5. Karamana Venkateswara Bhagavathar
6. Palkulam Subbhrama Bhagavathar
7. Puliyoorkurichi Padmanabha Bhagavathar
8. Parakkav Narayana Bhagavathar
9. Suchindram Harihara Bhagavathar
10. Varkala Janardana Bhagavathar
11. Tirupathisaaram Narayana Bhagavathar
12. Sangeetharatnakara Ramaswami Sastri
13. Tanjore Kathirkaamadaasan
14. Kadayam Kaasi Bhagavathar
15. Tentropperan Srinivasayyar

When the rule of His Highness Swathi Thirunal came to an end, the status and height of patronage given to art forms became deplorable. British rulers who resented art forms tried to dissolve the royal courts and the services of artists were terminated. But the status and rank of artists among general public gradually increased. The composers, painters and other artists of the later period enriched our cultural heritage by their large repertoire of compositions.

Kuttikunju Thankachi (1820-1904)

Kuttikunju Thankachi was a composer who lived during the first half of the 19th century. She, the only daughter of Irayimman Thampi, the famous composer and scholar, was born in 1820. She was born at Puliyarathala veedu in Vilavangodu Taluk. Her real name was Lekshmi Pillai. She was initiated into formal education at the age of seven. She possessed proficiency in different languages like Tamil, Malayalam and Sanskrit. She also mastered puranaparayanam, kavyanataka, alankara, vyakarana, tarkka etc. Her father was her first guru. She had also training under Aripaattu Kochu Pillai Warrier. She was married to Kunjan Thampan of Varanattu naduvila kovilakam at the age of 14.
Her first set of compositions was in Sanskrit and Manipravaalam – mixture of Sanskrit and Malayalam. She had an inborn talent for composing *kritis*. She has to her credit three *attakadhas* namely *Sreemathi Swayamvaram*, *Mitra Sabamoksam* and *Parvathi Swayamvaram*. In addition she has composed Kilippaattus, Thiruvaathirapaattus and Thullalpaattus. The influence of Irayimman Thampi and Aswathi Thirunal are clearly evident in her compositions. The *padas* figuring in the *attakadhaas* are full fledged with poetical excellence and rhetorical beauty. She has written some literary works like *Vaikkom Sthalapuranam*, *Thiruvananthapuram Sthalapuranam*, *Sivarathri Mahatmyam*, *Swargavaathil Ekadasi Mahatmyam* etc. Further, she has written *Seethaswayamvaram*, *Naradamohanam*, *Gangasnanam*, *Sethusnaanam paana*, *Kiraatham*, *Nalucharitham*, *Anjaathavaasam* and *Gajendra moksham*. She has also composed *kritis* in praise of *Thirurvaraattu Adikesava Perumaal*, *Neyyattinkara Krishnan*, *Garuvayoorappan* and *Mookaambika*.

The themes of her songs are religious and spiritual having sweet diction and soothing musical structure. Many *kritis* have only *pallavi* and multiple *charanas*.

‘Sooryakoti’ in *Natta* is in praise of Goddess of Mookaambika. Some of the popular *kritis* of Kuttikunu Thankachi are as follows:

1. *Kartyayani mam* - *Kamboji* - *Adi*
2. *Samajabare* - *Kalyani* - *Adi*
3. *Paabi Mohanaakrithe* - *Khamas* - *Adi*
4. *Anandarupa* - *Pantuvarali* - *Misra Chappu*
5. *Sree Pavanapuresa* - *Surutti* - *Adi*

She passed away in 1904 on *Ekadasi*, the eleventh day after new moon or full moon. Kuttikunu Thankachi is perhaps considered as the first woman composer of Travancore.

**K.C. Kesava Pillai (1868-1914)**

A native of Paravoor in Quilon District, K.C. Kesava Pillai was a prominent composer and Poet Laureate of Travancore. His contribution to Karnatic music as well as Malayalam literature is commendable. He was born in 1868 (M.E.1043). His parents were Raman Pillai of Valiavelichathu Veettil and Lekshmi Amma of Vazhavila tharavaadu Kochethubhavanam. He had school education up to the 9th standard only. Afterwards, he studied works like *Adhyatma Ramayanam Kilippattu* and *Bhagavatham Kilippaattu* along with many other works in Malayalam literature by himself. Further, he
learned music and attained proficiency in it. He also used to watch Kathakali with enthusiasm and learned the basics of Kathakali literature, costumes, mudras, techniques etc. At the age of 15, he wrote his first attakadha named ‘Prahlaada Charitham’. But scholars advised him to gain more proficiency in Sanskrit so that he himself can correct his works. He started to learn Sanskrit under the guidance of Paravoor V. Kesavan Asan. Afterwards he modified the already written attakadha Prahlaada Charitham and renamed it as Hiranyasura vadham.

Later he mastered vyakarana under his co-brother Ennakkattu Rajaraja Varma. He also learned English during this time. By the time he was 20, he finished writing three attakadhas, four folk songs and Sthavaratnamalika. The three attakadhas are Hiranyasuravadham, Soorapadmasuravadham, and Sreekrishnavijayam.

Sangeetha manjari and Sthavaratnamalika contained beautiful kritis and bhajana songs. Sangeethamaalika and Eswarasthboxrangal are also his prominent works. He composed prayers in praise of God to be sung by all communities irrespective of religion, caste and creed. Altogether, K.C.Kesava Pillai is believed to have composed 100 keertanas and has written a famous Geyanataka (musical play) ‘Sadaarama’ and Mahakavya ‘Kesaveeyam’.

In 1896, K.C. Kesava Pillai was appointed as teacher in Kollam Malayalam school. After some years he got promotion as Sanskrit Munshi in the English medium school. In 1894 he wrote Sreemoolarajavijayam and submitted it to Sree Moolam Thirunal Maharaja. Aasannamaranachittasatakam is a work consisting of 104 slokas in Saardoolavikriditham. Kerala Bhashaa Narayaneeyam is a translation of Narayaneeyam in Malayalam. Here both the lyrics and style stand on par with the famous Narayaneeyam. In addition, he has written some plays like Lekshmi Kalyanam, Raghava Madhavam, Vikramorvaseeyam, etc. Subhashitha Ratnakaram and Abbingayamalika are works of importance. He passed away in 1914 at the age of 46.

On account of his musical and poetical scholarship, he was awarded the title of Saras Gayaka Katimani by Sangeethasahityakovda Kerala Varma Valiya Koyi Thampuran.

Some of the famous compositions of K.C. Kesava Pillai are as follows: Satya Swaroopavibho in Sankarabarana, Bhujikka Nee Ramane in Mohana, Koti Divakara in Dhanyasi, Nana Jaathikai in Kamboji, Vande Maatharam in Sindhubhairavi, Vande Maatharam in Kuntalavarali, Kamalanatha in Thodi, Sree vasudeva in Kapi raga etc.

He is credited with a multi lingual Ragamalika ‘Adimalarina’ in four languages namely Malayalam, Tamil, English and Sanskrit.

Neelakanta Sivan (1839-1900)

A Tamilian by parentage, Neelakanta Sivan was a native of Kerala, born in 1839 at Padmanabhapuram and lived in Thiruvananthapuram. He composed in Tamil, his mother tongue. His childhood name was Subramaniam. He attained proficiency in Adhyatmasastra and philosophy. He used to sing Bhajana songs and won the appreciation of everybody. He did not have a proper musical education under any particular Guru. He had a natural talent and instinct for composing which resulted in highly musical and literary kritis par excellence. After graduation, he obtained a
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job in the Law Department in Government of Travancore. But after sometime he disappeared and became a yogi and devotee of Lord Siva. He changed his name to Neelakanta Sivan.

He composed many keertanas and sang them in Bhajanas. He is believed to have composed 1500 verses and 150 Padigams. His pieces are highly devotional and spiritual in nature but in simple ragas and talas. He wanted his songs to be sung by laymen who had a little knowledge of music.

He passed away in 1900 at his house at Karamana in Thiruvananthapuram while performing a bhajana.

Thiruneelakanta bodham is a major literary work by Neelakanta Sivan containing slokas and verses in praise of Lord Siva. Somavara Mahima; Pradosha mahaatmyam, Lalithadevi mabatmyam, Kannappa Nayanaar charitram; Nalvaar charitram, Keerthimalini charitram, Bhikshatana charitram, Halasya leela, Sambhava kantam, Parvathi kalyanam, and Dakshayagam are some of the prominent works written by Neelakanta Sivan. ‘Maname unakkoru’ in Sama, Vaavaa kalaitmaathe in Sankarabharanam, Sivanai ninai in Hamir Kalyani, Siddhi arul siva in Natta, Karunai Puriyithu in Varaali are some of his popular kritis. ‘Thiruneelakanta bodham’ is a major literary work by Neelakanta Sivan containing slokas and verses in praise of Lord Siva. Somavara Mahima; Pradosha mahaatmyam, Lalithadevi mabatmyam, Kannappa Nayanaar charitram; Nalvaar charitram, Keerthimalini charitram, Bhikshatana charitram, Halasya leela, Sambhava kantam, Parvathi kalyanam, and Dakshayagam are some of the prominent works written by Neelakanta Sivan. ‘Maname unakkoru’ in Sama, Vaavaa kalaitmaathe in Sankarabharanam, Sivanai ninai in Hamir Kalyani, Siddhi arul siva in Natta, Karunai Puriyithu in Varaali are some of his popular kritis. He has to his credit a Ragamalika, ‘Naadanainambum’, in different rajas starting with Natta. Here the raga name figures in the sabitya (literature) portion itself.

Neelakanta Sivan’s role as promoter and propagandist of Karnatic music in Kerala is worth mentioning. Like Tyagaraja, Neelakanta Sivan opted for the life of a Nada Yogi -- one who tries to realise god through devotion to music.

Harikesanallur Dr. L. Muthiah Bhagavathar (1877-1945)

Among the vaggeyakaaras of Kerala who lived in the latter half of the 19th century the name of Muthiah Bhagavathar is significant. He was a profound scholar, expert musician, and prominent vaggeyakaara. Above all, he was a renowned Harikadha performer. He was one of those musicians who tried and devoted his time for the popularisation of kritis of His Highness Swathi...
Thirunal. He has been respectfully considered as a towering personality in Karnatic music.

Muthiah Bhagavathar was born in 1877 at Punalveli in Srivilliputhoor. His parents were Lingam lyer and Anandam Ammal. He attained proficiency in languages like Telugu, Kannada, Sanskrit and Malayalam. After completing education he had composed many compositions inclusive of Varnas, Daru Varnas, keertanas etc. In his kritis he chose 'Harikesa' the name of his village as karthamudra or signature of composer.

At first he adorned the court of the Mysore Maharaja and later on was invited to join the court of Travancore by Moolam Thirunal Maharaja in 1897. The Mysore Government conferred the title of 'Gayakasikhamani' on him. The Madras Music Academy honoured him with the title of Sangeetha kalanidhi in 1930. He was honoured with Doctorate by the University of Kerala.

He was an expert composer in both popular and apurva janya ragas. He has to his credit two authentic books dealing with musicology, named 'Sangeetha Kalpadrumam', and 'Sangeetha Lakshanasaara'. It is believed that he has given new raga and musical notation of some kritis of H.H. Swathi Thirunal. He was invited to take the post of Principal in the Swathi Thirunal College of Music established in Thiruvananthapuram.

He passed away in 1945. He has collected and completed 102 kritis of His Highness Swathi Thirunal
with text and notation and published them in two volumes.

**T. Lakshmanan Pillai (1864-1950)**

A Tamil poet, scholar and musicologist, Lakshmanan Pillai composed many *kritis* in Tamil. He is the author of some literary works on various subjects. He was born in 1864. His parents were settled in Travancore. His father was Thiruviyam Pillai who was a government servant in Travancore. He graduated from Maharajas’s College at Thiruvananthapuram and entered government service at an early age.

He had to his credit many books and articles on various subjects like philosophy, music, literature etc. His article on *Music and Musicians of Travancore* throws light on the style of music prevalent in Travancore during his time.

He had musical education under the famous Vainika Kalyanakrishna Bhagavathar who initiated him into the theoretical and practical aspects of music. He started composing at an early age. While composing he adhered strictly to the norms for presenting Karnatic music in the traditional style. He had thinking, musical excellence and deep and noble literary eminence. His *kritis* are highly philosophical and extol high ideals. The thematic content of the *kritis* are religious and some dwell up on the greatness of music. His *kritis* can be taken as ideal examples of his simplicity in life and thought.

In the selection of *ragas*, Lakshmanan Pillai adhered to the principles of time concept and aesthetic and emotional fervour of each *raga*. He strongly believed that Tamil is the most suitable language for composing *kritis* and so he selected Tamil as the medium for his compositions.

Lakshmanan Pillai is credited with the authorship of nearly 400 *kritis*. In addition, he has written two literary works describing the principles of *Adhyatma, Dhyana Marga* and nature. He has also written some poems in the style of *Chindus* about *Kshetrapravesana Vilambaram* (Temple entry proclamation). Some important songs credited to him are:

| 1. Eesan Adiyar | Chakravakom | Adi |
| 2. Palli Ezhitharulwar | Bauli | Chappu |
| 3. Senthil Velavane | Pantuvarali | Adi |
| 4. Ninnamam | Nilambhari | Chappu |
| 5. Nin pernumai | Gaula | Adi |
| 6. Thumbam Thudithita | Bhairavi | Chappu |
| 7. Sankatame jagam |

He has composed a *kriti* in an *apurva raga* *Amarasenapriya*, *janya* of 60th *mela*. Neethimathi, Buddhar Perumaan, Ninairavatchi, Satyavathi, Velanaatakam, Iravivar man are some of the plays written by him.

Respecting his knowledge and proficiency he has been awarded with the titles of “Isaikavi Arasu” by Annamalai University and ‘Thamil isari selvar’, ‘Sangithakala Sikhamani’ etc.

**Attoor Krishna Pisharody – (1867-1964)**

A versatile scholar in musicology, Attoor Krishna Pisharody is the author of the famous *Lakshanagrandha* ‘Saneethabandrika’. He was also a poet, critic, researcher and, above all, a musical genius acquired. He was a native of Attoor, a village in Thrissur district in Kerala. Krishna Pisharody attained
proficiency as a vocalist and as a vainika. He conducted experiments in vena for finding out new srutis and melas.

Sangeetha Chandrika is an authentic lakshnagrandha dealing with the theoretical aspects of music and the basic principles of Sangeetha Sastra -- science of music. This work explains the scheme of 84 melas comprising of common melas as well as sankerthana melas. He had tried to codify all the existing lakshnagrandhas prior to his time especially Svaramelakalanidhi, Raga vibodha and Chiturdandu prakasika.

Mahakavi Kuttammatthu (1880-1943)

Among the poets of modern Travancore, the name of Mahakavi Kuttammatthu Kunjukrishna Kurup deserves special mention. His kritis are presented in concerts by modern musicians. He has written several verses of religious content which can be presented in musical programmes.

Mahakavi Kuttammatthu Kunjukrishna Kurup was born in 1880 A.D. He was a native of Kunniyoor House in Northern Kerala. His parents were Vangaadu Unnaman Unnithiri and Devaki Amma. He had his initial education under the tutelage of his relative Narayanan Unnithiri and later in a school in Karivalloor. Afterwards, he learned under eminent scholars namely Ramakurup and Govinda Kurup. He mastered kavya, alankara, nataka, vyakarana and also Ayurveda, the Indian system of medicine.

He wrote one Ottam Thullal, Keechakavadbom, Utsavcharitram, Kaliya mardana- a yamaka karya. He also gained proficiency in Vishachikiltsa i.e., treatment of poisoning by snakebites or due to insect lites.

His interest in music is clearly evident from his musical plays Devayaani Charithram and Baalagopalam. He has to his credit kbandakavyas namely Kiraatha bhith, Muchilottu Bhagavathi, Kadaamkottu Maakkom, Yogamastham, and a Sanskrit work Kaachilpramana pathrika.

In 1924 he became the editor of Kerala Chandrika. He has also to his credit some works having literary excellence such as Sudarsana, Mookaambika Sodasi, Sreedevi Charanaamritham and he has written a song Tharuna thayezum’ in Malayalam in musical setting of our National Anthem ‘Janaganamana’. Eventhough he was not a performing musician, many of his kritis are set to music of prominent kritis in Karnatic music. He has included nearly 300 songs in his plays which are being set to music. In all dramas together Mookambika Kataakshamaala is believed to be his last work.
He passed away on 7th of August 1943. However, Kuttamatthu, through his compositions, enriched the treasury of musical kritis by Travancore composers.

The contribution of modern musicians who devoted their life to the propagation of Karnatic music deserves special mention. Among the modern musicians Chembai Vaidyanatha Bhagavathar, Semmangudi Sreenivasa Iyer and Palghat K.V. Narayanaswami, who worked for popularising Karnatic music among laymen are significant. Once restricted to the elite communities, temple premises and royal courts Karnatic music has become democratic. It has reached its zenith of glory and prosperity during the 20th century.

The steps taken by the present royal family for the propagation and preservation of Karnatic Music cannot be underestimated.

The introduction of Music in academic curriculum at B.A., M.A. and Ph.D. levels changed the career of musicians. The efforts of eminent musicologists like Dr. S. Venkitasubramonia Iyer, Dr. V.S. Sarma, V. Madhavan Nair and Dr. Leela Omcherry for popularising the music in Kerala has brought in rich dividends. The role of Sri Semmangudi Sreenivasa Iyer, Sri. R. Shertalai Gopalan Nair, Dr. Chalakkudy Narayanaswamy, Sri. Mavelikkara Prabhakara Varma and Dr. K. Omanakkutty in notating and popularising the compositions of His Highness Swathi Thirunal, Irayimman Thampi, Kuttikunju Thankachi, K.C. Kesava Pillai and other composers are praiseworthy.

The establishment of three Music Colleges in Thiruvananthapuram, Thrippunithura and Palakkad helped in promoting music in Kerala. In addition, the Kerala Sangeetha Nataka Academy, Sangeetha Sabhas and Kerala Kalamandalam helped in popularising Karnatic music.

The yeoman services rendered by Sree Swathi Thirunal Sangeetha Sabha and the Department of Music established by the University of Kerala are rendering remarkable service for teaching and promoting Karnatic music and Kerala music at advanced level. The measures and steps taken by Travancore royal family for the propagation of the compositions of His Highness Swathi Thirunal and other Kerala composers are yielding fruitful results.

It is the duty of every musician of Kerala to include at least two or three pieces of Swathi Thirunal Maharaja and other Kerala composers in their concerts.

Further, the range and appreciation level of audiences in the region of Travancore has increased. The number of music lovers attending music concerts has gone really high in recent years. Further, the inclusion of kritis of famous composers of Karnatic music in South Indian Films has contributed to the popularity and appreciation of Karnatic music. The emergence of films giving priority for raga-oriented songs by music composers helped to gain popularity and affinity among the general public towards Karnatic music.
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