of music they were recording.[85] In addition to songs from Tamil stage dramas, the companies began recording folk music.[86] Hughes argues that the companies "helped to contrive a new category of . . . music which was (and still is) known as light music (mellicai): a kind of new popular, non-specialist, non-serious music meant for the widest possible audiences."[87] These, along with 'folk' music came to be known and understood as 'light music,' a genre that did not share any similarities with Karnatic Music in its history, patronage or performance format.[88] 'Folk' music seemed to represent everyday music that was popular among the working class who composed songs on their daily lives. These recordings were aimed at audiences who were classified as not possessing any

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[84] Hughes, "The 'Music Boom' in Tamil South India," 452.

[85] Ibid., 463.

[86] These classifications of music are very problematic. See Chapter 1, p. 31ff.

[87] Hughes, "The 'Music Boom' in Tamil South India," 463.

[88] Ibid.

"specialized musical training or expertise"[89] defined "in contrast to the contemplative and devotional ideal of classical Carnatic music."[90] In fact, as Weidman argues, because *kucchēri* were (and are) composition oriented, "the division between serious or classical music and light music was based on compositions . . ."[91] These distinctions were seen as necessary especially at the concerts where *thukkada* (lit. miscellaneous) compositions comprising of non-Karnatic Music were included, as discussed on p. 35 above. Therefore, although Hughes argues that the term 'light music' was vaguely defined, it seems to have denoted any non-Karnatic music. More importantly, the term seems to have referred to any genre of music that was not devotional in terms of Karnatic Music. In other words, by the 1930s, Karnatic Music had already been defined as 'religious' and therefore, 'Hindu' music. Thus, 'light music' seemed to have referred to the 'non-religious' music that is 'secular' music. Also, as Allen has argued, in order to establish Karnatic Music as 'classical,' other music forms had to be made less so.[92] Thus, arguably, both the gramophone record companies and the Karnatic Music community appropriated each others discourses and classification of music forms that were premised on 'religious' and 'secular' dichotomy, as discussed on p. 132ff above.

Contemporary understanding of 'light music' certainly reflects this dichotomy. 'Light music' represents film music and 'folk' music, which are considered 'secular' music, as that which does not contain the divine element. However, such a classification of 'folk' and film music as 'secular,' was appropriation of the same distinction, between 'religion' and 'secular' spheres,

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[89] Ibid.

[90] Ibid.

[91] Weidman, *Singing the Classical, Voicing the Modern*, 98.

[92] Matthew Harp Allen, "Tales Tunes Tell: Deepening the Dialogue between "Classical" and "Non-Classical" in the Music of India," *Yearbook for Traditional Music* 30 (1998): 26.

which the nationalist discourse of Indian colonial elites employed to define Karnatic Music as 'religious' music, as discussed in Chapter 3. The music 'revival' project had confined Karnatic Music to certain communities resulting in caste-based ownership of music. Contriving a genre that was 'non-Karnatic' therefore had wider audiences; but a consequence of it was further reiteration of exclusivity of music to these communities. This is reflected in contemporary music practices as well. Karnatic Music still remains popular among Brahmins and upper class Non-Brahmins whilst 'light' music reaches wider audiences and popularity.

Thus, whilst the early 20th century mechanical reproduction of music challenged the Indian colonial elites and the parameters of their constructed category Karnatic Music, early musicians found ways to appropriate and adopt certain aspects of the new technology (microphones and gramophone records) whilst regulating others (radio). In contemporary society, whilst all these forms of mechanical reproduction exist, what poses even greater challenge is the Internet, because of its immediacy and openness in dissemination. Interestingly, in contemporary society, we can see anxieties and concerns similar to that of the colonial elites expressed in the context of the Internet. In contemporary India, Karnatic Music is ubiquitous in the form of audiocassettes, CDs, radio and television broadcasts. However, easy access to Karnatic Music through the Internet is again challenging and transforming aesthetics, rather, prescribed aesthetics of music. Moreover, they are subverting copyright laws, which has caused deep concern among contemporary Karnatic musicians: for instance, Karnatic musicians feel that they are entitled to monetary compensation and protection under Moral Rights discussed on p. 17 for what they see as expressions of their individual creativity. There are different manifestations to these challenges, which I explore in the next section.

5.3   Contemporary Karnatic Music, the Divine: The Internet as a Subversive Tool

The availability of Karnatic Music on the Internet, specifically on websites such as YouTube, has now become very common. In addition to the availability of Karnatic Music albums on websites such as www.kutcheris.com, there are designated radio websites such as www.carnaticradio.com and www.shrutiradio.com where virtually unlimited Karnatic Music *kucchēri* are available. Also, the latest developments along these lines include a Karnatic Music app called 'Carnatic Raga' developed for Android phones, which "provides the Arohanam (ascending scale) and Avarohanam (descending scale) of each raga."[93] There are certain similarities between the ways gramophones, radio broadcasts, and the Internet have transformed Karnatic Music practices. The Internet disembodies musicians from their audiences, as do the other two mediums. There is a gap in time and space between the performances and the experience. However, the Internet also brings with it the perpetual availability of Karnatic Music, which is distinct from repeatability. The lag in time and space between virtual performances and the audiences experience renders these performances not a <u>collective</u> spiritual experience, but rather a construction of what the audiences <u>thinks</u> the performance is about. In virtual space, there are more choices of musicians and uninterrupted music performances available. With live performances, whilst the expression of the divine rested with the performers, these performances were intended as collective spiritual experiences, although this was initially challenged by the mechanical reproduction of music. Yet these mediums ensured that music remained within

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[93] Indu Nandakumar, "Carnatic Music App Gets Popular on Android," *The Economic Times*, January 5, 2012, accessed July 4, 2013, http://articles.economictimes.indiatimes.com/2012-01-05/news/30593087_1_mobile-apps-carnatic-music-downloaded.

the community, for the audiences was mostly from within the community due to the shared aesthetic preference of the community. However, the Internet reaches diverse audiences, certainly wider than for gramophone records and radio broadcasts. It also helps that most of these performances are available free of cost thereby prompting more audiences members to tune in. Thus, wherein Karnatic Music was available only to a specific community and therefore audience members comprised of members of the community, the Internet blurs the community boundaries, making Karnatic Music available to virtually anyone. It then becomes difficult to talk about audience members as a homogenous group. By homogenous group, I point here to the 'traditional' Karnatic Music community historically consisting of Brahmins and upper class Non-Brahmins who see Karnatic Music as representing their aesthetic preferences. In addition, as Dyck argues (albeit in the context of music forums that serves a specific purpose), the performers open themselves to feedback and criticism from diverse sections of their audiences,[94] which until then were contained within the Karnatic Music community (read: Brahmin and upper-class Non-Brahmin). The Internet thus acts as a medium that subverts the traditions of Karnatic Music in very similar ways to that of gramophone records and digitized recordings discussed above. Yet, subversion by the Internet can be seen as wider reaching because of the ease at which music is available perpetually through websites playing *kucchēris* 24/7. Thus, the ubiquity of the Internet serves as a tool for subversion.

Ever since Napster introduced and revolutionized music sharing on the Internet (followed by lawsuits for copyright infringements), many authors have

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[94] Jessica Dyck, "Blogging Music: Indian Musicians and Online Musical Spaces," (master's thesis, Univ. of Alberta, 2008), 10.

looked at the effects of availability of music on the Internet as a way of subverting copyright issues.[95] However, most works have focussed on music sharing on the Internet in relation to European and American copyright laws. I argue here that the Internet is beneficial to the larger community for the greater sharing and experiencing of Karnatic Music. Of course, increasing availability of Karnatic Music on the Internet is creating discomfort amongst the musicians. If news articles (some of which are discussed below) on newer technological developments that promote such music sharing, reflecting such discomfort amongst musicians are of any indication, the audience welcome these newer spaces to learn and experience Karnatic Music.

Dyck has argued that virtual music spaces create a sense of community and a sense of belonging among Indians who are migrating to the West in increasing numbers.[96] Whilst it is necessary to acknowledge the sense of identity that such spaces create, my specific interest here lies in how these spaces challenge traditional performance, experience and pedagogy practices as a mode of subversion.

5.3.1   The Internet and Pedagogy, Performance and Experience

Pedagogically, the Internet has proved to be a medium that is openly accessible to those beyond the Karnatic Music community. Prominent musicians, such as Shankar Mahadevan,[97] have created websites that teach music and offer diploma courses. For many, these options are a response to the

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[95] See, for example, *Music and Copyright*, 2nd ed. Simon Frith and Lee Marshall (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009); Adam P. Segal, "Dissemination of Digitized Music on the Internet: A Challenge to the Copyright Act," *Santa Clara Computer & High Technology Law Journal* 12, no. 1 (1996): 98-137; Lam, Calvin KM, and Bernard CY Tan. "The Internet is Changing the Music Industry," *Communications of the ACM* 44, no. 8 (2001): 62-68.

[96] Dyck, "Blogging Music," 9-10.

[97] See www.shankarmahadevanacademy.com

increasing demand from the Indian diaspora for a 'cultural' connection to their traditions.[98] In fact, learning Karnatic Music through Skype has become more popular with the University of Madras offering a six-month certificate course since 2008.[99] For many musicians in India, these are economic opportunities.[100] If the mechanical reproduction of music through radio broadcasting and gramophone records made Karnatic Music available to the public, online pedagogical tools only increase such exposures; the transnational aspect of the Internet lets anyone become a musician, a *guru* and a *sisya*, irrespective of their caste and class. In her study on Karnatic music blogs, Dyck discusses this "shifting"[101] nature of music performance and experience from traditional to contemporary practices through different technological innovations. She shows that the Internet plays a prominent role in music sharing and experience in the late 20th century.[102] However, I would go a step further and add that the Internet, much like the gramophone records and radio broadcasts, has contributed towards the musical education for groups who cannot generally be a part of the Karnatic Music community, owing to reasons ranging from belonging to a particular social class to living abroad.

Importantly, there is a level of autonomy (although not complete autonomy) that the Internet awards to audiences and students. The availability of music through apps on mobile phones transforms the way in which the divine is traditionally experienced within certain parameters discussed in Chapter 3.

[98] Rohan Krishnamurthy, "Logging On To The Virtual *Guru*kulam," *The Hindu*, 19 December 2012, accessed July 07, 2013, http://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/chennai/chen-arts/chen-music/logging-on-to-the-virtual-gurukulam/article4214484.ece.

[99] "Music Lessons Through Skype," *The Hindu*, September 18, 2008, accessed July 04, 2013, http://www.hindu.com/2008/09/18/stories/2008091860851200.htm.

[100] Krishnamurthy, "Logging On."

[101] Dyck, "Blogging Music," 17.

[102] Ibid., 26.

Thus, now 'access' to experiencing the divine is available 'on the go' anywhere. Whilst experiencing Karnatic Music through albums available online would not be that distinct from that of audiocassettes or CDs, as discussed on p. 35, *kucchēris* are usually seen as shared communal and embodied experiences of the divine. The underlying notion is that the act of audience members travelling to the *kucchēri* venues is seen as representing the act of seeking the divine similar to that of going to a temple; alternatively, the divine is experienced by listening to music within their homes (either through organised *kucchēris* or through gramophones and other digital recordings), where the divine resides in the *puja* rooms. This has been transformed by the Internet where experiencing the divine is not stipulated by any specific parameters — most importantly, the physical presence of the performers <u>and</u> the audiences nor is seeking the divine a pre-condition to experiencing the divine. The Internet then, lets the audiences experience the divine on their own terms as one young musician put, "It is up to each and every one of us to use the Internet beneficially."[103] These *kucchēris* thus produce different understandings of the divine and embodiment that rest almost entirely with the audiences.

But these transforming learning and performing spaces have generated anxieties among musicians similar to those of the early 20th century. Much like the early musicians, contemporary musicians are concerned about distortions of their performances. However, the focus here seems to be on how <u>their</u> performances — individual expressions of creativity — are distorted by the reproduction of these *kucchēris* on the Internet. In other words, the mechanical reproduction of music and the availability of the same through the Internet

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[103] Ajai Sreevatsan, "Keeping in Tune with the Digital Age," *The Hindu*, December 25, 2011, accessed July 5, 2013, http://www.thehindu.com/features/friday-review/music/keeping-in-tune-with-the-digital-age/article2747520.ece.

have raised questions about ownership. For instance, in an article that appeared in *The Hindu* about a Karnatic Music website called sangeethapriya.org that makes concerts recorded from *sabhās* available virtually, a prominent musician, T.M. Krishna, argued that recording at *sabhā* concerts should not be carried out without the permission of the musicians, saying "A ticket does not entitle a person to bring in his recording device."[104] In the same article, the owner of the website claimed, "I believe music is God's gift and I want to share it."[105]

This is an example of a larger issue that is prevailing in the Karnatic Music community because of the transforming of traditions brought about by new forms of mechanical and digitized reproduction of music. On the one hand, the musicians and the audiences see Karnatic Music as a traditional knowledge that is divine, that should be experienced and appreciated by all; on the other hand, some musicians are moving towards copyrighting and protecting their performances against distortion, piracy and other copyright infringements. However, these latter musicians <u>at the same time</u> adhere to the traditions that they have been trained in (which I discuss in the following sections) that problematize the applicability of copyright law to Karnatic Music. In addition to transforming music practices, what this signifies is the shift from communal experience of music towards modernity that encourages the commodification of arts. In the next section, I will discuss historical and contemporary ownership laws that problematize the situating of Karnatic Music within this particular legal framework.

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[104] Priyadarshini Paitandy, "The Virtual Sabha," *The Hindu*, October 21, 2011, accessed July 5, 2013, http://www.thehindu.com/features/friday-review/music/the-virtual-sabha/article2558794.ece.

[105] Paitandy, "The Virtual Sabha."

5.4   *Whose Music? Contemporary Karnatic Music Practices and Copyright Laws*

When gramophone record companies entered the South Indian market, they were protected by a copyright law passed by the British Government in 1847 that protected creative works on tangible media. Also, the companies began printing texts of the compositions in their catalogues, which they in turn copyrighted. In contemporary times, with access to Karnatic Music through the Internet, more contemporary Karnatic musicians are indicating their desire to be protected as performers under Indian copyright law,[106] one example being musician T.M. Krishna (as discussed on p. 274). Most musicians who want Karnatic Music to be protected by copyright laws look at copyright protection only as an economic benefit.[107] Typically, Karnatic musicians receive payment for the *kucchēri* they perform or the music lessons they teach. Yet, even today these are fees similar to a priest receiving gifts from the patrons of the temple for assisting them with experiencing the divine, rather than an assertion of their ownership of the performance through monetary compensation. Such fees given to a teacher are called *guru dakshina* (lit. donation or in this context, gift to a teacher). This has been my experience as a Karnatic Music student of 20 years during which my teacher charged a minimum fees that signified appreciation of her knowledge and teaching services. This concept of gift-giving is very similar

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[106] Mira Sundara Rajan (Canadian Research Chair, Tier II) in discussion with the author, April 2011. Also, see 'Artists and musicians told to come together to safeguard their work,' *The Hindu* February 2, 2011, accessed August 21, 2013, http://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/Chennai/article1147345.ece. Rāman Unni, an independent composer, Chennai, (in discussion with the author, January 2011) expressed his interest in making musicians pay some economic compensation to the government, since the performers are deriving economic benefit out of the *kriti* (compositions) composed not by them. He argued that the government should set up a fund and the payment made by performers be utilized for musicology research.

[107] Mira Sundara Rajan (Canadian Research Chair, Tier II) in discussion with the author, April 2011.

to the practices in the Indian medieval kingdoms discussed in Chapter 2 in which the kings donated gifts such as lands, jewellery and titles to smaller kings and chieftains, priests and performers for their services to the temple and during worships.

Although copyright law exists on the premise of promoting and protecting the creativity of the authors and the creators, several issues arise when Karnatic musicians attempt to protect and own their creativity and performances. Moreover, the transforming understanding of musicians of market and profit making is an attempt to situate Karnatic Music within the contemporary capitalist economy. What is problematic here is that copyright law focuses on 'creativity' and 'originality,' concepts that are difficult to define within the framework of Karnatic Music because these concepts had and have specific meanings and historical contexts <u>within</u> Karnatic Music. Ultimately, copyright law attempts to decontextualize music by treating the art as a commodity in a market where the audiences are the 'consumers'. Furthermore, it de-mystifies music by translating the metaphysical value that the indigenous culture prescribes to the art into property rights, thus changing the meaning (albeit constructed) of the art.

In making the above arguments, I do not contend that Karnatic Music is antiquated because of the early 20th century developments, that it has lost its relevance or meaning in the contemporary society and that it is meaningful <u>only</u> within the particular historical context of the Indian nationalist movements. Rather, I argue that whilst the performance format, space and experience have been transformed historically and in the contemporary society, Karnatic Music has a specific 'meaning' for the performers and the audiences that cannot be removed by attempts to situate it within the capitalist economy. It is then that complex sets of issues arise that copyright laws do <u>not</u> resolve.

My attempt here is to highlight those issues, but also to look at how the law attempts to remove certain 'histories' that are fundamental to understanding and experiencing Karnatic Music within the contemporary society. In addition to that, the Internet has provided a platform for Karnatic Music to become accessible to groups who were otherwise excluded from this collective ownership through the caste-based 'ownership' of music. To copyright Karnatic Music would be to 'bring back' the music to the community who in addition to caste-based 'ownership' would now also claim ownership through the laws that would render the art even more exclusive. That is, although *kucchēris* in some *sabhās* tend to admit the audiences for free, Karnatic Music was constructed on certain exclusive privileges enjoyed by a specific community (of Brahmins and upper-class Non-Brahmins); copyrighting Karnatic Music would mean that performances would become available only to those who have the capacity and intention to purchase music online, rather than being available openly to wider audiences.

However, before looking at the specific aspects of copyright laws in relation to Karnatic Music, it is important to note that it is more common for the Internet forums and columns to discuss instances of plagiarism and copyright infringement pertaining to film music than Karnatic Music.[108] Thus, whilst it is common to find references to certain film music directors as 'Master Plagiarist' or 'Copycat' etc.,[109] Karnatic Music is largely seen as being beyond the realms of copyright laws, at least according to many audience members. There seems to be a rationale to such a perception: Karnatic Music typically contains

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[108] Rajalakshmi Nadadur Kannan, "Articulation of Plagiarism in Indian Film Music Industry: A Discourse Analysis of Blogs and Forums," (master's non-thesis research paper, University of Maine, 2007), 9-10.

[109] Nadadur Kannan, "Articulation of Plagiarism in Indian Film Music Industry," 9-10.

compositions and songs that were composed by the 17th to 19th century composers. Compositions by contemporary composers are met with scepticism because they are not 'traditional enough'[110] as within the Karnatic Music community, there is a strong emphasis on the antiquity and <u>therefore</u> authenticity and 'classicalness'[111] of compositions and performances. The most suitable term in Tamil that refers to such antiquity that is often used by older musicians is *pazhamperum*; the root word here is *pazhamai* referring to the antiquity of something and *perum* literally means either praise or greatness arising out of ancientness. Thus, *kritis* of same set of composers are performed repeatedly at different *kucchēris* whilst musicians add their own interpretation and creativity to these compositions at each performance. Repetition does not indicate similarity in this context; rather, it becomes a foundation to exhibit the musicians' varied interpretations of the same *kritis*. Thus, establishing the originality of such a performance becomes problematic compared to, for instance, film music, where a musician sets a tune to lyrics written by them or a poet. There is an element of tangibility of creating music involved in film music, which is missing in Karnatic Music (that is, in film music, song composition takes place in the present rather than in a distant past).

In the following sections, I will look at specific aspects of the copyright law that Karnatic Music problematizes.

5.4.1   Who Owns Creativity? Embodiment and the Divine

According to Indian Copyright Law, the principle behind ownership is authorship and that monetary compensation and protection of expression of

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[110] "Why Compose New Songs, Asks Semmangudi," *The Hindu*, December 02, 2002, accessed July 06, 2013, http://hindu.com/2002/12/02/stories/2002120203650500.htm.

[111] Hence it is called South Indian <u>classical</u> music.

creativity encourages creativity.[112] In India, the Copyright Law that is currently in use was first passed in 1957 with amendments made through the years. The Law protects original literary, dramatic, musical and artistic works and cinematograph films and sound recordings from unauthorized uses. As discussed in Chapter 1, the 1994 amendment to the existing Copyright Law banned any 'unlawful' or bootlegged recordings of live performances, which typically end up on websites such as YouTube or blogs. It is, perhaps, helpful to note that most music rights (especially in the case of Karnatic Music) are still owned and administered by the recording companies; the 2012 Amendment has now provided the artistes involved in music making with more rights.[113] The Copyright Law protects the creative expression of an individual on the premise that such creativity originates from the individual, as *A Handbook of Copyright Law* of the Government of India states,

> Creativity being the keystone of progress, no civilized society can afford to ignore the basic requirement of encouraging the same. Economic and social development of a society is dependent on creativity. The protection provided by copyright to the efforts of writers, artists, designers, dramatists, musicians, architects and producers of sound recordings, cinematograph films and computer software, creates an atmosphere conducive to creativity, which induces them to create more and motivates others to create.[114]

Within the framework of Karnatic Music as defined by the Indian colonial elites by carefully choosing specific aspects of the music, creativity was and is understood as constituted by <u>both</u> embodiment and the divine inspiration. Embodiment is a key aspect of learning, performing and experiencing Karnatic Music: as discussed in the previous chapters, metaphysical value is attached to the aspect of embodiment. Repetition is an important component of this

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[112] See *A Handbook of Copyright Law*, accessed June 24, 2013, http://copyright.gov.in/Documents/handbook.html.

[113] See Chapter 1, p. 14.

[114] See *A Handbook of Copyright Law*, accessed June 24, 2013, http://copyright.gov.in/Documents/handbook.html.

embodied creativity. Whether learning a *kriti* or performing at a *kucchēri* or during a session of *manodharmasangeetham*, the musicians repeat the lines of the compositions over and over again for perfect learning or performance or to exhibit various interpretations of those lines of compositions. Thus, through repetition, creativity becomes embodied. When a musician performs *mei marandhu* (lit. transcending one's body), the music is seen as originating from the soul, the 'inner' sphere where the divine resides. References to soul-stirring music and devotion are frequently used in relation to Karnatic Music. Importantly, the other aspect of creativity, which is the divine inspiration, is the significant aspect of creativity originating from embodying the music and the divine. Accordingly, the musicians are evaluated based on their creativity: however, such creativity is expressed in the form of *bhakti*, which is seen as originating due to divine inspiration. Thus, through devotion to the divine, the gift of creativity is bestowed upon the musicians. For instance, musician Neyveli Santhanagopalan, when interviewed about a particular performance he gave in Brussels, said

> Suddenly, Fabricio, the Belgian saxophonist, challenged me on the stage with some complicated phrases! After a split second of dread I found that the reply to that just flowed from me. It was pure joy — when subconsciously your training and instinct come together![115]

What he referred to was the spontaneity in expressing his creativity on stage; however, that, to him, happened subconsciously. His reference to the instinct is *bhakti* as he said in the same interview "Carnatic music is not for entertainment. Neither did the Trinity compose for kutcheris. Their work was a pure overflow

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[115] "Neyveli R. Santhanagopalan - Carnatic Vocalist," *Kutcheribuzz.com*, 10 June 2000, accessed July 06, 2013, http://www.kutcheribuzz.com/kb-special/kb-interviews/1120-neyveli-r-santhanagopalan.

of the emotion of Bhakthi."[116] Thus, creativity in *kucchēris* is measured through spontaneous improvisations and rendition of the compositions. As a dialectic communal experience, *kucchēris* are seen as space where musician's true *bhakti* is exhibited.

To Karnatic musicians, the foundation for this creativity rests on the *guru* themselves, who embodies the divine.[117] To the colonial elites, creativity was authentic and pure (that is, conformed to their parameters) based on one's music lineage. For them, *guruparamparā* ensured such authenticity and purity. If a *sisya* learnt Karnatic Music from a teacher who is true to the prescribed traditions, the teacher imparted not only the art but the spirituality as well. Thus, the focus was placed on good teachers and training musicians to become good teachers. As noted above, this was one of the reasons why early musicians and musicologists criticized gramophone records. They were wary of pseudo-musicians recording 'bad music' that would in turn be impressionable among listeners, especially children, thereby continuing a legacy of corrupted creativity. In contemporary Karnatic Music community, lineage has become less important because of the multitude of music teachers and institutions.

Such creativity originating from 'divine inspiration' is expressed throughout a concert. However, the *kritis* are taught to musicians through oral tradition and therefore, performances cannot be attributed to any one musician. Thus, ambiguity prevails in legally separating a musician's style from their teacher's style, which problematizes copyrighting a particular rendition of a *kriti* as a mark of that musician's creativity or style. In addition, there is one segment of a performance that specifically represents creativity, a segment carefully

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[116] "Neyveli R. Santhanagopalan - Carnatic Vocalist."

[117] See Chapter 1, p. 40f.

constructed and approved within the parameters set by the colonial elites, called *manodharmasangeetham* (lit. creative music from the mind). This segment is dependent upon spontaneity and repetition. As discussed on p. 35, *manodharmasangeetham* is a coming-of-age segment for musicians, the idea being that a musician has perfected *bhakti* if they can <u>spontaneously</u> demonstrate their creativity where, as Santhanagopalan said above, both knowledge acquired through learning and devotion come together. Within this broad segment, a musician performs *ālāpana*,[118] *kalpanaswaram*,[119] *neraval*[120] and *rāgam-thānam-pallavi*.[121] Each of these require the creativity of the performer; however, the emphasis is not only on the prowess of the musician to perform complex embellishments but also exhibit "refined taste,"[122] as Subba Rao wrote in 1939. He argued, "To sing a *rāga* and sustain interest in it requires creative talent . . . which [are] inborn than acquired."[123]

The format of *manodharmasangeetham* problematizes ownership of creativity: transcripts of Music Conferences in the 1920s and 1930s (published in the *Journal of Madras Music Academy*) show how *swaram* (specific notes of a particular *rāga*) were deliberately composed by musicians and musicologists who established the 'correct' rendition of a *rāga*. However, each sub-session within this session displays interpretation of each musician; they perform these sessions with embellishments that are spontaneous and repetitive. Sundara

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[118] *Ālāpana-* Melodic improvisation of a *rāga* (musical scale).

[119] *Kalpanaswaram-* Improvisation of a *rāga* using different permutations of the notes that make up the *rāga*.

[120] *Neraval-* Extempore melismatic improvisation of verses of a composition.

[121] *Rāgam* is another term for *ālāpana*; *thānam*-improvisations of a *rāga* using rhythmic notes generally used in Bharatnatyam; *pallavi*-tutelary phrase of a composition sung in repetition with embellishments.

[122] T. Subba Rao, "The Seven Lamps of Sangita," *Journal of Madras Music Academy* 10, vol. 1-4 (1939): 57.

[123] Rao, "The Seven Lamps of Sangita," 57.

Rajan argues that whilst a *rāga* cannot be copyrighted, a particular rendition must be copyrighted because that marks the creativity of the musician.[124] Copyrighting any particular rendition of a *rāga* is problematic because a musician's creativity and interpretation of the *rāga* is displayed during the *ālāpana* session; because of the session's melismatic nature, no two renditions of a musician are or remain the same. In fact, <u>that</u> is the mark of their creativity and knowledge of the *rāga* — that no two sessions are similar. Moreover, *rāgas* do not belong to the musicians and <u>therefore</u> nor does any particular rendition. In addition, copyrighting the *swaram* or a particular combination of *swaram* or any of the embellishments during this session employed by the performer would be absurd, because practically hundreds of combinations of *swaram* are possible: no one combination of notes can be proven as original.

Whilst creativity within Karnatic Music is problematic to define and copyright, the question of authorship further complicates the issue.

5.4.2   "What is an Author?"[125] The Concept of 'Original Genius'

In 1934, Nobel laureate Sir C.V. Raman discussed the idea of 'original genius' attributing the capacity to produce good music as divinely inspired by saying "You cannot produce a Theagaraja [Tyāgarājā, one of 'the Trinity' of Karnatic Music] by turning the handle of a gramophone. That is a task that is yet beyond <u>human power</u>."[126] As discussed above, genius within Karnatic Music has been seen as belonging to a supernatural realm <u>beyond</u> the human realm. The notion that creativity and inspiration originates from an individual and that ought to

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[124] Mira Sundara Rajan (Canadian Research Chair, Tier II) in discussion with the author, April 2011.

[125] Foucault, "What is an Author?," 141. My emphasis.

[126] Raman, "Opening Address," 99.

be protected to ensure personal liberty is an idea that developed during the Enlightenment period. Kretschmer and Kawohl have argued that whilst earliest move towards protecting works of authors could be observed in, as early as, 14th and 15th centuries in Germany and France, Statute of Anne that came into effect from 1710 solidified such protection.[127] But the idea behind ownership of private property as a fundamental, absolute right came from the writings of John Locke who argued for individualization of labor and work as pertaining exclusively to the one who put in the labor.[128] Kretschmer and Kawohl have argued that 18th century writings solidified the idea of right to private property as a natural right.[129] For instance, Immanuel Kant argued that "copyright [derives] from the natural right of self-expression" and Hegel argued that right to property was right to freedom, thereby arguing that a personhood (or subjecthood) is conceived by the property the person owns or the right s/he has to own a property.[130] What this did was to emphasize on the importance of the author who is now defined by their expressions of creativity, their intellectual property, who has inalienable rights to such property. Kretschmer and Kawohl have argued that 19th century developments in Europe solidified the idea of 'protecting' these rights. In other words, 18th century ideas on personhood has already established that intellectual property is an author's inalienable right, 19th century developments reified the author as a "source of protection"; this is evident from the laws passed during the late 18th and early 19th centuries in

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[127] Martin Kretschmer and Friedemann Kawohl, "The History and Philosophy of Copyright," in *Music and Copyright,* 2nd ed. Simon Frith and Lee Marshall (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009), 23-26. However, it must be noted that Statute of Anne initially protected texts and thus, pertaining to music, it protected the texts of a composition or notation rather than the music recording itself.

[128] Kretschmer and Kawohl, "The History and Philosophy of Copyright," 25.

[129] Ibid., 31.

[130] Ibid., 31-32.

France, UK and Prussia where "the term calculation shifted from the date of publication to the life of the author."[131]

According to Woodmansee, while the European Renaissance scholars believed that 'inspiration' came from above (meaning, the divine), the 18th century theorists believed that 'inspiration' came from within: they called this "original genius"[132] and therefore, the product of such genius is the property of the creator.[133] Although "writing was considered a mere vehicle of received ideas which are already in the public domain, and, as such a vehicle, it too, by extension or by analogy, was considered part of the public domain,"[134] most writers were paid an honorarium for their labor. However, Woodmansee clarifies that such a payment was only "acknowledgment or reward, recognition, favour, stipend" according to Zedler's Universal-Lexikon of 1735.[135] Thus, Woodmansee argues that "the author" is a relatively recent invention, one of modernity. "Specifically, it is the product of the rise in the eighteenth century of a new group of individuals: writers who sought to earn their livelihood from the sale of their writings to the new and rapidly expanding reading public."[136] She also posits that writers in the 18th century Germany lacked any protection for their labor and thus, they set out to redefine the nature of writing and the concept of author.[137] In fact, Woodmansee argues that the idea of 'god-inspired' creativity existed during earlier centuries. For instance, during the pre-modern era, Saint Cecilia, the patron saint for

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[131] Ibid., 23-26.

[132] Martha Woodmansee, "The Genius and the Copyright: Economic and Legal Conditions of the Emergence of the 'Author,'" *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 17, no. 4 (1984): 427.

[133] Woodmansee, "The Genius and the Copyright," 427.

[134] Ibid., 434.

[135] Ibid.

[136] Ibid., 426.

[137] Ibid., 434.

musicians and church music, was attributed to one's inspiration, much like Karnatic Music for which Saraswati is the patron-deity.[138] However, the notion of creativity came to be understood as 'original genius' during the Enlightenment period where an author's creativity was individualized to mean their liberty. Thus, such a notion represents the idea that personal liberty signifies the development of a rational human being who has " . . . [begun] to enter the market as 'free' agents who maximize their own rational interests."[139] A consequence of this is to take an inherent position of 'secularity' represented in capitalist 'free-markets,'[140] in which the contexts that represent the divine are removed to make the author and their work the only focus, and the economic benefits the <u>only</u> aspect of creativity. Such 'secularisation' is due to homogenizing the idea of history that renders meaningful, as Chakrabarty argues, which I discuss below.

In addition, the honorarium that Woodmansee talks about is similar to the fee that Karnatic musicians received for performing or teaching music. The fee is to honor the service they have provided the public or the teacher with, but is not a monetary compensation for their creativity. This set-up ran parallel to the patronage priests and the musicians received historically in the Vijayanagara Empire and the Tanjavur Kingdom that was discussed in Chapter 2. Accordingly, a patron (a king or temple or a private patron) bestowed titles and rewards upon the musicians as mark of honoring their creative talent. Yet, these

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[138] As in the polytheistic tradition in India, whilst Saraswati is the patron-goddess of knowledge and acquiring such knowledge, Ganesha is the patron-god of knowledge, as well. In paintings, Saraswati holds a *veena*, a string-instrument, whilst sitting on a lotus. In addition, Dakshinamurthy, an incarnation of Siva, is the patron-god of education.

[139] Timothy Fitzgerald, *Religion and Politics in International Relations: The Modern Myth* (London: New York: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2011), 237.

[140] Fitzgerald, *Religion and Politics in International Relations,* 146.

were not indicative of the monopoly that musicians would enjoy over artistic expression of their creativity, as in the case of copyright laws.

Authorship is acknowledged in Karnatic Music compositions through *mudra* thereby necessitating attribution to the composer(s). Karnatic Music does not dismiss ownership entirely; rather, it assumes collective ownership. Music taught orally is open to improvisations. Thus through *manodharmasangeetham* and a particular rendition, a performer establishes authorship. As Barthes argues, texts do not contain one singular 'theological' meaning; rather "is a tissue of quotations drawn from the innumerable centres of culture."[141] Thus, the reader as the 'destination' engaging with the text deciphers the meaning and holding "together . . . all the traces by which . . . text is constituted."[142] Although, his essay pertains to literary authors and readers, it is important to invoke him in reference to Karnatic Music. The authorship established by *manodharmasangeetham* is temporary until another performer improvises those compositions. Foucault argued that the author "does not affect all discourses in the same way at all times and in all types of civilizations . . . does not refer purely and simply to a real individual, since it can give rise simultaneously to several selves, to several subjects,"[143] and that an author is born every time they come into interaction with a work. This is specifically true pertaining to *manodharmasangeetham*. Every creative session displays a new form of the musician and their interpretation of the particular *kriti* or *rāga*. However, as discussed on p. 281ff above, such creativity is understood within a transcendental context. Moreover, as discussed on p. 35ff above, *kucchēri* is a

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[141] Roland Barthes, *Image Music Text*, trans. Stephen Heath (New York: Hill & Wang, 1978), 146.

[142] Barthes, *Image Music Text*, 147-148.

[143] Foucault, "What is an Author?," 153.

dialectic communal experience in which the audiences actively participate whilst re-interpreting and experiencing the performance. Arguably, the audiences are then authors of each of these performances. What Foucault critiques here is the modern understanding that an author is a 'free agent,' and that their work is an exercise and exhibition of their 'free will.'[144] On the contrary, he argues that an author is a product of a discursive relationship of discourses with the culture and the society.[145] A *kucchēri* is a display of a dialectic relationship between the musician and the divine, the musician and their *guruparamparā*, the musician and the audiences, and finally, the audiences and the divine through the musician. Hence, to treat a particular rendition as the musician's <u>own</u> or in other words, as Foucault describes, "individualization,"[146] is very problematic in this context. As discussed in the Chapters 3 and 4, these traditions were constructed during the early 20th century as a part of the nation and national-identity building project. The colonial elites of Madras deliberated not only on what a *kucchēri* should entail, how the *kucchēri* format should be performed, but also what compositions authentically reflected the true history of Karnatic Music (that again they had just constructed).[147] In fact, Manuel argues that this "new sense of individualism" was an important aspect of the newly emerging idea of aesthetics, during the period of modernity that was marked by the ideal of individualism.[148] Thus, he argues that such "rise of individualism create(d) a

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[144] Ibid., 141-160.

[145] Ibid.

[146] Ibid., 141.

[147] To them, the answer to the question on compositions was that of 'saint-composers' who they argued to have had influence of the *bhakti* tradition. See, Chapter 3.

[148] Peter Manuel, "Modernity and Musical Structure: Neo-Marxist Perspectives on Song Form and Its Successors," in *Music and Marx: Ideas, Practice, Politics*, ed. Regula Burckhardt Qureshi (London: Routledge, 2002), 52.

new dimension of dualism between the self and society that did not exist before capitalism."[149]

Thus, the Copyright Law attempts to do precisely what Barthes criticizes, that is, emphasize the authorship to the extent that the nature of the work is determined by who the author is. Secondly, by stressing on the importance of an author, as Barthes points out, the work is being situated at a particular point of time and context when it was 'created' and performed, rendering it timeless. Through ownership, copyright law attempts to fix a *kriti* the musician performed at a particular context and at a particular point of time, namely, a concert or recording studio, thereby decontextualizing music from its social relations. In other words, copyright law treats all works of art homogenously using time as a static phenomenon. Ultimately, we are looking at fluid categories with ever-changing classifications that are being situated within the context of market economy that homogenizes time. Chakrabarty discusses this as 'history,' a discourse of the West that 'measures' the East by treating time as "homogenous"[150] in which "events happen in time but time is not affected by them."[151] By fixing the time of the work of art when it was composed as absolute, the law heirarchizes other works deeming them to be inferior to the 'original.' However, such a hierarchy is problematic in this context because to establish the originality of a particular composition or a particular rendition of that composition is impractical for two reasons: a) arguably, the first time *kritis* were performed can be said to be the originality of the compositions of the Trinity, however, that would mean referring to the 17th century renditions; b)

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[149] Manuel, "Modernity and Musical Structure," 52.

[150] Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference*, 2nd ed. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), 73.

[151] Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe*, 73.

Karnatic Music relies on oral tradition as a way of passing the knowledge to the next generation and therefore, <u>encourages</u> certain level of distortions that are natural to the oral traditions. As discussed in the previous sections, such 'distortions' are marks of creativity and divine inspiration.

Whilst the ownership and the monetary rights of copyright law are problematic within the context of Karnatic Music, Indian Copyright Law also allows certain non-monetary rights for composers, performers and authors and this pertains to the right to attribution, authorship and the rights against misrepresentation. Under Indian Copyright Act of 1957, moral rights are listed under Section 57.

5.5 *'Non-Monetary Rights'- Moral Rights*

My interest in moral rights stemmed out of its provision as a non-economic right a performer/composer is entitled to, which is arguably a less problematic aspect of copyright law in the context of Karnatic Music, since copyright law in general focuses more on economic benefits. The 2012 Amendment bill strengthens the moral rights of authors, while defining the rights as

> The author of a work has the right to claim authorship of the work and to restrain or claim damages in respect of any distortion, mutilation, modification or other acts in relation to the said work which is done before the expiration of the term of copyright if such distortion, mutilation, modification or other act would be prejudicial to his honour or reputation. Moral rights are available to the authors even after the economic rights are assigned.[152]

According to Sundara Rajan, prior to the 1994 amendment, moral rights under the Indian Copyright Laws contained most provisions from the Berne Convention[153] especially the right to attribution and the right to integrity.

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[152] See *A Handbook of Copyright Law*, accessed June 24, 2013, http://copyright.gov.in/Documents/handbook.html.

[153] Mira Sundara Rajan, "Moral Rights in Developing Countries: The Example of India- Part I," *Journal of Intellectual Property Rights* 8 (2003): 365.

However, India does not provide explicit rights other than these two rights.[154] Also, in accordance with the Berne Convention, Section 57 of the Indian Copyright Act of 1957 maintains moral rights 'independently' of economic rights that creators might obtain from copyright laws.[155] According to Sundara Rajan, "the aim of moral rights law is to protect the non-commercial interests of creative authors . . . the scope of moral rights provisions transcends the general legal objective of protecting the professional livelihood of authors."[156] Thus, moral rights are "characterized as the 'non-economic,' 'non-proprietary,' or 'personal' rights of the author."[157] For instance, authors can claim moral rights, even after they have sold the copyrights, for proper attribution of their work and from their work being misused or misrepresented, which might prove to be detrimental to their reputation as authors. Sundara Rajan calls moral rights "a valuable instrument for the protection of authors' interest in their work, and . . . cultivating the cultural phenomenon of authorship in developing countries."[158]

Moral rights, currently, as non-economic rights of an author, are in conjunction with copyrights, which of course give the author economic compensation. The main aspects of moral rights are attribution and integrity,[159] thus the rights in addition to identifying the author also protect the author's work from being misused or misrepresented. This is somewhat different from the general copyright law that focuses on infringement, piracy, etc. The 1994 amendment made to the Copyright Act of 1957 is closely related to Karnatic

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[154] Sundara Rajan, "Moral Rights in Developing Countries," 366.

[155] Ibid., 367.

[156] Mira Sundara Rajan, "Moral rights in the Digital Age: New Possibilities for the Democratization of Culture," *International Review of Law Computers & Technology* 16, no. 2 (2002): 187.

[157] Sundara Rajan, "Moral Rights in the Digital Age," 188.

[158] Sundara Rajan, "Moral Rights in Developing Countries," 359.

[159] Sundara Rajan, "Moral Rights in the Digital Age," 188.

musicians because it expanded the protection for the performers and redefined sound recording, in addition to providing protection to all original literary, dramatic, musical and artistic works, cinematography, films and sound recordings. The 1994 amendment was primarily aimed at protecting software, due to the information technology boom in the early 1990s in India. However, it expanded the performers' rights by including "visual or acoustic presentation made live by one or more performers" in the definition of performance, and by adding "a recording of sounds from which such sounds may be produced regardless of the medium on which such recording is made or the method by which the sounds are produced" in the definition of sound recording.[160] By doing so, the Government of India has included live Karnatic concerts thereby giving the musicians/performers the right to claim protection from 'unauthorized recordings' of the performances. The law specifically targets a common practice of recording live Karnatic Music concerts and uploading them on the Internet on websites like YouTube or blogs, a practice referred to on p. 272 above.[161] Along those lines, Sundara Rajan described[162] a scenario as an example that shows the importance of moral rights in protecting the performers: in the case of 'unauthorized recording' of live concerts by the audiences, the musician might not have felt that they gave their best performance, or might not want that particular concert to be available to the public for free. In neither of these scenarios does the musician have control over the recordings. When such recordings are available in the public domain, the musician might feel misrepresented. In addition, the Government of India

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[160] See The Copyright (Second Amendment) Bill, 1994 available at http://parliamentofindia.nic.in/ls/bills/1994/1994-31.htm.

[161] Paitandy, "The Virtual Sabha." See p. 278.

[162] Mira Sundara Rajan (Canadian Research Chair, Tier II) in discussion with the author, April 2011.

agreed that the expression of ideas also meant performances (and not recordings only), and hence, the argument seems practical.

Furthermore, Sundara Rajan makes a compelling case in an essay on misrepresentation of the works of Subramania Bharati (Sundara Rajan's great-grandfather), one of India's national poets, who lived during the colonial period in Tamil Nadu. He is well known for his nationalism, feminism and he is a significant part of historical nationalist movements of Tamil Nadu. Bharati intended on earning a living through his poems and therefore, aimed to publish his work. However, the patriotic nature of his poetry forced the British Empire to ban his work. Bharati's several attempts at publishing were futile and he died in poverty. After his death, his wife published a collection of his poetry and intended on publishing more; however, after Indian independence, the Government of India bought the copyrights of his works from his family and gave it to the public for free, since the government treated the work as a national treasure. While the intentions of the government seem noble, Sundara Rajan argues that the government could not control the many distortions and misrepresentations of the poet's work[163] that appeared on the subsequent prints. One such distortion involved misspelling one of the words in his poem that altered the meaning of the poem completely.[164] Sundara Rajan's arguments make a good case for protecting the integrity of the author (as in the case above), and the performer (in the context of this research) using moral rights, which gives the control to the musician on how recordings of their performance should be disseminated. In fact, with regard to folklore under international

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[163] Mira Sundara Rajan. "The Lessons of the Past: C Subramania Bharati and the Nationalization of Copyright," *Scripted* 6, no. 2 (2009): 205-206.

[164] Mira Sundara Rajan, "Moral Rights in the Public Domain: Copyright Matters in the Works of Indian National Poet C Subramania Bharati," *Singapore Journal of Legal Studies* (2001): 164.

copyright protection, the laws do not protect folklore directly, and since indigenous peoples have indicated that their art and representations not be exploited, Sundara Rajan argues that stricter moral rights would compel artists to attribute and properly use indigenous arts.[165] However, moral rights also contain issues that contradict and conflict with Karnatic Music. The problem begins with the identification of the 'original' author and how 'original' their work was, and how 'distorted' the work in question now is.

5.5.1 'Distorting' Performances: Question of Integrity and Moral Rights

According to the Indian Copyright Law, under the provision of moral rights, the authors or the performers can claim against misrepresentations that would affect their integrity as an artist. This specific aspect of moral rights deals with distortions of the works of 'original' composers and performers, as discussed on p. 293ff above. However, the primary problem arises in understanding what distortion means within the framework of Karnatic Music; in other words, how is distortion determined in Karnatic Music. The nature of Karnatic Music is to adapt and improvise a *kriti* and that determines a performer's skill. Weidman describes these improvisations as:

> A "composition" in Karnatic music is hardly the same as a composed piece of music in the Western tradition; it is a certain number of lines, each of which are played or sung with a number of variations. While the lyrics of most compositions are fairly standardized, there is no standard notation for compositions, and different versions of the "same" compositions vary widely. Even within compositions, musicians often add improvised flourishes that eventually become part of the composition.[166]

Thus, what moral rights label as 'distortion,' is understood as creativity in Karnatic Music. Moreover, Karnatic Music not just allows for distortions, it <u>rewards</u> distortions. However, it is necessary here to point out the distinction

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[165] Sundara Rajan, "Moral Rights in the Public Domain," 194.

[166] Weidman, *Singing the Classical, Voicing the Modern*, 98.

between distortion and misrepresentation: *sruti-bheda* (lit. wrong pitch) or *apaswaram* (lit. incorrect *swaram*) are seen as misrepresentations in Karnatic Music. Yet these misrepresentations are not seen as something that infringes upon a performer's 'originality,' because as discussed so far, establishing originality (with its myriad meanings) within Karnatic Music is problematic. Thus, for instance, if a musician commits *sruti-bheda* or *apaswaram*, it is seen as a reflection of the unperfected skill of the musician rather than, as moral rights claims, a misrepresentation of the composer that would malign the composer's reputation.

Secondly, as discussed on p. 286ff above, within the Karnatic Music tradition, contemporary performers are not composers. In other words, musicians do not compose the *kritis* they perform (as in Western tradition); rather, they repeatedly perform *kritis* of the 17th century composers due to the prevailing perception of such *kritis* alone representing true *bhakti*.[167] Thus, realistically, contemporary musicians cannot claim against distortion of their rendition of the *kritis* — clearly, their own renditions are centuries old, handed down to them through oral tradition and <u>therefore</u> subjected to distortions. If musicians argue for protecting their integrity against distortions, they would need to consider protecting the integrity of the 17th century composers, which is impractical because the 'original' version of the *kritis* are beyond the legal limit to protect the authors. Moreover, if a performer claim rights against distortion of their performance, they also have the responsibility to not distort the compositions. Consider this scenario: a musician, performing Tyāgarājā's *kriti* at a concert, feels that their style needs to be protected under moral rights. Since, Tyāgarājā's *kriti* cannot be copyrighted, legally, his descendants can

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[167] "Why compose new songs, asks Semmangudi."

claim moral rights against the distortion of his *kritis*. How then does the performer's claim hold against that of the descendants, who arguably are a better authority on the composer? More importantly, the only known records of Tyāgarājā's *kritis* are that of his *sisyas*. How can one determine what was the 'original' rendition in order to determine whether or not the contemporary performer has distorted the *kriti*? Thirdly, Karnatic musicians are linked to their *guruparamparā*, a lineage of music learning with distinct *bāni* (lit. styles). However, *bāni* functions as a foundation from which the musicians have the liberty to develop their own *bāni*. Yet no one *bāni* can be clearly classified enough to claim legal protection.

Therefore, attempting to situate Karnatic Music in a particular, specifically capitalistic, context is problematic in many ways: the art has been transforming over decades according to historical developments and yet, carries with it certain 'histories' or contexts without which Karnatic Music loses its meaning. Arguably, it would acquire a new meaning; yet, that meaning would be within the framework of a 'secular' capitalist economy that even if does not give a new meaning to Karnatic Music, would ignore the contexts within which Karnatic Music emerged. Thus, while historically music was embedded in social relations, copyright law is attempting to disembed music from its relations and to render it only a creative expression of art that can be owned by individuals, as in the case of the right to private property. However, as discussed using specific aspects of the Indian Copyright Laws, the context within which Karnatic Music is performed, in addition to the way it is performed, experienced, and learned problematizes the applicability of these laws. In addition, although Karnatic musicians' are showing interest in copyrighting their performances, they are upholding the traditions of the art through their learning or teaching or performing practices. This contradiction, the assumption

of inherent 'secularity' by the market that assures economic benefit that musicians want to subscribe to <u>whilst</u> adhering to their traditions, can be better understood using Chakrabarty's 'Two Histories of Capital.'

5.6   Copyright Laws- Dehistoricizing Labor and Capital

5.6.1   Disembedding 'Enchanted' Practices

Chakrabarty argues that History 1 is 'secularized' and does not take into account "tendencies," which he calls Histor(ies) 2(s), that are intrinsic to understanding human labor; this 'secularization' leads to abstraction of labor. However, such abstraction of labor (as in History 1), he argues, renders them incapable of reading those histories of labor that cannot be classified as 'secular.' Copyright laws can be read as an example of History 1, a secularized history in which a work of art is claimed to have authorship and <u>therefore</u> ownership and monetary value is assigned to them. The idea of 'secularizing' the public domain and components of the public domain is a result of European Enlightenment. Also this, precisely, is the problem of historicism in which "secular histories are usually produced by ignoring the signs of these ['enchanted'] presences."[168] As discussed on p. 278ff above, understanding time as homogenous employs a modern understanding of history that is "disenchanted."[169] Such a reading of history, as Marten argues (albeit in a different context), is common in the West where " . . . [history] always tries to move towards an over-riding narrative"[170] that tends to misunderstand or

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[168] Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe*, 72.

[169] Ibid., 73.

[170] Michael Marten, "On Knowing, Knowing Well and Knowing Differently: Historicising Scottish Missions in 19th and early 20th century Palestine," in *Transnational and Historical Perspectives on Global Health, Welfare and Humanitarianism*, ed. by Ellen Fleischmann et al. (Kristiansand: Portal Books, 2013), 213.

misread "Other worldviews"[171] as "messy."[172] Such a problem arises when copyright law understands Karnatic Music within the framework of History 1, for, as Chakrabarty says, "it [labor] often entails, through rituals big and small, the invocation of divine or superhuman presence."[173] It is this 'messiness' that Chakrabarty highlights when he talks about the 'labors' of weavers of North-eastern part of India and the rituals they follow, which include worshiping the tools used for weaving, invoking the divine.[174] One cannot remove the rituals from the context and abstract the labor practice of weaving; the rituals are a part of weavers' lives as much as the weaving, as it ensures to the weavers a good day or year of productivity. Thus, the output of the labor is as much dependent on the weaving, as the weavers are on their rituals. Similarly, for instance, Karnatic musicians have to prostrate at their teacher's feet to receive blessings before and after music lessons; performers bow to the audiences before beginning their performances. As discussed in Chapters 3 and 5, the divine is seen as inspiring the creativity of these musicians, in addition to their *guruparamparā*. It is within these contexts rendition of a *kriti* or a *kucchēri* that we call labor becomes meaningful. Abstraction of labor by History 1 does not let us read these contexts by treating them either as superstition or as irrelevant.[175] What then matters in this context is the creative expression of the musician, which is seen as originating from the musician, which needs to be assigned monetary value and owned.

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[171] Marten, "On Knowing, Knowing Well and Knowing Differently," 213.

[172] Ibid.

[173] Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe*, 73

[174] Ibid., 72.

[175] Ibid., 77.

The 'secularizing' function of copyright laws can be traced to the origins of the idea behind copyrighting and private ownership of one's creativity. The ethos of creativity seen as inalienable to the author and <u>therefore</u> defines the author, individualizes the author and her/his subjecthood rather than seeing the author within her/his context and the intertexuality of their works. Under this Lockean notion of subjecthood, property rights defines an individual and the individual is not a subject of their social contexts, rather that of the property they can claim rights of producing and <u>therefore</u> owning. Labor, thus, becomes a production-related activity measured in relation to time, which is now treated as homogenous. However, to abstract labor is to disembody musicians from their performances, because as discussed on p. 281ff above, musicians embody creativity, thereby embodying the divine.

5.6.2 Disembedding the Traditions

Modern formal economics (in this context, History 1 defined by Capital) has been arrived at through a process of disembedding a theoretical construct based on a belief in self-regulating markets from the embedded nature of most substantive economics. This process dissolves the traditional forms of local social relations and transforms them into relations of production and consumption mediated by Capital in global markets, as in the case of copyright laws, which treat artistic expression of an individual's creativity as owned by the artist and therefore, any consumption of such creativity has to be compensated monetarily. What problematizes this idea in the context of Karnatic Music is that performance and experience are treated as a collective experience for both the performer and the audiences. What monetary compensation the performer receives is not seen as 'service' rendered by the performer, rather as sharing the creativity and devotion to the divine with the

audiences and deliver the collective and dialectic 'spiritual' experience. Therefore, to treat the entire performance as production and consumption removes the meaning from Karnatic Music. It is therefore difficult to treat Karnatic music as a commodity disassociated from its 'histories' because as Chakrabarty puts it, "labor, the activity of producing, is seldom a completely secular activity in India,"[176] and copyright laws attempt to read it as such because they attempt to 'secularize' music by removing it from its histories and reading it devoid of context. Manuel argues that according to capitalism (of which copyright law is an example), this particular aspect of performers, as "socially free individuals operating in an ahistorical . . . world . . ." has constructed a bourgeoisie ideal of aesthetics that leads to the "trend of commodity-production."[177]

Moreover, by embodying the traditions (including the history), the musicians themselves function as an ideological construct — the ideology being that of the 20th century construction of Karnatic Music. This ideological function is certainly contingent upon the context within which the musician has emerged. However, copyright law assumes free will of an author, in that creativity is attributed solely to the creator or musician in this context, as if a creator is independent of their context. It is this "individualization"[178] of the author-function, that is, the creator being disembedded from their contexts. Foucault critiques this when he argues, "we must entirely reverse the traditional idea of the author. We are accustomed . . . to saying that the author is the genial creator of a work in which he deposits, with infinite wealth and generosity, an

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[176] Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe*, 72.

[177] Manuel, "Modernity and Musical Structure," 53.

[178] Foucault, "What is an Author?," 141.

inexhaustible world of significations."[179] Thus Foucault argues that an author does not function on free will and that a work is contingent upon the context within which it is produced,[180] and that this is modified in each instance when it interacts with newer contexts.[181] As discussed on pp. 35 and 286, concerts are dialectical spiritual experiences in which the audiences actively participate. Thus, not only does every performance in every concert acquire a new creator and a meaning (contingent upon the context — space, time and the audiences), but also the creative sessions such as *manodharmasangeetham* produce a new creator for every improvisation that is being performed. However, such creativity is understood as originating from the divine, represented by the teacher and the music itself. Chakrabarty rightly argues that historiographies assume a normative position of 'secularity' and therefore, 'objective,' and that such a position of neutrality is a product of modernity. Any notion that is otherwise, that is, any attempt to read a worker's production in relation to her prayer or worship or creative inspiration that is attributed to 'the divine', is treated as 'non-neutral' (subjective and therefore, dubious), and the worker's prayer or worship of tools as 'superstition.'

Thus, whilst musicians see traditions as intrinsic to their performances, they are also disembedding music from the same contexts that are now treated under the purview of copyright laws as being either irrelevant or as 'superstition' and <u>therefore</u>, irrelevant. What then happens is that the musicians themselves are placed in crossroads where they would need to negotiate the disconnect: that is for instance, whether copyrighting a particular rendition of a *rāga* would potentially affect their capacity to perform the *rāga* that could be

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[179] Ibid., 159.

[180] Ibid.

[181] Ibid., 157-158.

seen as having been inspired from a different musician; or whether *kucchēri* would become the same dialectic spiritual experience if the experience is stipulated by the 'productivity' of the musician's creativity or when the role of the audiences is thus removed altogether from the *kucchēris*, rather than as a shared experience of the divine.

5.7   Conclusion

So far, in this chapter, I have drawn parallels between the early 20th century developments in the mechanical reproduction of music and contemporary developments in the mechanical production of music and how musicians have coped with the transformations these developments have brought to music. Although the early musicians adapted to gramophone records and radio, challenges from the mechanical reproduction industry prompted them to adhere to the parameters set by them within which music had to be performed and experienced, thereby making music exclusive to a specific community. Contemporary musicians' moves towards ownership laws as a response to challenges by new forms of mechanical reproduction further alienates Karnatic Music to an exclusive group now based on economic class (in this context, that translates to those who could afford to pay to experience and perform music). I have sought to show how the copyrighting of Karnatic Music can be understood in the context of the homogenization of time using Chakrabarty, Foucault and Barthes. This will help move the thesis to its conclusion, seeking to offer a response to the question in the introduction: can Karnatic Music, a shared traditional knowledge and a form of prayer, be copyrighted?

6   Conclusion

"There is an economy of cultural goods; but it has a specific logic."[1]
— Pierre Bourdieu

I began this thesis with the question: whether Karnatic Music, understood as a shared divine experience, traditional knowledge and therefore, a form of prayer, can be owned by individuals as expressions of creativity through copyright laws? This question raises several issues: what is Karnatic Music, what is divine, what is shared traditional knowledge, how do we understanding ownership and creativity, specifically when seen as originating from the divine. In order to answer these questions, I began by looking at the history of music and dance patronage in the medieval and late-medieval kingdoms, that is, the Vijayanagara Empire and the Tanjavur Kingdom. I argued that music and dance were historically embedded in the social relations of kingship and therefore the patronage of performance arts had a symbiotic relationship with the temples and the royal courts, both as performance spaces and as systems of legitimization for kingship. However, with the expansion of British colonial rule in India, royal patronage declined, resulting in music and dance shifting to colonial urban centers for patronage from the Indian colonial elites. Here, Karnatic Music and Bharatnatyam as art forms were carefully constructed by self-appointed custodians of not only the nation's culture at a very crucial juncture in its history, but also the 'inner' spiritual space of which art was seen as an expression. This ensured the exclusivity of music performance, pedagogy and experience within a specific community, meaning that within the emerging ideas on nationalism and national identity, music and

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[1] Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste* (trans. R. Nice (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1984), 1.

dance were removed from the traditional communities of *devadāsis* and re-situated amongst Indian colonial elites. Gramophone record companies and radio broadcasts, through the mechanical reproduction of music, challenged these parameters historically and that resulted in newer types of music. However, the emergence of these newer types of music was along the lines of previously established classifications of a classical/non-classical dichotomy based on which Karnatic Music was being defined; this can be directly mapped onto the religion/secular dichotomy. Thus, the gramophone companies and radio broadcasts further reified the classification of music that was being constructed. Accordingly, these types of music, with specific definitions situated within a historical and social context, influenced the stratification of the society in which gender identities were redefined, and caste identities were solidified based on aesthetic preferences.

However, the assimilation of colonial categories such as 'religious' and 'secular' signified a <u>selective</u> appropriation of European modernity that was then re-situated to suit the needs of this newly emerging idea of a unified national identity. Thus, for instance, whilst the European Enlightenment had cast the category 'religion' as irrational, belonging to the private, 'inner' sphere, to be deliberately separated from the political, 'outer' sphere, the Indian colonial elites appropriated the distinction but attempted to strengthen the 'inner' sphere to reflect their true identity. In other words, to them, 'religion' was not irrational but traditional: their origins were imagined as pure, and needed to permeate into the 'outer' sphere that would have been theirs, if not for the colonial politics. The idea was that the soul strengthens the body, likewise, the 'inner' spiritual sphere strengthens the 'outer' political sphere. To this end, performance arts served as tools to establish this notion, and female bodies (and to a certain extent male bodies) were a site for this struggle. As

Deniz Kandiyoti argues (albeit in the context of the Middle East), "The refashioning of gender necessarily involved articulation of new images of masculinity and feminity. These images were, in fact, dual since they contained both ideals to aspire to and identities to be condemned and cast aside."[2]

The mechanical reproduction of music attempted to blur the aesthetic distinctions between communities through public access via for example, public broadcasts, something that the Internet is adept in doing now albeit in a new way as discussed on p. 274 above. Contemporary musicians experience similar anxieties in relation to the Internet as the musicians of the early 20th century did — that is, how the Internet has transformed the way Karnatic Music has been traditionally performed, learned and experienced; more importantly, whilst mechanical reproduction of music has subverted Karnatic Music tradition, in contemporary times, the issues is how the Internet has become a venue for alternative ways of subverting the traditions of the Karnatic Music community and ownership of music through copyright laws. However, these musicians not only conform to the new technology and its effects, but also challenge them. For these musicians, the Internet is a very important tool for the transnational transmission of creativity, and for economic benefit through virtual lessons; yet, they also challenge the technology using copyright laws. What is similar between this process (in contemporary society) and the historical process of the colonial elites is that, Karnatic Music is further excluded from the public sphere and made even more exclusive through, in addition to a caste-based specific community, a class-based community. However, as discussed in Chapter 5, copyright law itself comes with an array of complexities when approached from

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[2] Deniz Kandiyoti, "Afterword," in *Remaking Women: Feminism and Modernity in the Middle East,* ed. Lila Abu-Lughod (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998), 281.

within the context of Karnatic Music. Chakrabarty's "Two Histories of Capital,"[3] that deals with the analytical distinction between History 1 and Histor(ies) 2(s), shows how copyright law removes the contexts and histories within which Karnatic Music is defined and performed by treating the performance as human <u>labor</u> that produces a creative expression of art, thereby, 'secularizing' the art. Thus, themes in Ch. 3 and 4 discussed the historical developments that were involved in the construction what we now understand as Karnatic Music (and Bharatnatyam). By treating Karnatic Music as merely an expression of an individual's creativity, copyright law ignores these contexts thereby rendering Karnatic Music as a standalone category that can somehow be associated with the performer <u>without</u> having to contextualize within particular contexts. However, copyright laws are challenged by the constant intervention of the contexts and histories within which the art form emerged, and the availability of Karnatic Music on the Internet and therefore do not allow for the <u>complete takeover</u> of capitalistic ideologies. In other words, whilst copyright laws attempt to hide Karnatic Music further from the public sphere, the Internet and the array of websites discussed in Ch. 5 subvert the meta-narrative of copyright laws.

However, it is important to emphasize, as discussed in Chapter 3, that the context within which Karnatic Music was defined and the 'secularizing' function of copyright law are now constructed rely upon similar assumptions, namely the reification of the religion/secular dichotomy. It is the nodal or quilting point around which discourses function: Karnatic Music and Bharatnatyam were formed as expressions of a national identity, with

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[3] Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton & Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2007), 47.

musicians and dancers themselves being an ideological construct, and the individualization of creativity monetizing these art forms. Chakrabarty's theory overlooks the ideological binary, i.e. religion/secular, which is fundamental to understanding the construction of homogenized history that 'secularizes' and <u>therefore</u> monetizes labor.

6.1   Religion/Secular: Ideological Operators

Chakrabarty theorizes History 1 and Histor(ies) 2(s) not as polar opposites, because the latter constantly attempts to subvert the complete takeover of the former.[4] However, he does not notice how the distinctions between local traditions and global instrumental rationality is itself ideologically constructed, especially insofar as 'local traditions' or 'indigenous practices' tend to be classified as 'religious' in contrast to the 'secular' nature of modern academics, bankers, politicians, businessmen, and scientists, specifically, as in the case of the distinction constructed by the early 20th nationalists between the 'inner' sphere of spirituality and the 'outer' sphere of colonial politics. The religion/secular binary is itself an integral feature of modern ideology and it tacitly makes Chakrabarty's analytical distinction possible. If the distinction between History 1 and Histor(ies) 2(s) is to do more than merely 'map onto' the globalizing ideology of market rationality progressively replacing local superstitions, then it must come to terms with the religion/secular binary as an ideological operator. That the possibility of the ideological contradiction between copyright laws and the traditions of Karnatic Music even exists is because of, as Chakrabarty argues, the idea that economics is a secular and rational science, and therefore laws of production and consumption should

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[4] Ibid., 66.

disregard what is deemed as religious practices (such as in the case of Karnatic Music). Thus, the understanding of labor within this context entails not 'secularization' that History 1 does by ignoring those practices because they are messy and do not conform to the framework of 'secularized' labor, but rather a <u>different</u> understanding of histories as Histor(ies) 2(s).[5]

Such an idea is part of a larger ideological construct of the religion/secular binary and although Chakrabarty argues that the Two Histories are not polar opposites, they are juxtaposed as binaries: a History that attempts to move towards a meta-narrative of labor, whilst the other Histories are messy, yet contain those aspects that the former cannot incorporate. For instance, he says that "secular history"[6] is incapable of understanding and handling those "practices in which gods, spirits . . . have agency in the world."[7] However, what he does not argue is that the category 'secular' is constructed to differentiate between itself and the 'gods' and 'spirits' in order to appear rational as opposed to the 'supernatural' and 'other-worldly.' In fact, Chakrabarty approaches both 'secularization' and "gods and spirits"[8] as ontological entities. He argues "gods and spirits to be existentially coeval with the human"[9] and highlights ritualized labor practices that invoke "superhuman"[10] and "enchanted presences."[11] However, "gods and spirits" cannot be kept as the reference points of safety

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[5] Ibid., 72; Michael Marten, "On Knowing, Knowing Well and Knowing Differently: Historicising Scottish Missions in 19th and early 20th century Palestine," in *Transnational and Historical Perspectives on Global Health, Welfare and Humanitarianism*, ed. by Ellen Fleischmann et al. (Kristiansand: Portal Books, 2013), 213.

[6] Ibid.

[7] Ibid.

[8] Ibid., 16.

[9] Ibid.

[10] Ibid., 72.

[11] Ibid.

from 'secularization.'[12] Rather, they need to be approached as categories, the categories and their definitions being inherently problematic, precisely because they were constructed by values of modernity. Thus, Histor(ies) 2(s) cannot be seen as the 'non-History 1' that subverts History 1, but rather as ideologically constructed categories themselves. However, Histor(ies) 2(s), unlike History 1, show us that understanding such labor practices "involves a different kind of epistemology."[13] For instance, whilst Chakrabarty argues that there are multiple versions of History 2 that cannot be homogenized so he calls them Histor(ies) 2(s), we need to consider that even within History 1, there is a possibility for multiple secularities. It certainly is so within the context of Karnatic Music. Chakrabarty refers to only one type of History 1, which is the 'secular' history to indicate the 'non-religious' history. However, the attempts of capitalism and the labor market to monetize Karnatic Music is but one of many 'secularities' that Karnatic musicians negotiate, another being a type of 'secularity' that is not 'non-religious.' Karnatic musicians are thus negotiating the ability to respect *guruparampara* and ritualistic aspects of music performance whilst at the same time attempting to apply ideologies of capitalism through ownership laws, which I refer to as the disconnect or ideological contradiction. Therefore, Karnatic Music here is not being treated <u>completely</u> as 'secular' music by re-defining performance as 'intellectual property.' 'Secular' here does not involve only 'non-religious' and 'secular' here does not involve a homogenous ideology.

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[12] My sincere thanks to Katja Neumann for helping me in clarifying this particular argument on Chakrabarty.

[13] Marten, "On Knowing, Knowing Well and Knowing Differently: Historicising Scottish Missions in 19th and early 20th century Palestine," 213.

Fitzgerald argues that the separation of 'religion' as a category distinct from 'secular' was in addition to legitimizing scientific knowledge as empirically testable, and therefore, absolute truth also enabled new laws of labor, capital and private property.[14] He describes how the distinction was arrived at: the category 'religion' represented Christian Truth as the universal truth. It was against this idea and the mysticism of Churches that the idea that 'religion' and the role of the Church should not be mixed with the functions of the government was arrived at, essentially separating the Church from the State.[15] The 'secular' category came to represent rationality and progress.[16] This distinction later became "a tool of the Christian administration of the colonized subjects"[17] to read non-Christian practices as 'religions' that are irrational and superstitious. It is this 'secular' history that Chakrabarty rightly critiques: a holistic, all encompassing narrative that takes an ahistorical approach homogenizes cultures and abstracts labor by ignoring specific rituals that are embedded in labor practices. However, it would more useful to understand 'secular' history as an ideological construction that makes deliberate attempts to read labor practices universally as economics.

Chakrabarty uses the example of workers worshiping their tools and machinery; the celebration of festivals is exclusively for the ritual to be embedded in the seemingly 'secular' activity of labor and production.[18] However, in addition to universal 'secular' history's ignoring of these labor practices, the example illustrates the ambiguity in distinguishing between the

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[14] Timothy Fitzgerald, *Religion and Politics in International Relations: The Modern Myth* (London: New York: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2011), 9-10.

[15] Fitzgerald, *Religion and Politics in International Relations*, 80-81.

[16] Ibid., 13.

[17] Ibid., 8.

[18] Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe*, 77.

religion/secular categories that we assume to be a given in so many of our discourses. This ambiguity prevails throughout the history of music in Tamil Nadu, beginning from the role of temples. Historically, in addition to being a place of worship and a performance space for arts, they functioned as economic centers by leasing lands obtained as grants from the royal court for farming and irrigation. More importantly, they played the role of legitimizing the sovereignty of the king by bestowing titles upon him and performing rituals for him while at the same time receiving patronage from him. In this example, to categorize temples only as places of worship, or to distinguish between 'religion' and 'secular,' is complicated, as I have shown in Chapter 2. Throughout the British colonial period, the temples began losing their central role in the society by being classified only as 'religious' centers and therefore, disqualified from performing 'secular,' state-related functions. The arbitrariness of the distinction between 'religion' and 'secular' (although, our discourses indicate a sense that the distinction is a given and we understand what it is) is further illustrated by the colonial construction of religion in India. Christian missionaries who considered 'religion' to mean only Christian Truth were faced with the problem of representing non-Christian practices and rituals, which they called paganism and heathenism; yet, colonial constructions used Christian narratives to describe what was practiced in India as 'religions,' but of a lesser kind, that had to be scientifically studied in order to teach the 'Hindus' the Christian Truth, which was the ultimate Truth.[19]

Chakrabarty's argument on the problem of universalizing narratives of 'secular' history is right, in that as Fitzgerald points out, these narratives have created ideological contradictions among, in this case, Karnatic musicians in

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[19] Fitzgerald, *Religion and Politics in International Relations*, 248-249.

India. On the one hand, they understand what Karnatic Music represents as a performing art, as representing their cultural identity, but on the other hand, they are compelled by the laws of the market to profit from their performances. In order to make sense of how a total takeover of History 1 would transform Karnatic Music, musicians must confront this disconnect. Thus, applying copyright laws to Karnatic Music is problematic not (only) because Karnatic Music is understood as a form of prayer but (also) when we deconstruct the categories—Karnatic Music, 'religion,' and 'secular,' copyright laws decontextualize expression of creativity through Karnatic Music from all these histories thereby 'secularizing' the art. Importantly, whilst deconstructing these categories, we see that copyright laws themselves are problematic having been constructed (framed) based on these categories, specifically the 'secular.' What I am specifically pointing to, in this thesis, is: that the music (and dance) communities, historically, had a different understanding of ownership: they acknowledged the 'creator' or the 'original' composer of a composition through *mudra* but the composition representing the art belonged to the community and the lineage of hereditary performers. However, as discussed on p. 40, the different styles of performances are guarded within certain *guruparampara* that are passed through the music lineage.[20]

Contemporary understandings of ownership through copyright laws have focussed on the commodification and commercialisation of music. Also, historically, music was seen as originating from the divine—that is, the ability to perform certain a composition was 'god-given,' as Neuman has shown in

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[20] Neuman discusses this particular aspect of *guruparampara* pertaining to Hindustani music tradition. See, Daniel M. Neuman, *The Life of Music in North India: The Organization of an Artistic Tradition* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1990), 148-149.

relation to Hindustani music tradition.[21] There is a certain mystification of music and its origins in that context. With copyright laws, the origins of music is 'demystified' by decontextualizing the 'god function' in creating music but there is also glorification and mystification of the <u>individual</u> who now is seen to possess the power to create 'original' music.

Developments in the early 20th century show that Karnatic Music is a social construct, and so were its history and aesthetics. However, mysticism and the divine are not the only histories of Karnatic Music. Even when constructing their cultural identity, as discussed in Chapter 3, the nationalists were attempting to answer questions on authenticity and individuality albeit in a different sense from that of 18th and 19th century German philosophers discussed on p. 281ff. These were answered by subscribing to a mystic ideal, with the music representing a cultural identity that was guided by the divine: music bestowed by the divine was a collective knowledge to be shared within a community, and this very mystification was a part of the creation of this community. Copyright laws oversimplify these questions by ignoring these histories completely, and making only the performer and the performance relevant. A parallel that can be drawn to the disembedding of Karnatic Music from its social and historical context to be treated as a 'production' within the framework of capitalism, is the disembodying of the body: for example, of the female body from performance arts as in the case of *devadāsis* as outlined in Chapter 4. Their embodiment of the arts, more specifically the compositions, was integral to the performance, and representation of their interpretation of these compositions. Disembedding arts from their bodies using the mind/body dichotomy (in which mind represented the spiritual/'inner'/pure sphere,

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[21] Neuman, *The Life of Music in North India,* 172-186.

whilst the body represented the erotic/'outer'/obscene sphere), performance arts were placed into new spaces that distinguished between 'religious' and 'secular' spheres, as discussed in Chapters 3 and 4. Individual performers may not carry the burden of these histories, but they are active participants in their social construction. In the case of Karnatic Music, the musicians are themselves ideological constructs, their identity emerging within these very specific historical contexts. As Bourdieu argues, "an art which ever increasingly contains reference to its own history demands to be perceived historically."[22]

Chakrabarty posits History 1 in relation to Histor(ies) 2(s) arguing that they are not polar opposites rather, "the relations that do not contribute to the reproduction of the logic of capital can be intimately intertwined with the relations that do."[23] But he also argues that History 1 should "subjugate or destroy the multiple possibilities that belong to Histor(ies) 2(s)"[24] for it to be complete, which Copyright Laws have been quite successful in doing. In other words, Histor(ies) 2(s) problematize the working of History 1. Thus, whilst the contexts within which Karnatic Music was defined, performed and experienced problematizes the function of History 1 through Indian Copyright Laws, the practices of contemporary musicians who uphold the traditions and importantly, the array of websites that push further the dialectic spiritual experience of a *kucchēri* further complicate the complete takeover of History 1. Much as History 1 attempts to disembed and disembody musicians from the music so as to assign monetary value and profit to the production, musicians embody this contradiction between History 1 and Histor(ies) 2(s) by moving towards copyright laws whilst <u>simultaneously</u> adhering to those traditions that

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[22] Bourdieu, *Distinction*, 6.

[23] Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe*, 64.

[24] Ibid., 65.

problematize the laws and the audiences adapting to and adopting technological developments that enable the music available to larger audiences. In addition, the audiences also embody the problematizing aspect of the complete takeover of History 1 by experiencing music as a shared (albeit virtual) communal and 'spiritual' experience, as the owner of a website that carries recorded *kucchēris* claimed: "I believe music is God's gift and I want to share it."[25] Newer forms of mechanical reproduction in the contemporary society, in addition to placing musicians in an ideological contradiction or disconnect between 'secular' capitalist economy that seeks profit and traditions that contextualize how Karnatic Music is performed, experienced and learned, have also opened up an art form that was exclusive to a particular community comprising Brahmins and upper-class Non-Brahmins.

Today, Karnatic Music, again, is being displaced and re-defined into an 'intellectual property.' However, when we talk about a particular performance of a musician being their own, we are ignoring these histories. Whilst historically the re-definition of Karnatic Music made music exclusive to a certain community based upon caste, contemporary moves towards copyright seeks to place music within an exclusive community that is defined not only on the basis of aesthetic preferences but most importantly, on economic class. This means that in addition to the prescribed aesthetic preferences, financial resources determine the extent to which individuals are enabled to participate in this cultural economy. As Bourdieu argues, aesthetic enjoyment presupposes a certain cultural class-based context:

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[25] Priyadarshini Paitandy, "The Virtual Sabha," *The Hindu*, October 21, 2011, accessed July 5, 2013, http://www.thehindu.com/features/friday-review/music/the-virtual-sabha/article2558794.ece.

> the conscious or unconscious implementation of explicit or implicit schemes of perception and appreciation which constitutes pictorial or musical culture . . . [relates to a] familiarity with the internal logic of works that aesthetic enjoyment presupposes.[26]

In this sense, possessing economic capital in <u>addition to</u> cultural capital (in the form of specific aesthetic preferences) would, then, become a marker for a Karnatic Music audience.

From History 1's perspective (shared by that of musicians such as T.M. Krishna and Ms. Sudha Raghunathan[27]), every aspect of labor is treated as a production that needs to be monetized and every creation as that which needs to be copyrighted. This ideological contradiction embodied by the musicians, and the intervention of Histor(ies) 2(s) embodied by the audiences is "messy"[28] and thus, there is a call for stricter enforcement of copyright law that Sundara Rajan[29] and Ms. Raghunathan advocate. However, as Marten argues, from a Histor(ies) 2(s) perspective, this is "not in the least messy – it simply involves a different kind of epistemology."[30] This different epistemology is an integral part of this shared tradition of knowledge: it is a dialectic spiritual experience rather than being a Bourdieuian cultural capital that then becomes an aesthetic marker for a particular caste and class. Copyright law threatens the apparent messiness that I have sought to show is actually needed in order to sustain what Karnatic Music has become, which, despite its colonial-related origins, continues to offer subversive ways of overcoming and negating the 'inner'/'outer' or religion/secular dichotomy. For that reason alone, great caution needs to be

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[26] Bourdieu, *Distinction*, 102.

[27] Ibid. See, "Artists and Musicians Told to Come Together to Safeguard Their Work," *The Hindu,* February 2, 2011, accessed July 5, 2013, http://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/chennai/artists-and-musicians-told-to-come-together-to-safeguard-their-work/article1147345.ece.

[28] Marten, "On Knowing, Knowing Well and Knowing Differently," 213.

[29] Mira Sundara Rajan (Canadian Research Chair, Tier II) in discussion with the author, April 2011.

[30] Marten, "On Knowing, Knowing Well and Knowing Differently," 213.

exercised in reflecting upon copyright questions in relation to Karnatic Music. It remains to be seen whether such caution will change the legal issues around Karnatic Music, or, if it does not, how the practitioners of Karnatic Music will adapt and change to deal with the removal of such messiness.

Glossary

Abhinaya	Expressions performed during a Bharatnatyam performance.
Advaita	Non-dualistic Vēdanta philosophy.
Āgama (āgamic)	Rituals prescribed in the Vēdas.
Agathiyar	Sage Agathiyar, a Tamil film released in 1972.
Agrahāram	Lands or areas of cities occupied by Brahmins. Usually, parts of cities or villages were donated to Brahmin families as inām.
Āhiri	A rāga that is believed to cause hunger or starvation.
Alam Ara	The first talkie in Hindi released in 1931.
Ālāpana	Melodic improvisation of a rāga without lyrics.
Ālvārs	12 Vaishnavite saints.
Amrithavarshini	A rāga considered to bring rain/storm.
Āndāl	One of the twelve and only female ālvārs.
Anjaneya	A Hindu deity and exponent in music.
Anubhavam	Experience.
Anupallavi	Second section of a composition usually consisting of two or four verses.
Apaswaram	Error in performance of a rāga's notes.
Ārōhanam	Ascending notes of a rāga.
Asvamēdha Yāgam	Asva (in Sanskrit)- horse; mēdha (in Sanskrit)- sacrifice. It is an elaborate ritual of horse being selected for sacrifice and let to roam the country freely for 30 days protected by the king's warriors; on the 31st day, the horse is sacrificed to the tutelary deity after which the queen plays the role of a widow for a night grieving over the dead horse. There are different modern interpretation of the rituals in modern understanding, one such being mēdha to mean not sacrifice but worship.
Atmārtham	Essence of a soul (in this context, bhakti).
Āvarōhanam	Descending notes of a rāga.
Āyudha pūja	Ritual involving worship of tools, performed on the last days of navarāthri festival.
Bāni	Performance style of a musician.
Bhajans	Short compositions composed in less-technical tunes performed as a group during worships.
Bhakta Prahalada	The first talkie in Telugu released in 1931.
Bhakti	Devotion to the divine.
Bhakti margam	Path of devotion. This was the principle of Bhakti Movement but became the principle of Karnatic music, itself.
The Bhakti Movement	A movement during the first century believed to have produced works of saint-poets ālvārs and nāyanmārs.

Bhāvā	Expression of an emotion; within the context of Karnatic Music, it <u>always</u> refers to bhakti.
Bhōga	Erotic longingness expressed in devadāsi performances.
Bikshā	Begging or public donation.
Bollywood	Hindi film industry based in Mumbai (formerly, Bombay).
Brahma	A Hindu deity, also known as the creator.
Brahmadēya	Gifts given to Brahmins in the Vijayanagara Empire and the Tanjavur Kingdom.
Brahmacharya	Celibacy as prescribed in Hindu texts promoted by nationalists in the early 20th century.
Chamara	Fan.
Chhatra	Umbrella.
Charanam	Third and final section of a composition consisting of four or eight verses.
Chaturdandiprakasikha	A music treatise that first classified and systematized rāga based on their grammar.
Chinna Mēlam	Small band comprising of dancing girls called devadāsis accompanied by male musicians and other instrumental accompaniments.
Dakshinamurthy	An incarnation of Siva and patron-god of education and learning.
Dharma	Rule of law seen as set by the divine.
Dhrupad	A vocal genre Hindustani music.
Dēsi	Within Karnatic Music, this refers to non-traditional mixed-style of music.
Dvaita	Dualism Vēdanta philosophy.
Gamakās	Melismatic improvisation of verses of compositions.
Ganesha	Patron-god of arts and knowledge.
Gitās	Composition consisting of swaram and sāhitya used as beginners' exercises.
Gita Govinda	A work written by Jayadeva consisting of love-poetry between Krishna and his lover Radha.
Gummipattu	A type of folk music in which woman clap hands and walk in circle while singing songs.
Guru	Teacher.
Guru dakshina	Donation or gift given to a teacher for teaching Karnatic Music.
Gurukulavāsam	A practice of sishyas living at the teachers' houses during the course of their education. This practice phased out over years. Currently, some Karnatic musicians are trying to instil this practice.
Guruparamparā	Lineage of a guru.
Inām	Tax free gifts, usually lands.

Isai Vellalars	Nattuvars who eventually received the caste status of Isai Vellalars.
Ishtadevata	Ishta means favourite and Devata means God. Composers had their own favourite god.
Jāti	Caste.
Jāvalis and Padams	17th and 18th century erotic poems.
Kalpanaswaram	Creative notes, involves vocal or instrumental performances of 7 notes of a particular rāga after the performance of second half of a song set to the rāga. Artistes perform combinations of the 7 notes of a rāga to which the song is set.
Kanakabhishekam	Shower of gold.
Karthikeya	Also, known as Murugan, he is the son of Shiva and Parvati. Apart from Karthikeya, they have another son called Ganesha.
Kathākālakshepam	A musical performance that involved partly recital of stories on deities set to music and partly narration of these stories.
Katthikalyanam	'Dagger-wedding,' a ritual involving devadāsi marrying a dagger signifying the king after which she would be initiated to king's concubinage.
Khasi	A language spoken in North-eastern part of India.
Kollywood	Tamil film industry based in Chennai (formerly, Madras).
Kucchēri	Karnatic Music concerts.
Kuravanji	kurava- lit. name of a tribe in hilly parts of the Tamil Country; vanji- lit. a woman from the tribe
Kuratthippāttu	Gypsy woman's song; a genre of folk music composed and sung by particular tribes in Tamil Nadu.
Krishna	One of the ten incarnations of Hindu deity Vishnu.
Kritis	Compositions.
Lakshana	Music theory or grammar.
Lakshya	Music practice.
Layam	Melody.
Madham	Belief in any doctrine, opinion, belief, agreement, and teaching.
Maniyam	Tax-free lands as grants.
Manōdharmasangeetham	Music of a mind's rule or conduct.
Manusmriti	Law of Manu as mentioned in the Vēdas. See, Chapter 2.
Mārgi	Within Karnatic Music community, this refers to traditional and pure style of music.
Matam	Ashramic institutions.
Matādhipati	Head of a matam.
Mēla	Tradition.

Melakartha	Contemporary classification of rāga based on their grammar.
Mellicai	Light music, a category contrived by gramophone companies.
Moksha	State of oneness with the divine after one's death.
Mridangam	A cylindrical percussion instrument with its sides covered by leather. This instrument is used predominantly in Karnatic music and Bharatanatyam performances. Tabla is similar instrument used in Hindustani performances.
Mudra	Stamp. Most composers included a signature phrase or their name at end of their songs.
Murai	Tradition or way of life.
Nāgaswaram	A long pipe-like wind instrument.
Nalayira-divyaprabandam	A collection of poems composed by 12 ālvārs comprising of 4000 verses, also called Tamil Vēdas.
Nāradhā	Puranic sage believed to be an exponent in music.
Natakas	Dramas
Nataraja	An incarnation of Siva.
Nattuvars	Male dance masters in Chinna Mēlam.
Nātyasastra	Dance treatise believed to have been written by Sage Bharata between 200 B.C.E and 200 C.E.
Nautch	Dance, referred to dance performances in salons in colonial Madras.
Navarāthri	A festival consisting of 9 days of celebrations. Also, known as mahānavami.
Nayanmars	63 Saivite saints.
Nayaka-Nayaki	Hero-heroine theme in a performance.
Neraval	Extempore melismatic improvisation of verses of a composition.
Nilāmbari	A rāga believed to cause sleep.
Nottuswarams	Western notes used in Karnatic Music
Pālayakkarars	Warrior chieftains assisting the Vijayanagara Empire.
Pallavi	Beginning verses of a composition usually consisting of one or two verses.
Pālaiyams	Smaller kingdoms within the Vijayanagara Empire.
Pancharatnam	'Five jewels.' It refers to five important compositions of Tyāgarājā, performed in succession during his death anniversary every year in January.
Parvati	Hindu goddess and Siva's wife.
Pattābhishekam	Ritual of royal unction.
Periya Mēlam	'Big band' that comprised of band of wind instruments with nāgaswaram in the lead accompanied by tavil and thālam as percussions.
Pottukattudhal	Tying of a pendant called thāli during the wedding.

	Women wear thāli around their neck as a sign of their married status. This practice is prevalent in contemporary society as well.
Prasādam	Consecrated food that represents the divine distributed in temples.
Purāna	Sacred Indian texts.
Rājadharma	Law of the king.
Rāgas	Tunes to which Karnatic songs are set. There are 72 melakartha rāgas (mother rāgas); each of these contains 7 notes in ascending and descending order, each. Also, these 72 rāgas have more rāgas under them based on different combinations of these 7 notes.
Ramayana and Mahabharata	Hindu epics.
Rasā	Moods; There are nine rasas according to Natyashastram (rules for dance) applied to 'Classical' dance in Tamil Nadu called Bharatanatyam. Natyashastra is believed to have written by Sage Bharathamuni and hence the name Bharatanatyam. The nine rasas are Shringaram (love or romance in this case, divine love), Hasyam (humour), Raudram (anger or fury), Karunyam (compassion or mercy), Bhibatsam (disgust), Bhayanakam (fear), Veeram (valour), and Adbhutam (wonder or amazement). Although, these rasas are mentioned in Natyashastram, Bharatanatyam or other classical dances from other states in India are always accompanied by vocal Karnatic music. Therefore, a song sung with one of the above rasas is represented in dance moves and thus, these rasas are integral part of Karnatic music.
Rasikās	Connoisseurs of music.
Sabhās	Karnatic Music associations in Tamil Nadu.
Sāgara Sangamam	The Sea Unites, a Telugu film released in 1983.
Sāhitya	Text of a song.
Sāhityavinyāsa	Spreading of the text (this session is a part of manodharmasangeetham session).
Salangai Oli	Music of the Anklets, a Tamil dubbed version of the Telugu film, Sāgara Sangamam, released in 1983.
Samadhi	Grave.
Samasthana vidwan	Court musicians. Courts of Indian kings had practice of patronizing Karnatic musicians, poets and scholars who performed for the kings. Karnatic musicians performed music on the 'divine' for the kings, acting as medium between the kings and the 'divine.'
Samayam	Belief in any doctrine, opinion, belief, agreement, and teaching.

Sampradaya	Tradition.
Sangam Period	Period between 3rd B.C.E. and 3rd C.E. in Tamil Nadu believed to have seen growth in arts and literature that later influenced music in Tamil Nadu.
Sanga Ilakkiyam	Literature written during the Sangam period.
Sangitasara	Music treatise written in 14th century that laid theoretical framework for contemporary Karnatic Music.
Sangitasudha	A music treatise written by Raghunātha Nāyaka, a Tanjavur king.
Sāngyam	Rituals.
Saranālayam	Refugee centers created for devadāsis to integrate them to the 'respectable' middle-class society.
Saraswati	Patron-goddess of music, dance and arts in general.
Saraswati Sabhadham	Saraswati's Oath, a Tamil film released in 1966.
Shiva	A Hindu God, also known as destroyer.
Shringāra	Eroticism expressed in music and dance.
Silappadikāram	A text believed to have written during the Sangam Period (3 B.C.E to 3 C.E.)
Sishya	Disciples or students.
Sruthi-bhedha	Wrong or error in pitch.
Svaramekalanidhi	A music treatise authored in the 16th century that was forerunner for contemporary rāga classification.
Swaram	Notes of a rāga.
Tānam	Elaboration of notes of a rāga.
The Tamil Isai Iyakkam	Tamil Music Movement that gained momentum in the 1940s in Tamil Nadu, specifically, Madras.
Tavil	A drum-like percussion instrument.
Thālam	A percussion instrument consisting of two palm-sized disks; it resembles palm-sized symbols. Incidentally, rhythmic cycles in Karnatic Music are also called thālam (in Tamil).
Tālā	Rhythmic cycles to which Karnatic songs are set.
Tēvaram	Compositions by Saivite poet-saints nāyanmārs.
Therukootthu	Street entertainment consists of musical Tamil dramas performed on the roads during festivals or special occasions.
Thirumanam	Wedding.
Thiruvilayadal	The Divine Play, a Tamil film released in 1965.
Thukkada	Compositions performed at the end of kucchēris as miscellaneous and less-technical compositions.
Tirupugazh	Compositions by Saivite poet-saints nāyanmārs.
'The Trinity' of Karnatic Music	Tyāgarājā, Mutthuswamy Dikshitar and Shyama Sastri, believed to have been influenced by the 1 C.E. bhakti tradition.

Tulāpurusadāna	Weighing of the king against gold or grains
Tyāgarāja Ārādhana	Festival celebrating the death anniversary of Tyāgarājā, one of the Trinity, at his samadhi in Tanjavur.
Unnal Mudiyum Thambi	'You can, Brother!,' a Tamil film released in 1988.
Upanishads	Sacred Indian scriptures.
Valli	Karthikeya's wife and a gypsy woman.
Varāli	A rāga that is believed to ruin guru-sisya relationship if a composition in this rāga is taught by the guru to the sisya.
Varnams	Compositions comprising of swaram and sāhitya usually used as warm-up exercises.
Varnāshramadharma	A classification of the society based on occupation: Brahmins-educated classes, Vaisyas-tradesmen, Kshatriyas-warriors and Sudras-manual laborers. This classification is much more complicated that just based on occupation.
Vatukās	Northerners, referring to warriors-clans that moved from northern territories of Vijayanagara Empire to the southern territories to provide protection to smaller kingdoms.
Vēdas	Sacred Indian scripture consisting of four: Rig, Yejur, Adharvana and Sāma. Of these, Sāma is considered to be precursor to Karnatic Music.
Vedānta	'End of the Vēdas.' It refers to set of philosophies that developed after the end of era of Vēdic ritualistic practices.
Villupattu	A type of folk music sung by tapping the string of a bow tied with bells for rhythm.
Vina	A plucked string instrument.
Virupaksha	An incarnation of Hindu god Siva.
Vishnu	A Hindu god, also known as the protector, he is known to have 10 incarnations.
Visistadvaita	Classified non-dualism Vēdanta philosophy.
Zamindars	Persian term for land owners.

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