Introduction

Sukul, P B.”The theme of conflict between generations in the novels of I.S. Turgenev and O.V.Vijayan- A Study based on Fathers and Sons and Thalamurakal” Thesis, Department of Russian and Centre for Comparative literature, University of Calicut , 2013.
INTRODUCTION

History of generations has always been one of the most debated and discussed themes in the panorama of the world literature. This theme has played a major role since the beginning of literary writing. The intergenerational conflict has been considered as one of the natural phenomena in the history of mankind. When human histories are transformed into literary forms like novels, it is natural that they portray the conflicts and clashes of not one generation but of generations. Each generation gets evolved in their own socio-cultural values and principles. They also have their own personal viewpoint regarding social experience of their own times. Subsequently, it can be said, that these real life conflicts normally get reflections in the literary creations.

Generation gap is a common term generally used to describe the differences in cultural and social norms between younger generation and their elders. There are historical, social, cultural and psychological reasons that lie dormant behind the issues of generation gap. We can define it as a difference in values and attitudes between one generation and another, especially between young people and their elders. Every society deals with the conflict between new radicalism and stagnant tradition. Most often elder and younger generations do not understand each other because of their different experiences, social background, political opinion, religious believes,
behaviour etc. Posterity and its contradictions have always played a significant role in the history of human civilisation. The social mentality of a particular generation is very much related to its own social conditions. According to Georgy Plekhanov. “The social mentality of an age is conditioned by that age’s social relations”.¹

Conflicts have always been part of mankind since the inception of human race, thanks to the individual nature of human self. Our survival on this world hinges on how we manage the different features of conflict that is fuelled not only by seemingly incompatible interests and values but also by hostilities. According to the German sociologist Ralf Dahrendorf:

“In ordinary parlance conflict has been broadly associated with tensions surrounding decisions on various choices, sometimes being manifested in confrontations between social forces”.²

Novel is comparatively a new literary venture with the characteristics of relatively wider time and space enabling a detailed discussion on one or more themes. The novels selected here in this study, are on the basis of their social significance pertaining to the specific period of social transition. This

study primarily focuses to analyse the differences in the social approach of
different generations in the same society.

This is an approach to see how historical events are reflected in literary
works. It is also an attempt to integrate the two disciplines – history and
literature. The primary focus of this comparative study is to analyse the
contradictions in the social approach of different generations portrayed in the
novels of *Fathers and Sons* and *Thalamurakal* (Trans. Generations)

**Previous studies**

The two novels *Fathers and Sons* and *Thalamurakal* (Generations) have been critically appraised by many researchers and critics separately, but
there has never been an attempt to compare both the works. Though a lot of
critical materials are available at present on Ivan Sergeyevich Turgenev and
OV Vijayan, they have not been studied in comparison as novelists of
‘generations’. There are a number of critical works published on Ivan
Turgenev pertaining to his life and writings. Among them, Edward Garnett’s
*Turgenev: A Study*, Leonard Schapiro’s *Turgenev: His Life and Times* and
Harold Bloom’s *Ivan Turgenev* are remarkable works. The above mentioned
critics have extensively examined the novel *Fathers and Sons* while
discussing other works of the same author.

There are numerous works analysing OV Vijayan’s contributions as a
master of ingesting modernity in Malayalam literature. P K Rajashekarán’s
Pithrughadigaaram: O V Vijayante kalayum Dharshanavum (O V Vijayan: His Art and Philosophy), Gopi Narayan’s *OV Vijayan Oru Jeevitham* (O V Vijayan: A Life) and Dr. R Satyajith’s *OV Vijayan Charitram Rashtreeyam Samskaaram* (O V Vijayan: History, Politics and Culture) are notable. However, in comparison with critical works on other novels written by O V Vijayan, studies on his last novel *Thalamurakal* are very few.

Here the theme of conflict between generations is discussed with reference to the novels *Fathers and Sons* and *Thalamurakal*. A comparative study between Ivan Turgenev and O V Vijayan taking them as representatives of two different ages is debut. This comparative analysis of the two novels is a study of two civilisations too.

**Relevance of the study**

We are living in an age where the gap between the generations is widening at fast rate. The changes in science and technology enhance this gap to a great deal. The rapid and oxymoron development of science and technology, globalisation and commercialisation have bridged the physical distances, but increased the gap between the human beings and generations. It is in such a paradoxical context that the issue of generation gap is being discussed in the present research work. Though two different backdrops of two civilisations, the two novels *Fathers and Sons* and *Thalamurakal* are significant as they definitely mark the age of their own. In an age, where the
gap between generations is being acute, it is much relevant and interesting to analyse the theme of conflict between generations in the backdrop of the two novels.

The first chapter of the thesis analyses life and literary contributions of the two authors – Ivan Turgenev and O V Vijayan. Both the writers have significant place in their own language and literature. Turgenev is renowned for his detailed descriptions of Russian life of the nineteenth century. He realistically portrayed the peasantry and the rise of new intelligentsia in an attempt to develop the nation into a new age. He was the first Russian writer who was recognised outside his country. He has been considered as one of the great Victorian novelists and ranked along with Nathaniel Hawthorne and Henry James. O V Vijayan is considered one among the most talented Indian writers of the last century. His early life experiences influenced his later literary life considerably. Vijayan’s works are noted for its lyrical beauty and distinguished by its many layers of meaning.

The title of the second chapter of this thesis is ‘Treatment of Socio-Political Issues in the novel Fathers and Sons and Thalamurakal’. It is necessary to analyse the social milieu of the novels before discussing other aspects of the text. The social backdrop of a particular work is a key factor to study the work historically. Here in this chapter we conduct a brief review of the historical developments in Russia during the first half of nineteenth
century. Though geographically Russia is sandwiched between Europe and Asia, it is still considered as a European nation. The culture and language of Russia which encompasses the borders of the vast empires from Eastern Europe to central Asia, has hundreds of year’s tradition. Till the beginning of twentieth century the Russian empire was under the rule of Czar Autocrats. In fact, the socio-political condition of nineteenth century had a dominant place in the history of Russia because of the wide range of social changes witnessed by its society. The very social changes are the background of Ivan Sergeyevich Turgenev’s novel *Fathers and Sons*. By the second half of the century Russian intellectuals were divided into two important schools. They were **Slavophils** and **Westerners**. The *Slavophils* were a group of educated land owners of Russia, who criticised the westernisation of the nation and preached a return to the Old Russian life. They believed that Russian civilization was unique and superior to western culture. The westerners, the radical wing of higher thoughts believed that Russia’s social, cultural and economic development depends on the adoption of western thoughts, technology and liberal government. These different views of intellectual groups were interestingly and symbolically portrayed in the novel *Fathers and Sons*. The second part of the second chapter is about the socio-political background of the novel *Thalamurakal*. The novel takes an off course as it is set in the backdrop of socio-cultural changes in the Malabar region of southern India. The novel tells the story of a landlord family’s many
generations which progress through two hundred years of social and political history of Malabar. In its course the story as well refers to many national and international events.

The title of the third chapter is ‘Clashes of ideas-fathers Vs. sons-a critical study of the two novels’. The chapter has two parts; the first part of the chapter discusses the theme of generational conflicts in the Russian novel *Fathers and Sons*. The novel does not merely deal with the clash between two generations but it also depicts the conflict between the two ideological trends of idealism and ardent materialism. *Fathers and Sons* is Turgenev’s most famous and enduring novel and through its central character Bazarov, the author portrays a classical portrait of the mid-nineteenth century nihilist. The word *nihilism* was introduced to Russia by Turgenev himself. The second part of the third chapter discusses the intergenerational conflicts in the Novel *Thalamurakal*. Through the presentation of more than four generations, the author gives much space for generation gap. The novel is connected with the life of the author and his predecessors and so is considered as a novel with much personal elements. His childhood life with his father who was an officer in Malabar Special Police, and the political depression during the 1950’s are discussed in the novel in different ways. Peculiarity of the novel is the fact that the author moves from his world of experience into the history of his predecessors.
The fourth and the last chapter is a comparative enquiry on the theme of generational conflict in both the novels. The present research thesis follows comparative method, since it has always been a relevant way to study literary texts. Though both the novels were written in entirely different periods and social cultural milieu, they are based on a similar theme – the theme of generation gap. Along with this conflict of generations the novel also embodies the perspective of mutual harmony between generations. Apart from examining the similarity of the works of two different languages and writers, the study also focuses on the differences among them. The work reveals the both sides of the coin one with similarity and other with differences. Here it is necessary to mention, that the present thesis has its limitations in the context that it is based on an English translation of the novel *Fathers and Sons* and the original Malayalam text of *Thalamurakal*. 
CHAPTER 1

IVAN TURGENEV AND OV VIJAYAN: WRITERS OF TWO CULTURES AND GENERATIONS

Introduction

It is in the nineteenth century, the literary form of novel becomes more popular. Novel as a literary genre began in the western countries and their different genres also came into existence there. This period in western literature was dominated by realistic tendencies. In Russian literature many realistic novels appeared during the same period. Among the early novelists of Russia, Ivan Turgenev showed a propensity towards realism.

Malayalam novels began to appear only towards the end of the nineteenth century. Nevertheless, realistic stories and novels appeared in Malayalam only after the early decades of the twentieth century. Novels of Thakazhi Sivasankara Pillai and Keshava Dev are examples of the early Malayalam realistic works. O.V. Vijayan is a representative of the post-realistic era of Malayalam novel. Vijayan’s first novel *Khasakkinte Ithihaasam* (The Legend of Khasak) appeared in 1967 and it is considered as a milestone in the history of Malayalam novel.

Beyond the boundaries of language and nation, Turgenev and O.V. Vijayan were writers of two epochs. From a historical point of view of art and
literature, one can see that modernism came as continuity to realism. European Realism directly influenced the writers of other languages including Malayalam, and the same thing happened in the case of modernism as well.

Analysing the history of development in writing of world literature, it is evident that the genre modernism that developed in twentieth century is a continuation of realism which was formed earlier. In such a wide analysis it can be assessed that O.V. Vijayan, the spokesperson of modernism of Malayalam is a successor of Ivan Turgenev who is one of the pioneers of European realistic tradition. Both Turgenev and Vijayan incorporated their own peculiarities into their writings that belong to two different periods. They used entirely different literary devices and techniques in their writings as they represented different cultures and social circumstances. Turgenev, right from his early writings reflected his own responses to the society; nevertheless, this is more evident in his novel *Fathers and Sons*. O.V. Vijayan was as well responding to his society through his viewpoints right from his first short story *Oru Yudhathinte Arambam* (Starting of a war). It is pertinent that as representatives of different generations and cultures they had to engage with different social situations. Though there is a century of gap between these two writers, from a historical point of view it can be unequivocally stated that reaching O.V. Vijayan through Ivan Turgenev is a continuity of human creativity without boundaries.
Ivan Turgenev

Ivan Sergeyevich Turgenev (1818-1883) is the Russian novelist, poet and playwright. He is considered as one of the towering personalities in the history of Russian literature. Turgenev is known for realistic and affectionate portrayals of Russian peasantry and for detailed studies of the Russian intelligentsia, who were trying to shift the country to a new age. He was the first Russian novelist who enjoyed an international reputation. Turgenev was honoured more in Western Europe and America than in Russia. Famous literary critic Henry James once called him 'the novelist’s novelist'. As a realistic novelist, Turgenev was intently interested in social reforms. He set his literary works in contemporary Russia; the background of his literary creations was the social changes, which happened in his land at that time. Eminent literary personality Edward Garnett regards Turgenev as a unique novelist among the great novelists.

“Turgenev’s place in modern European literature is best defined by saying that while he stands as a great classic in the ranks of the great novelists, along with Richardson, Fielding, Scott, Balzac, Dickens, Tolstoy, Flaubert and
Maupassant, he is greatest of them all, in the sense that he is the supreme artist”\(^3\)

Turgenev’s entire literary life has been divided into five periods by literary historians. His literary career starts with the *juvenile period*, it extends from 1818 to 1842. In this period he created mainly romantic lyrical poetry. The next period is known as *remarkable decade*. It was from 1843 to 1852, during this period he published his first major work *a sportsman’s sketches*. The next period extends 1853 to 1862, in this period his literary life reached its climax and he published four of his novels and nine of his stories. The next period starts from 1863 and ends with 1870 and it is generally known as *German period*. Turgenev published nine stories and one novel in this period. The last decade of his literary life is known as *French period*, and it extends from 1871 to 1883.

### 1.1 Biographical sketch

Ivan Turgenev was born in 28\(^{th}\) October, 1818 into an extremely wealthy family near Orel, a small town in central Russia. His father, Sergei Turgenev was a colonel in imperial Russian cavalry and his mother Varvara Litovinovna was a wealthy landowner, she had made a great influence in Turgenev’s early life. Like other writers and intellectuals of his age, Turgenev

---

also had a rich and aristocratic background. Turgenev’s mother Varvara had large estates and she owned five thousand serfs. Just like other nineteenth century Russian serf owners, she ran her estates as a private kingdom with herself as queen. Most often Varvara’s approach towards her serfs was very cruel and inhumane. But young Turgenev had a cordial relation with serf’s children and he showed sympathy to their conditions. It was a difficult period in his life; Often Turgenev himself claimed that he hadn’t a single happy memory from his childhood. But his provincial life provided an abundant material for his early stories. In his childhood, a family serf had read for him interesting verses from the collection of Mikhail Kershakov, a renowned Russian writer of his preceding century.

When he was only four, Turgenev accompanied his parents on a tour to Western Europe; from here onwards he travelled to western countries more often. Ivan Turgenev and his younger brother Nicolas were primarily educated at their home under foreign teachers from France and Germany and they learned French and German languages also. It has been said that like Alexander Pushkin he had also two maternal tongues, Russian and French. Turgenev’s parents had used French language for their daily conversation in their home. During that period elite Russian families generally used French as the medium of their conversation as a part of their dignity.
At the age of fifteen, Turgenev joined in the University of Moscow but after one year’s studies in Moscow he moved to St. Petersburg with his family. Then he joined St. Petersburg University for learning Russian classic literature and philology. In St. Petersburg he studied under professor Plentinev, who was a close friend of famous Russian poet Alexander Pushkin and this relationship helped him to create good company with the elite literary circle including Pushkin. After completing his degree from St. Petersburg University, Turgenev went to Berlin for his further studies in philosophy. In Berlin, he studied Latin and Greek and he was deeply involved in the works of George Friedrich Hegel. At that time, University of Berlin was the centre of Hegelian thought and it was the inspiration of several of the young generation of Russian idealists. In Berlin, Turgenev read enthusiastically the enlightenment writers, especially Voltaire and Diderot and took a keen interest in the ideas and personalities of French revolution of 1789. At Berlin, young Turgenev met many of Russian followers of Hegel and radical political thinkers including Alexander Herzen, Nicolai Stankevich, Vissarion Belinsky, Mikhail Bakunin and Gronvsky and then he became a friend of these ‘new’ Russian intellectuals. Turgenev met Stankevich in 1838 and immediately fell under the swag of the religious, philosophical idealism to which Stankevich had devoted his life. Stankevich had a profound impact on Turgenev but the unexpected demise of Stankevich in 1840 was a great blow to him. Two months after Stankevich’s death, Turgenev entered into a deep friendship with
Bakunin. By 1843, famous literary critic Vissarion Belinsky (1811-1848) became close to him, it was Belinsky who established him firmly on the path of social realism and social responsibilities. Turgenev’s literary creations in the 1840s reflected the developing influence of Belinsky. Turgenev’s favourite hero Bazarov has certain parallels with Belinsky and the character Rudin’s thoughts also clearly echo him. The author also received inspiration from Belinsky’s life and wrote for many of his central beliefs. Belinsky had given equal priority to his love of nation and with regard to western culture, a belief in the individual and his inalienable rights. Turgenev’s three years experience in Germany caused his lifelong affection towards western civilisation.

In 1841, Turgenev returned his home country and entered into the Russian civil service, but he could not continue in the administrative post and by 1843 he left the civil service job. He dedicated his life to literature though his mother disapproved of his literary endeavour. During this time Turgenev had become infatuated with the French opera singer Paulina Garcia Viardot (madam Viardot), whom he first met in 1843 and the relationship continued for his entire life. His relationship with Viardot usually has been considered platonic.
1.2 Discussion of Major works

Like most of the novelists, Turgenev also began his literary career with the publication of verses. His cordial relationship with famous literary giants had made great influence on Turgenev’s early literary career. He was only sixteen when his first verses were published in Pushkin’s journal *sovremennik* (The Contemporary) in 1834. Even though Turgenev had completed one of his early derivative verses *steno* (1834) in the model of the famous English poet Byron, the first of his works to draw attention was a poem, *Parasha*, published in 1843. The creative potential of Turgenev was rapidly appreciated by Vissarion Belinsky, noted Russian literary critic of the period. Belinsky had the conviction that literature’s main target was to reflect truths of life and to adopt a critical attitude towards its injustices.

Famous French writer Gustavo Flobourt was one of the close friends of Turgenev, with whom he shared comparatively similar ideas reagarding form and content of novel. Both Turgenev and Flobourt rejected the radical views of right and left and accepted a soft although rather pessimistic view of the world. Turgenev was one of the first political novelists in nineteenth century Russian literature. In the 1840’s, he wrote more long poems, criticisms and short stories under the influence of the famous Russian writer Nikolai Gogol. *A conversation, Andrei* and *Land owner* were among the major creations of this period. These works were of psychological sketches in verse that linked
Turgenev to the school of Gogol. His other short stories of this period were Andrei Kolosov (1844), Three Portraits (1846) and The Duelist (1847) and these works explored the relations between the individual and the society.

In childhood, Turgenev became well acquainted with provincial life in general and in particular peasants’ living, which provided him abundant materials for his early stories, such as A Sportsman’s Sketches. Simultaneously Turgenev was also writing plays. In 1840s he published few interesting plays, like – Without Money (1846), Lunch at the City Marshal’s (1849), A Poor Man Gentleman and the Bachelor (1849). The former was an imitation of Nicolai Gogol’s work. In 1855 he published another play A Man in the Country (1850) which was a comedy in three acts. This work is considered as Turgenev’s dramatic masterpiece. His contemporary writers like Leo Tolstoy and Fyodor Dostoevsky mainly wrote on matters of spirituality and religion, but Turgenev focussed more on the movement toward social reforms. His portrayal of Russian country life and its confused times of political turmoil were modelled by many fellow writers including Henry James and James Conrad. His relations with famous writers like Tolstoy and Dostoevsky were often tensed.

In 1850 Ivan Turgenev returned to Russia as his mother was dying. He inherited from her eleven estates, including Spasskoye with thousands of serfs. He did his best to reduce the load of these serfs, and freed some workers
among them. In that year he wrote *A Month in the Country* and *A Provincial Lady*. In the very next year and which expressed Turgenev’s characteristic dissatisfaction with the idle, introspective gentry intelligentsia and he suggested a new hero belonging to the raznochinets, the Russian word which means a member of no definite class.

In 1852 Turgenev published his collection of stories *The sportsmen sketches*. These stories were first published in the famous Russian journal *Sovremennik* (The contemporary) in a serialised manner before appearing in book form. It was the first major collection of stories by Turgenev and it gave him much recognition as a writer. He wrote most of the stories in this collection based on his own experiences and observations at his mother’s estate of Spasskoye. Most of the stories are based on the theme of the relationship between landlords and their serfs in rural Russia. *The sportsman’s sketches* consist of twenty five stories. *Khor and Klinyoh, The District Doctor* and *The office* were among the important stories of the collection. The work was translated into many European languages, though by the 1850’s it was banned in Russia. According to famous Russian literary figure M E Saltykov Shchedrin, “this work laid the foundation for entire literature whose subject was the common people and their needs”.

The collection of stories focused on the peasant serf, who is intelligent and

---

talented but deprived of rights. Through these stories, Turgenev revealed the sharp contrast between the soullessness of the landowners and the elevated inner qualities of the serfs, who were one with majestic, mysterious and beautiful world of nature.

After publishing *The Sportsman’s Sketches* Turgenev wrote two novellas *Mumu*, which was published in 1854 and the very next year he published another work *The Inn*. Both these works presented the worst social conditions under the Czarist Russia and were critical of serfdom. In the early 1950’s Turgenev wrote several novellas or short novels like *The Diary of a Superfluos Man* (1850), *Faust* (1855) *Asiya* (1858) and *The Lull* (1856). In these works he expressed the anxieties and hopes of Russians of his generations.

In 1856, Turgenev’s first novel *Rudin* published as a serial in the journal *Sovremennik* and later it came out in the form of book. *Rudin* was written by him as an immediate aftermath of the Crimean war. The novel tells of an eloquent intellectual, Dmitry Rudin, a character modelled partly on the radical thinker Mikhail Bakunin. Rudin’s power of oratory skill and passionate belief in the need for progress influenced the younger members of a provincial salon that much that the hero, Nataliya, fell in love with him. The other important works of this period were *Two friends* and *A Quiet Spot* both the works published in the year of 1854. The novel *A Nest of Gentry*
published in 1859 and it deals with Russia’s historical destiny. Lavertiesky, the hero of the novel is more ordinary man than Rudin and he is closer to the life of the common people and has a better understanding of their needs. In 1855 Alexander-II became the new Russian Czar and the political environment in Russia became more relaxed. Inspired by the new social changes, in 1860 Ivan Turgenev published the novel *On the Eve* (*Nakanune*). It’s a major work concerning love in the time of war and revolutionary change. The novel *On the Eve* deals with the problems faced by the younger intelligentsia on the eve of Crimean war and speculates on the outcome of the emancipation of the serfs in 1861. Elena, the leading female character of the novel is charming and courageous young women. Her concerns for justice finds no passage in her small circle of family and friends until she meets the young Bulgarian patriot Insarov, whose idealism matches her own views and he becomes Elena’s comrade and catalyst for the changes in her life.

Turgenev’s most famous and enduring novel *Fathers and Sons* appeared in 1862. It was originally published in the Russian Magazine *Russkii Vestnik* (Russian Herald) under the title of *Ottsy i Deti* and is also known as *Fathers and children* in some translations. The novel tells the story of two generations and portrays the conflict between the older generation, reluctant to accept reforms, and the radical youth. After the publication of the novel *Fathers and Sons*, Turgenev went through a period of doubt and disillusionment. He involved in an open debate with Alexander Herzen, where
he defended his humanist views. His next novel *Smoke* was published in 1867 as *Dym*. It concentrates on the upheavals in Russian life after the emancipation of serfs and other reforms. The novel offended all *Slavophils* and all conservative religious opinion in Russia. It combines sensitive love story with political satire. *Smoke* like many of Turgenev’s other works is a fairy short novel. The beautifully written story takes place in 1862 and portrays Russians of all classes, congregating in the German resort town of Baden-Baden. The story revolves around the engaged Grigory Litvinov and his encounter with his beautiful former fiancée – Irina Ratmirov, now married to a Russian general. She is imprisoned in a painful marriage and diligently strives to rekindle the flames of their former love. Litvinov has to make a choice, and, when he does, he reflects on his painful life through the image of smoke. The novel is considered as most cosmopolitan of all Turgenev’s works. The following year saw the publication of one of Turgenev’s finest short stories *First Love* (1870) which was based on bitter sweet childhood memories.

In 1870 Turgenev moved to France and settled in Paris he regularly attended dinners with renowned writers like Emile Zola and Guyde Maupassant. During this period Turgenev wrote many of his best-known stories like *A King Lear of the Steppes* (1870) and *The Torrents of spring* (1871), Turgenev published his last novel *Virgin Soil*, on which he had worked for around six years. The novel was published at a time when Russian
thinkers were engaged in deep discussions on history and art. The novel deals with the *Narodniki* (populists) movement. *Virgin Soil* is a long novel and it is another work dealing with generational issues. The young people of 1870’s are the subject matter of the novel. These young people, fed up with the talk and empty idealism of their elders, have decided to become the bearers of the change. The book is accepted in Europe as a best seller. While living in Paris in the 1870’s Turgenev became closely acquainted with leading populists and be contributed money to the Narodnik Journal *Vpered* (Forward).

In the year 1870, Turgenev published one of his most beautiful stories *The Song Triumphant Love* and the next year he wrote one of his talented works *Clara Milich*. His important work *The Misterial Tales*, which was published after his death. Turgenev’s abundant contributions to literature and art were highly valued in France and England. In 1878 he was chosen as the Vice President of the International Literary Congress in Paris and the following year he received an honorary doctorate from Oxford University. Turgenev’s literary style influenced both the Russian and the European novelists of the last decades of the nineteenth century. His literary creations have also influenced many later Soviet authors like Alexi Tolstoy and K.G. Paustovsky. On September 3rd 1883 Ivan Turgenev departed from this world.
O.V. Vijayan

Introduction

Ottapurackal Velukkutty Vijayan, the towering personality of Malayalam literature, is popularly known as OV Vijayan. He has a significant role in the development of fictional modernism in Malayalam. Vijayan has an active presence in the post independent India in different roles like journalist, cartoonist and creative writer, which helped him in a great manner to know the social realities of India. According to famous literary critic PP Raveendran “OV Vijayan reigned supreme in the world of Malayalam letters while he was alive, and continues to be the guiding force of Malayalam fiction even after his death.”

In his sixty years of literary life he wrote six novels, nine collections of stories, a book of cartoons and a few collections of essays. Eminent literary analyst Dr. N.A. Karim says

“In a very broad sense Vijayan belonged to the main stream of modern Malayalam novel, the foundation of which was laid by the unrelenting realist O. Chandu Menon and the inveterate visionairy C.V. Raman Pillai. We find a


\[5\] Raveendran, PP. *Makers of Indian literature: OV Vijayan*. New Delhi: Sahitya Academy, 2009 p-7
combination of both in a modern idiom in Vijayan’s stories
including the story on Khasak.\textsuperscript{6}

1.3 Biographical Sketch

OV Vijayan was born into a land-holding middleclass family in the Palakkad district of Kerala on 2\textsuperscript{nd} July 1930. He had his early education largely at home under a private tutor. His grandmother, during the childhood days of Vijayan was an excellent story teller; it was this everlasting experience which moulded the thoughts of formative years. Fascinating, rich and scintillating kernel of first hand of Malayalam stories too influenced the foundation of his literary career as a great story writer. Vijayan’s father Ottpulackal Velukutty was an officer in Malabar Special Police of erstwhile Madras Presidency of British India. Vijayan’s father Velukkutty’s continuous transfers as police officer from one place to other provided him ample platform to understand closely the social and cultural back ground of Malabar region. As a child Vijayan was largely homeschooled, his physical weakness had always limited his school life, therefore it was his informal education through his private tutor Mr. Narayanan Nair, which opened the gates of future possibilities for the great writer. His first experience with formal schooling was at the age of twelve, when he joined Rajas high school,

kottakkal in southern Malabar, directly in to sixth standard. The formal education for which his father had made arrangements during the absentee years was sufficient to keep him at par with the fellow students. The next year he had to change school to Kodvayoor in Palakkad, where his father decided to temporarily anchor the family lest his frequent transfers may ruin the domestic composure. He graduated from Victoria College, Palakkad in 1954 and later it was Madras Christian College where he took masters degree in English literature. In 1950’s, when he was a MA student, he started his literary career by writing literary notes.

1.4 Discussion of Major Works

OV Vijayan wrote his debut story in English *Father Gonsalvus*, but he was eagerly waiting for the ripe time to explore his writing skills in the medium his own mother tongue – Malayalam. It was realised in the form of a story – *Parayu Father Gonsalvus* (Tell Father Gonsalvus). During the same period he published another important story *Oru yuddhathinte Aarambam* (Starting of a War), which was a story of agrarian problems faced by the local farmers of that time. The story had some touches of revolutionary ideas. He started his career as a lecture by teaching for a short period at Victoria College, Palakkad; and a little later in 1955 he shifted to Madurai Students Tutorial College. But it was in Malabar Christian College at Kozhikode, which changed the whole course of Vijayan as it was here, while working as a
lecturer, that he got introduced to gamut of literary figures. During this period he got a strong relationship with prominent literary figures of that time. Unfortunately, Vijayan’s ideology landed him into trouble by being terminated from the college. This proved to be a turning point of his life as now he had enough time to meditate on his literary creations. In 1956 he relocated himself into remote village called Thasrak in Palakkad district and it is here that his masterpiece of life *khasakkinte ithihasam* (*The legend of khasak*) was perceived. Though to earn bread and butter, Vijayan worked as a lone teacher in a local school, he devoted much of his time to finish his first work *The Legend of khasak*. The work envelops the life experiences of writer at Thasrak. In search of greener pastures, in 1956, Vijayan joined a college in Thanjavoor, Tamil Nadu as a teacher. There he worked for a period of two years but was not able to concentrate fully on literary works, as a result, he resigned from the job in 1958, and returned to his own native place. Then he joined a local monthly journal *Prapancham*, which was published from Kozhikode under the leadership of prominent communist leader AK Gopalan. During his later phase of life (from 1958 to 1963), he shifted to Delhi for better prospects. There he worked as a political observer and cartoonist in *Shanker’sWeekly*. From 1963 onwards he worked in pro-soviet daily *The Patriot* News Daily but Vijayan’s anti-soviet stand resulted in losing his job. During this period he published a portion of his masterpiece novel *Khasakhinte Ithihaasam* (*The Legend of Khasak*) named *Appukkili* in the
Mathrubhumi Weekly. In 1965 OV Vijayan entered into new stage in his personal life, he married to Theresa and a son was born to him in the next year.

OV Vijayan began his career as a cartoonist by opening a cartoon studio at Canaughtplace in Delhi and later he published a series of cartoons in The Economic Review, The Hindu and The Asia Week. Later he also drew cartoons for a famous Malayalam weekly called Kala Kaumudi and the series of cartoons name Ithiri neram Othiri darshanam (A little amusement, A little philosophy, 1999). Along with cartoons he published his political articles also. After earning in the world of journalism and cartooning, he published his first novel Khasakinte Ithihaasam (The Legend of Khasak) in 1969. It took twelve years of writing and rewriting to reach its final form. The publication of this novel brought a new era in the history of Malayalam novels. Vijayan brought about a sea of changes in Malayalam literature with this novel. The novel is set in an imaginary but now immortal village of Khasak. It changed the literary sensibility of Malayalam readers in a radical way. It is celebrated as a contemporary classic of Malayalam fictions.

It was a turning point in the history of Malayalam literature and literary historians say that it can be divided into pre- Khasak and post- Khasak eras, named after Vijayan’s pioneering first novel. The novel tells the story of a teacher named Ravi dispatched to a newly created informal school in a remote
village *Khasak* and deals with his existential crises overthere. Ravi, the protagonist of the novel is a great visionary in astrophysics who completed his post graduate programme in physics. The novel ends when Ravi begins his journey to some other realms of existence.

It was Vijayan who released Malayalam fiction writing from the chains of tradition:

‘the fictional genius whose 1969 masterpiece *Khasakinte Ithihasam* (The Legend of *Khasak*) shot him into fame as a legendary storey teller, the harbinger of a version of modernism that heralded a radical change of sensibility in Malayalam.”

OV Vijayan’s views on communism and spirituality are the most debated subject in the contemporary social life. He accepted a healthy perspective towards Hindu spirituality at times when the same philosophy is used by some sections of people as a means to attain power. And it is for this reason that some critics still try to dilute and remould the ideas of Hinduism in an unhealthy perspective which Vijayan has always objected. Vijayan’s perception on communism is displayed not only through cartoons and political articles but also through his novels and short stories. He was neither

a staunch supporter of communism and nor took a stand of being an anti-
communist. He was only against the false policies of communism; we come
to know this idea through a detailed examination of his works. Through his
logical sense and analytical skills, he tried to point out the contradiction
between ideology and practise of current Marxism. He mainly criticised the
way of Indian communists, who were not ready to admit the mistake done by
the practise of communism. He believed that Indian communist movements
failed to create its own identity in an Indian contest. According to him these
people always worked on international perspectives and not on local agenda
thus imitating Russian way or Chinese way. Initially, Vijayan’s positive
criticism on practise of the theory was not accepted by the Indian communist
movement in that sense. But it soon proved to be correct when the eastern
European nations collapsed in the 1990s. Vijayan was the first Malayalam
writer to highlight the issue of environmental degradation through writings.
The creative mind in him very much feared a nuclear holocaust, as was
evident from his writings. Vijayan had his own view points on Democracy,
Nationalism, Marxism, Spirituality and Environment which are reflected
through his articles, like *Indraprastham* (1986) and *oru sindhoorappottinte
ormakku* (The memory of a vermilion mark, 1987):
“As a political commentator, Vijayan always showed his firm commitment to democratic values as revealed by his six collection of political articles.”

After publishing his novel, *The legend of Khasak*, he wrote the novels like, *Dharmapraanam* (The Saga of Dharmapuri), *Gurusagaram* (The Infinity of Grace), *Madhuram Gayathri* (Sweet is the Music), *Pravachakante Vazhi* (The path of The Prophet), *Thalmurakal* (Generations). Each of these novels has created a widespread interest and debate among the gamut of eminent literary figures and intellectuals. The Malayalam weekly journal *Malayala Nadu* had published Vijayan’s second novel *Dharmapuraman* (The saga of Dharmapuri) in 1977 in series; and in 1985 it was published in a book form.

Undoubtedly the novel is a great political satire, where the writer targets the political culture, the institutions and their false and liquefied ideologies used to fulfil their own personal gains. If engaged meaningfully in depth one can sense the realms of hidden spiritual meaning in the novel. Vijayan directly portrays the political conspiracies of India and the dark side of authoritarian rulers. Many critics tried to see this novel as vulgar and cheap literary creation, but in real sense the writer tries to present before the readers the naked picture, of modern life. Here in this novel the great Prajapathi acts as ruling roost of the symbolic nation Dharmapuri, but in fact, he is only a

---

8  Sachitanandan, K. *Frontline* Magazine, vol22, issue 08, March12-25, 2005
obedient of two super powers. Through the forceful allegories Vijayan depicts
the pathetic condition of a vast nation.

Vijayan’s third novel *Grusagaram* (The Infinity of Grace) published in
1987. This novel is different from Vijayan’s earlier works in terms of the use
of language, vision and characterisation. The novel talks about Kunjunni, a
journalist from Kerala, who finds his way to the infinite grace of life, after his
long and winding physical and spiritual journey. Like all his other works, this
novel too was translated into English by the author himself. The novel won
several awards including The Prestigious Vayalar Award and Central Sahitya
Academy Award. *Gurusagaram* (The Infinity of Grace) was marked not just
the transformation of his craft, but also the evolvement of Vijayan’s ideology
itself, from a staunch supporter of communism to spiritualism, that he had
embraced in the period and thanks to his then new found association with
Kurunakara Guru.

OV Vijayan’s another important novel *Madhuram Gayathri* (Sweet is
the Music) published in the year of 1990. In this short work he attempts to
manifest some abstract imaginations by experimenting with a new idea of
homogenising mythology with ecology. This lyrical novel is an allegory of
natural and human spirits fighting together for survival in today’s mechanical
world. Here in this novel we have a banyan tree as a protagonist and Sukanya
as a heroine. The work discovers a kind of obscure, visionary esoteric love
relationship among them. The delicate, refined, pure and sensuous love of human soles forms the internal structure of the story. Another much discussed work by OV Vijayan was *Pravachakante Vazhi* (The path of the Prophet) was published in the year of 1992. The author’s obsession with metaphysics of *guru* grace continues into this novel. The novel emphasises the vision that intuition is perennial and it is one and the same always. The oneness of the revelation makes the ways of all prophets the same. The great education in spirituality was experienced by Vijayan in those inhuman days when the Sikh were maniacally hunted after and mercilessly butchered in Delhi following the murder of Mrs Indira Gandhi.

Vijayan’s last novel *Thalamurakal* (Generations) published in the year of 1997 and it was autobiographical to a great extent. In the novel, the novelist reaches back to his roots in Malabar, to his own Ezhava community and fictionalises the real life story. Thalamurakal records two century long struggle of an Ezhava landlord family, named Ponmudi, to overcome their caste identity in a society closely guarded by the rigid caste system. Vijayan attempts to draw a social chronicle of Malabar through portraying four generations of Ponmudi family in *Thalamurakal*. Vijayan was also one of the first Malayalam writers with an international outlook. Auschwitz, typhoon in Hongkong, the assassination of Soviet dissidents like Hungarian Imre Nage were as much subject matter in the novel.

Vijayan has been truly a versatile and prolific in his literary life that spans a period of about a half century. He deserves a prominent position in the history of Modern Indian Literature. The success of his creations is in his
ability to combine a sublime sense of tragedy with a subtle streak of comedy.

As a writer O.V. Vijayan will be remembered for the deep philosophical vision that he brought to bear up on his literary creations.