

Hailed as the torch-bearer of modern Malayalam literature, M.P. PAUL (1904-52) was a master of prose. Thought, word and deed united in him into a harmonious whole, rendering his personality and writing a perennial source of inspiration for generations of writers. Paul established that a living literature was never trapped in its past, that it broke new ground and progressed to new frontiers and expanding horizons.

In the words of N. Krishna Pillai "Paul had the critical faculty to discern the subtle poetic principles lying hidden underneath a chaos of technical nomenclatures associated with a multiplicity of literary theories, a sensibility skilful at poetic appreciation gained through constant acquaintance with world's masterpieces, a spirit of freedom that militated against the tyranny of custom and tradition, and a style free from bombast, restrained, grave and powerful."

K.M. THARAKAN (b. 1930) is a distinguished writer and won the Kerala Sahitya Akademi Award for literary criticism in 1975. Author of several books both in English and Malayalam, Tharakan is the editor of the *Malayala Manorama Weekly* and *Bhashaposhini*.

Widely travelled both in India and abroad, Tharakan has been associated with many literary and academic bodies, including the Kerala Sahitya Akademi as its Vice-President.

Tharakan presents this monograph on Paul mainly for the non-Malayalam readers.

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M.P. Paul

K.M. Tharakan

Makers of
Indian
Literature

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M.P. PAUL

The sculpture reproduced on the endpaper depicts a scene where three soothsayers are interpreting to King Suddhodana the dream of Queen Maya, mother of Lord Buddha. Below them is seated a scribe recording the interpretation. This is perhaps the earliest available pictorial record of the art of writing in India.

From Nagarjunakonda, 2nd century A.D.

***Courtesy:* National Museum, New Delhi.**

MAKERS OF INDIAN LITERATURE

M.P. PAUL

K.M. Tharakan

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I

Master Builder

M.P. Paul, Kuttikrishna Marar, and Joseph Mundasseri constitute the critic-trio of Malayalam Literature. They have had as their predecessors a galaxy of literary critics among whom two outshone the rest, P.K. Narayana Pillai, honoured as 'Sahitya Panchananan' and A. Balakrishna Pillai who earned the title 'Kesari'. Literary criticism had its beginnings in Malayalam in the writings of C.P. Achutha Menon, A.R. Raja Raja Varma, Kerala Varma Valia Koil Thampuran, Anthappayi and Vengayil Kunji Raman Nayanar, but it was Sahitya Panchananan who gave it a stature on a par with poetry. P.K. Narayana Pillai was conversant with the critical writings of Mathew Arnold and Hudson, but he had the moorings of his literary thought in the principles laid down by the classical Sanskrit Scholars, chiefly the theory of Rasadhwani. He edited the texts of three major ancient poets of Malayalam, Cherussery, Thunchathu Ezhuthachan, and Kuncan Nambiar, devoting his introductory essays entirely to an examination of the authenticity of the texts and an evaluation of their literary merits. Though he was a powerful critic excellent at critical judgement, he did not introduce deliberately or systematically western critical categories into the Malayalam literary field, nor did he concentrate his attention on the development of Malayalam-prose in conformity with the emerging culture. The credit goes to Kesari Balakrishna Pillai for having brought Malayalam Literature into direct and intimate contact with English, European, and American literary worlds. He gave unfailing guidance to the writers of short stories and novels who came to the fore in those days, with their hearts set ablaze with the fire of revolution. Kesari was widely read, but he did not look upon sharp discrimination of literary merits as his chief mission, nor did he seek to effect a blend of eastern and western literary principles to form new

critical tools to be applied in evaluating the works of Indian writers who were exposed to western thoughts and styles of expression; certainly Kesari enlarged the vision of Kerala literary men and made them familiar with the best that was thought and known in the world outside. But he left a lot for the critic-trio to accomplish.

The trio had their contemporaries too, a constellation of critics consisting of Kuttipuzha Krishna Pillai, Sanjayan, P. Damodaran Pillai, Ullattil Govindan Kutti Nair and others. But the three doyens were at its centre, as the main source of its light and energy. It was in the thirties that M.P. Paul made his debut as a literary critic with the publication of his *Novel Sahityam*. Joseph Mundassery and Kuttikrishna Marar entered the field of criticism a little later; Paul had his roots in western literature and western literary thought. Marar had drunk deep in Sanskrit literature and poetics; he had earned a reputation as a commentator of Vallathol's poetry. Joseph Mundassery learned from both. He sought to amalgamate the western literary principles with Sanskrit poetics and succeeded in his attempt to a large extent. In this regard he was primarily influenced by Paul. In Paul's writings one may discern many of the seeds of thought that flowered in the works of Joseph Mundassery.

More than any other critic of his time Paul knew that a new age had been inaugurated in Malayalam by the novels of Chandu Menon and C.V. Raman Pillai as well as the shorter works in prose by such writers as Vengayil Kunji Raman Nayanar. The steady rise of the middle class into power warranted the full flowering of prose, the short story and the novel dealing with the problems of contemporary society, giving expression to the aspiration of the common people struggling for their rights. Poets of Kerala by and large dealt with puranic themes, but the new situation demanded not only novel interpretation of such themes, but treatment of social problems that craved for immediate solution. The poet-trio comprising Kumaran Asan, Vallathol Narayana Menon and Parameswara Iyer had dealt with a few problems relating to caste discrimination, political freedom and poverty, but many more fundamental human problems remained. As society progressed it was sure to emancipate the depressed, the destitute and the downtrodden. New

creations had to appear in new forms. Paul realized that it was the function of informed criticism to set the ground for such creations presenting to the new generation of writers high standards of literary excellence and new vistas of progress. He gave the impetus to the writers of the thirties to draw inspiration from contemporary life and explore novel ways of expressing themselves imaginatively.

A great lover of Shakespeare, Paul was deeply sensitive to the subtleties of poetic beauties both in English and in Malayalam. However he consciously limited himself to the study of prose and fiction for two reasons—for one thing he felt that there were at least a few critics in Malayalam Literature who gave themselves to the study of poetry, whereas there was only Kesari who devoted his talents to the study of prose at the time. For another, Paul felt that the coming age belonged to fiction rather than to poetry. The need of the time was vitalising Malayalam prose and fiction, and Paul rose up to it. Besides his works on the techniques of the novel and the short-story he wrote a few essays on aesthetics, which were compiled in the form of a book later. Two slender collections of his essays appeared posthumously. Very little was the output of Paul, but his impact on Malayalam Literature was very great. He did not just adorn, rather he put a new life into everything he touched.

Paul's expositions of the literary forms of the novel and the short story rank with the finest expositions of the other genres in the language. As a literary form the novel commanded a position equal to that of poetry. The emphasis in the short story was on the craft, for its primary concern was the exploration of new ways of expression and existence. In the novel the content was as important as the form, but more important than either was the interpretation of life it gave. It is to Paul's credit that he offered Malayalam a classical analysis of humour in his *Novel Sahityam*, such an approach to the subject being unknown in Malayalam till then. His essays on aesthetics were the first authoritative dissertations on the subject to appear in Malayalam. Again it was Paul who introduced for the first time in Malayalam the inseparable relation between literature and society as a fundamental principle of literature. The craft of writing was of paramount importance in literary creation, but

it could at no point afford to sever itself from the heart of humanity. Artistic works produced for art's sake devoted entirely to aestheticism would cease to be art in the absence of a lively contact with life.

As a writer of excellent Malayalam prose Paul has had few rivals. In most languages folk-songs appeared first giving way to poetry and poetry in course of time contributed to the development of the drama which was considered the culmination of poetry as the dictum *Natakantham Kavithvam* claimed. Prose and prose-fiction developed at a later stage, hence there are critics who would go to the extent of declaring that "novel is the culmination of the play." This may be a subject of fruitful discussion among critics; it must be admitted that the full development of prose is the real index of the genuine growth of a language. Good prose is born when the people using it develop clear thinking and communicate with one another without inhibition and are perpetually engaged in reforming themselves. So long as the feudal set-up with its caste structure flourished under a king in Travancore, literature of the state was controlled by the Nampoothiris and their dependants discharging temple duties. Cochin was not different in its political set-up. Though Malabar was under the British rule, the situation obtaining there continued to be basically feudal. The Christian missionaries contributed greatly to the liberation of the people by the attempts they made to give them education and the efforts they took to develop the native languages of India. They succeeded to a great extent in rendering the languages an effective medium for the communication of ideas to the people at large. The missionaries in Kerala compiled dictionaries in Malayalam, codified its grammar, and started journals in Malayalam. As prose developed the middle class gained access to the riches of Malayalam language and literature. It was an indication of the broadening of people's vision, their urge for liberation, and also the development of their critical faculty. The social revolution that was set in motion in the last decades of the 19th century gathered momentum in the beginning of the 20th century as it took life from the freedom struggle in India and also the Marxist ideologies that were widely disseminated in the socio-cultural realm. Malayalam prose had its flowering in the writings of the critic-trio as the short story and the novel had

their spring in the composition of Thakazhi, Dev, Basheer, Uroob and Pottekkat.

Paul regarded it as an axiom that good prose could sprout only from clear thinking. Any literary work would have its emotive appeal and rhythmic grace and prose writers would appropriate these qualities in their writings, but with them, lucidity came first. A master writer should be able to express the most subtle of thoughts in the clearest words possible. Paul's prose was remarkable not only for its lucidity, but its euphony, dignity and its lively contact with life. Good prose is never stilted or static. The prose of Paul grew with the growth of the language, yet it retained its essential qualities. Consistently throughout Paul wielded prose as an instrument of discrimination, exposition of profound ideas and dissemination of liberal thoughts.

By the independence of his spirit and the indomitable power of his thoughts Paul exercised a tremendous influence on his contemporaries. Those who came in contact with him instinctively looked upon him for guidance; those who tried to oppose him were impressed with his integrity; even the worst of his enemies were full of admiration for his sincerity and his genuine concern for the development of his people and his language. Kuttikrishna Marar and Joseph Mundassery held Paul in high esteem and Vaikkam Muhammed Basheer looked upon him as his guide and philosopher, to speak only of just three major writers of Kerala who paid the highest praise to Paul's genius.

Joseph Mundassery looked upon Paul as his senior colleague and guide. In his autobiography he refers to his association with Paul with warmth. This is how he estimates Paul after having described his last meeting with him at Trivandrum: "Paul's untimely demise was a heavy blow not only to his family, but to the cultural renaissance of Kerala. For me, I felt as though I had lost the torch-light on my way through the first route of progress. Paul was indeed a genius. He proved himself to be one in all the fields of his activity. He believed that man was entitled to freedom and comfort in his life. He remained a free bird to the last. The burial he was given by the church authorities was a testimony to the price he had to pay for it. Towards the end of his life his joy was converted into grief, comfort deserted him for ever. Though he bore a

volcano in his heart, his composure was unruffled. He was a man rather short, but with a soul ever so lofty."

Paul was the founder-president of Kerala Progressive Writers' Organisation which swore by the dictum that "art was for life", and totally rejected the theory of "art for art's sake", literature, worth its name must conform to the laws of beauty, but it had to touch life at its roots, and give expression to the inmost urges of the people. Marar would at no time brook any compromise of the fundamental principles of beauty with the treatment of political or social problems and he had his doubts about the objectives of the progressive writer's organization. The following excerpts from Marar's essay on Paul are noteworthy:

"I read from the papers that a debate was going on in the Kottayam literary circle about the permanence of literature. Paul, the president of the Progressive Movement, wrote an article challenging the permanence of literature. Kainikkara Kumara Pillai and P. Damodaran Pillai opposed Paul vehemently. I too took up cudgels for them against Paul. Paul's rejoinder to our criticism was more apologetic than assertive. In those days I hadn't read his *Novel Sahityam*. Only recently did I go through it. I was deeply impressed with Paul's grasp of literary principles. Paul had broken certain literary idols in the *Novel Sahityam* but few had taken note of that. . . Though I differed from Paul's views on the permanence of literature I found myself in agreement with Paul's arguments in the welcome speech he made at the Kottayam Progressive Writers' general assembly. In the mean time I read Paul's *Soundarya Nireekshanam* and developed an admiration for him. I realized the greatness of Paul at the Trichur conference of the progressive writers. Though Paul was the president of the Progressive Writers' Organisation he opposed the move of a section of the conference to get a leftist literary manifesto approved by the general body. A lesser man would have bartered away his individual freedom to retain his presidentship. For Paul's open criticism of the Soviet Writers, the leftists covered him with insults and called him a stooge of the Vatican. But Paul held his ground. In *Keralopaharam* of 1948 Paul wrote an article about art, 'pleasure is not a purpose of art.' When some writers attacked Paul on this score I went to his defence. That was how I who

started as an opponent of Paul, turned out to be one of his ardent supporters." In his review of Paul's "Aesthetics" Marar paid a glowing tribute to the critical genius of Paul. Vaikkom Muhammed Basheer in his remnisces refers to his indebtedness to Paul. Perhaps of all the compliments paid to Paul's genius the most pithy and significant has come from Basheer. He wrote of Paul, 'A man modest and self-restrained, a great scholar, dynamic thinker, above all a lover of mankind.'

There have been a few essays written on Paul, but no biography nor study of him has appeared so far in Malayalam. Paul was one of the first Malayalam critics to assert that literary sensibility was to be renewed from time to time. In fact even as early as the forties, before modernism made its entry into Malayalam Literature he had explained its rationale in his essay, "Art and Age". He wrote: "When the correspondence between a writer's inner self and the social milieu collapses, the writer retreats from the external world into the inner world and engages himself in individualistic experiments and pursuits." None of the modern writers in Malayalam has brought forth a more valid argument in vindication of modernism. But Paul knew that if such experiments were to be solid achievements instead of being mere efforts, they should work out a new sensibility unifying the best in the tradition with the most seminal in the modern.

Paul had an integrated vision of life and a unified approach to literature. He had his reservations about religion, but he had firm faith in man and the great moral values of life in the Arnoldian sense. The greatest human achievements may be ephemeral, but man himself shall not only survive, he shall overcome. Paul was committed to the liberation of society, but he was not a communist. He fought for progress, but it was the progress of all through all, under the leadership of the best and the wisest that he had in mind. Progress was not to be achieved at the expense of individual freedom. Paul was a votary of beauty, but to him beauty was not the ivory tower into which a writer escaped. His outlook was scientific, but he was not a materialist, not even a naturalist. Paul aimed at the liberation of the human mind from all oppressing superstitions and traditions; But he also knew that the best of traditions were more liberating than the life-negating ideas. Contrasting some of the Soviet writers with the modern Kerala writers, he pointed out

that the Kerala writers were greater, for they stood on the shoulders of their hoary heritage. The high ideals of humanity were to stay and to rejuvenate humanity ceaselessly. Paul was against the exploitation of eroticism in literature. Though he knew Freudian psychology he was not for a blind application of it in literature. He respected the great masters of the West; but he never felt that Kerala writers stood only in their shadows. In his estimate, a writer like Basheer ranked with the world's best short story writers. If only Malayalam were widely spoken, Kerala writers of the first rank would have been appreciated the world over, he wrote. He limited himself to his range. He was a master of prose, his reading in fiction was far and deep. He wrote about both prose and fiction with authority. Yet he was modest in his claims. In a note he sent to Mr. S.K. Nair with reference to Mr. Nair's pen-portrait of him, he wrote, "If I were to begin my education today, I would have tried to become a first rate literary man in Malayalam. I would have tried (with others) to secure for Malayalam literature a laudable place in the comity of world literatures. I started reading Malayalam only after I became a teacher of English. My contribution is chiefly to the field of English teaching in Kerala. I couldn't integrate my love of Malayalam with the profession I had chosen." Yet Paul became the great critic that he was not only because of his genius, but also because of his mastery of English. As we have seen, Paul was much greater than just a Professor of English. He was one of the shapers of the Malayalam literature of the 20th century. Along with Marar and Mundasserry he bestrode the world of Malayalam literary criticism for two decades, like another colossus. On Paul's death Professor C.A. Sheppard, his colleague, said, "Paul had a large library, but the man was much larger."

2

Childhood and Education

Paul belonged to an ancient Syrian Catholic family, Menacherry which originally belonged to Mukkattukara, a village in Trichur. Some four hundred years ago, an ancestor of Paul built the Catholic church of the parish, as a recompense of which the church authorities offered to remember his name at the mass for two hundred years. In course of time one of the branches of the family declined. Paul's grand-father felt it infra-dig to live in Mukkattukara as a relatively poor man among affluent kinsfolk and planned to leave the place. In his youth he had enrolled himself as a novitiate in a seminary, to be later ordained as a priest, but whether it was because his independent spirit militated against the discipline of the seminary or because he felt himself unfit for the sacred profession, the fact remains that within a short time of his joining the seminary he left it for good. This caused some alarm in the family-circle dominated by the conventional elders who believed that such acts of apostasy would certainly bring the wrath of God upon the family. But nothing untoward happened, the man married and when a son was born to him he set out from Mukkattukara like Abraham from Urs in quest of a place where he could settle down and live peacefully. He came to Puthenpally, Varapuzha, built a house on a piece of land he bought and established himself there.

His son Paulose who grew into a hardworking man took to timber business and earned enough money to improve the house his father had built and to win the respect and regard of the people of Puthenpally as a man of means and integrity. His wife Rosamma, a devout woman, meek and beautiful, bore him seven children, four girls and three boys, Paul being her fifth child born to them on 1 May 1904. Paul was a buxom infant of golden complexion, radiant and lively. It was only natural that Paulose developed a special liking for the child, granting him

privileges denied to his other children: the child was to be given regular oil baths, and also tasty food; the comeliness of his figure and the glow of his complexion were to be retained at all costs.

As ill luck would have it, not long after the birth of Paul his mother fell ill and the boy missed much of the tender affection and care which only mothers can ever give their children. This might be one of the reasons why Paul was a little more attached to his father than to his mother which is rather unusual with boys as a rule. Rosamma recovered after a few months, but she could hardly exercise any domineering influence over her children; having lost her health she found it exasperating to cope with even their pranks. The responsibility of tending Paul and young Antony his younger brother, rested with their elder sister whom the boys tenderly called Kochu Pengal (Little sister). Pappu the elder brother of Paul was serious by temperament right from his childhood; as if to atone for the apostasy of his grandfather, the boy took a vow to dedicate himself to the service of the church. As Paul narrated it to Mrs. Paul later, one of his earliest recollections of his mother was associated with his being locked up by her by mistake in a cellar into which he had crept to steal candies. Neither as a boy nor as a mature man did Paul ever realise how such an overfondness for sweet food indulged without restraint could be disastrous to his health.

It did not take Paulose long to divine that Paul was an intelligent child. Education having been denied to him by destiny he was very keen that his sons should be educated, for education was sure to fetch them money and also respect in the community. Paul was only three years old when his father put him under a country-teacher. At first the little child was a bit reluctant to learn, but Kochu Pengal coaxed him into writing the alphabet, with one roasted cashewnut for each letter written. As the letters combined into words representing concrete objects, the boy found himself transported into a new world full of excitement and joy, and there was no going away from it any more. Paul was soon put into a private school offering primary education to a select few, where he proved himself far superior to his fellow students. With immense pride and high expectation Paulose put his prize-boy at St. Albert's

school, Ernakulam, run by the Italian Fathers. Paul at eight deserved admission to the upper primary class but the school authorities, chiefly considering his age, put him in the fourth standard which had, in those days, at the end of the academic year, public examination conducted by the Department of Education, Government of Cochin. At the examination Paul came out with distinction winning a scholarship. Thereafter at every public examination Paul excelled himself winning scholarships, Paulose's joy knew no bounds when he learnt the news of Paul's passing the seventh standard with distinction once again winning a scholarship. He went straight to the boarding house with a sovereign for the class-teacher and a basket of ripe mangoes for the boy, who loved them.

Paulose was an affectionate father, but he concealed his love for the children lest they be spoilt by pampering. He was a disciplinarian in his own way. According to him the boys were to have their heads shaved and they were to wear thick clothing, two things which Paul as a child despised most. Also he could not quite appreciate his mother's rationing the food for the children lest by overeating their health be spoilt. Later when Paul grew into a man and a father he was indulgent to his children, granting them all the privileges that had been denied to him as a child. However for one restriction imposed on him by his father, Paul was beholden to him; Paulose strictly forbade him from mixing freely with the boys of the village, his house and its extensive grounds being sufficient in his estimate for his children to play about, as a result of which Paul took to reading first as a hobby and later as a source of entertainment and edification. Certainly Paul read a lot while at the boarding, but he was no book-worm of sedentary habits shunning companionship and the play ground. He was popular among the students as skilled at soccer and also as a brilliant student, proficient especially at the languages, French, German, Malayalam and above all English.

Paul lost his beloved mother when he was only twelve years old, the children must have felt lonely for a while but the loving father showered his affection on them giving them a sense of security. After a year or so there came a proposal for a second marriage for the father which the kindly man put to his children for their consideration. Paul dismissed the suggestion forthwith

whereupon the father dropped the matter altogether. Right from his childhood Paul revealed his capacity to take decisions by himself; he was ever principled but never self-willed or obdurate. Since Paul didn't have the age-qualification to appear for the English School Leaving Examination, he had to wait one full year for it, a period which he devoted to reading the world's classics. Paulose's health began to decline by about this time, but unlike the other parents of his day he didn't try to bring his sons to his own profession.

At the age of fifteen Paul passed the English School Leaving Certificate Examination with distinction winning a scholarship. Hearing of the creditable success of his son the ailing Paulose heaved a sigh of relief and commented, "Now, my son might find a living." The same year with his dream of seeing his sons educated at least partly fulfilled Paulose passed away leaving the children to the care of their uncle. The well-meaning affectionate uncle consolidated the assets of his late brother which however did not come to much and took up the full responsibility for the education of his nephews. Paul's elder brother was at Kandy Seminary, his younger brother Antony was at school; Paul was sent to St. Thomas College, Trichur for higher studies.

Very little is known about Paul's student days at St. Thomas College, Trichur, the famous college of arts and sciences run by the Syrian Catholic Arch Diocese of Trichur. No doubt he impressed his professors as a brilliant student and the Catholic Fathers as a professing Syrian Catholic boy. It was obligatory for Catholics to attend the mass on Sundays and other important days, to confess their sins to the priest and to participate in the Holy communion all of which Paul did as a good Catholic without any extraneous compulsion. Back at home during the holidays Paul took an active part in the youth activities of the Parish Church. One could infer that he composed religious songs for his parishoners to sing. These songs do not have a high poetic quality, but they submit themselves with ease to musical recitals. In 1922 after passing the Intermediate Examination with honours Paul joined St. Joseph's College, Trichinopoly for his B.A. Degree with History as the main subject. Like St. Thomas College, Trichur, St. Joseph's College, Trichinopoly was also run by Catholic Fathers. It is remarkable to observe that Paul who had his education uniformly in Catholic institutions

was never for once reported to be rebellious or indisciplined. He was consistently loved by his teachers, and respected by his class-mates for the excellence of his conduct and the brilliance of his mind. But Paul loved independence. At Trichinopoly he stayed with a few of his college-mates at the first floor of a house owned by an English woman who had no children. He was extravagant with his money without worrying who made it for him and how, and spent it on excellent English films and cigarettes, and of course on books. These days Paul did not make any attempts at literary compositions in Malayalam, but his love for his language and its literature remained with him as strong as ever. While he was at Trichinopoly it happened that the college was closed for a few days owing to the outbreak of an epidemic. Paul set out for home with his friends. At Ernakulam he engaged a country boat to reach Puthenpally. As the boat cut across the gentle waves and moved on, in the stillness of the night to his utter joy Paul heard the boatman sing a song of the Virgin which he had composed earlier for his parishoners. The recollection of this homage the simple boatman paid to a composition of his adolescence always thrilled Paul to the soul.

In 1925, on his passing the B.A. Degree Examination, M.P. Paul was appointed tutor in English in St. Joseph's College, Trichinopoly. It was the beginning of the teaching career of one of the most celebrated teachers of English Kerala has ever produced.

3

A Profile of Courage

Human dignity and human freedom were the two high values held aloft by the architects of the Indian Renaissance. The poet-trio of Kerala, filled with patriotic fervour and inspired by a vision of the highest values in the Indian tradition, sang of freedom with 'full-throated' ease. Freedom was man's birth-right, freedom was life, its negation was death, freedom was nectar. National freedom came first with Vallathol, social and economic freedoms were given precedence by Kumaran Asan. According to M.P. Paul these were indeed of paramount importance. However these freedoms were of little avail unless they ensured individual freedom which was the very basis of human existence. The soul of man is free, but its manifold expressions in the world outside are inhibited by a multiplicity of taboos, and conventions, family customs and community beliefs not to speak of the economic and political structures that strangle the human spirit. The uniqueness of Paul in his attitude to individual freedom is that unlike many a vociferous advocate of personal freedom, Paul did put into practice what he actually preached.

In Indian communities, even in the most reformed and advanced groups marriages are arranged by the elders rather than left to the free choice of the young people involved. For Paul to have taken the decision to stand by the girl whom he loved, against the will of his uncle who educated him, was definitely an act of freedom, even of heroism. Mrs Paul in her memoirs gives an account of her romance with Paul and its culmination in matrimony in the face of stiff opposition from the bridegroom's family. Paul and Mary were distant cousins; in their adolescence they met and fell in love. In the estimate of Paul's uncle, Paul was the most eligible bachelor of the Syrain Catholic community at Puthenpally, and Mary's folk had trapped the young man into a marriage with a girl, poor and

without adequate support, though a little charming. Mary on her part adored the youngman of golden complexion, short, with a rich growth of hair well cropped, extremely handsome and reputed for his brilliance. In the period of Paul's courting her, Mary had to brave many a finger pointing at her, and insults and calumny. Paul let his fancy roam about freely to weave sweet dreams of his wedded life with his fiancée. From the place of his study afar he wrote thrilling epistles to Mary of which none is left for posterity. On one occasion before he left for Trichinopoly Paul left a note for Mary with a quotation from *Sakuntalam*. "Alas, the body alone moves forward, the heart beats a retreat, as does the flag of a chariot which races forward". The marriage of the two was celebrated at the church at Puthenpally; Paul's father's folk, including his own brothers and sisters, kept away from it altogether. Paul was deeply attached to his family and he loved his brothers and sisters, especially his Kochu Pengal deeply, but he let nothing stand in the way of his freedom to choose his mate for himself. It was after the birth of his third child that he was reconciled to his uncle and reunited with his family. All his life he remained loyal to his father's people. The story of Paul's love and marriage is no sentimental tale in which a head-strong young man infatuated by the charms of a fair damsel rushes madly into a wedlock with her. Rather on Paul's part, it was the manifest expression of an indomitable spirit actuated by a high sense of personal dignity and a lofty concept of human freedom and a realisation of Kumaran Asan's dictum, "The hearts of the young are free; in the marriages they make of their own wills."

As was expected of the brightest minds of the day Paul was also goaded by his friends and admirers to appear for the I.C.S. Examination. In 1927 when he was a tutor in St. Joseph's College, Trichinopoly, Paul went to Allahabad to take the I.C.S. Examination. The examiners gave him the ninth rank, only those who won up to the sixth rank were selected. One wonders what sort of an official Paul would have made, with his unbreakable spirit of freedom and his elevated concept of nationalism. At St. Alberts School, he was once caned by an Irish teacher for naming Mahatma Gandhi as the greatest living man in answer to one of the questions put by the teacher. Later, at a meeting held in connection with the birthday of the King of Travancore, Paul created a stir in the audience by pointing out

that loyalty to the king was meaningful only when it is based on loyalty to one's fellow beings and to one's country. However Paul was not fully conscious of the magnitude of the tidal waves of the freedom struggle spear-headed by the Mahatma till 1927 when his North Indian journey brought about a tremendous change in his national outlook. At Allahabad Paul the teacher of English, dressed in western style went to pay his respects to Motilal Nehru at Anand Bhavan. The sight of Motilal Nehru in simple Khadi *dhoti* and *kurtha* brought home to Paul the absurdity of blindly aping the west. He realized that the people of India were first and foremost Indians and they had to come to their own. On his return from Allahabad, Paul took to wearing Khadi—a practice to which he strictly adhered to the end of his life. Paul however knew only too well that he was not cast for a politician, and confined himself strictly to the cultural field which also was badly in need of men capable of opening new vistas of progress. Men genuinely concerned for the welfare of the people seldom find true scope in the grooves of the administrative machinery, and Paul had no occasion to grieve over his failure to be enlisted by the British Government for its service in India.

In 1928 Paul joined St. Thomas College, Trichur, on a contract basis as a lecturer in English. In 1929 he appeared as a private candidate for the M.A. Degree Examination in English Language and Literature of the Madras University, and came out with distinction. St. Thomas College was Paul's own Alma Mater; most of his professors were on its staff, and one of them Rev. Father Palookkaran was its principal when Paul joined its Department of English. He was not there for long when an offer came for him from Chidambaram College, Chidambaram, which he declined out of his love of his Alma Mater, and his loyalty to his community. In the early stage of Paul's service, the best of relations subsisted between Paul and his Principal, for Paul's part the College gave him ample opportunity to prove his mettle as a teacher of English, and for the management the addition of a brilliant loyal Syrian Catholic teacher to the Department of English was an asset. It was while Paul was working in St. Thomas College, Trichur that he wrote an erudite thesis *On the Necessity of Theism* a refreshing contrast to Shelley's fiery dissertation *On the Necessity of Atheism*. This

little piece of disquisitional prose along with the concise but profound exposition of *The Catholic Church of the Twentieth Century* was rated very highly by the Catholic scholars of Kerala, and even prescribed as reference books to the students in the seminaries. Not long after Paul joined St. Thomas College, Trichur, Joseph Mundassery joined the Department of Malayalam of the same college. The association of these two critical minds had far reaching effects on the cultural growth of Kerala. To begin with Joseph Mundassery was as loyal to the Church as M.P. Paul. The two youngmen combined together to translate Thomas A Kempis's *The Imitation of Christ* into Malayalam. Unlike the clergy of the time who were totally averse to Kerala art and Malayalam Literature Fr. Palookkaran had a genuine interest in Malayalam which combined with his religiosity and community-consciousness prompted him to encourage the literary enterprises of both Paul and Joseph.

Soon M.P. Paul earned a reputation for himself as an excellent teacher of English. Paul appeared shy to face his students; he would rub his face, push back his hair and then start his talk. Once the lecture was started, communication was effortless, all distinctions between the lecturer, the subject taught, and the students disappeared, all the three constituents merging and blending into one integrated symphony. Paul could count among his early disciples such men of eminence as C. Achutha Menon, E.M.S. Namboothirippad, A.M. Thomas, and P.T. Punnoose. In his *Pages of Reminiscences*, C. Achutha Menon devotes a chapter for M.P. Paul, which gives us materials enough to understand and assess him as a teacher.

"Paul was short, very handsome, his hair was unkempt, often he would push it back with his hand. As he started his lecture he held on to the chair or the edge of the table. As he lectured he would push it a bit forward, or pull it back a little now and then Paul took to wearing Khadi with the Salt Satyagraha movement of Gandhiji. He wore a dhothi, a shirt, or coat, and a khadi shawl. (Later he took to wearing khadar *juba* (kurtha), instead of shirt). In those days there were three teachers in the Department of English in St. Thomas College—Professor P. Ramanathan, Principal Fr. Palookkaran and Mr. M.P. Paul, each excellent in his own way. The notes of Professor Ramanathan were useful from the point of view of the

examination. He coached the students for the examination, but the delights of literature eluded his understanding. Fr. Palookaran on the other hand could enjoy literature, but never took pains to prepare his lesson. Also he taught most of the English lessons in Malayalam. Paul was a contrast to either as a teacher of English. There were enough materials in his lecture to help the students pass the examination creditably. But there was much more in it for the students to enjoy and to reflect upon. His lectures were to the students excursions into the realms of imagination and also explorations of the subtleties of poetry and language."

Achutha Menon remembers Paul reading to the students a number of poems of Robert Burns in the course of his teaching of Carlyle's essay on Robert Burns. In the Intermediate class Paul did Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night* giving equal emphasis to its romantic and comic elements. Being by disposition an arch-opponent of puritanism of every variety and an unrelenting critic of all forms of cant, conceit, and causistry, Paul delighted in bringing out the beauty of Shakespeare's exposure of the conceited Malvolio. The teaching of Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* also suited the temperament of Paul, Mr. and Mrs. Bennet and Parson Collins offering plenty of scope for comedy. Paul did not take resort to Malayalam medium for explaining the English text, but in the course of the explanation of passages in English he came out with parallel passages in Malayalam. Achutha Menon remembers how once as he explained the subtle differences between far-fetched conceits and spontaneous similes he drew a contrast between Vallathol's conceit in *Prabhata Geetham* (Song of Morning) praised by G. Sankara Kurup and Vallathol's spontaneous imagery in *Radhayude Kriharthartha* (Radha's sense of fulfilment) which is genuinely poetic. This provoked a student-admirer of G. Sankara Kurup to argue with Paul, which far from irritating the teacher only brought forth the best in him. Paul was ever patient with students, willing to explain himself to them and also giving them full freedom to entertain their own views. There was not a trace of the professional dogmatism of the old despotic professor about him. The teacher was there at the disposal of the students to show them the way, never to lead them by the nose. Of the reputed teachers of English of those days in the Travancore-

Cochin area only P. Sankaran Nambiar who was much senior to Paul equalled Paul in his mastery over English as well as Malayalam. Nambiar excelled in the composition of Malayalam verses and Paul eclipsed his contemporaries at the University circle in his fine discrimination of literary qualities of works, old and new.

For a time, work in St Thomas College seemed pleasant for Paul: the Principal was kind, the colleagues on the staff were cordial, and the students were full of love and admiration for him. But the inevitable finally took place, the independent spirit of Paul clashed with the authoritarian structure of the management. In his confrontation with the authority, among the college teachers of Kerala Paul stands as a singular example of a relentless fighter for justice. It was an act of freedom unimaginable to the intelligentsia of the day working in private colleges, for insubordination to authority spelt instant dismissal from service, and colleges were few and far between. The service conditions of the staff of St. Thomas College were far from satisfactory as one may infer from the accounts given of them by men like Joseph Mundassery. There was a general cut in the salary of government servants in Cochin State in 1930; under its cover the management of St. Thomas College cut the salaries of the teachers employed by them. Principal Palookkaran did this preremptorily without giving any advance notice to the teachers in the college. In his autobiography Joseph Mundassery gives a detailed account of the situation obtaining in the college at the time, and the reaction of the staff to the notorious salary cut.

"The staff of St. Thomas College, Trichur were underpaid, even Paul got less than a hundred rupees. Many teachers didn't have regular appointment orders, few got the annual increments. Salary was disbursed in instalments by the Head Clerk who would advance money to teachers according to his likes and dislikes. Paul and a few others detested this practice and requested the Principal to see that salary was disbursed in full on a fixed date every month. Father Palookkaran had agreed to this, but the relation between the Principal and Paul became strained on this score. It was against this setting that matters came to a head with regard to Paul on the issue of the salary cut.

"As soon as the Principal circulated the notice of the cut, eleven of the teachers submitted to him a request not to implement the cut without holding a meeting of the staff and explaining the matter to them. This request was summarily rejected by the Principal. As Vice-Principal Joseph Pettah expressed himself helpless in the matter and as his other colleagues hesitated to enter the fray Paul decided upon a course of action all his own. He prepared a tract titled *The Story of a Cut* and published it. His argument was that a cut without consent of the parties involved was a highhanded act and a gross breach of faith. When Father Palookkaran came out with a counter-pamphlet explaining his stand and snubbing Paul, Paul paid back with compound interest with his second pamphlet *Principal turns Pamphleteer*. When he found that Fr. Palookkaran was in no mood to relent, Paul issued legal notice to the manager of the college, Bishop Rt. Rev. Dr. Vazhappilly, through his lawyer Puthiezhatt Raman Menon.* Paul could have donated more money to the college than Father Palookkaran cut from his salary. But the vital question was whether the employer had the right to violate the terms of agreement with his employee. It was not just bravado on the part of a believing Catholic layman to fight with his Bishop, in the eyes of the faithful it was an outrageous act violating the very foundation of the Catholic community structure built on discipline. But Paul set himself like a knight in arms ready to thrust at injustice. The Bishop of Trichur, a perfect gentleman as he was, in order to avoid the scandal involved in a possible litigation with his employee worked out a solution to the tricky problem. He advised Father Palookkaran to admit the wrong in the order of the cut, Paul on his part agreed to resign his post in the college with money as compensation. Paul's refusal to comply with the demand of the Principal cost him his job, nevertheless in offering a stubborn resistance to arbitrary abuse of power by authority he was creating certain human values for his generation. It was three decades after Paul's resignation from St. Thomas College that the College Teachers of Kerala mustered the prowess and strength to unite themselves to fight against the management for their legitimate rights."

* Puthiezhatt Raman Menon later became a justice. He was also for sometime president of the Kerala Sahitya Akademi.

Immediately after resigning from St. Thomas College Paul hired a building just opposite the Bishop's palace, and opened in it a tutorial college to coach students who failed in the University examinations. There was a rush of students to this new institution as soon as the results were out. As a young revolutionary Paul was immensely popular with the progressive-minded in society. Talented young men frequently met at Paul's tutorial in the evenings and formed a forum for discussion of cultural and social problems of topical interest. Soon Paul started a periodical, 'Navakeralam' (The New Kerala) to publish the independent views expressed in this forum and also to give his responses to current issues and events, the chief feature in its column being Paul's scathing criticism of the unwholesome practices in the institutions run by the Catholic Fathers. Of the several satirical travesties that appeared in the columns of Navakeralam the most devastating was "The Bishop at the foot of the Stairs." This was vindicated in its ruthless exposure of the deadening conventions and traditions that deprived large sections of the laity of the church their legitimate rights. The authorities of St. Thomas College at this time were obscurantists. However one wonders whether Paul was not a bit hasty with his criticism of the constitution of the Church structure. There came to be a lacuna between Paul and the local church authorities, it only widened with the passing of time. In the meantime Paul tried his best to be a member of his community. He accepted the offer to be editor of *Cherupushpam* (Little Flower) published from Irinjalakkuda and ran the periodical successfully for some time. In its columns he did pioneering work in reforming the language of the Malayalam translation of the Catholic liturgy, a venture not appreciated by the clergy of the day but undertaken by them with great zeal after the second Vatican, in the sixties.

After a year of its starting, the Tutorial College was shifted to another building in the heart of the town. The progressive forum of the youth used to meet at the college as earlier, it was attended in these days by both G. Sankara Kurup and Joseph Mundassery. Constant exposure to the forum stimulated the literary thought of Paul considerably. Paul wrote his *Novel Sahityam* (The Novel) and *Khandukatha Sahityam* (The Short Story) when he was in Trichur. The Tutorial College brought

money and fame to Paul but it appeared as though he was not content with its success. In 1933, all of a sudden Paul wound up the College and set out for Madras to study law though by this time in addition to his wife he had his three daughters to maintain, the eldest of them in a boarding school. Mrs. Paul went to their house at Alwaye to stay there with her younger daughters. With the income from their coconut garden of three and a half acres she found it difficult to make both ends meet. In the meantime Paul did part-time work in Rajaji's Tutorial College to support himself at Madras. It was a difficult year for the family. In order to clear the debts incurred during the period the family had to sell their house at Alwaye for eight hundred rupees. Paul passed the F.L. examination with distinction, yet there was one more year to go before he could take the law degree. That year Paul spent the annual holidays with his family at Puthenpally. When the college was about to reopen and Paul started for Madras an invitation came to him to steer the Department of English of St. Berchman's College, Changancherry. He accepted the invitation with pride and joy, his study of law dropped once for all.

Paul went with his family in a special boat to Changancherry. For sometime the reputation of St. Berchman's College had suffered an eclipse owing to the lack of efficient professors on its staff. With a view to boosting its name the authorities decided to appoint M.P. Paul Head of the Department of English and to have men like V.V. John on its staff. Paul served S.B. College for five years, until he found himself in disagreement with the Principal and the management of the College. Finally the Principal, Father Romeo Thomas, advised the management to discharge Paul from service.

Paul received the dismissal order unperturbed. But students who got wind of it prepared to launch a strike and Paul had to intervene to pacify them. In this context some well intentioned people volunteered to mediate between Paul and the management and managed to bring about a rapprochement. Paul called on the Bishop at his palace, the Bishop was generous in his approach to the matter and the problem was solved for the time being. But as days passed Father Romeo Thomas grew vindictive, it seemed, and made work in the college difficult for Paul. Paul resigned his post, but he sued the management for breach of

faith and won the case. During the holidays of that year Paul went to stay at Puthenpally with his wife and five children, with no job at hand.

When the schools reopened in 1938, Paul started a Tutorial College at Changanacherry, which was from 1940 called M.P. Paul's College. As soon as the University Examination results were out, there was a heavy rush to Paul's College exceeding all expectations. Paul's college flourished, and in standards of excellence it was on a par with the best private colleges in Travancore. The teaching staff were excellent, the class rooms were well furnished, with a table and a chair for every student of the B.A. Class, and there were separate hostels for men and women attached to the college. Mrs. Paul records in her memoirs that their life at Changanacherry was the very best from the points of view of health, wealth and happiness. Paul made money, he was lavish in spending too. He shifted his college from Changanacherry to Ernakulam in 1940, and from there to Kottayam in 1942, when people were ordered to evacuate under the threat of bombardment by the Japanese during the second world war. Paul's college prospered in all these places.

When Paul's College at Kottayam was at its hey day, the Management of S.B. College, Changanacherry once again invited Paul to guide its Department of English. This was under extraordinary circumstances. The State Congress struggle for responsible government in Travancore was gathering momentum. The freedom struggle started in Travancore as a combined movement of the Ezhava and Christian Communities to get their rights for Government employment recognised by the Government, gradually it grew into a movement for responsible government when the Nair leaders also joined hands with other leaders. Sir C.P. Ramaswamy Iyer, the Dewan of Travancore, resolved to cripple the financial strength and the morale of the communities involved in the struggle, one by one. Initially his wrath was unleashed upon the Syrian Christian Community which was the most prosperous in those days. The liquidation of the National Quilon Bank, the sealing of the *Malayala Manorama*, and such other acts were calculated to demoralise and destroy the Christians. In a dramatic move to deprive S.B. College, Changanacherry, of efficient teachers Sir C.P. Ramaswamy Iyer asked Professor Sahasra Nama Iyer to resign from the

staff of the college, which he did. In order to meet the challenge and give a rebuff to the Dewan, letting bygones be bygones, S.B. College authorities requested M.P. Paul to head the Department of English of the college as earlier. Paul complied with the request knowing only too well that he would find it difficult to serve the institution for long. As it turned out, he served it this time only for a term of two years. The college had offered him a salary of rupees four hundred, attractive enough for any professor of English of the time, but to Paul freedom and self respect took precedence over the most handsome emoluments that managements could offer him. In 1946, Paul left S.B. College for good and he was back in his own college, enjoying once again the pure breath of its freedom.

In 1950, Paul got another offer, this time from his Excellency Mar Ivanios the Arch Bishop of Trivandrum, to build the Department of English, Mar Ivanios College, Trivandrum, which was only just started. In those days there was no University rule preventing college teachers from working in tutorial colleges. Paul accepted the invitation of the Arch Bishop and shifted his residence and Paul's college to Trivandrum. This was a workable arrangement for Paul, the city of Trivandrum being specially convenient to him for the education of his children and also for the development of Paul's college. Paul stayed with his family at Trivandrum for two years when quite unexpectedly death came to him. He left behind him his wife and nine children of whom only the eldest was married at that time.

To his last day Paul lived a life of independence. He showed by the example of his life, free from fear and hate, that in the dialectical confrontation between authority and individual it was up to the individual spirit to hold its own and by a stubborn resistance force authority to modify its structures or by a firm assertion of the will to carve out its own existence inventing new structures. Paul's attitude to the Catholic Church and the Indian Communist Party offers us unmistakable proof of this conviction of his. He firmly believed that as man was born into freedom he should not let his soul be bound in fetters.

4

Professor and Principal

The running of a tutorial college involved capital investment, employment of teaching and non-teaching staff, tactful handling of students and above all management of business. Paul entrusted the management of the college to responsible persons such as Mr. Gopala Menon, his own personal investment being the brilliance of his lecture and the integrity of his character. Mrs. Mary Paul was the warden of the women's hostel. Paul had an efficient team of teaching staff consisting of Messrs Gopala Menon, Achutha Menon, Kochu Govindan Nair, Mathen Tharakan and Narayana Dev each extremely good in his own way. The students of the tutorial college were comparatively grown up, responsible young men and women, so to say. They had the freedom to mix freely without violating the canons of decorum, a privilege denied to them in the regular colleges by the conventional dons. Thanks to the excellence of the coaching in the college most of the students passed their examinations, but it was never so oppressive as to make their study laborious and dull. The students had their fun and frolic, mirth and merriment, their practical jokes and annual socials, and Paul was always with them as their guide and friend. Paul's students, spread all over India, have happy recollections of his personality, his character and his lectures. They gave him the respect due to a champion of freedom, and a man upright and pure. His class notes were literary pieces. One student could recite from memory as an example of its style the following sentences from Paul's note on Charles Lamb's "Dream Children": "It was in a pensive mood that Lamb contemplated the tableau which is immortalised in the essay 'Dream Children'. The pathos of the essay is heightened by the fact that it is the most poignant and beautiful expression of all the joy that he has missed in his life." According to him Paul's practice was to lecture for the first

twenty to thirty minutes and to dictate notes extempore for the rest of the hour. Paul was a chain smoker; it appeared as though he suspended it only during the hours of his lecture. The greatest achievement of Paul as a Professor and Principal was that he could leave in the minds of his students an indelible impression about the strength of his personality and the depth of his study.

Paul treated the other members of the staff of the college as members of his own family. Never did he stint them their remuneration, nor did he ever stand in the way of their progress. Mathen Thakaran left Paul's College in 1944 to join St. John's college, Palayamcottah, his vacancy in Paul's College being filled up by S.K. Nair. In his book *Njan Kanda Sahitya Karanmar* (The Literary Men I saw) S.K. Nair describes his meeting with Principal M.P. Paul. The parlour of Paul's house was neat and tidy and well-furnished with his books nicely set in his Almirah. Paul himself occupied the rocking chair which he loved. With the deliberate intention to impress Paul, Mr. S.K. Nair introduced himself to Paul with a description of the details of his qualification in stilted English. To Mr. Nair's utter dismay Paul responded in pure Malayalam. He said to Mr. Nair, "Mr. Nair, you may join the college, but remember these students are not a submissive flock, and we cannot take any disciplinary action against them as they do in regular colleges; if you can manage them, well and good, but that is for you to say." Those few words painted for Mr. Nair the picture of a free private tutorial college. He decided to join the college, at least he would have the privilege of working under such a man as Paul. As Principal, Paul had no serious student-problem to solve. Those who failed to rise up to the high standards of conduct expected of a student of Paul's college were free to leave the institution forthwith. The mischievous who came to scoff remained to pray, but the malicious finding the place unsuited for their genius left the college in stealth. In the estimate of the public it was a distinction to have studied in Paul's college: this prestige in itself washed away the stain of past failures on the part of the student.

Paul was a fast and voracious reader intent to peruse every good book, poem, play, fiction, or criticism that came his way. He adored Shakespeare and Keats, but loved the company of

the masters of fiction, and humourists like Belloc, Chesterton, Jerome K. Jerome, and Wodehouse. The detective works of Conan Doyle, Chesterton and others gave him pure delight. He shared the pleasures of his reading with his colleagues and the most talented among his students. Paul took the initiative in staging Shakespeare's plays in St. Berchman's College. When 'Macbeth' was performed he took the role of Macduff. At home it was one of the great joys of Paul to enact scenes from Shakespeare with his children, his own favourite role being that of Othello. Paul's lectures on Shakespeare and other masters of English were remarkable for the new dimensions he could bring to bear upon their works. It was as though a spell was cast upon his students as he spoke. His English was impeccable, his voice engaging, each of his expressions felicitous and instinct with power. To the admiring Paul was a legend, to the sceptical Paul was the holy mount totally inaccessible. But Paul like the sun, continued to shed his light on all alike; he was at all costs considerate to his students.

Paul was lucky that he invariably got the very best men on the teaching staff of his college. In course of time a talented young man joined his staff. His name was C.J. Thomas. At the time when Paul offered the job to him, even in his wildest fancy he did not dream that the man would soon steal the heart of his eldest daughter. Thomas was a talented artist, excellent playwright and dynamic thinker all rolled into one. Like Paul, he too, valued independence of spirit. Born as the son of a priest of the Jacobite Syrian Christian Community which belongs to the fraternity of the Pan-Orthodox Christians as differentiated from the Roman Catholic Church, and brought up by his father to be ordained a priest, in course of time Thomas had stoutly refused to wear the robe of the priest and declared himself to be a communist. It was only years later that Thomas renounced his allegiance to the Communist party and affirmed his faith in democracy. Paul had no difficulty in appreciating the originality and talents of the young man. But he did not consider him worthy of the hand of his eldest daughter. She was eighteen at that time, and Thomas was considerably senior to her; from the point of view of Paul, Thomas had actually seduced his daughter. Paul asked himself whether governed by pure sentiment he was trying to deny Thomas the personal free-

dom which he himself had exercised as a young man in the choice of his bride. However he might try he could not reconcile himself to the view that his daughter made her choice as a mature, responsible woman. Wasn't it an instance of mad infatuation and gross seduction from which she was to be saved by her guardian? But Paul was definite about one thing; if the two were bent upon wedlock, they should be united in marriage with his blessings. Rosy was married to C.J. Thomas and Thomas continued on the staff of Paul's College.

Paul was a great pioneer in the field of private education for the young. He had his own vision of education modelled after Tagore's conception of Santiniketan and his ideas of free education. Each student should get the education most suited to the development of his special talents. Those who were good at singing should be able to go to the Music Academy, artists should be sent to Fine Arts College. Free knowledge should be accessible to all; the old and the young without any regimentation imposed from outside should be able to sit together and discuss things that stimulated the mind. Paul granted the maximum freedom to the children, he was particular that the minds of the young should be liberated from superstitions, taboos and traditional practices that had no relevance in the contemporary context. Liberal education in the true sense of the term not only inculcated the best of human values in the mind, it necessarily achieved emancipation of the mind from the trammels of customs and blind beliefs. Many of the conventional believers in the Catholic Church thought that Paul's litigation with the Bishop would be met with punishment from heaven. Mrs. Paul cites an episode to show how eager some people were to see some evil befall Paul in the months following Paul's resignation from S.B. College, Changanacherry. That year, it happened that once Mrs. Paul sent the head clerk and a peon to Alleppey by boat with the examination fees of the students appearing for the September Examination. It was a rainy day, and it happened that the boat capsized. Somehow the passengers escaped, among them the clerk and the peon. That evening the two came back to Changanacherry with the receipts of the money remitted at the Treasury. When Mrs. Paul told about it to Paul, he commented with a smile; "If the money were lost, people would have said that it was punishment from heaven for my revolt

against the Bishop. But look! This shows that God is on my side! What do you say?" Paul stood by truth, and God was Truth. He expected his children and his students to stand by it.

Though a revolutionary himself he could not approve of student-strikes of post-independence India. Students were not to be pawns in the hands of the politicians. It was true that the educational system which was a legacy of the British rule to independent India was fraught with inherent drawbacks. Planned and purposeful attempts were to be made to restructure it to suit the needs of modern India; ill-timed and aimless student-agitations could only add to the frustration of the students and produce little good to the country. Paul stuck to his ideals of high education which had a great deal in common with Newman's Idea of a University though unlike Newman he put humanity rather than God at its centre.

5

The Man

People remember Paul with respect and affection. Shy by disposition it took Paul a little time to break the ice with strangers. He spoke little, but his words conveyed a lot. He was hospitable, courteous to guests: he always put them at their ease like the true gentleman of Newman's description. He was chivalrous to ladies, but had little time for small talk with them, and entrusted the duty of entertaining his women guests to his wife. Paul had a number of literary friends who felt free to call on him any time of the day. They felt perfectly at home in his residence.

Paul went to bed at 10 p.m. and got up by 4 or 4.30 a.m. He would take a cup of coffee from the flask, switch on the table-lamp and read. Often he would spend a little time to exchange pleasant sallies with his wife whom he would wake up deliberately for the fun of it. He took his bath in the evening, Mary had to apply oil to his body before the bath. He ate tasty food, all types of delicacies he loved, it mattered little whether they were good for his health or not. However tired he might feel he would do the work for the day, and no worry or anxiety could deprive him of his peaceful sleep. He was a very loyal and loving husband and an affectionate father. According to him what his children needed most was not a lot of money, but good food, upbringing and affection. He wished that his children were able to develop themselves in their own way, to the fullest. He wished that his third daughter who had real talent for music could be sent to a Music Academy. Education must certainly help one find a way of livelihood, but more important was the development of one's talent and the enlargement of one's mind.

Right from the early days of his career as a teacher Paul divided his time between working days and holidays. During working days he would be at the place of work, Trichur, Changanacherry, Ernakulam or Kottayam as the case might be. But

during the holidays he would be at Alwaye or at Puthenpally. Once he spent a few days with his family in a big boat on River Periyar at Alwaye. It was thrilling to live in the open like that for a few days free from cares or worries. In summer the waters of Periyar gave coolness to the body and the breeze blowing from the west calmed the spirit. Because of Periyar, Alwaye is excellent as a summer resort, and like many of the well-to-do of his days Paul used to stay in Alwaye for summer. Paul and Kuttipuzha Krishna Pillai were of the same age, and Mrs. Paul recalls how one summer she and the children happened to have Kuttipuzha Krishna Pillai as their immediate neighbour in Alwaye. When Paul was away Kuttipuzha was a veritable uncle to the children.

When Paul went to stay at Puthenpally he would become a farmer for the time being. He would take an active part in cleaning the premises and tidying the house. And then his sabbatical began. Paul would attend to no official work during this period, he would not even send replies to the letters he received. He would read books, especially light ones like the works of Stephen Leacock or Wodehouse. He was not good at farming, but excellent at gardening. Mary remembers how sedulously Paul tended the little garden he made in the courtyard of the house they had rented at Trivandrum.

Paul was very keen that the rooms should be kept clean and tidy. He used his books liberally but never let them lie scattered about on his table or the room. He loved his rocking chair and sat on it reading, smoking his cigarette dropping its ash carefully in the ash-tray. Paul loved drinks, every variety of it, he took them in the company of his friends, waxing eloquent as glass after glass was emptied. In 1950 when Paul shifted his residence to Trivandrum he abstained from drink, for he did not want to violate the dry laws of the district. Paul had a high sense of humour, he was not specially good at repartees, but his words were always suggestive. He could be satirical or sarcastic if he wished to be, his criticism had both punch and power as is evident from his writings. Paul had his childhood friends and he enjoyed their company. Mrs. Paul narrates how Paul enjoyed the companionship of his friend Kunjaipu who when tipsy would entertain the whole family with his mock speeches and performances. Kunjaipu himself would mimic the speeches of the various partici-

pants at a public function. His mock presidential speech would begin with. "Ladies and Gentlemen, you know, we are competition, consideration, confusion, adulteration, constipation, railway station and abortion—yes that is the point." This set the whole family roar with laughter.

Paul loved Karnatic music and had an expensive library of records. Generally he played them after supper, sometimes for hours. At Madras Paul came across one of the most talented musicians of Kerala, Mammen Bhagavathar, a Syrian Christian, who had left his native village for Tanjore as a boy out of his love of music and studied classical music at the feet of great musicians there. Mammen Bhagavathar had travelled to various parts of India and won gold medals from distinguished princes and princesses. Back in Kerala he got little encouragement either within his community or outside it. He would call on Paul and spend a few days with him. Paul loved the classical ragas of Mammen Bhagavathar. Paul commented, "Mammen is no doubt a past master in classical music. His misfortune was that he was born in a community that failed to appreciate his talents". The Syrian Christian Community of Kerala was highly advanced in the educational and cultural fields, but they had for years kept themselves aloof from Indian art, music and literature lest their faith be shaken by Hindu influence. In the latter half of the nineteenth century Christian missionaries played a decisive role in shaping modern Malayalam prose, yet the Christian acceptance of Malayalam literature was limited to its lexicon, grammar and prose. By the beginning of the twentieth century the situation improved for the Christian men of letters, they made successful attempts at the different genres of literature. Even at this stage very few of the Christians came forward to appreciate the temple arts and classical music. Paul had a clearer vision of future India than most other members of his community, he knew for certain that Christians could not for ever keep themselves isolated from the rest of the people of India culturally. They had to claim as theirs too the past of India with its rich tradition and cultural heritage and make their own contribution to the growth of a culture which was to be a fine blend of the old and the new.

It is true that Paul refused to adhere to the canons of the Syrian Catholic Community of which he was a member. Early in life he was a practising catholic, but in course of time he lost

his faith in the rituals, ceremonies and practices of the Church; however there was no disclaiming of his inheritance of the culture of the Syrian Christian Community of Kerala. Though he was earning enough from his college to support himself and his family, though he needed no new feather to be added to his cap as a professor of English, as if in response to some call coming from the inner recesses of the community of his birth he responded to the invitations that came from Catholic Managements to serve their institutions. When the second invitation came from S.B. College Changanacherry to serve it he told his wife: "I would go, may be it is a kind of sweet revenge for me, or maybe I am prompted by my Christian ideals to return good for evil, I just can't say." He would serve the establishment again, but certainly not at the peril of his personal freedom. In 1947 when he resigned from S.B. College, Changanacherry, for a second time, it appeared as though he would never again serve any Catholic institution. But in 1950 he got a telegraphic communication from the Arch Bishop of Trivandrum, "Laid up very much wish to see you" and showing this communication to his wife Paul commented: "This is in fact diplomacy of the first order, it would appear as though the Arch Bishop himself would have come here had his health permitted it." To Paul, the spontaneous assent he gave to the request was neither a matter of sweet revenge nor a matter of ideals, but an instinctive response to an urge to serve the community which continued to own him. Paul's own brother was a Catholic priest, he had many Catholic priest-friends like Father Eapen, Father William, and Father Benedict. While at Changanacherry at the instance of Father Eapen, Paul attended the holy mass in the Church. Paul held Christ in high reverence, but honest to himself he refused to entertain beliefs in personal sins that might be absolved by a confessor priest. Christians cannot partake of the holy communion unless the confessor priest prepares them for that and those who do not qualify themselves to receive the communion are denied all privileges as a member of Christian community including the right to be buried after death in the cemetery of the Church. That was how Paul was refused a ceremonial burial by the Church authorities. But enigmas remain: was Paul, the author of the *Necessity of Theism*, an atheist? Did he deny categorically the saving sacrifice of Jesus

Christ or was it just that he had lost his faith in the bona fides of the ecclesiastical structure of the church or was it that he could not put his trust in the priests who were no better than others? There are enlightened men in the church who hold the view that if only the clergy of the time were a little more imaginative, Paul, like Mundassery, would have agreed to abide by the conventions of his community without necessarily endorsing all its practices.

If Paul was not wholeheartedly with the God of the Church, he was totally opposed to the Mammon of the heathens. He would say, "whenever money took possession of man, it drove the humanity out of him. Money would come and go, man was to be primarily human." Paul was a spendthrift, but he saved enough money to buy a few acres of coconut gardens, and he insured himself for seven hundred rupees, a small amount for his big family. Money was for the use of it, never could it be an idol, an object in itself. Once a pick-pocket took his purse on his way to a theatre where a good English picture was running its last show. What made Paul ill at ease was not certainly the loss of his purse, but his missing a good picture which was running.

Mary was a good housewife; she managed her household cleverly and skilfully. It was her duty to keep the house, to entertain guests and to bring up the children. Only on very few occasions did Paul rebuke Mary. Mary remembers how Paul was unhappy at her preparing a dish of fish which could offend the vegetarianism of their guest Kochu Govindan Nair while they lived in the boat in Periyar at Alwaye. Paul didn't wish Mary to shout at or abuse others even under provocation, even if it be once in a while. Peace was to prevail in the house. Paul's faith in giving full freedom to the children was put to severe test when his eldest daughter Rosy chose C.J. Thomas as her husband. After much hesitation he finally gave in to the wishes of his daughter.

Mrs. Paul writes that she had seen Paul's eyes filled with tears only on two occasions: when his elder son and third daughter had both serious attacks of typhoid fever, and when he heard the news of the death of Mahatma Gandhi. Paul was stout of heart even though his health was rapidly declining; he drew strength from the integrity of his character. He was true to his own self, in all that he thought, said and did.

6

New Frontiers

Paul played a signal role in steering the course of Malayalam literature at a crucial stage of its development. He inspired the young writers of the period to free themselves from conventions and to base their writings on social reality. The chief object of literature was man, and his predicament in the contemporary social and cultural milieu.

Paul had become a literary celebrity in 1930 at the age of twenty six with the publication of his *Novel Sahityam*. Kuttikrishna Marar rightly said that the book with its devastating criticism of Appan Thampuran and a few others should have won him greater fame as an iconoclast at that time. Paul made history when he brought forth his explosive pamphlet *The Story of a Cut*, exposing the breach of faith on the part of the Catholic management of St. Thomas College, Trichur. When he resigned his job in St. Thomas College and started his Tutorial College, progressive minded people of the time looked upon him as a revolutionary. Both G. Sankara Kurup and Joseph Mundassery alike sought his company. Joseph Mundassery in his autobiography records how he used to read the books recommended by Paul. Appan Thampuran, a great patron of letters at that time, expressed his desire to see in person the critic of his books. When they met, Thampuran asked Paul whether it was advisable to be so critical of the works of the new genre in Malayalam. Paul, as a critic was of the view that truth must be told about works at all events however eminent their authors be.

It was only natural that young writers of the time sought Paul's company and looked upon him for leadership. The feudal structure of Kerala society embedded mainly in the caste-system began to totter as ideas of national freedom and social revolution awakened the people to the need of evolving a new society

and culture in Kerala. The urges of the people demanded new forms of expression which was in truth the rationale for the new school of literature called the Progressive Literature. In the thirties while still working in Changanacherry Paul felt the impact of the Jeevat Sahitya Movement which developed into the Progressive Literature Movement in Kerala. In Malayalam Paul was its chief theoretician and philosopher. His commitment to the movement brought him into active fellowship with a number of talented short-story writers, poets and critics who won laurels in course of time. It was a galaxy of men comprising Thakazhi Siva Sankara Pillai, novelist and author of *Chemmeen* (Prawn); P. Kesava Dev, novelist, and author of *Odayilninnu* (From the Gutter); Changampuzha Krishna Pillai, poet and author of *Ramanan*; Muhammed Basheer, novelist and author of *Balyakala Sakhi* (childhood playmate); Kedamangalam Pappukkutty, poet; S. Guptan Nair, critic; Joseph Mundassery, critic; and R.S. Kurup, novelist. There were also writers of the leftist group such as E.M.S. Namboodirippad, C. Achutha Kurup, and M.S. Devadas in the same circle.

When the progressive literary movement was in full swing Paul received a number of literary men at his house. Some came for comfort and encouragement, some for advice and some others for working out the strategy for the new literary organisation of writers who revolted against the reigning schools of literary thought and style dictated by Mahakavi Ulloor and Mahakavi Vallathol and their votaries. Mrs. Paul in her memoirs cites a few episodes related to this period, which bring out Paul's sense of humour, his hospitality and his leadership. Once he made his wife hear a weary story read out to her by its author; and when she protested against it later, Paul with a twinkle in his eye remarked that it was a training given to Mary in order to develop her into a writer. She also remembers how O.M.C. Nampoothiripad and Thakazhi crashed into the house occasionally and partook of the non-vegetarian food and also drinks served there. In connection with the anniversary of the progressive literary movement held at Kottayam a number of literary men came to Paul's house, and enjoyed his hospitality.

Paul had the charisma to draw free thinkers and literary men around him. Mathen Tharakan, sometime his colleague, was his life-long friend. It was Mathen Tharakan who introduced Vaik-

kom Mohammed Basheer to Paul when they were at Ernakulam. S.K. Nair another colleague grew into one of his ardent admirers. Paul was associated with periodicals, *Nava Keralam* and *Cherupushpam* (Little Flower) to begin with. While at Changanacherry he started a periodical, *Katha Varika* (Story Weekly) featuring short stories of the up-and-coming writers of the day. Muttathu Varkey, writer of popular novels, was the assistant editor of *Katha Varika*. When Paul was at Ernakulam he started another periodical *Udayam* (Dawn) which introduced a number of new features such as humorous skits, lampoons, informative essays and so on. As the chief editor of these periodicals Paul could win the regard and friendship of a number of literary men. Any literary attempt that was new in content or style could find a place in the columns of Paul's periodicals which contributed largely to the resuscitation of the cultural life of Kerala.

While at Kottayam Paul gave the leadership to the formation of a literary forum, *Sahitee Sakhyam* (Literary League). Paul was its founder-president, S.K. Nair was its Secretary. It had among others Karoor Neelakanta Pillai and Vaikkom Mohamed Basheer as its members. The Sakhyam met every Sunday evening at Paul's Tutorial College, and held lively discussions on a variety of literary topics. Members could present their own writings at these sessions for evaluation by fellow members. Basheer presented his *Bulyakala Sakhi* (Childhood playmate) before its publication in one of these sessions. It evoked mixed reactions from the audience. Most of the members found certain portions of it offensive to their sensibilities, the Muslim social set up sounded exotic to them. But Seetha Raman and Karoor had a few good things to say about the book. Paul in his summing up paid a glowing tribute to the book describing it as the finest social novel in Malayalam since the publication of *Indulekha*. This was an unmistakable testimony to the unerring critical discernment of Paul. Basheer's reputation as the foremost novelist of Malayalam was established that day. Though at first people wondered whether Paul was extolling a young Muslim with the deliberate intention to snub high-caste novelists, the rise of Basheer's reputation during the last few decades has confirmed the validity of Paul's assessment of him (Basheer is the only Malayalam writer chosen to be a Fellow of the Sahitya Akademi)

At another regular session of *Sahiti Sakhyam* Karoor Neelkanta Pillai read his short story, *Uthuppante Kinar* (Well of Uthuppan). Paul discerned the sparks of a genius in this story and declared it masterly. This boosted the self confidence of Karoor who rose to be one of the foremost short-story writers of Malayalam in the forties.

With the deep desire to promote the literary men of Kerala Paul suggested to some of his friends that they must have a co-operative society for the printing and sale of their works, a suggestion which gained acceptance among a few to begin with. Accordingly, at the initiative of Paul and with the unstinted efforts of Karoor Neelakanta Pillai, a writers' co-operative was registered in 1947. Paul was its founder-president; Karoor its founder-secretary. Paul held its reins till he died in July 1952, except that in 1949 he vacated the post for a short time. In a note prefaced to Paul's collection of essays titled *Sahitya Vicharam* published in 1953, the publishers wrote; 'It is three years since Paul entrusted us with the manuscript of this book. So far we have published hundred and fifty books; the president's book could not find its place among them.' Paul was neither publicity-conscious nor money-minded.

Paul was humane, always at the disposal of people who needed him. To conceive of Paul as a high-brow professor interested only in serious subjects is wide of the mark. He loved idle gossip with friends. After his classes in the evening he would go out with friends for a walk which was likely to take him to the near-by bar-attached hotel where he would spend most of the evening taking whisky, his friends being treated to the food and drinks they loved best.

Paul was ever willing to pay respect where due, appreciate and encourage genuine talent, and extend help and patronage to whosoever needed it. On the occasion of Kesari Balakrishna Pillai's sixtieth Birth day Paul and Karoor called on Kesari to pay homage to the great man on behalf of the Writer's Co-operative Society. Paul had profound regards for his professor, Edamarath Sebastian who was given the privilege to write the foreward to his *Novel Sahityam*. Uroob (P.C. Kuttikrishnan, novelist, sometime President of the Kerala Sahitya Akademi) recollected that it was Paul who introduced him to *Ulysses* of James Joyce. Paul told Uroob, "this novel is no easy reading.

This in itself may not impress you as masterly, but it is a seminal book which is going to revolutionise the concept of modern fiction." Unlike Joseph Mundassery, Kuttikrishna Marar didn't get the opportunity of associating himself closely with Paul; however he had great respect for the critical acumen and literary powers of Paul. Paul loved and appreciated Basheer, the man and the writer. Mohammed Basheer had an adventurous life. A relentless fighter for freedom and a revolutionary he was imprisoned several times, and his book *Premalekhanam* (Love Letter) was banned in Travancore. When he was released Basheer travelled all over India, and finally came to Ernakulam. Basheer had no means of livelihood; he wrote vigorously; his excellent stories fetched him only little money. Paul tried to help Basheer in a variety of ways without in the least hurting his self-respect. Basheer moved with Paul as a member of his own family; playing with Paul's children, making Paul's *chapathis* just for the pleasure of it. Early in his literary career Basheer showed some of his writings to Paul. He recollects how he threw away his draft of the highly erotic story "Sthree" which Paul considered unseemly and sentimental. Later when Paul shifted to Kottayam Basheer also went to Kottayam. Paul incurred virulent attacks from certain critics mainly because of the leadership he gave to the Progressive Literature Movement and also because of his strong resistance to the infiltration of communism into it. When the occasion needed it, Paul could retaliate without giving quarter to his opponents. He had proved his mettle in his criticism of the social novel of C.V. Raman Pillai and the works of Appan Thampuran. He had mercilessly attacked the aestheticism of Vallathol and the neo-classicism of Ulloor. Paul considered it his vocation to work for the regeneration of Malayalam Literature and he succeeded in doing it in a large measure. In the thirties and the forties, along with Kesari Balakrishna Pillai, M.P. Paul was chiefly responsible for opening new horizons for Malayalam Literature and leading a generation of writers to new frontiers of literary thought and sensibility.

7

Demise

Mrs. Paul gives us a brief but moving account of the passing away of Mr. Paul. Ever since the family shifted to Trivandrum Paul looked weary and tired. The tragic truth was that he was in the mortal grip of acute diabetes and yet he was blissfully unaware of it. He didn't care to go for a medical check-up, nor tried to be on diet; he went on working without remission, running a tutorial college of his own and working in Mar Ivanios College, Trivandrum. As he himself put it, he was burning the candle at both ends. One morning as he read the news of the death of a prominent man in the papers he commented to his wife, "Well some day the papers would report my death too. For a few days, perhaps a few people may talk about me too, and then nothing more will be heard of me. This is the fate of one and all." Did Paul by any chance have a premonition of the coming event? He might have felt that with his declining health he would not be able to carry on for long.

Joseph Mundassery in his autobiography says that Paul's life became bitter towards the latter part of his life. Self-possessed and fearless as Paul was, there was no question of his spirit wilting under adversity. In 1952, the situation for Paul was that his income was on the increase, his eldest daughter was married, the other children except the youngest were in school or college. If only he were healthy there was no cause whatever for his wife and children to be anxious about their future. That his son-in-law had no secure job might have given Paul a little worry, and also his indifferent health. But Paul kept up a brave face, never gave himself to sentimentalism and continued to work as assiduously as ever. He had the humility to acknowledge that no man held the key to his future in his hands, but so long as man's spirit was unfettered he could hold his head unbowed in defiance of the bludgeoning of chance.

In June and July Kerala gets heavy rains. In June 1952 it seemed Paul had caught a very bad cold. He felt as though he had a sore throat. His very voice sounded different as he gave his talk on *Kundalatha*, considered to be the first novel in Malayalam. The cold seemed to persist; so on the advice of an expert Paul was admitted to the payward of the General Hospital, Trivandrum. He was in room number seven. As Paul left for the Hospital, he cast a glance at his youngest daughter on the rocking horse and also on the garden he had cultivated in the courtyard. Were there tears in his eyes that moment? At the hospital Paul seemed almost normal, but for his exhaustion and weariness. He tried to give the impression to his wife and children that he was fast recovering.

On July 12th 1952, it must have been 11 a.m. when Paul received from the postman a copy of an English Grammar book written by Prof C.A. Sheppard. Mrs Paul and C.J. Thomas were by his side when all abruptly a change came over him. In a few seconds Paul passed away. His death shocked his admirers all over Kerala. His closest friends and colleagues in the literary and cultural circles rushed to the place from far and near. To add to the general grief that filled the minds of the members of his family, relatives and friends, it was made explicit by the authorities of Cathedral Church, Palayam, Trivandrum that he would be denied the rites of a ceremonial burial in the church cemetery. This caused a sensation among the public. After a lot of discussion between the well-wishers of Paul including his brother, the priest and the church authorities, the authorities finally allotted a plot beside the cemetery for Paul's burial. His burial is most aptly compared to the burial of Moliere, which he had cited in his preface to *Lubdan* (Miser) his translation of Moliere's play *L'avare*: "A little before his (Moliere's) death his friends sent for two priests to administer the last unction to him. But they flatly refused to go. The church authorities did not permit his body to be buried in the church cemetery. The burial took place on the order of the king without any religious rites, in the stillness of midnight. Almost a hundred of his friends followed his coffin to the grave with burning torches."

And with hearts burning like torches Paul's friends bore his coffin to the grounds of the Cathedral church, Palayam. In all

solemnity they put him in his grave. The tributes paid to him by his students, admirers, and friends testified to the tremendous impact of his personality and writings.

Paul himself was in the least concerned about either the religious rites of his burial, or his life after death. But he belonged to the Syrian Christian Community, and it hurt the sentiments of countless people that a man who practised high Christian ideals more than most professing Christians was deprived of the rights due to the members of the community. Paul who refused to abide by the canons of the Church was one of the finest of men and had the anchor of his purest thoughts in unsullied Christian humanism; and it is not less paradoxical that whereas the Church disowned Paul the entire Christian Community including the elite among the clergy proudly acknowledge Paul as one of its illustrious sons. Paul belonged more to the country than just to the community. Myriads look upon his grave as a standing monument of man's determination to keep his spirit upright and free. Paul awakened the community into which he was born to the urgent need to progress with the progressive forces in society. It was as though he opened the sluices of the gate holding back fresh and liberal thoughts for long and let them flow freely into the waters of tradition refreshing and renewing them. Paul knew that the Church was powerful, but he also knew that freedom of spirit as dictated by conscience was too precious to be surrendered to authority however formidable. Man has a right to dissent, and Paul exercised his right in his own way.

8

On the Novel

In English literature, Paul loved works of every literary genre; he had a special liking for the plays of Shakespeare and the lyrics of the romantic poets. But he knew that as society was progressing, liberating the different classes of people held under suppression for long, prose and literary genres in prose suited for the expression of their urges would develop considerably. Without calling Ralph Fox to witness, he came to the conclusion that the pride of place so far given to epics would go to the novel in the modern society. Novel with its wide canvas comprising people of all classes covering a span of time extending to generations, with its flexibility of movement, and questioning of social structure had emerged as the most formidable literary genre in the 19th century. For sometime, it was argued that novel dealt only with the surface of life and the superstructures of society, inadequate as it was to plumb into the depths of existence; but Tolstoy and Dostoevsky between them dispelled all such doubts and established once for all that the best of fiction equalled the best of poetry or drama in its interpretation of life. Critics in the west began to give serious attention to the study of the technique of the novel and the evaluation of the masterpieces of fiction. Novel in its rudimentary form appeared in Malayalam as early as 1878, with the book *Khathaka Vadhom* (Slayer Slain), *Kundaletha* considered the first novel in Malayalam by several critics though a romance, appeared in 1887. It was evident that a social revolution was afoot, and that the forces of renaissance at work in India would shake Malayalam literature to its very foundation setting the stage for the production of works of unprecedented power and beauty. In the last decade of the 19th century there appeared on the Malayalam scene two writers, O. Chandu Menon and C.V. Raman Pillai of unquestionable genius who with their contribution to

prose fiction not only enriched Malayalam Literature, but also proved the efficacy of the new literary genre to hold its own against other genres, and be comprehensive expression of the sensibilities of the various sections in society. The poet-trio Kumaran Asan, Vallathol, and Ulloor, held the stage in the early decades of the present century; but as wizards of prose fiction O. Chandu Menon, and C.V. Raman Pillai had cast their spell on the reading public of Kerala at large. The novel was not only born but also fully grown in the works of these masters. By the thirties, in spite of lack of variety the novel grew in bulk; and Paul found the time most congenial for a book on the techniques of the novel with suitable illustrations drawn from the literatures of the West, and Malayalam.

Novel as a literary form made large strides of progress in the 20th century especially in its latter half, with attempts at the formulation of its literary principles finding it difficult to cope with the novelty of the forms invented for it by new generations of writers. Viewed in the light of the latest exposition of the novels of today as those made by such writers as Iris Murdoch, Philip Roth, David Lodge, Malcolm Bradbury and others, even such works as *The Craft of Fiction* by Percy Lubbock, *The Structure of the Novel* by Edwin Muir, and *Aspects of the Novel* by E.M. Forster may appear out-dated. However some of the fundamental principles laid down by the earlier masters haven't lost their validity with regard to the majority of books of fiction produced today; also due credit should be given to the pioneering work done by them in the cultural contexts in which they found themselves. Paul's book came at a time when it was most needed, upholding the highest aesthetic and social values relevant to fiction, it acted as a beacon light for the talented novelists who were to dominate the field of fiction in the years to come.

Paul knew that novel, perhaps more than any other literary form, was intimately related to society and culture. It reflected the inner as well as the outer activities of people who belonged to a particular society in a particular clime and time. Naturally like Aristotle, Paul gave utmost importance to the depiction of human beings in action in literature. Action involved questioning of social values, and questioning was possible only against the affirmation of certain fundamental human values. Accord-

ing to Paul, novel was in the ultimate analysis, humanist and any experimentation with the form in violation of the humanist principle was disastrous both to the genre and to culture. Paul analyses the subject systematically, and treats each of its constituents with the authority of an academician. The book is divided into fourteen chapters, the first nine deal with novel as a literary form, and the later chapters give us scintillating criticisms of the works of O. Chandu Menon, C.V. Raman Pillai, Kerala Varma, Appan Thampuran, and Narayana Kurukkal who had each contributed to the development of Malayalam fiction.

In the first chapter of his book Paul makes it clear that literature and literary forms defy definition, for Saraswati, the Goddess of letters is for ever absolutely free. Novel and *Akhyayika*, he says, are the same. A novelist is one who can transform his experiences as well as the experiences of others into powerful artistic form. To begin with the novel is explained "as a prose structure which produces poetic experience by the treatment of a theme probable and expressive of man's thoughts and feelings". A novel must have a story which is built on a sequence of events in time. Interest in the story is sustained by arousing and satisfying the reader's curiosity successively through a series of episodes. According to some critics the chief function of the plot is to evoke wonder which gives a psychological basis for people's interest in the novel. But Paul does not subscribe to this view. In fact he forestalls such an inference by adding that "A good novel not only arouses the curiosity of the reader, it appeals to reason and common sense and conforms to life." Conforming to life is the acid test of the authenticity of the novel. Episodes gleaned at random from life and arranged without rhyme or reason will have no impact on the reader unless they are unified into a single piece of powerful experience. The reader at every point in the narrative would verify whether the plot actually suspends disbelief or not. Plot is woven of events which have not only temporal but logical sequence. It is an integrated whole with an organic unity of its own.

In chapter four Paul attempts to analyse the plot from the point of view of not only western concepts but from the point of view of Sanskrit poetics as well. According to western lite-

rary thought a plot must have a beginning a middle, and an end, which are termed exposition, complication and resolution respectively. The complication of the plot reaches a crisis which is the turning point in the plot, before it resolves itself in the denouement. The first part of the plot is *Amukha* or *Mukha* when the characters are introduced and the story is set in motion. The second part of the plot is *Pratimukha* which is instinct with anxiety and thrill or *udwega* when the initial movement of the plot is met with opposition. As the conflict intensifies the plot moves to its third part latent with possibilities which is termed as *Garbhasandhi*. Tension mounts and reaches its culmination in the crisis. The release of the tension starts as the plot reaches its fourth part which Paul describes as *Vimochana Sandhi*. Even at this stage the reader may not be able to predict whether the story will end as a tragedy, comedy or tragicomedy. The last part of the plot is *Nirvahana Sandhi* or Resolution. Paul elucidates his ideas with suitable illustrations from Malayalam novels giving diagrams of a variety of plots. The most common technique employed in popular novels and detective stories is to arouse the curiosity of the readers by presenting to them a mystery or a puzzle or problem the solution of which is held back from them till the end, with the sole purpose of sustaining the reader's curiosity all through. The major drawback of this technique is that it reduces the plot to the level of a puzzle, the story becomes artificial with little or no bearing on life. Any novel that leans too heavily on the techniques of plot construction, such as parallelism, contrasts, disguise, mystery and chance happening for its effect fails to conform to life and forfeits its claim to be ranked with the great classics. The historical novels of C.V. Raman Pillai, though very powerful, liberally employ such techniques.

Paul devotes the sixth chapter of his book *Novel Sahityam* to a description of the different types of novels familiar to the Kerala readers. By 1930 a wide variety of novels had appeared in western literature, such as the historical novel, the social novel, the picaresque novel, the psychological novel, the stream of—consciousness novel, the existential novel, the science fiction, the thriller, the crime-story, and the philosophical novel. Edwin Muir had divided the novel into the chronicle novel, the dramatic novel, and the periodic novel. Forster wrote of pattern,

rhythm and prophecy in the novel. Paul did not think that the time was quite suited for an elaborate description of all these different types. That may be one reason why he confined himself to just six types, the historical novel, the social novel, the psychological novel, the detective novel, allegorical novel, and the science fiction. There were historical novels and social novels in Malayalam, such as of C.V. Raman Pillai and O. Chandu Menon. *Bhaskara Menon* of Appan Thampuram was one example of the detective story, but the best examples of it were to found in the works of Arthur Conan Doyle. The novels of Wells served as the best models for science fiction. Long before Wells, Jules Verne had produced a few masterpieces of science fiction. Psychological novels were not written in Malayalam; Paul therefore cites the works of Henry James as the best examples for this type. Narayana Kurukkal's novels afforded examples of allegories in Malayalam. The world of the novel is immensely vast, a first hand acquaintance with the world's classics in fiction may defy the efforts of even the most assiduous scholar. It is to be doubted whether Paul was familiar with the European, Russian, and American masters of fiction at the time he wrote his *Novel Satitayam*. Melville, Kafka, Flaubert, Proust, Tolstoy, Dostoevsky, and Joseph Conrad are great names but Paul does not dwell on their works to bring out the greatness of the novel in all its dimensions. From Paul's point of view such an attempt was not warranted in the situation obtaining in the Kerala cultural field in the thirties, it was much better to study a few types of novels thoroughly than to have a bird's eye view of the entire world of fiction. He made a broad division of novels based on two fundamental principles: novels may be divided on the basis of the chief emotions they express, for example some may be comic, some may be tragic, some others satirical, and so on; and novels may be divided on the basis of the method of treatment. One may notice here that Paul's emphasis on the emotion expressed in the novel is due to his understanding of the eastern literary theory of *rasa*, whereas the stress he gives to the method of treatment is based on his thorough acquaintance with the western literary principles.

The novel, like the epic is a literary form, half dramatic and half narrative; the narration may be in a variety of ways. In the novels of Jane Austen, Walter Scott, Chandu Menon, and C.V.

Raman Pillai the omniscient novelist being everywhere at every time narrates the entire story. Some novelists like Defoe and Dickens make one of the characters of the novel narrate the whole story. Some others employ the epistolary method as Richardson does in *Pamela*. Paul divides novels in yet another way different from the methods he suggested earlier when he points out that there are novels of imagination and novels of observation. In fact every novel calls forth the play of imagination and keen observation, but according to the predilection and talent of the writer there may be a shift in the emphasis given. Novels of imagination are basically romantic, whereas novels of observation are essentially realistic, though Paul carefully refrains from making such a division. When he writes of novels of imagination he had in mind the historical novels which necessitated the imaginative recreation of a bygone age vividly. The social novels of Chandu Menon, were to him supreme examples of the novels of observation.

In a novel characterisation is no less important than plot-construction. Action which constitutes the plot necessarily springs from characters who are the agents of action. As in the play in the novel too, action rises out of characters and characters issue themselves in action. Characters and action go together. In societies in which individuals shape themselves struggling against social structures novels portray life-like characters in conflict with themselves and in conflict with others. Each novelist is at liberty to take his own view of the method of characterisation and the role to be assigned to characters in his novel. Characters may be shaped by nature, profession or environment. They evolve themselves in the course of the confrontations between and among them. Sometimes some characters may outgrow the limits of the novel and capture the reader's imagination like real people in real life. Paul cites Sanku Asan of C.V. Raman Pillai, as a character of this stature. Characters artificially created by manipulations and clever devices would be unconvincing. They should be neither the embodiments of evil, nor of virtue. The universal should be particularised in characters endowing them with individual traits, which might comprise racial, national, provincial and communal characteristics, as well as mental and physical traits. Habits, gestures, colloquial expressions, manners, dress, inclinations all these might be used

by the novelist for effective characterisation. As E.M. Forster does, Paul also divides his characters into flat and round characters, Vaithy Pattar of *Sarada* and Sanku Asan of *Marthanda Varma* being examples of the former and the latter respectively. The novelist must know his characters inside out, so that he can delineate even their inmost thoughts and depict convincingly how they will react in varying situations.

In the eighth chapter of his book Paul discusses the question of theme in the novel. The novelist is free to choose whatsoever subject that appeals to him, and to give his own interpretation to it. What is of prime importance is that the reader shall not feel the theme obtrusive in the novel. Good novels may instruct us even as they delight us, but precedence is to be given to the element of delight. Novel has been conceived as a criticism of society based primarily on common sense, and as such comic elements have been considered much more suited to the genre than tragic elements. Comedy is effective in reforming society as the delight it produces by the exposure of the follies and foibles acts as an incentive to the people to cure the society of its ills. Paul gives a masterly analysis of humour in the course of his discussion of the theme of the novel. Humour may be absolute or social according to the end it seeks. Absolute humour is the philosophic humour of a thinker who broods over the disparity between man's conceits and the shape of things in reality. Shakespeare's character Puck who wonders what fools these mortals be exemplifies the sense of absolute humour. Social humour consists in the disproportion between individual actions and the code of conduct accepted by society. Social humour may be exploited in a variety of ways, it is produced by mispronunciation, puns, mistaken identity, snobbery, and so many other foibles. Humour springs from sympathy not from cynicism, hatred or spite. Paul says that the subjects of comedy may be ostentation, manners, ethics, or emotion. Excesses of humours, and self contradictions in them also produce laughter. Comedy rising out of the follies resulting from violation of ethics and excess of emotions is far more enduring than other types of humour. Paul finds in *Indulekha* apt examples of all types of humour.

Having defined the novel and expounded its fundamental principles of composition Paul attempts an evaluation of the

well known works of fiction in Malayalam. *Kundalatha* considered the first novel in Malayalam is remarkable for the grace of its narration and the working out of its plot. But it is a weak adaptation of Shakespeare's *Cymbeline* and is a dismal failure as a novel. Kerala Varma Valiakoithampuran's *Akbar* is a translation of a novel written originally in Dutch by Brover; its sanskritised language deserve censure.

Paul's evaluation of *Indulekha* is masterly. He defends the sentimentality of Madhavan and shows how in the novel it is counter-balanced by Indulekha's common sense. Paul points out that though Chandu Menon does not consider English education superior to eastern education, education worth the name shall liberate people from the tyranny of taboos and customs. The plot of *Indulekha* is well-knit; all the situations in the novel being natural; the characterisation is excellent, even minor characters live in our minds. The eighteenth chapter of the novel which gives us a dialogue on the necessity of English education is superfluous. Paul praises Chandu Menon without reservation for his keen sense of humour and comedy. Suri Nampoothiripad in *Indulekha* is a master-creation of a comic character in Malayalam literature. *Sarada*, as good as *Indulekha* but considered more serious, is an incomplete piece. It offers a number of interesting situations replete with humour and a few characters that dominate the imagination of the readers. As a writer of social novel, Chandu Menon undoubtedly bears the palm.

Paul's assessment of C.V. Raman Pillai's novels also declares his critical genius. He points out that *Marthanda Varma* of C.V. Raman Pillai, based on the life of a great Raja of Travancore is written after *Ivanhoe*; as a literary piece it equals *Ivanhoe* in all departments. Except that it resorts to incredible adventures, and that its denouement is a bit abrupt, it ranks with the finest works in the world. Paul's admiration for the work prompts him to compare C.V.'s understanding of the human mind to that of Tolstoy. C.V. Raman Pillai's art and craftsmanship developed and attained perfection when he wrote *Dharma Raja* and *Rama Raja Bahadur*. However, whereas the scale of C.V.'s building of characters in *Marthanda Varma* was life-like, in the later novels, it grew giant-like as of the sculptors who built the statues of Buddha in the Mahayana Period. Paul praises the

characterisation of C.V. and commends the stylisation of his his dialogues, but finds his plots artificial and his narration too much sanskritised and ill-suited for the representation of the situations in the novel. C.V.'s limitation as a novelist became glaring in his *Premamritham* which is but an apology for a social novel. Paul's estimate of Chandu Menon and C.V. Raman Pillai as novelists of world-class boosted the morale of Malayalam writers who could look upon the works of the two masters as excellent examples of imaginative creations in prose. It was gratifying to realise that in the production of imaginative works writers of Kerala could vie with writers anywhere in the world. Paul paid full compliments to Appan Thampuran as a stylist, but he exposed the drawbacks and defects of his novel *Bhootharayar*. Appan Thampuran's *Bhaskura Menon* had only few qualities to boast of, its only merit being that it was the first detective novel to appear in Malayalam. Paul considered Subramanyam Potti's translation of Bankim Chandra Chatterjee's *Durgesa Nandini*, an excellent example and recommended the novel as a model to Malayalam writers.

In his epilogue to *Novel Sahityam* Paul writes: "in the last fifty years Malayalam has had a good number of poets, but few novelists of note. A novelist needs mature experience of the world, creative energy, the intellectual power to contain within himself others, the large-heartedness to criticise the ways of the world dispassionately the power to communicate to others his own experiences, the capacity to appreciate works of beauty, the narrative style acquired through long disciplined practice and the goodness of human nature to sympathise with humanity." A good social novel must give a truthful account of the social situation and present living characters who are both agents as well as victims of the forces at work in society. Many novelists of the time didn't have the acumen to criticise society nor had they the power to delineate character. Paul considered humanity as the very soul of the novel. Why should there be novel if it were not to reform and elevate humanity?

In the 1963 edition of *Novel Sahityam* the publishers included Paul's essays on *Kundalatha* and *Balyakala Sakhi*. *Kundalatha* no more enjoys the position of the first novel to appear in Malayalam, nor does it give scope for the full play for Paul's critical faculty. The essay on *Balyakala Sakhi*, is a superb piece

of fiction-criticism. It is much easier for a critic to bring out the merits of a literary classic than to testify to the greatness of a contemporary author. Basheer had earned reputation for himself as a good-story writer, but it needed the sharp discriminative faculty of a critical genius to declare one of his works a master-piece of writing to be ranked with *Indulekha*. Paul was right in his evaluation of Basheer's *Balyakala Sakhi* which has since become a classic in Malayalam. Paul pointed out that in his new novel Basheer could effect a blending of powerful social criticism with the creation of convincing episodes which struck the finest chords of humanity. It was *Balyakala Sakhi* that ushered in the renaissance of the novel in Malayalam literature.

The lengthy essay, *Gadyakatha Sahityam* (Fiction in Prose) written twenty years after the publication of *Novel Sahityam*, was intended as a broad survey of the 20th century European novel as well as the later novels in Malayalam. It is not such a deep study of the novel as the earlier comprehensive work. Paul points out that the 19th century was the most fertile period for the novel, and that journal writing and play writing have offered formidable challenges to novel writing in the 20th century. Though this may be partly true of English literature, the Malayalam novel flourished in the forties and thereafter. Paul therefore foresees a golden period for Malayalam novel in the years to come. Though on the whole the 19th century was a much more productive era for novel in the west. Paul admits that there were a few seminal writers in the 20th century who were sure to have their impact on the 20th century novel. *Sons and Lovers* by D.H. Lawrence was a major novel showing how Freudian psychology would influence the modern novel. Impressionism, Post-Impressionism and Surrealism were artistic movements actuated by Freudian psychology. According to Freud's pessimistic outlook men are victims of their own complexes and are condemned to suffer. Paul did not endorse Freudian psychology, but he had to admit that it would have a tremendous impact on literature. As a novelist James Joyce was much greater than D.H. Lawrence. His *Ulysses* was a perennial source of inspiration to generations of experimentalists in the field of fiction. Paul makes mention of other British novelists like Virginia Woolf and Dorothy Richardson. European and American novelists do not engage his attention. Paul knew for certain

that new forms would have to give place to old forms of writing, nevertheless to him certain aspects of the novel were fundamental. He affirmed that a novel should tell a story that was composed of episodes arranged in logical sequence and that it should have a plot, a few characters, and a powerful criticism of social values. In the face of the revolutionary winds of change sweeping over world literature he held to the Arnoldian dictum that literature was at bottom criticism of life.

Though of late a few books on the principles of novel writing have appeared, Paul's *Novel Sahityam* to this day holds its sway in the realm of Malayalam literature. Though his views on plot and character may beat a retreat under a consistent onslaught from modernist writers, his humanism shall outlive even the most radical technical experimentations of *avant-garde* writers; for there is no novel, or literary work, worth the name without man being at its very heart.

9

On The Short Story

Paul's work *Khanda Katha Prasthanam* (the short story) originally serialised in his journal *Navakeralam* came out in book form in July 1932. In his Introduction to the book Paul wrote that the book was but a record of the experiences of a reader's excursions into the world of the short story. In his note to the second edition titled *Cheru Katha Prasthanam*, published in 1946, Paul pointed out that though the examples given in the book were outdated the principles enunciated in the book were still valid. Paul wanted to revise the book sometime later, but could not. Taking stock of modern literature in 1946, Paul rightly claimed that of the different modern forms of literature in Malayalam the short story was the most developed. In the thirties Kerala came to have a group of first-rate short story writers who gave the literary genre a new verve, vigour and direction. The Progressive Literature Movement gave them the fillip they needed. Kesari Balakrishna Pillai and Paul boosted their morale and led them to pastures ever fresh and new.

In writing the book on the techniques of short story Paul consulted such western masters on the subject as Poe, Stevenson and Henry James and also such books as *Short Stories—how to write them*, *Short-Story Writing and Free-lance Journalism*, and Hudson's *Introduction to the Study of Literature*. His originality consisted chiefly in his assessment of the cultural scene of Kerala, and his subtle literary analyses of the works of the Kerala short story writers. Paul's method has been academic, and he is consistently systematic in the treatment of the subject.

The book is divided into nine chapters, the second edition had an evaluatory note on Karoor's short stories as appendix. In the first chapter the author shows how the short-story which is by no means a shortened story was born in America. People felt that they needed some form of fiction which entertained and

thrilled them without consuming much of their time. They should have it in full in one instalment in a single number of the journal, so that at a sitting they would be able to enjoy it. Short-story was fiction in tabloid form. Poe defined it as fiction which could be read at the most within an hour. In its aim, range and structure the short story is different from the novel; concentration is of its very essence. It aims at intensity of thought or emotion and effective expression. As done by R.L. Stevenson short stories may be divided into three categories, according to the nature of the subject of its treatment; short stories of action, of character and of atmosphere.

Short stories of action depict the external activities of the people. Actions constitute the plot of the story. The plot may sustain the curiosity of the reader, but it must have an inner logic of its own. The stories of action arouse delight by the narration of events. They have characters but the chief interest of the story is the development of plot with its exposition, complication and resolution. What engages our attention in short stories of character is the uniqueness as well as naturalness of the characters presented. The writer concentrates on his characters and reveals them through a situation of his invention. Such a writer must have a deep insight into human character, and also the mastery to portray character through situations. The stories of atmosphere aim at creating an atmosphere through a situation and suitable characters. Paul cites *Dwaraka* of Vengayil Kunji Raman Nayanar as the finest example for a story of atmosphere. There are some who make mention of a fourth category called sleuth-stories. Needless to say that at present we are familiar with a number of varieties, not at all mentioned by Stevenson. However the broad division made by him holds good in its generality in the present as much as in the past. The development in short story in modern times chiefly consists in the sophistication of its technique.

The second chapter shows how the writer chooses his subject. The short story writer who is a shrewd observer of life, men, and manners may get the stimulus for his writing from real occurrences. Pieces of news appearing in the papers, sensational events talked about by people, happenings in real life all constitute materials for the short story. Facts are stranger than fiction yet they may not be recorded as they are, they are the ore to be

smelted and purified in the imagination of the writer. The writer decides what to retain and what to eschew. His creative energy transforms objective facts into subjective experiences. The most important aspect of a short story is its credibility. Here Paul leans heavily on the Aristotlean theory of the law of probability. The story deals not with things that have actually happened but with things that may happen; and not with the actual but the probable. It shall by no means tax the credulity of the reader. The reader must be able to participate in the experience communicated and transform it as his own.

The third chapter of the book titled, "Germ of the Story", describes how a story grows in the imagination of the writer. It is as though a seed is sown in the writer's sensibility, the plot with its inner logical structure, grows out of this seed. Certain stories depict a state of mind or a human situation, certain others create an atmosphere. Stories may exploit any of the emotions, pathos, or love, or fear. It is said that so long as there are men and women stories have subjects to spring from. The most common emotion exploited is love, but there are other emotions too. The life-blood of a short story is its prime emotion which is chosen by the writer by himself. It may spring out of an event, character, or atmosphere. There are various seeds, some may spring out of fancy or even fantasy, some may come out of characters. Contrasts of characters, inconsistency in the conduct of the same character in different conditions, conflicts between ideals, and dissimilarities between scenes have given writers materials for their writings. Some stories are born of the writer's concern with certain precepts or ideals. They are written to instruct. Event, inference from reports, strange locale, emotion, character, contrast and philosophy have contributed to the making of the short story.

Paul continues the discussion of the development of the story in the chapter that follows. In building the structure of the short story the writer gives paramount importance to its crisis which is the very soul of the plot; it gives life to the story; he conceives it clearly and intensely, and weaves the structure accordingly. With regard to novel writing it is said that many a novelist has had no preconception of the development of the novel. It is as though the work takes its own course and progresses. But with regard to the short story the writer cannot take

any chance. He has to visualise the crisis in advance; once he has made sure of the crisis he can direct the story towards it either slowly or rapidly; but never with such abruptness as to make it appear incredible. The culmination of the story in the crisis shall be experienced by the reader as the natural culmination of the story. In this context Paul emphasises the need for concentration. The novelist who seeks to present a living society in a particular age may introduce many plots and themes in the same story. The short story writer shall have singleness of purpose and full concentration. In fact he should try his best to make his work, as expressive as possible. A short story shall be suggestive. The style should conform to the theme. The style, the theme, and the plot must form themselves into an integral whole. The environment, the character, the event, the episode shall all combine to produce a single effect. In order to stress the need for the unity, Paul explains the unities mentioned by Aristotle, of which the unity of action is of prime importance. The chief defect with many of the Malayalam short stories was the lack of their concentration. Also instead of showing the theme they relied heavily on wordy descriptions for effect. Verbosity is no substitute for deft delineation of life. Some of them interposed irrelevant soliloquies into the stories, some left a gap in the narration with asteriks which was by no means justifiable.

The fifth chapter of the book deals with the construction of the plot which must have a beginning, a middle, and an end. Paul cites R.L. Stevenson's *Markheim* as the best example of a good short story. None of the parts of the short story shall be artificial. Utmost attention should be given to the denouement. The reader should feel that the resolution of the story is the most natural, not in the least laboured. At the same time every story, like Tagore's short stories, must give ample scope for the imagination of the readers.

Paul shows that a short story may be presented in a variety of ways. Like the novel, the short-story should maintain a logical sequence rather than just a chronological sequence of events. "The latter end of the commonwealth so to say shall not forget the beginning". One thing must lead to another consistent with its inner logic. The writer may narrate the story in his own words, in such cases the omniscient writer is everywhere witnessing and reporting everything truthfully. But such

a narrator should let the story unfold itself rather than expose the whole story himself. It should never appear that the writer is keeping the clue of the story to himself hidden deliberately. The end should come as it should, at the right time. Some writers let one or more of the characters narrate the story. A character narrating the story has his limitations in understanding other characters and explaining them. Also the reader knows in advance that the hero narrating the story is safe and well so much so that the risks he undertakes do not cause any suspense or tension. In addition to the three methods of the story being narrated by the all knowing writer or character, or a story being narrated by one character to others there is the epistolary method.

The seventh chapter of the book Paul devotes to characterisation. The characters must spring from the plot, as the plot must rise out of characters. Also the characters must conform to real human beings in their essential aspects. Supernatural characters, if introduced, must by contrast highlight certain essential aspects of the human character. A short story writer who has the imaginative power to identify himself with other people will be able to create excellent characters. Characters may be expressed by gestures, by descriptions, by their response, by their words and their acts or by all these combined. Character is brought out by situations, often at moments of conflict between the past and the future. Often their past haunts these characters; they want to liberate themselves from the past. This conflict creates a tension, which brings out their characters. The writer should be able to reveal to the reader what passes in the minds of the characters. Paul suggests that there should be sufficient thought not only in choosing characters and drawing them but also in naming them.

In chapter eight Paul establishes that the dialogue must be natural and correspond with the characters. Each character has his unique way of expressing, his own way of thinking, feeling and responding. Dialogue shall only contribute to the progress of the story, it shall not stand in the way of its development. It shall relieve the monotony of narration, reveal character or situation but shall never be superfluous, or out of place. The dialogue in the short story shall be emotive, brisk, interesting, and meaningful. It can be humorous or full of pathos as the case

may be. Though dialogue in real life may be drab and without point or direction, the dialogue in the short story shall be interesting and purposeful, from the point of view of plot or character. No short story shall be woven exclusively of dialogue; a story is half narrative and half dramatic. Paul even shows how dialogue should be printed, leaving out repetition of names. The ninth chapter of the book is devoted to a discussion of apt titles for the short story. He exposes to ridicule funny titles with alliterations conveying no sense.

Paul's appreciation of the short stories of Karoor shows his skill at practical criticism. He says that Karoor chooses subjects from every day life and transforms them into poetic experience. He does not openly criticise society, but exposes its evils with sternness. Karoor's material is man, and the clue to his magic as a short story writer is to be sought in his humanity. He finds humanity both in the haves and the have-nots; he opposes injustice wherever it is rampant. We feel that we had come across his characters in real life. Some of the stories read like certain famous stories in the west though, we know the author hasn't ever read them. This leads Paul to say that literature is the same everywhere, because the stuff of humanity is the same everywhere. Paul shows that short story in the west has two periods, the period before Maupassant and Chekov and the period thereafter. The stories of the early period were mostly shortened stories, but Maupassant and Chekhov revolutionised the concept of the short story by making it a lyrical piece. Paul by this statement was advising the young writers to follow the example of Chekhov and Maupassant. Paul pays due credit to the translation made by Kesari Balakrishna Pillai and the original works of Dev, Thakazhi, Basheer, Pottekkatt, Ponkunnam Varkey, Lalithambik Antharjanam, Karoor, Saraswati Amma and R.S. Kurup. Paul's contribution to the development of the short story is signal.

Progressive Literature Movement

A concern for fellow beings is embedded in the Christian ethos. M.P. Paul, Ponkunnam Varkey, and Joseph Mundassery who clashed with the Christian hierarchy were deeply concerned with social justice, economic freedom and liberation of the human mind. This zeal led all the three to the progressive school; both Varkey and Mundassery openly supported the Marxists at a later stage. Paul stood for the freedom of individual, and kept himself at an equal distance from the Communist Party and the Catholic Church. But it must be borne in mind that both the Communist Party and the Christian Church were deeply concerned with social uplift, and Paul showed his concern for the poor with them. The social and political situation of the thirties created in the minds of Indian writers at large a keen social awareness.

The nineteen thirties were the seed-time of the new culture of modern India with the Salt Satyagraha movement, the India Act of 1935, the introduction of Provincial Autonomy in 1937, the Gandhian movements for Harijan uplift and basic education, the organization of the revolutionary parties of diverse hues (the Congress Socialists, the Royists, the Communists) the involvement in the war in 1939, the schism in the Congress leading to the expulsion of Subhas Chandra Bose and his eventual escape to Germany and Japan; it was a packed decade indeed. Against this background some of the writers in north India with Premchand in the lead started the Progressive Literature Movement in 1936. Under the impact of this movement in Kerala an organisation was formed with the nomenclature of Jeevat Sahitya Organisation in 1937.

Paul was not directly associated with the movement at first. In one of his speeches Paul explained what it was. He says that Malayalam writers had borrowed the expression "Jeevat Sahi-

tyam" from Hindi; it meant Progressive Literature. Progressive Literature means literature that prompts the people to move along the path forged by free scientific thinking. May be such a path is the path of revolution. According to Paul such writers as Ibsen, Tolstoy, Romain Rolland, Bernard Shaw, and H.G. Wells are progressive in their outlook, the essence of "Jeevat Sahityam" being a profound concern for "humanity". The progressive writers aim at the liberation of man at all levels. In this stage of man's evolution art helps man sharpen his sensibility; just like civilization, religion, God, truth, duty are all man-made: so also is art. Man must use what he has made, he should not worship it. Beauty is man-made; he must use it. In the futurologistic works like Shaw's *Back to Methuselah* or Huxley's *Brave New World*, man is represented as evolving. In the course of his evolution man overcomes many obstacles; he uses a number of instruments to overcome them. Art shall be helpful to man in working out his progress. The major problem that humanity faces at this stage is that of economic justice. Since the products of the earth are not evenly distributed, there is inequality in society; a sharp division of people into the "haves" and the "havenots". Writers of the progressive school therefore want art and letters to be used as instruments with which to solve the problem of economic inequality and as a humanist Paul sympathised with the movement. Many writers with leftist leanings were influenced by the movement. But the Jeevat Sahitya Movement, in itself didn't make any signal contribution to Malayalam literature despite its efforts to enlist a number of progressive-minded writers. By about 1944 it gave way to the progressive literature movement and Paul was called upon to lead a fight against the reactionary forces that obstructed social progress.

The progressive movement in Malayalam literature was inaugurated on 29th January, 1944. The first session of the meeting was presided over by G. Sankara Kurup, the second session by M.P. Paul, writers like Joseph Mundassery spoke. At one of its sessions a manifesto of the organisation prepared by a few writers was presented by P. Kesava Dev. At this meeting a committee of nine literary men was constituted with M.P. Paul as its president, and C. Achutha Kurup and P. Kesava Dev as conveners. The second annual meeting of the organisation was held at Kottayam in 1945. The first session was inaugurated by

Harindra Natha Chatopodhyaya; M.P. Paul welcomed the audience. (It was presided over by Mundassery.) The second session was presided over by Changampuzha Krishna Pillai, and the third by Kuttipuzha Krishna Pillai. The speeches of the various participants of the session were compiled in the form of an anthology titled *What is Progressive Literature*. The membership of the committee was expanded into twenty eight; Mundassery and Sankara Kurup were in the new committee. Paul was re-elected president; and C. Achutha Kurup was the convener. In 1946 and 1947, it seems no annual meetings were held. By about this time the organisation was fraught with internal dissensions with two groups pulling the organisation in opposite directions.

There were the Marxists who identified progress with revolution as envisaged in Marxism. According to them the first loyalty of the writer was to the cause of class struggle. Then there was the other group which vigorously fought for the freedom of the writer and affirmed that progress of the people was to be achieved through creating in the people a sense of social awareness. They insisted that every literary work must have artistic perfection and beauty of form. Formal beauty was advocated as essential by Mundassery. At the third meeting of the Progressive Literature Movement held at Trichur in 1948 the differences between the two groups came to the fore. The meeting was inaugurated by Mulk Raj Anand. Joseph Mundassery was the convener of the meeting. There was an attempt made by the Marxists in the group, E.M.S. Nampoothiripad, K. Damodaran and others, to make the general body accept the declaration of the Calcutta thesis of the Marxist Party. This was defeated by the stern stand taken against the thesis by Paul, Dev and others. Paul came out with an open attack on Soviet Stalinism. The Progressive Literature Movement had its next meeting at Quilon in 1949. Paul presided over it. But the movement had by then sustained a decline. That was the last meeting of the Progressive Literature Organisation presided over by M.P. Paul. The Organization continued its activities till October 1954. Thereafter the organization dissolved itself. In chapter forty three of his autobiography *Mundasseryude Aatmakatha*, Mundassery gives his reminiscences of the Quilon Conference.

There was the Sahitya Parishat functioning in Kerala. This

organisation enfolded within itself almost all the literary men of Kerala. However the younger group could not endorse its functioning in toto. Many of the younger group rebelled against the existing style and form of writing. Changampuzha was as good a romantic poet as Vallathol or Asan; but his style differed from theirs. He dealt with subjects chosen from real life, in a style that was stamped with his personality. He was fired with social concern. He was supported by Kadamangalam Pappukkutty. Sankara Kurup also differed from the senior writers. Both G. Sankara Kurup and Changampuzha aligned themselves solidly with the Progressive Literature Movement. The movement was mainly of the prose writers, the short story writers, novelists and playwrights. They expressed the indignation as well as the aspiration of the lower class who came to the fore in society and asserted their rights. Kuttipuzha was a nationalist and Marxist, who broke new ground in thinking. His aim was to revolutionise the process of thinking as such. M.P. Paul and Mundassery both had social concern and revolutionary thinking. They were given adequate encouragement by Kesari Balakrishna Pillai. Dev, Thakazhi and Basheer wrote excellent short stories giving expression to the hopes of the depressed classes. Then there were the Marxist thinkers, E.M.S. Namboodiripad, K. Damodaran, C. Achutha Kurup and M.S. Devadas. All of them found in M.P. Paul a man of integrity, learning and wisdom untrammelled by prejudices, capable of giving them the right leadership. No wonder they unanimously chose him the president of the working committee of the Progressive Literature Movement. We have to examine the speeches of M.P. Paul at the meetings of the Progressive Literature Organization to assess his contributions to literature and culture in the thirties and in the forties.

In his presidential speech at the Shornur Conference Paul gave an exposition of the nature, aim, and function of Progressive Literature. The basis of Progressive Literature is a firm faith in the future of man; the universal brotherhood and freedom envisaged by Shelley are to be made a reality; literature and art are progressive when they help man realize this ideal. It shall render man fearless, adventurous and action-oriented. Man stands on his past, but the past can never be man's lodestar. Most of the neoclassicists have not only been idealizing but idolising

antiquity. They aped the ancients. Man must liberate himself from an obsession of the past. He should see life around him and draw inspiration therefrom. Progressive Literature should be neither a fanciful outburst of the youth nor a calculated move of the communists to capture the cultural field. Literary men of the progressive group have a genuine concern for social justice. Economic freedom is to be achieved some way, not necessarily through communist methods. Literary men of the progressive group would fight against social evils, they would fight for the establishment of a just society. Till now poetry was primarily concerned with God, nature and woman, hereafter literature shall deal with social realities as understood in the light of science. It is the revolutionary outlook of the writer that helps him produce progressive literature. It is his sincerity that gives it life. In this speech Paul elucidates the fundamental tenets of Progressive Literature. Most of the literary men of Malayalam were till then writing about the past, drawing inspiration from the Puranas. Paul wished that the new writers interpreted the present and paved the way for the future. The writers of the old school were concerned with traditional ideals and values. New literature shall advocate the new values of humanism and the liberation of man from all fetters. Most of the early writers were in a sense escapists. The new writers must grapple with the present and show the way forward. Social reality is the stuff of which literature is made. In the imaginary dialogue between rudder and sail included in *Gadyagathi*, Paul shows that literature in order to be effective must be directed properly. The rudder and sail should work together to take the ship to its destination.

At the Kottayam meeting Paul gave a fuller exposition of the Progressive Literature organization, a wing of the All India Progressive Literature Organization which itself had been inspired by a world-wide movement to make good literature an effective weapon for social change. Writers of the earlier generation relying heavily on Sanskrit heritage wished to keep away the influence of modern literature. The Progressive writers respected the contribution of Sanskrit literature; at the same time, they were aware of the drawbacks of the Indian tradition. They were of the view that Malayalam too had its individuality, it could draw from other resources, eastern and western, but it was no

longer to be slavish to Sanskrit literature. Malayalam literature was to be primarily of Kerala.

Earlier literature in Malayalam was feudalistic, turned into an instrument of entertainment of the haves. It had lost contact with life. This was to change once for all. Literature and Art were of man, for man, for his progress. Even science, ethics, and politics were all for man. All great literature has a purpose, but the purpose is never obstructive. Didacticism would take away from a work of art much of its beauty. Great literature with a purpose was not didactic, the purpose was woven into the warp and woof of the work. This was true of *Ramayana*, *Aeneid* and the poems of Wordsworth. Good literature always aimed at the progress of mankind. There was a tendency among the conservatives to limit the meaning of ethics to narrow codes of morality. Great Literature liberated mankind and enlarged its vision. Progressive Literature could deal with any subject whatever, it would effect a liberation of the mind, especially of the common people. Its ethics should make man action-oriented. Paul denied the charge that Progressive Literature was communist, that it indulged in pornography, and that it sought to calumny the great tradition. Its avowed aims were the liberation and enlargement of the human mind and the promotion of man.

Paul's outlook was scientific, not Communist. He stoutly opposed the move of his associates to render Progressive Literature Organisation the cultural wing of the Communist Party of India. In his presidential address of the Trichur meeting, Paul came out openly against the Communist move to capture the Progressive Literature Organisation. His presidential speech was a classical defence of the freedom of the writer, and a tirade against the Communist manifesto prepared for the literary organization by a section of its members. Joseph Mundassery was the general convener of the Trichur meeting. He also tried to steer clear of the Marxist Party's plan to make the organisation its cultural wing. K. Damodaran, the Marxist leader attacked Paul openly, and Joseph Mundassery indirectly. Later in a powerful article Mundassery who was working for *Mangolodayam* rebutted the charges levelled against him. It was he who evolved the theory of artistic beauty of expression or *Roopa Bhadrata* as the key to artistic excellence, as against the importance given to the infiltration of socialist ideologies into the

literary works. Paul also endorsed this view. However it should be borne in mind that for all practical purposes Paul and Mundassery believed that literature should concern itself with the problems of the common man and inspire him to fight for social justice. The major difference between them on the one side and the Marxists on the other side was that they did not consider the Marxist means the only means for social uplift and progress. Writers should be free to choose their paths to achieve social freedom, also they should not sacrifice the beauty of form for the sake of political propaganda.

At the outset Paul pointed out that artistic truths were likely to be lost in the turmoil resulting from political polemics. It was necessary to reaffirm artistic truths. It was often believed that scientific truths were opposed to poetic beauty. It was one of the major purposes of Progressive Literature school to assert that beauty and truth, art and science were not opposed to one another. The economic theory of Marx, the eugenics of Mendel, the evolution theory of Darwin, the psychological thesis of *Freud*, *Jung*, the theory of relativity of Einstein have all gone a long way in shaping the outlook of the modern literary man. To the scientists words are signals conveying truths, to the literary man words are the expressions of his sensibility, words combine together to create ecstasies. Science uses language in the bourgeoisie way, as its slave to carry out its dictates. Literary men treat words as though they are independent beings working together like labourers for common good. (This comparison is ingenious but not very happy; comparison should be so interpreted as to make it give the meaning that whereas scientists handle language in a purely utilitarian way, the literary men use it creatively.) The basic principles of science are observation and verification, those of literature are a sense of beauty and power of expression. The poet creates new ecstasies with words; "Out of three sounds he frames not a fourth sound, but a star".

The writer gets his experiences from society, he creates literary works by transforming them in accordance with his inner sense of artistic form. He achieves this not in a state of frenzy, but in tranquility. Since this is the principle of artistic creation, it is evident that good literature is neither a mechanical copy of life nor an excited outcry against injustice in society. Experiences have to be transformed by imagination into shapes

of beauty. Only with self-restraint can a literary man make his work a mirror that holds up to life. Paul had little sympathy for writers who indulged in pornography.

According to Paul, any literary man was free to join any political party of his choice. It was well and good if he joined a progressive party. But the prime duty of the writer was to man; humanity and humanity alone was his creed. Paul differed from the view that Communist party was the most progressive party and it alone was humanist. The main question was whether the party granted the writers their individual freedom. Every writer was free in his endeavour. In all political theories the most important aspect is the co-ordination of the creative energy of the individual artist with the resources and well being of the society. With regard to a writer, his freedom is of the essence. That was why Lenin granted Gorky the freedom to choose his own model and determine his own style. Gorky's master in literary matters was not Lenin, but Chekhov. Unfortunately for Russia, under the Stalinist regime writers didn't enjoy freedom at all. Paul cited the episode of the opera-writer Shostakovich to show how everybody had to dance to the tune of Stalin in Russia. There were writers in Kerala who held in high esteem such Soviet Writers as Mayakovsky; Paul begged to differ. He was willing to accept the best in Soviet culture, but he stoutly opposed any move to let the progressive literary front to be led by the nose by Stalinist Russia. Literature was to be of the common people, not of the upper class alone. Also there should be a free encounter between different ideals and ideologies in the cultural field. Literature would be fired by sparks of such conflicts. The literature of the common people shall not by any means be inferior, low, or mean. It shall have a high standard; but two fundamental principles shall be satisfied, the first is that literature shall be literature, the second is that literary men shall be free. Joseph Mundassery described this speech as thought-provoking and dignified. E.M.S. Namboodirippad writing about it anonymously described it as a sermon from a pulpit made by a rank reactionary.

Paul presided over the next annual meeting of the Progressive Literature Organization held at Quilon. In his presidential address, Paul clarified that literature to be literature must have beauty of form. The communist writers gave importance to the

content or subject of the literary works. Realising the danger to literary excellence involved in this undue emphasis, Joseph Mundassery evolved the theory that beauty of form was the very soul of literary work, which was a development of Paul's argument that in literature words express sensibility. The leftists pooh-poohed the idea of beauty of form. But Paul pointed out that all literary works of Soviet Russia worth the name have beauty of form. Paul's explanations of the form of treatment has a communal and social aspect. Words not only symbolise the poetic subjects and experiences but arouse deep emotions. They create a literary form which is accessible to the poet as well as the reader. Form is the connecting link between the poet and the reader, the very vehicle of communication. Hence form is as much social as the theme. Any one who repudiate form repudiates the society from which it has sprung up. Those who indulge in irresponsible experimentation, distorting form are anti-social, anarchists. Forms shall change in conformity with the urge of the society, and also in accordance with the demand of the subject. The progressive writer shall not reject form, he shall rather rejuvenate it. There shall be perfect harmony between subject and form. Beauty sprouts forth from this harmony which constitutes great art. Literature and life are indivisible; that doesn't mean that literature should be subsequent to any political party. No literary man shall ever subject himself to the mandate of any political party, or political leader. Politics is not omniscient nor shall we consider it omnipotent. The Communists are for making literature a weapon for class war. Neither literature, nor class war is so simple as that. A progressive writer is free, he shall have the right to explore, to criticise, to create. He shall not be either with the American bloc or the Russian bloc. Literary men shall transcend these blocs for the betterment and progress of man. He shall look forward to the creation of a world neither distorted by discrimination, nor fragmented by narrow creeds. He shall look forward to a heaven of freedom where justice prevails.

The vision of Paul was clear, his faith in man firm. Humanism was his creed. Progress of mankind was his dream. As a literary critic he upheld the freedom of the literary man; and insisted on the observance of the laws of truth and beauty. He had a literary theory that was an integrated system. With this

equipment he gave the right leadership to the progressive minded writers of Kerala, at a time when they needed it most. There are critics who wonder whether progressive movement had made any valuable contribution to Malayalam Literature. The truth is that Malayalam literature entered a new era with the progressive movement. Asan and Chandu Menon had their social concerns, but it was the progressive writers who brought down the literary muses from their towers and made them serve the common people. Progressive Literature gave expression to the cry of the lower middle class for recognition and identity. It made it impossible for the feudal literature of the past to hold absolute sway in the cultural field. It revolutionised the structure of language rendering it simple, forceful and lively. Every subject was rightly deemed worthy of literary treatment. Literary men were made to grapple with the present day rather than escape into the past. Writers were to see man in his environment and present him both as an individual and as a product of his age and society. The outlook became scientific as more and more writers took the position that man's encounter hereafter was with social forces rather than fate. Malayalam literature, especially prose, short story, and novel, witnessed a renaissance in the forties and the fifties for which Progressive Movement was largely responsible. Paul was undoubtedly one of the builders of this new age.

Paul as a Prose Writer

Paul was not a prolific writer, nor did he take the initiative to publish any anthology of his prose writings. He very much wished to revise his *Novel Sahityam* and *Cherukatha Prasthanam* and to write a similar book on *Nataka Sahitam*, (The Drama) and also to compile an English-Malayalam Dictionary. Many things such as his commitment to the Tutorial College, his introvert nature, his love of reading for its own sake, and his own declining health prevented him from fulfilling any of these wishes. After his demise in July 1952, the S.P.C.S. Kottayam took the initiative to bring out two volumes of his essays, both slender, the first *Sahitya vicharam* ((Literary thought) in July 1953, the second *Gadya Gathi* (The development of prose) in July 1954.

It is refreshing to observe how Paul applies his mind to the subject of his treatment, analysing in detail its subtleties, leading the reader all along with him to the conclusions that he draws which appear to be incontrovertible. The key to the beauty of his essays is to be sought in his inimitable style remarkable for its lucidity and grandeur. His diary notes show that if only he had set his mind to it he could have written personal essays after the manner of Goldsmith, Stevenson, or E.V. Lucas. There is for example an autobiographical piece originally written in English in his diary, the translation of which is included in *Gadya Gathi*. He writes; "I do not know who I am, which exactly is my destination or whither I am going from hither. There are religions which presume that they know the answers. But I have no faith in any such religion. Now, I am a member of a Church by accident of birth. But that religion has no relevance to me. This 'I' who call me 'I' do not believe in any of the false claims made by religion. I shall not be untrue to myself. I cannot profess a religion to please others, even if it were to please

my blood-brother who is a Catholic Priest." Paul was unhappy that he jotted down such lines in English rather than Malayalam; nevertheless the piece occupies a place in Malayalam comparable to that of Goldsmith's 'City Night Piece' in English Literature. His note on "Religion" also reads more like a lyrical piece than a discussion of the subject. In it like Akhenatan of Egypt he exhorts us to 'worship the Sun' for the Sun is the chief benefactor of mankind, the earth owes its very existence to the grace of this Lord of Light. Though Paul was a past-master in such prose compositions of lyrical grace he did not bother to write such essays.

Paul's attempts at short-story writing did not meet with success. Kesari who appreciated Paul's critical talents found Paul's early short stories disappointing. Paul confined himself to translating Lupin Stories and he never had any pretensions as a short story writer. He translated a play of Moliere for the pleasure of it, dictating the entire material to one of the wardens of his hostels for women. The woman who found herself out of place in the hostel would have been thrown out of work hadn't Paul employed her to take down the dictating of his work. The play which exploits the renaissance theory of humour exposes to sheer ridicule a die-hard miser. It employs the disguise element, and such other renaissance dramatic techniques as the reversal of situation, exaggeration, and the exposure of excesses in characters. Paul himself did not write any plays, but he had a shrewd insight into the techniques of playwriting. In one of the essays included in *Gadya Gathi* Paul criticises the Malayalam stage vehemently, for the stage continued to be dominated by Tamil plays with their stage—techniques obnoxious to enlightened audiences, as they were, with the harmonium player given a seat on the stage, and the actors in their roles singing along with the harmonium player. The characters themselves as in the films burst out in music in season and out of season. Such an admixture of concert and play-acting was against the very spirit of the drama which was basically constituted of conflict. A good play by its powerful representation of human conflict gave a meaningful interpretation of life even as it reformed the tastes and sensibilities of the audience. Paul did not elaborate his views on the dramatic genre. Essay was the medium best suited to him for self expression,

but he was at his best when his critical mind was given full play in the exposition of literary principles and in the discrimination of contemporary literary works.

Paul's essays, including those cited so far, may be grouped under two heads, the general essay and the personal essay, though Paul himself would not have approved of such a division, for both the general and the personal alike bear the impress of his personality. Of the essays of a general nature, the one on the worship of the state gains our attention as a carping criticism of Hegel's theory of state and Paul's affirmation of his faith in individual freedom. Paul advances seven arguments against Hegel's theory of state. Man is not a limb of body-politic, and as such his claims as an individual shall not be forfeited. The state may have its personality, but then communities in the state, even minorities also have their individualities. Communities, however small they may be have their own rights and freedoms to be protected. If the state claims that it alone matters and sets itself to devouring individuals, a world-state, which is not unlikely to evolve, can devour the states also. Again as an inter-continental structure religion may claim itself to be superior to states and empires and may devour even states. The truth of the matter, according to Paul, is that no state has an individuality or personality of its own. Whatever progress the world has achieved has been made by individuals and not by the state. Paul stands by the individual against the state though he would not underrate the role of society in shaping individuals. The essay "A speech" included in *Gadya Gathi* in its early part refers to some problems in education. Paul states that the chief aim of education is the enlargement of the mind, We wish Paul elaborated this idea in his own way, but, in the same speech some introductory remarks on education Paul passes on to the modern trends in literature.

As a literary thinker and critic Paul proves his mettle in his essays. In the essay titled 'Oru Prasangam' (A speech) Paul points out that the thirties and forties form a transition period in the history of Malayalam literature. It is only natural that such a period warrants a lot of experimentation in techniques of expressions for novel treatment. Of the many experiments conducted by talented literary men, several may be futile, just ephemeral, but a few may come to stay. Paul, in the essay

proceeds to describe some of the new schools of literature, and some of the western forms with which the Kerala writers were not familiar. He gives short notes on Jeevat Sahityam, Realism, Mysticism and also on the Sonnet, the Dramatic Monologue, and the Play; they are lucid but not comprehensive. Paul's purpose was to give a preliminary introduction to the subjects rather than to present a detailed study. In *Vicharadarpanam* (Mirror of thought) there are included one essay on soliloquy and another on epistles. These essays are short introductions rendered delightful by the beauty of their style. In the essay on epistles, Paul points out that 'sincerity' is the soul of an epistle, a principle equally applicable to the personal essay and the lyric. Indians do write letters, but as a nation, they do not care to preserve them for posterity, seldom do they publish them. The essay on Poetic Definition just lists a number of definitions of poetry given by the poets and the critics of west; however he does not cite from the writings of such modern critics as T.S. Eliot and I.A. Richards. The fact was that Paul, like other eminent professors of English of the thirties and forties looked upon the Romantics and the Victorians as masters of literature, but unlike them he could come out of their magic world and expose himself to the influences of contemporary society when he plunged into the Progressive Literature Movement. His essay on *Sangeethamapi*, is unique in Malayalam for the comparison it makes between the classical musicians of the day and the contemporary poets of Malayalam. The language of the essay is rhythmic, it flows with a gusto. One may not take this as a serious critical venture of Paul, though the comparisons made are genuine and relevant.

The literary essays of Paul are masterpieces of prose composition even as they are masterly expressions of a critical mind. The essay on Modern Prose Literature seeks to comprehend all forms of modern Malayalam prose including prose plays. Paul deals with the different forms one after the other, in the academic style. Poetry at its best may be superior to prose, but the development of prose in a language is to be considered the palpable index of its cultural growth. Prose has its variety of forms, biography, novel, short story, essay, parody, farce and criticism each of which had its natural development in Malayalam. Paul considers Kuncan Nambiar, humourist par excellence

the like of whom even world literature does not have to offer. He wishes that comedy has had its due development in Malayalam. Dramatists of Malayalam who aped inferior works in the West have to learn how to analyse society and expose its evils in their works as Ibsen and Shaw have done. Paul severely criticises melodramas and sentimental novels which are detrimental to the development of Malayalam literature. Luckily enough, under the guidance of Kesari Balakrishna Pillai a group of writers have been able to reinvigorate Malayalam short-story. Malayalam is rich in personal essays because of the contributions made by Vengayil Kunji Raman Nayanar, E.V. Krishna Pillai and C. Anthappai and others, yet essays of the type written by Charles Lamb have to be produced yet. In literary criticism Paul feels that Malayalam has a long way to go. Criticism that gives undue emphasis to rhetoric fails to bring out the beauty of the works. Paul enumerates different types of criticism such as the historical method, the judicial method, the comparative method and the touchstone method and shows that a critic is free to adopt any of these methods, though none of them may be described as infallible. Viewing Malayalam prose as a whole Paul entertains the faith that it has had creditable achievements, and that its future shall be definitely brighter. Such a declaration from a critic of Paul's calibre infused new life into the young writers of Kerala.

The essays "Kalayum" Kalavum", (Art and time) "Kavya Prachodanam", (Inspiration for poetry) "Vagarthaviva Samprathau", (The binding of sound and sense) "Bhasha Gadya Sailee" (Prose style) and "Hasyathinte Utpathi" (The origin of humour) are purely literary. "Vagarthaviva Samprathau" is an expression from Kalidasa's *Raghu Vamsa*. Though critics consider word and its meaning separately for the sake of analysis and exposition, the two are indivisible. Words and their meanings are instruments of poetry. They are not the soul of poetry. A poem has metre, figures of speech, words and their meanings. These have to go together integrated into a single poetic experience. The unifying force is the creative genius of the poet. According to Paul the most essential aspects of poetry are the genius of the poet and the receptive sensibility of the reader. It is significant to observe that Paul considers *Sahridaya* as part of the poetical work, an idea developed by M.H. Abrams. This means poetry is commu-

nication. From this position Paul easily goes to the beauty of poetic form which is the link between the poet and the reader. In order that the form be such a link, it must have a community character. At the same time every creative work has its individuality too, for it is a product of an individual genius. Since poetry is an integrated whole, it defies translation, and as mentioned by Robert Browning like a star it produces ecstasy; the measure of the ecstasy is determined by the *Sahridaya*. Any word-structure which fails to evoke ecstasy fails as a literary work. In this essay Paul vehemently criticises the Marxists who discredited the role of genius in poetic creation and contended that what mattered in poetry was only its proletarian theme, the beauty of form being of no consequence.

In the essay "Kalayum Kalavum" Paul shows that though every work of literature is the creation of a literary genius, it belongs to the age of its creation. Great art is produced by societies in the periods of their glory. Art declines when society decays. Age and society have their impact on literary works. Great literature and art flourished in Athens in the days of Pericles, Rome produced some of its best works during the days of Augustus Caesar. It was when Italy flourished in the fifteenth century that great sculptors, painters and artists expanded the cultural horizon of Europe. Literatures of Elizabethan England and France of Louis the 14th are other signal examples of the intimate interaction between the age and art. Paul does not contend that geniuses are solely the products of their age, what he seeks to establish is that the age also plays its part in contributing to the flourishing of geniuses. No artist, however talented he maybe, can deny his indebtedness to his age. Paul's sense of humour is happily at work when he shows how differently his contemporaries would have written had they lived in the 19th century; Paul says that he for one would have been a catholic priest averse to literary works, and Basheer would have been but a vendor of sundry articles.

Paul explains one of the fundamental principles of art when he says that artists turn experimentalists or escapists when their inner life is in direct conflict with the spirit of the age in which they live. As for modernism, it had not yet come into the Malayalam literary field. According to Paul, Scott, Dumas, and C.V. Raman Pillai were escapists. Great writers invariably

revolt against the existing oppressive order. Voltaire, Byron and Shelley were uncompromising fighters for freedom. K. Ramakrishna Pillai, though not a poet had in him the fire of a revolutionary. The writer is perpetually engaged in a fight against the evils obtaining in society. Some use satire as an effective weapon to fight with; others adopt a direct method. Great creative art can certainly rejuvenate society giving it purpose and direction and lead it to new frontiers of progress.

Paul's essay on "Bhasha Gadya Sailee" (Prose Style) a speech delivered at the Parishath meeting held at Kottayam in 1938 is a masterly exposition of the subject. Paul says that style is not *Riti* of Vamana. Vamana speaks of the three *Ritis* of *Vaidurbhi*, *Panchali*, and *Gaudi*. He bases his theory chiefly on the happy choice of words. Dandi's concept of *Marga* has similarities with *Riti*. But style as understood in English is different. Style may best be translated as *Sailee* according to Paul. (In Malayalam *Sailee* means idiom too, but style is different from idiom). Style is the way of expressing personality; hence the aphorism that style is the man. Good style must have at least three qualities; individuality, sincerity and liveliness engendered by intimate contact with the living language. Style achieves individuality when it expresses the personality of the writer. A reader acquainted with the works of a leading writer must be able to discern the imprint of his personality in the style of any piece produced by the man. Verbosity, bombast and conceit betray the insincerity of the writer. A style noted for its sincerity shall be lucid. Any piece of good writing must have a dynamic contact with life. It shall not be stilted. Paul could not approve of the poetic prose current in Malayalam in those days. Good prose must be free from tumidity and artificiality. Images used must be fresh; the diction shall be racy. Paul himself was one of the finest stylists in Malayalam, his essays being lucid expressions of his own personality.

The essays "Kavya Prachodanam" (the poetic inspiration) "Hasyathinte Utpathi" (the origin of humour) show Paul's perspicuity in the principles of literary creation. Paul says that whereas science bases itself on reason, art and literature spring out of intuition. Poetic ecstasy is inexplicable as it is beyond reason and inference; as though by some work of magic in poetry thought is rendered into emotion in poetry. Paul is able

to explain this fundamental truth of poetic creation without calling Eliot to witness. He raises the question how best thought may be rendered into emotion. The feat may not be accomplished by the use of any figure of speech. In poetry thought is to be smelted in the crucible of imagination. Paul avers that no idea or thought which has not been transformed into poetic emotion has any place in poetry. This idea is the same as that of Eliot's unified sensibility which calls for the rendering of thought into emotion. Paul attempts to explain it without taking recourse to I.A. Richard's theory of synaesthesia. Sensibility according to Paul is a faculty of the human mind which is capable of intergrating thoughts and experiences, memories and fancies into ecstasies. It is the faculty to feel, appreciate and express experiences. Poetic emotion is not to be identified with ordinary emotion. Emotion like thought undergoes a radical transformation in the sensibility of the poet. Then only does it become worthy of poetic expression. Paul confesses that it is difficult to explain how emotion and thought are made poetic. One wonders why he did not take recourse to the theory of esemplastic imagination for it is implicit in his concept of the poetic process. But the process of poetic creation, when all is said and done, is a mystery. Paul points out that writers like Priestley have felt that they were possessed by some supernal power in moments of creation. They describe this possession as inspiration. Writers are "blessed men getting blessed moments" of creation. When Shelley wrote that poets were hierophants he had this idea in mind. Poets do not go beyond this point to define clearly the power that inspires them.

Paul in his essay on humour makes an earnest enquiry into its origin. Psychologists have shown that laughter is a sort of excitement. There is a gas that can put people to laughter. Aristotle has said that laughter rises out of reversal of situation, as for instance in the fall of a conceited person. Fall may arouse laughter in certain cases, but it is not the sole source of laughter. There are those who point out that laughter rises out of exaggerating or inflating the defects or deformities, or distortions in men. Rabelais excelled in exploiting humour rising out of exaggeration. Laughter may rise from understatement as in the works of Jane Austen, Arnold Bennet and Galsworthy.

Writers like Hazlitt have said that laughter rises out of in-

congruities. Incongruities between two characters, or two states, or between two states of the same character, may arouse laughter; incongruities in utterances or manners also produce humour. Paul says that all types of humour do not necessarily rise out of incongruities. He considers Bergson's theory of humour by far the most acceptable, man is a 'laughing animal' and he may also be defined as an animal that is a veritable object of laughter. Bergson brings out the idea that it is the introduction of the mechanical elements into the dynamic life that produces laughter. Anything that seems to arrest the flow of life, anything that betrays the presence of the merely mechanical, makes us laugh. A man falls because of his thoughtless or mechanical act. He develops mannerism by growing mechanical. People fail to respond to social etiquette or customs when they grow mechanical. Bergson is of the view that humour is intellectual not emotional. Sentiments and humour do not go together. Humour is a social response, not individual. People become objects of laughter when they fail to conform to social norms.

The great Acharyas of India have laid down the canons covering all aspects of poetic creation and literary appreciation and they are as valid today as in the past in the discernment of poetic qualities. However as a result of India's contact with the west new literary genres such as the personal essay, the short story, the novel and the play in prose were introduced into literature and they warranted a reinterpretation of the ancient canons to render them applicable in literary discrimination. Critics like Kuttikrishna Marar tried to rely exclusively on the Indian aesthetic principles for literary evaluation. Paul believed that as the new literary genres were western, western literary principles were to be brought to play in evaluating them. He therefore took upon himself as a labour of love the responsibility of disseminating the most valid of the western literary principles in Kerala. At the same time he knew that the culture evolving in India was basically Indian, and should be so, and that as such the principles of literary criticism to be expounded in the modern context should be a new system integrating in itself the cardinal ideas of western and eastern criticism. The essays on "Style", "*Vagaritha viva sampraktha*", and "*Kaavya Prachodanam*" and "*Kalayam Kalavum*" are supreme examples of Paul's successful ventures in evolving such a system.

Aesthetics

Paul's *Soundarya Nireekshanam* (Aesthetics) still considered one of the most authoritative books on aesthetics in Malayalam was first published in 1947. The subject engaged the serious attention of Paul when the controversy was going on in the Progressive Literature Organisation about the relative importance of form and content in literature. Paul was of the view that art and literature must serve the people; in order that they are effective, they should have organic beauty of form. Hence beauty is the prime factor, the very soul of a work of art. As Paul gave deep thought to the subject he came across Burke's essay on "The Sublime and the Beautiful", Bergson's Aesthetics, Lessing's essay drawing the distinction between poetry and painting, and Joad's, A Guide of Philosophy. *Soundarya Nireekhsanam* consists of four essays Paul wrote on aesthetics, analysing the very essence of beauty.

The arguments in the essay titled "Beauty in Nature and Art" are systematically arranged. There is beauty in Nature, but this beauty is not always manifest. It is mixed. It flashes in a second and vanishes in the next. The artist who is an aesthete perceives it and enjoys it. He then tries to express it and transmit the joy he has experienced. This transmission is communication; communication as such presupposes a purpose, hence art is purposeful. From these arguments we may draw the following conclusion. Artistic beauty is neither exclusively subjective nor objective, it is subjective-objective. Nature is ever undergoing change; something or other in Nature attains perfect beauty every time. Of these phenomena, the artist disengages that which captivates him and gives it expression. He gives expression not to the beauty in nature, but to the ecstasy it has given him. What the artist contributes anew is the value he gives to this ecstasy. Sometimes the object that captivates the artist in itself may not

be beautiful, but its expression becomes beautiful by virtue of the value given to it by the artist. Paul may have been influenced by Pater's essay on "Quest for Beauty" in preparing the essay especially in his assumption that something in Nature attains perfection every minute. His own contribution to the idea consists in the argument that the artist reconstructs the beauty in Nature by giving value to his own ecstasy. He also makes it clear that objects in Nature, ugly or unattractive in themselves when recreated by the artist become works of beauty, by virtue of the value given to them by the genius of the writer.

The third essay in the collection deals with Lessing's theory of art, or to be more specific his theory of the limitations of painting and poetry. Painting and poetry are two different forms of art, expressing sensibility in two different media. Painting represents objects at rest. It is static. It can never represent time which flows from the past into the present and from the present into the future. So painting is essentially spatial (So also is sculpture); it can represent actions or temporal growth or dynamic flow of things only indirectly. Lessing gives us the classical example of Laocoon, which expresses the agony of Laocoon only in an indirect way. This view of Lessing may be criticised on the basis of the argument that we seldom get a view of all the details in a masterpiece simultaneously. Even vision takes time, and is temporal. Without being too technical we may say that since time is the fourth dimension it is also to be reckoned with in the appreciation of sculpture or painting. Poetry according to Lessing deals with things only in time; one word comes after the other. It is impossible to assemble all the words simultaneously. Lessing quotes the example of Homer's description of Agamemnon's shield in Iliad. The poet can move in time, he can never be still. So he can suggest static scenes only indirectly. But then this view too may be criticised, the reader having read of the description of a thing or a scene may be able to revivify it in memory and hold it in the mind statically. Anyone who reads the "Ode to a Grecian Urn" by Keats can retain in his mind the picture of the lovers engraved on the urn. However Lessing's theory is specially significant in the study of the difference in the symbols used by the artist and the poet. They are bound to be suggestive, symbols in painting and sculpture must be suggestive of movement and action and

symbols in poetry must be suggestive of static states. Every symbol, by its very nature is to be indirect and suggestive.

The fourth essay is on "Ideal and Reality"; it is based on Bergson's aesthetic theory. Bergson's reputation as a philosopher was at its apex in the fifties. Bergson's concept of perpetual change as the ultimate reality about cosmos, his distinction between mechanical time and psychological time, and his faith in the west as well as the east especially appealed to Paul. One only wishes that Paul could go deeper into his philosophy and his concept of "elan vital". Bergson's chief aim was to integrate materialism with idealism. The cosmos as such is a welter of atoms ever in a flux. The matter constituting this welter is as much energy as it is matter and it is ever dynamic. But what impels this welter? Who set it in motion? How does it function? Certainly there is a dynamic force impelling this world. Bergson calls it, "elan vital" or life force. This cosmos has an inner music, an inner rhythm. Man caught in the perpetual flux is not normally sensitive to this rhythm. His attitude is utilitarian, his chief purpose being survival. However artists endowed with imagination and genius perceive the inner rhythm and harmony of the universe with their intuitive power and express them. Through these works others also become aware of the inner harmony of the universe. It is with the intuitive faculty that mystics and artists apprehend the mystery and beauty of the universe and express them. Beauty to Bergson is, therefore, the inner rhythm of things grasped by the artists and the poets. Paul points out that Bergson ignored the social and historical aspects of beauty and art. However Bergson's thoughts both on society and history are implicit in his theory of the flux of energy. They too have their inner harmony consistent with the operation of the "elan vital". It is the harmony that the artists apprehend. Bergson has taken the central aspect of his theory of intuition from Plotinus and Plato.

The first essay in the book "The Foundation of Aesthetics" is one of the finest prose-pieces in Malayalam. Paul must have drawn material for the piece from C.E.M. Joad's *Guide to Philosophy*. But Paul has his own vision as well as his own conclusions. There are many critics who argue that beauty is objective. There are of course two essential factors in aesthetics, the object that is appreciated and the subject that appreciates it.

We cannot specifically seek the mystery of beauty either in the object or in the subject. If it is purely subjective how is it that certain objects captivate and thrill us whereas certain other objects repel us? Certainly some objects are more beautiful than others. However certain objects which impress some as beautiful do not impress others at all. Beauty depends as much upon the object as upon the reaction of the individual to the object.

In the second part of the essay Paul examines the qualities of beauty enumerated by Edmund Burke in his dissertation on "The Sublime and the Beautiful". According to Burke beautiful objects are small, smooth, gently curved, delicate, clean and fair. Burke thinks that objects must be sufficiently small as to be perceived in toto. He speaks of several other qualities. Beautiful objects arouse in us an emotion comparable to love. It melts the hardness in us. Beauty acts by relaxing the solids of the whole system. Burke seems to think that beauty is materialist, and exclusively objective. Herbert Spencer found beauty in the absence of effort, in states of rest as well as motion. Beauty must be something born effortlessly. Paul does not endorse either Burke's conception of beauty or Spencer's.

In the third part Paul examines Plato's theory of beauty as an absolute idea. The beauty we see manifest in nature or in objects is a reflection of the absolute beauty. Hence in Plato's view the foundation of beauty is transcendental. Paul almost agrees with the view that flashes from the absolute come upon the sensibility of blessed men in blessed moods. This view is Platonic, later developed as a system by Plotinus and accepted by Bergson. (This is almost similar to the Indian theory of beauty.) Hegel accepts this Platonic view as he realizes that his dialectics fail him in explaining the basis of beauty. The world is the becoming of a pre-existing idea. Beauty is indivisible with the idea. The beauty we perceive in nature is the concrete manifestation of the absolute idea seeking self realization in matter. Paul admits that the realm of idea is inaccessible to reason; that is to be reached only by intuition.

Paul dismisses the idea that proportion and harmony are the essence of beauty. Even in poetry proportion and harmony alone are not the essential factors of beauty. In Greek philosophy especially Socratic thought, beauty, truth and goodness go together. Paul does not elaborate this metaphysical concept.

Socratic concept of beauty is utilitarian and it bases itself on the postulate that the ultimate reality is the good. The good as manifested in life whatever be its form shall be useful. Naturally therefore only that which is useful can be of any value. This argument applies as much to beauty as to other virtues. Paul does not agree with this idea. In his view the criterion of utility should not be applied in the assessment of beauty. In the fifth part of the essay Paul enumerates the different qualities associated with beauty, they are but characteristics of beauty. They do not form its foundation.

Since it is difficult to discover an objective foundation of beauty Paul says that it must be sought in the sensibility of the creative or preceiving subject. The basis of beauty is experience; in fact aesthetics means sensuous experience. The qualities that we associate with beauty are the stimuli in the objects of beauty; they are not the projections of the aesthetic sense of the subject. The stimuli are of the object, but the aesthetic sense is subjective. Experiences is the result of the inter action between the stimuli in the object and human sensibility. It is an integral union between the essence of man the perceiver and the essence of the world the perceived. Of the experiences only a few appeal to the aesthetic sense. Beauty is the judgement that the human mind makes on such experiences. This judgment may vary from person to person. The faculty of aesthetic judgement is supra-rational, deeper and more fundamental than reason, memory and inference. It may comprehend all human activities including science. This view is Kantian, a lucid exposition of which is given in Joad's *Guide to philosophy*. It is the judgement that matters. A detailed analysis will convince us that it is the same mental faculty that pronounces judgement on the ideas of truth, goodness, and beauty. The aesthetic sense, conscience and reason are three fundamental faculties of the human mind; these are but three modes of the same creative human faculty. Paul agrees with Keats' statement: "What the imagination seizes as beauty must be the truth." This is true in the Platonic sense.

This does not mean that beauty is purely subjective, for the judgement is exercised on something which is an integrated union of the external stimuli and the internal aesthetic sense. Marar goes to the extreme position that beauty is ultimately subjective, a position that may be justified only on the plane of

Aham Brahmasmi.

Paul's aesthetic theory is not at all materialist. In the ultimate analysis it is Platonic. Did Paul endorse Plato's theory of the absolute ideas of truth, beauty and goodness? If so, he was an idealist, and not a materialist. It is true that he has had little faith in the soul or life after death, or an anthropomorphic God created by human imagination and sustained by religion. Nevertheless there was something higher than the mere historical or the materialistic, something beyond; something supernal. Man the individual is there with his mysterious faculties; and man aspires for freedom. Is such a man a clod of earth, the quintessence of dust? Beauty, goodness and truth are there, yet they come from beyond. They envelop the transcendental. So we are led to say that Paul's aesthetic theory is that of an idealist enlightened by scientific thinking.

Paul's Critical Stance

Paul's attitude to life and literature was undergirded by his faith in man and human progress. He endorsed the dictum that the proper study of man is mankind. Why all this Kaleidoscopic panavision of cosmos and its life but for man to enjoy and emulate? The supreme test of literature is its humanity. Truth, Beauty and Goodness have given shape to man; and these ideas in their turn subsist in man and sustain him. Unrelated to man, the profoundest of philosophical categories have little relevance; all that man has learned, done, and achieved, the entire wealth of man's knowledge, wisdom and material possession is for man.

Art and literature are therefore for man, centered upon man. The humanity of art and literature was categorically stated by Paul. According to him humanity has at least two dimensions, the individual and the social. His vision of art and literature enveloped both. As an individual to every man freedom is the life-breath. Paul's very life exemplified this eternal truth. At the same time, every individual is in some way bound to his society. A writer writing for himself as an individual invariably expresses his society, for nobody exists in the void; Even the loneliest of the ivory tower of imagination is filled with the sad music of humanity. So every great work of art, however individualistic it may be, is bound to be a social product. Art is individualistic and social. It is pertinent to examine how Paul has been able to build an integrated system of literary principles.

Every writer is an individual with his own vision of life and his own way of expression. He chooses subjects according to his taste or only such subjects as conform to his outlook and fire his imagination. He realises that his genius consists in exploiting a particular genre, poetry story, or novel as the case may be. Also it is his personality that determines his style. In all these respects the emphasis is on the individual and individual free-

dom. None shall fetter the flight of poetic imagination. A closer look at the process of poetic imagination as expounded by Paul will show us that Paul's understanding of this process is basically romantic. In Nature, and in life there are things or happenings that kindle the poet's imagination. The poet stretches his imagination to apprehend it aesthetically. In this endeavour the subject apprehending transforms the object apprehended into a unified whole. This is the process accomplished by the esemplastic imagination of Coleridge. We notice that Joseph Mundassery in *Kavyapeetika* (Introduction to Poetics) takes this idea as it is and exemplifies it through a diagram.

One has to consider Paul's theory of literary creation in association with Paul's theory of aesthetics to study his poetic theory in the correct perspective. In his essay on aesthetics Paul says that beauty is the judgement passed on the subject-object blend made by the aesthetic imagination of the perceiver. He shows how this judgement itself is an apprehension of beauty in a state of blessed mood when reason is exalted, and how this is possible only to blessed people in blessed moments. He takes this idea from Bergson; basically it derives itself from Plotinus. The most remarkable aspect of this theory is its semblance to Maritain's theory of creative intuition. Maritain, the Thomist philosopher, found Bergson very much in agreement with the Thomist theory of intuition that based itself on faith in the operation of grace. Paul did not go to the extent of acknowledging the operation of grace as the cause of inspiration or the capacity for the discernment of beauty, nor did he accept James Joyce's theory of epiphany given in his *Portrait of the Artist as a young man*. He was happy to quote Keats, "What the imagination seizes as beauty is the truth." In western thought this idea has had its origin in Platonic thought. Plotinus developed it still further. The Christian Philosophers and mystics integrated this idea with the Christian concept of the operation of grace. It is interesting to note that Paul who is generally considered a rationalist and materialist found the idea of "blessed people getting blessed visions in blessed moods" most congenial to his concept of poetic as well as aesthetic apprehension. This idea is basically Christian. Instead of acknowledging this, Paul held on to the theory of imagination which is secular and romantic. The demarcation line that distinguishes the one from the other is imperceptibly thin. The

theory of the writer getting an insight into the heart of things in moments of epiphany is not alien to Indian aesthetics. Paul for one developed this theory in his own way depending himself mainly on Coleridge and Bergson. He took the view that all products of art are undoubtedly products of individual geniuses, as declared categorically by the great English Romantics.

Paul raises the question how the objects are to be represented. He rules out the naturalist or photographic representation, for the human imagination is not just a film of the camera that gives us a copy or reflection of objects, rather it recreates the objects of its representation. Every aesthetic or poetic subject is a bundle of stimuli for the sensibility of the poet. The aesthetic work created by the poet in its turn, is a bundle of stimuli for the reader who being stimulated by them recreates the primary stimuli in life through their aid. This process gives the reader sheer delight, as *samyoga* gives *ahlada* to the *sahridaya*. There is no evidence to suggest that Paul took ideas from I.A. Richards, but his theory has much in common with the Indian *Rasa* theory and I.A. Richard's theory of Synaesthesia. Paul gave a lucid exposition of it in his essays in *Sahitya Vichara:n* (Literary Thought).

Those who put a premium on the role of individual genius in poetic creation are likely to underestimate the part played by society in artistic production. A poet is a man among men, a social being. He is stimulated by the society in which he lives. All his experience even those which he considers extremely private are experiences he gains as a man living among men. His sensibility which is individual is steeped in social sensibility. A sensitive writer cannot but have an acute social consciousness. Most of the romantics reacted negatively to this consciousness trying to escape from the social reality. The neo-classicists who glorify the feudal social structure of the classical works which they ape deaden their sensitivity to the living society of their time. Paul attacked the escapists and the neo-classicists. He was not against the cultural heritage and tradition so long as they contributed to the healthy evolution of society. But a blind adherence to the dead customs of the past and a cowardly flight into unreal worlds of rosy dreams did not in any way help the flowering of the poetic sensibility. Paul was for the integration of individual imagination with the social reality. Every age has

its milieu, the poetic genius responds to it militating against its strangling structures and liberating its healthy strains for the resurgence of a new society. A writer who fails to respond creatively to his social milieu deceives himself. This idea was propagated by Joseph Mundassery also who leaned a little too heavily on Christopher Caudwell's *Illusion and Reality* and Marxist interpretation of literature for the exposition of his ideas, but Paul stoutly refused to be limited by doctrines which he considered dogmatic. Progress was necessary, it meant for Paul freedom of the individuals and freedom of the spirit. In defending "the beauty of form" Paul took one or two ideas from Caudwell. He said that all literary forms were communal. However, he modified this Caudwellian idea in conformity with his aesthetic principles. His interpretation was not that the forms sprang from the communities, though he would not have objected to such premises, but that the primary function of form was communication. Marxists insisted on stressing the importance of social themes in literary works at the expense of artistic form. Paul pointed that however vital the subject might be, it would not be art unless it was moulded into a shape artistically agreeable to the community. It is the artistic form that perfected the artistic creation, and the form though initially designed by the poetic genius has to be in harmony with the reader's sensibility, in order that communication may be effective. Both in the choice of the theme and the making of the form, society plays a vital role in the poetics of Paul. There is not a trace of contradiction or inconsistency in this exposition of the process of artistic production.

Every writer has his inner world. He is free to withdraw into it, or to engage himself in experimentation. Paul, as a critic, does not appreciate such withdrawals. Mysticism, certain types of romanticism, and modernism appear to vindicate such withdrawals to a considerable extent. But humanity expresses itself best in action in society. All contemplation, rumination and recapitulation must ultimately augment the human spirit to express itself in action in society; hence the importance Aristotle gives to action in his theory of poetry and drama. Action is the expression of an individual in society. It is action that directs the course of history as well as culture. Reflection is good, isolated pilgrimages may be necessary, expeditions of

the soul may become inevitable. But humanity in its healthiest state expresses itself in noble actions. Therefore action is at the centre of life, every great literary piece is built on action. Paul inspired his fellow writers to be extrovert to identify themselves with their society and to reinvigorate it. He had a natural preference for action in novel, short story, play and even poetry. Great literature deals with great actions according to him. Action involves morality. Contemplation may be amoral but action does something good, or evil and so is invariably moral or immoral. It follows that action is guided by the great laws of morality. With Arnold, Paul too believed that any work in revolt against morality was in revolt against life itself. But the word morality was to be interpreted in its widest and deepest sense as truth. The laws of morality are but the laws of truth, and great literature is to conform to these laws. The true is also the beautiful, for there can be no discord or disharmony in the true. To Paul beauty and truth, or art and morality, individual and society are not dissociated from each other. Rather they combine themselves into a unified whole in art and literature. It is art that unifies mankind and harmonises life. And so Paul has a consistent theory of art which is as relevant today as at the time Paul expounded it. Paul not only knew the theory but applied it as we have seen in his evaluation of contemporary works. No wonder Joseph Mundassery acknowledged his indebtedness to him and Kuttikrishna Marar expressed his appreciation for him.

In his foreword to *Sahitya Vicharam* Prof. S. Guptan Nair writes that in Malayalam literature Paul is the only critic whose evaluation he could endorse in full without the least reservation. No other critic has put so many ideas into so few words as Paul. In his *History of Malayalam Literature* Prof. N. Krishna Pillai has hailed Paul as a literary critic of the highest order. He says that Paul's critical method is of judicial criticism. However there is a lot of difference between a judicial critic who mechanically applies literary laws for literary discrimination and a critic like Paul who is for a free amendment or alteration of literary laws in conformity with the genius of the writer. Paul applies his laws with largeheartedness without sacrificing the fundamental principles of poetic truth and poetic beauty. N. Krishna Pillai rightly says, "Paul had the critical faculty to dis-

cern the subtle poetic principles lying hidden underneath a chaos of technical nomenclatures associated with a multiplicity of literary theories, a sensibility skilful at poetic appreciation, gained through constant acquaintance with world's master pieces, a spirit of freedom that militated against the tyranny of custom and tradition, and a style, free from bombast restrained, grave and powerful. In the whole of Malayalam Literature there is not another the like of him to boast of." So unique a literary critic was M.P. Paul.

The most remarkable thing about Paul is that thought, word, and deed unified in him into a harmonious whole, rendering his personality and writings a perennial source of inspiration for generations of writers. Paul established that a living Literature was never trapped in its past, that it broke new ground and progressed to new frontiers and expanding horizons. He ran his race, fulfilled his mission, and won the crown of glory. Paul is rightly hailed as the torch bearer of modern Malayalam literature.

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M.P. PAUL

(Chronology at a glance)

1904 May 1	Paul is born.
1916	Paul loses his mother.
1919	Paul loses his father. He passes E.S.L.C. Examination.
1922	Passes Intermediate Examination.
1925	Paul passes the B.A. Degree Examination. Joins the Department of English. St. Joseph's College, Trichinopoly.
1927	Sees Motilal Nehru. Decides to wear Khadi for the rest of his life. Paul marries Mary.
1928	Joins St. Thomas College, Trichur.
1929	Passes M.A. Degree Examination in English.
1930	Resigns from St. Thomas College, Trichur.
1933	Goes to Madras to study Law.
1934	Joins S.B. College, Changanacherry as Head of the Department of English.
1938	Starts a Tutorial College at Changanacherry.
1940	Tutorial College shifted to Ernakulam.
1942	Tutorial College shifted to Kottayam. Formation of Sahitee Sakhyam, Kottayam.
1944	Joins S.B. College, Changanacherry as Professor of English. The Progressive Literature Movement (Kerala) inaugurated.
1945	S.P.C.S. is registered.
1946	Again in the Tutorial College, Changanacherry.
1947	The S.P.C.S. formed with Paul as its first President.
1950	Joins Mar Evanios College, Trivandrum as Professor of English.
1952 July 12	Paul passes away.



