Chapter 3

CLASHES OF IDEAS-FATHERS V/S SONS: A CRITICAL STUDY OF THE TWO NOVELS

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Introduction

Every society deals with the clashes between new ideas of younger generation and the existing values of their elder generation. There are many reasons behind the conflict between generations. In modern times the term generation gap indicates the cultural and social differences between the younger generation and their elders and it is one of the major problems being faced by the current society. Famous Indian sociologist MK Ganju says “generation gap may be interpreted as the difference in attitudes, aims, beliefs and complexes between old and young in any given culture”36. According to eminent psychologist Kenneth Keniston, “Generational consciousness also entails a feeling of psychological disconnection from a previous generation, their life situations and their ideologies.” 37 The theme of generation gap has always been one of the most discussed themes in the field of world literature. The present research thesis will be analyzing, how the phenomenon of

conflict between generations is appearing in the novels *Fathers and Sons* and *Thalamurakal*.

**PART A: FATHERS AND SONS**

Ivan Turgenev’s *Fathers and Sons* was originally published in 1862 in the Russian magazine *Russki Vesnik* (The Russian Herald), under the title, *Ottsy i Deti*. The novel represents the time of the social unrest that was happening in Russia just before the historic declaration of Emancipation of Serfs in 1861 by Alexander II, as well as the various reforms and social changes that took place at the time. Turgenev dedicated this novel to Vissarian Belinsky, well known progressive intellect and literary critic of nineteenth century Russia. Many critics pointed out that Bazarov, the protagonist of the novel, has some similarities with Belinsky.

“… Bazarov has some of the characteristics of Belinsky too, like him he is the son of a poor army doctor, and he possesses some of Belinsky’s brusqueness, his directness, his intolerance his liability to explode at any sign of hypocrisy…”  

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The theme of the novel is the confrontation between the old and the young, between liberals and radicals, and between the traditional civilization and young harsh positivism which has no use for anything except what is needed by rational man. Through the presentation of the generation gap between the fathers and sons in the story, the author clearly symbolises the current political debates between the older generation and the younger radicals.

Turgenev was a writer, who was intently interested in social reforms and as a realistic novelist; he set his novels in contemporary society. Even before the publication, the novel provoked a controversy. Both the radicals and the liberals believed that, the novel, especially the portrayal of the protagonist Bazarov, was aimed against them. Famous literary critic Frank Friedeberg Seeley has commented on this argument:

“the storm of criticism provoked by the novel raged around the figure of Bazarov, Turgenev’s apologetics are of little help towards understanding that hero, the attack had came from all sides, with the right complaining that he has been glorified while the left protested just as bitterly that he was a caricature”.

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Though the strong serf system was the peculiarity of Russian society till the emancipation proclamation in 1862, the relationship between land owner and the serfs was undergoing a tremendous change also. Many renowned literary critics have observed that, the novel *Fathers and Sons* has a significant role in the history of modern novel. Famous modern writer, Jesse Matz says,

“Russian writer Ivan Turgenev, Whose *Fathers and Sons* (1862) brought to the novel a new intensity of emotion, a newly precise kind of observation, a perfect combination of the complex and the simple, and a bracing nihilism”.40

On the pages of his masterpiece *Fathers and Sons*, Ivan Turgenev reveals a broad picture of a period of transition in the history of Russia.

### 3.1 ideological crisis in the novel

In the very beginning of the novel, Nikolai Petrovich Kirsanov and his servant Peter are eagerly waiting at a posting station, a depot for horse carriages, for his son Arkady, who has just graduated from St. Petersburg. However, when Arkady arrives, his father is surprised to see that he has brought a friend, Bazarov, to stay with him at their farm. Evgeny Vasilich

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Bazarov is a senior medical student who serves as Arkady’s trusted adviser. Bazarov becomes the central figure in the later part of the novel. He is calm, cool and passionate. Nikolai and Arkady reaches the farm house at Marino along with Bazarov, where Arkady’s uncle, Pavel Petrovich Kirsanov, is happy to receive him. But Pavel does not care for Bazarov. Nikolai, a widower, who has recently freed his serfs, and he has been selling off his land to make his ends meet. He has a forbidden relationship with a young girl named Fenechka who serves Nikolai and two of them have a son named Mitya.

Pavel Petrovich Kirsanov, elder brother of Nikolai, lives with them and is a well respected society man who long back was a captain in the Royal army, but later lost his position due to a mysterious woman. One morning when Bazarov goes out to collect frogs for experiments, Pavel and Nikolai enquire about his friend. Arkady tells them, that Bazarov is a nihilist, a type of scientific materialist that advocates believing in nothing. These ideas, which Arkady mimics in their conversations, distress the elder Kirsanov brothers, who realises that there is a large gap between them and the younger generation. When Bazarov returns, the two old men are preparing to defend their arguments. Pavel is much harsher than his brother Nikolai, and he has no patience for the young nihilist.
A few weeks later, a series of conflicts erupts between old Pavel Petrovich and young Bazarov. Pavel Petrovich argues that one cannot live without principles, and that the Russians are traditional people, who believe in faith. But Bazarov, for his part, argues that the young people can do nothing more useful than to reject everything, and he also adds that ‘A decent chemist is twenty times more useful than any poet’. 41 Both the men lose their tempers. After observing this debate, Nikolai recalls his differences with his mother when he was young. She couldn’t understand his views because she represented a different generations. Nikolai wonders whether the same thing has now happened between his generation and the youngster’s.

In the next part of the novel Bazarov and Arkady go to a nearest town, and meet Matvei Ilich Kolyazin, a close relative of Kirsanovs. Like Pavel, Kolyazin dislikes Bazarov, though he invites the young men to the Governors’ ball. The same day on the road they met Victor Sitnikov, an old companion of Bazarov, who convinces them to meet and have drinks with a clever old lady, Evdoksiya Kukshina. Madame Kukshina tells them they should meet Anna Sergeevna Odintsova, rich young widow, at the Governors’ ball. At the ball they meet Anna Odintsova and Arkady instantly falls in love with her. However she treats him as a friend and is more curious about

Bazarov. Anna’s meeting with the two young men is a turning point in the novel. She then invites the two of them to her place in the country at Nikolskoye. At Nikolskoye, Anna introduces the two young men to her younger sister Katya. Bazarov and Arkady stay at the estate for a fortnight and Arkady slowly starts to befriend with Katya. They are both left to spend most of his time together. Meanwhile over the course of time Bazarov and Anna fell into an intimate relationship. Being a nihilist it was hard for Bazarov to admit his emotions. However, in a change of events, later Anna rejects him. The situation at Nikolskoye becomes very tense and it seriously affects Bazarov. Finally Bazarov decides to leave for his parent’s house. Then the novel shifts to a new atmosphere, Bazarov’s aged parents Vasily Ivanovich and Arina Vlasevna are thrilled to see him after three years. They were excepting Bazarov to stay with them for a longer period. Nevertheless, Bazarov decides to depart from there just three days later. He promises his parents to return soon. On the way to Arkady’s home they both decide to go Nikolskoye. But Anna is hesitantly to entertain them both together. So they have to leave her abode early. When they return to Marino, Arkady realises that, he cannot stop thinking about Katya. His father shows him some letters that Anna Sergeevna’s mother sent to Arkady’s mother, and Arkady decides to use it as a cause to return. And then he comes back to Nikolskoye.

Bazarov is left alone at Marino, so to escape his loneliness, he goes out to explore nature. With times Bazarov comes closer to Fenechka. He enjoys
talking with Fenechka and playing with her child and one day all of a sudden he approaches Fenechka and delivers a harmless kiss, which is observed by Pavel Petrovich. The old man feels it is his duty to defend his brother’s honour and he challenges Bazarov for a duel. But Pavel didn’t disclose about the incident to his brother. And the next morning both Pavel and Bazarov are well prepared for the duel and using Peter, the servant as their only witness, Pavel fires first and misses, and then Bazarov shoots and hits Pavel on his thigh. As soon as Pavel is hit, Bazarov, being sympathetic, attends him. Meanwhile Arkady is spending a great deal of time with Katya at Nikolskoye, but he cannot quite tell her he loves her. Bazarov comes to Nikolskoye to tell Arkady what happened with Pavel. Arkady is shocked, but Bazarov assures him that Pavel is fine. Arkady again tries to express his love for Katya in the garden but is interrupted when they hear Bazarov and Anna walking by, and talking about their own failed relationship. Somehow after they left the place Arkady finally tells Katya that he loves her.

The next day, Bazarov returns home and begins helping his father, to treat the local peasants. Vasily Ivanich is happy and very proud, but worries that Bazarov is sad and gloomy. One day Bazarov is in town, and decides to help the local doctors to autopsy a man who recently died of typhus. In the process, Bazarov accidently cuts himself. Actually he is very calm about it, but as the days pass, it becomes clear that he has contracted the disease. Bazarov is feverish and bed-ridden.
Bazarov’s physical condition becomes serious, and he expresses his wish to inform Anna about his health immediately. His father does so, and Anna responds by accompanying a doctor with her. Bazarov is partly delirious. At his request, Anna gives him a kiss on the forehead before she leaves and he dies the same evening. The novel ends with the weddings of Nikolai with Fenechka and Arkady with Katya.

3.2 Conflict between ‘fathers’ and ‘sons’

As a realistic novelist Turgenev was interested in social reforms. He set his literary creations in contemporary society; naturally the background and social changes going on in his land at the time do function in his novels. The gap between two generations in the novel neatly symbolises the existing political debates between older liberals and younger radicals in Russia during the nineteenth century.

When Ivan Turgenev published his novel *Fathers and Sons* in 1862, he intended to address the social clashes in his country that emerged as a consequence of Russia’s transition from the cruel disciplinarian Nicolas I to the more generous and tolerant Alexander II. The growing social conflicts of the period resulted many changes in the thoughts of intellectual sections of the country and a division occurred among them into *Slavophils* and *Westerners*. In addition to the split within the intelligentsia, the difference of ideas resulted, in a division among the common masses as reactionaries and
radicals. This division was accompanied by a larger generational conflict and this had become a major subject in the nineteenth century Russian literature. These schools of different thoughts later came to be known as the generation of 1840’s and 1860’s respectively. In fact it is the continuation of these two types of social views that the novel *Fathers and Sons* portrays.

The characters of Pavel Petrovich and Evgeny Bazarov are different from one another as they belong to two generations and have two different views of life. These two characters appear to represent the ideological conflicts between two generations. Ivan Turgenev has created these characters as signifiers of two intellectual streams of Russian society.

It is Arkady, in the fifth chapter of the novel who introduces Bazarov to his father and uncle. And through Bazarov the novelist has introduced to us a new ideological stream. It is Turgenev who uses for the first time the term *Nihilism* in a literary work to describe the type of character represented by Bazarov.

“The term “nihilism” was used in Russia in the first half of 19th century, but it never assumed either popularity or precision until Turgenev infused vital life into the term in
his famous and controversial novel of 1862 *Fathers and Sons*.42

With the introduction of the character Bazarov, the term *Nihilism* gets prominence and a little later the same term is being explained by Arkady. A nihilist is a person “who approaches everything from a critical point of view.... A nihilist is a person who doesn’t bow down before authorities, doesn’t accept even one principle on faith, no matter how much respect surrounds that principle”.43 Arkady takes pride in describing his friend Bazarov as a person who analyses everything prevalent in society from a critical point of view. Besides he describes himself to be a follower of his good friend.

Thus Bazarov is a representation of the younger generation’s radical thoughts and viewpoints and he is most often considered to the central figure in the novel. Bazarov inculcates the central ideal of ‘nihilism’ and acts as the representative force of the newer generation. Bazarov is a nihilist of humble background whose perspective on life involves a rejection of anything that has previously been accepted as valid. After introducing Bazarov as a nihilist, it is seen that all the character of the novel diverges in to two specific groups.


One group comprises the young generation who wants to look at every thing critically in the light of new scientific thoughts, and the other group consists of the people of the old generation who are not against social reforms, yet want to realise the same through the Russian tradition and beliefs, and who are also ardent supporters of romantic thought. As a response to Bazarov’s nihilistic approach, Pavel Petrovich says:

“We’re people of another age; we assume that without principles, (Pavel Petrovich articulated this word softly, in the French manner, Arkady, on the contrary, pronounced it principals, accenting the first syllable), without principles accepted, as you say, on faith, it’s impossible to take a step to draw a breath”.44

Pavel believes that, it is impossible to live without principles and he reacts strongly against the views of new generation. But the young Arkady thinks in a different way, according to him the emergence of Nihilism is not a new one but it is a continuation of a historical process and it is just an extension of Hegelian thought. Along with the presentation of these two types of different attitudes towards life, the author tries to hint the major theme of

the novel, which is the conflict between the Romantic past and materialistic present.

The difference of opinion between Nikolai Petrovich and his son Arkady are depicted on the first few chapters of the novel. The conflict between father and son increases when Nikolai tries to explain his relationship with Fenechka, his maid servant, and Arkady assumes the role of the more advanced person who could not be disturbed by any form of unorthodox social relationship, because he belongs to new generation and its new thoughts. But Nikolai is anxious about the response of his son. It should be noted here that Russia of the nineteenth century was strictly divided into definite social classes. Fenechka is a member of the lower class, who would not be accepted by the wealthy and elite class to which Nikolai belonged. The dominant position and the respectful status in the society becomes a hurdle before Nikolai to accept Fenechka, as his wife. The point of view is that the old aristocratic order is so firmly embedded in Nikolai’s mind that he can’t really justify his relationship with Fenechka as proper. But on the other hand, Arkady with his advanced thoughts is ready to accept the relationship between his father and Fenechka. Though not directly, it explores the clash of generations through the depiction of the difference of opinion between Nikolai and Arkady.
The plot of the novel develops through the ideological conflicts of the two different streams of thought. Pavel Petrovich is a powerful character throughout the novel, and strongly criticises the ideas of the new generation. Pavel is introduced by the novelist to the readers in the fourth chapter of the novel with following description:

“… a man of medium height, dressed in a dark English suit, fashionable low cravat, and patent leather shoes, entered the drawing room..... He appeared to be about forty five: his closely cropped gray hair shone with a dark luster, like new silver; his face, sallow, but without wrinkles.... his bright black almond shaped eyes were particularly exquisite”.45

Actually the character of Pavel has been presented by the novelist in a contradictory way. On one hand he dresses himself up in western fashion and on the other hand he tries to uphold Russian traditions and culture. While he initiates the western ways in his personal life, he is not ready to accept western thoughts and German scientific ways held by the new generation. In those days, families of Russian feudal nobility used French language as their lingua franca. They used Russian language only to communicate to the feudal

45 Ibid. p. 12
vassals. Pavel and his brother Nikolai too follow this path. Despite the contradictory nature of Pavel as a character, if analysed historically, he is a profound believer of the Russian Philosophy of Slavophils. Pavel is a spokesman of those people who preferred slow and gradual change backed Russian traditionalism and also wanted to pose as progressive thinkers. His attitude towards the new ways of thinking is evident in his reference to Bazarov, who is a nihilist and critically everything. “He doesn’t believe in principles, but believes in frogs”.46

Along with the presentation of intellectual debate of the Russian society, the author also tries to depict the changing attitudes of the entire society. Turgenev presents these new trends in the fourth chapter of the novel. When Arkady and his friend return to home, the situation is different from what it had been in the past. Before the new changes came into existence, it was a custom that all the servants should come together around and greet the arrival of the young master. But now the custom has been changed. In the very first pages of the novel we can see the changed face of Russian servants and more important is the contrast between two types of servants represented by Peter and Prokofitch. Peter is one among the new liberated type of servants. “The servant, about whom everything the turquoise ring in his ear,

styled multi coloured hair, ingratiating movements, in a word, everything proclaimed him to be a man of the new, advanced generation”.  

Peter represents the new generation of servants; he is the new liberated type of men while Prokofitch belongs to the older generation, follows the traditional customs of Russian society. Therefore he comes forward and kisses his young master’s hand.

“A man aged sixty entered, white haired, thin and dark, in a brown frock coat with brass buttons and a pink scarf tied around his neck. He grinned, went up to kiss Arkady’s hand, and after bowing to the guest withdraw to the door and stood with both hands behind his back”.

Through the presentation of these two models of servants the novelist hints the conflict of stands between the different generations.

The novelist presents Bazarov as an energetic character who is always engaged in either experiments or arguments. His undaunted behavior appears in the novel to signify the new generation’s different ways of thinking. There is a description of Bazarov’s explanation to the children of farmers about his


48 Ibid.12
experiments on frogs in the fourth chapter of the novel. He is giving an explanation of the working of the body of frogs in a simple way to the children.

“I will cut the frogs open and look inside to see what’s going on; since you and I are just like frogs, except that we walk on two legs, I’ll find out what’s going on inside us as well”\(^\text{49}\)

Through this description Bazarov is challenging the traditional religious beliefs about the existence of human beings. Whether it was deliberate on the part of the novelist or not, in fact it was against the prevalent view of thinking. Those words of Bazarov are an open denial of the Christian belief that human beings are created in the image and likeness of God. “So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him, male and female he created them.”\(^\text{50}\)

Turgenev’s literary creations were not done from a religious background unlike his contemporaries Dostoevsky or Leo Tolstoy. The publication of Charles Darwin’s famous book *The Origin of species* in 1858 was a huge blow on thoughts about man and his origin prevalent in the society those days. It is noteworthy that *Fathers and Sons* was published within a few

\(^{49}\) Ibid. p. 15

years after the publication of Darwin’s book. Through Bazarov’s words a long held belief was being corrected. This way, this particular character joins in the inevitable phenomenon of conflicts between generations. Throughout the novel, he appears as a partisan scientific thinker and continuously remains to question the prevailing belief systems.

The following chapters feature the heated arguments between Pavel and Bazarov. The novelist is depicting a face to face confrontation between views of two different generations through these battles of words. The character of Bazarov, more often appears in the novel to show interest in the findings of Western scientists, German scientists in particular. Whenever he speaks of his studies, he talks enthusiastically about the observations of German scientists. But, Pavel denies and rejects Bazarov’s Pro-German stands. In the beginning of the discussion, Pavel is not even ready to refer to the name Germany. Instead of Germany, he uses the word Teutons. According to Pavel, Bazarov’s respect for German’s and disregard for Russian scientists are signs of his disloyalty to the country. Pavel dislikes Bazarov’s lack of patriotism in paying two much homage to German scientists. But Bazarov suggests that people have to make German scientists as their role models, who are the leaders of Nineteenth century’s new thought.

“Yes, the Germans are our teachers in this regard”.\textsuperscript{51}

\textsuperscript{51} Ibid. p. 20
Pavel Petrovich vehemently criticizes the young nihilist, who follows the German thoughts. Bazarov likes the Germans because they are scientific and rational, and for being superior to the Russians to this count. This is a reflection of the ideological debates that raged in Russian society during the 19th century. In these wars of words one can see the ideological divide between Russian traditionalist *Slavophils* and *Westerners*, who accepted western thoughts. Though he is against German scientists, Pavel Petrovich openly expresses his respect for German Romantic poets Goethe and Schiller. Fundamentally, he is expressing his opposition of scientific reason and his favoritism towards Romanticism by showing his liking for German poets. But, Bazarov is harshly criticizing the romantic propensity of Pavel Petrovich. He is a strong representative of the nihilist attitude; he rejects the romantic ideals and values of previous generation, as well as its cultural institutions and art. This narrow-minded believer of science is completely rejecting the art and the artist.

3.3 ‘A decent chemist is twenty times more useful than any poet’: Bazarov’s Nihilist Views

“A decent chemist is twenty times more useful than any poet”.52 This declaration by Bazarov shows his overzealousness towards science and his contempt of romanticism and art. Pavel has always accepted the value of art

52 Ibid. p.18
and music, and when he hears a young man saying that art is meaningless, he practically foams at the mouth with ire. But Bazarov doesn’t even believe in science as a general principle. He thinks that only the individual objective experiment is important.

Though Arkady looks upon Bazarov as his ideological guru, advises Bazarov to behave more sympathetically to his uncle Pavel. Arkady is trying to make his friend understand about his uncle’s position after a love affair failure. Arkady wants Bazarov to develop some compassion for Pavel, a compassion built upon understanding why Pavel has developed into the type of person he is. But, Bazarov is trying to show more of his nihilist approach even at this instance. He doesn’t attach any significance to emotions in life and he looks at men as more bodies. Therefore, he is only ridiculing Pavel about his love failure and its consequences.

“Still I say that a man who stakes his whole life on women’s love and, when that one card gets beaten, turns sour and sinks to the point where he’s incapable of doing anything at all, then that person is no longer a man, not even a male of the species. You say he’s unhappy. You ought to know but all his foolishness still hasn’t gone out of him”.  

Here we do see Bazarov’s ardent position against all emotional sides of human mind and rejecting romanticism and emotional relationships between men and women, at which he looks from a utilitarian point of view. He takes into account only the physiological factors of man.

“We physiologists understand all that. You just study the anatomy of the eye: where does that enigmatic gaze come from that you talk about? Its all romanticism, none sense rubbish artifice. Let’s go have a look at that beetle”. 54

Here, Bazarov reveals a character, which sees human relationship in a mechanical way. Bazarov approaches everything with as much scientific objectivity as possible and will ultimately maintain that human feelings and concepts should be viewed either as nonsense or as only so much weakness in the human body. Yet those views dispute with the then prevalent romantic views of relationships.

Despite belonging to the same generation, we can see minor differences of opinion between Bazarov and Arkady. From the conversation about the marriage between Arkady’s father Nikolai and his maid Fenechka, this difference becomes explicit. Arkady is thinking about the legal status of the marriage between Nikolai (belonging to a higher social strata) and his

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54 Ibid.
little brother’s mother Fenechka (belonging to a lower class). He is prompted to think in such terms, thanks to his novel views about society. At the same time the readers see a more liberal Bazarov, who even rejects the very concepts of marriage. Bazarov’s nihilism is again revealed when he ridicules Arkady for feeling that Nikolai should marry Fenechka. Arkady actually thinks he is being very advanced by advocating such a marriage. But Bazarov opposes all existing kinds of social forms. He says, “How very generous we are! So you still attach significance to marriage I never expected that from you”.

Arkady views the marriage between his father Nikolai and the maid Fenechka as a progressive act considering the fact that both belonged to economically and socially different classes. But Bazarov is even more advanced or liberal by believing that marriage is just a ridiculous institution that has no meaning.

In the tenth chapter of the novel, the conflicts of ideas between the Nihilistic views of young generation and the romantic ideas of elder generation is at its peak. Pavel Petrovich’s reaction to Bazarov, who is spokesman of the new generation and his views amounts to sheer hatred. Pavel realises the contempt the new nihilist harbours towards him. Pavel more

55 Ibid p. 33.
often than not confronts the arguments between the views of two generations in an emotional way. This signifies the two different ways of thinking among the two generations.

The two characters who reject completely the ways of the new generations in the novel are Pavel Petrovich and his servant Prokofitch. Meanwhile, unlike his brother Pavel, Nikolai makes an attempt to understand the views of the new generation. While Bazarov considers Nikolai as a mere romantic and he is an exact model of older generation. He believes that the golden period of Nikolai is over because even now he is enjoying with the romantic poems of Pushkin. Bazarov says:

“But he’s antiquated; his songs been sung..... A few days ago I looked over and he was reading Pushkin,’Bazarov continued meanwhile. ‘Tell him, if you would, that it’s of no use. After all, he’s no longer a young boy; its time to toss that rubbish aside. Just imagine the desire to be a romantic in this day and age! Give him something more substantial to read.”56

Through the rejection of Pushkin’s poems, Bazarov completely denies the literary heritage of Russia. Alexander Pushkin is considered as the symbol of Russian Romanticism. More over Bazarov, a staunch materialist, suggests

Arkady to replace the Pushkin heritage by handing him over the book titled *Staff and Kraft* (Force and matter), a book, which is written by Ludwing Buchner and which offers a materialist interpretation of the universe for Nikolai. Through his approach towards Nikolai, Bazarov becomes a typical icon of the new generation, who rejects the entire elements of romanticism in life.

Unlike his brother Pavel, Nikolai often accepts Bazarov’s ideas. He says “No Brother, don’t say that: Bazarov’s clever and he knows his stuff”. But Pavel chooses to see Bazarov as a personification of egoism.

There is a description in the tenth chapter about the strong differences of opinion between Bazarov and Pavel over the aristocrats. Pavel, who declares himself as a liberal, says that he has respect for the aristocrats. He quotes the English aristocrats to justify his points. Pavel says that English aristocrats do not give up their own rights but at the same time they respect the rights of others as well. Pavel reminds Bazarov that it were the aristocrats who liberated England and who were the sustaining force of freedom.

“The English Aristocrats They don’t retreat one iota from their rights, and consequently, they respect the right of others, and consequently; they demand the fulfillment of obligations owing

\[^{57}\] Ibid.
to them, and consequently, fulfill their own obligations. The aristocracy gave England its freedom and support it.”

Pavel very strongly criticises the views of Bazarov who devalues aristocracy and Russian traditions. More over, Pavel also tells to Bazarov who ridicules the former’s dress code, hygiene and orderly life that he can’t have a life devoid of his pride and prestige. Pavel reiterates that he will continue to live according to the prestige of Russian aristocracy. Through his responses, Pavel expresses all his opposition and rejection on the nihilist and materialist views of the new generation which Bazarov represents.

But Bazarov gives a patient listening to all the criticisms of the new generation’s views made by Pavel. He continues to ridicule the attitude of Pavel who does nothing practical but wax verbose about pride and prestige. Bazarov asks what benefits are the people going to get out of these hallow talks.

“You say you respect yourself, yet you sit herewith your arms crossed; what use is that to the bien public? You’d been better off not respecting yourself, but doing something”.

58 Ibid p-37

By criticising everything from his nihilist point of view, Bazarov questions all custom and traditions of the older generation. These battles of words take a new dimension with Arkady who is Bazarov’s pupil pitching in. Arkady says, ‘I have already told you, uncle we don’t accept any authorities’60 What follows is an open declaration by Bazarov of the fundamentals of nihilism thereby refuting everything and increasing the differences between Bazarov and Pavel.

Their repeated and heated exchanges foreshadow the later violent conflict and exemplify the differences in attitude between two generations. For example, after Bazarov explains his nihilistic stance and rejection of all authorities Pavel asks him “on what basis’ he would act. Bazarov replies:

“We act on the basis of what we recognize as useful”
Bazarov replied. “Now a days the most useful thing of all is rejection – we reject”

“Every thing?”

“Every thing”

“What? Not only art and poetry . . . but even . . . it’s too awful to say . . .”

60 Ibid.
“Everything,” Bazarov repeated with indescribable composure.\textsuperscript{61}

By these debates, Bazarov argues that the most useful thing of all is rejecting everything; he is advocating the need for the destruction of the existing social system more than being a war of words between persons. These discussions reveal the conflict of views between two generations.

Pavel harshly criticises the ideas of the new generations that everything should be destroyed without suggesting on alternative model. He is the spokesman of the reformists who only want to solve the problems existing in the prevailing social system. The question he raises towards the nihilists who irresponsibly want to destroy everything is relevant here: “You reject everything, or to put it more precisely, you destroying everything… But one must also build”\textsuperscript{62}

When Pavel asks the new generation who wants to destroy everything, what after that, he is also expressing his own generation’s skepticism. Nihilism is one of the various streams of thoughts that emerged during the mid nineteenth century Russia, after the nihilism is followed by other movements also. Many of the protagonists of these movements were trying to

\textsuperscript{61} Ibid. p. 38
\textsuperscript{62} Ibid. p. 38.
pave a way for the future movements. They thought that what was left to be done would be done by those who followed. In the novel Bazarov also gives the same answer, what comes after would be determined by the successive generations is the indication shown in Bazarov’s reply. Bazarov’s reply is historically significant in the light of that the movements that followed in Russia later came up with new views.

When a discussion between Pavel and Bazarov becomes very heated, Nikolai tries to interpose to prevent serious clashes. Unlike his brother Pavel, Nikolai is not ready to reject all arguments of new generation, he makes some effort to understand the views of the new generation. Earlier, while in St. Petersburg, he had tried to read the books favored by the new generation. He is a little bit disturbed to the fact that the new generation doesn’t recognise his progressive approach like giving the rights to his serfs and servants. Though he gives freedom to vassals under him and liberalises feudal administrative laws of the agricultural lands, Nikolai fails to understand and accept the views of the new generation.

This part also reinforces a wider range of theme in the novel like the natural clashes that exists between succeeding generations, between fathers and sons of all periods of history. Nikolai tries to justify his son Arkady’s and his friend’s different views by reminding Pavel that they are children; they too thought of their parents of being old fashioned. Nickolai recalls:
“Once I had an argument with our late mother: she was shouting and didn’t want to listen to me . . . . Finally, I told her she couldn’t understand me; I said we belonged to two different generations. She was terribly offended . . .”63

Through these words, Turgenev is suggesting that any two different generations at a given time always fail to understand each other. Even Nikolai, who is, to an extent, a democrat in his views, can’t accept the nihilism which rejects art and literature and is utilitarian in essence. In a way what is revealed through this character is the opinion of the novelist himself. Though Turgenev himself was a liberal, he has accepted the new changes to a great extent.

“No one will pretend that Turgenev was a revolutionary, on many occasions he professed his political liberalism and gradualism and his abhorrence of revolution.”64

Thus it can be said that in the novel Fathers and Sons, it is the character Nikolai who carries the thoughts of the novelist. But, Turgenev criticizes both the nihilists, who reject everything; and romantic persons like Nikolai, who lives in a romantic world and allows himself to be subdued by

63 Ibid. p. 42.
64 Freeborn, Richard. Turgenev and revolution. seeer. Vol.61, No.4, October 1983
the practical considerations of every day life. At a closer look, one can understand that the character Nikolai doesn’t succeed much in life and indulge in a kind of romantic dreams. But Pavel is neither a romantic dreamer nor a ‘born’ romantic like Nikolai.

Pavel reminds the representative of the new generation that they are in fact heaving forth the same old and failed ideas of materialism as new and fresh. Meanwhile Bazarov reveals his more radical and new ideas on society, through the explanations of the existing system and the necessity of a drastic social change. He says that the reformists like Pavel restrict their social criticism with in words, while he and his people believe in action. He reminds his elders that Russia’s problems cannot be solved only by reformist and remedial means and it will be possible only through an entire change to the system. Bazarov, afterwards, starts a verbal attack on all the existing beliefs and traditional customs.

“Then we realized that talking, simply talking all the time about our open sores isn’t worth the trouble, that it leads only to being vulgar and doctrinaire, we saw that even our intelligent men, our so called progressives and denouncers served no purpose of all, that we were preoccupied with a lot of nonsense, arguing over some form of art, unconscious creativity. Parliamentarianism, legal
profession, and the devils knows what else, while it was really question of our daily bread, when we were being oppressed by the most primitive superstitions, when all our joint stock companies were collapsing merely as a result of a lack of honest men, while the emancipation, about which the government was so concerned, will hardly do any good because our peasants are happy to steal from themselves, as long as they can get stinking drunk in the tavern”.65

Through this long monologue Bazarov draws a realistic picture of his society and declares that a total reorganization of the society or an absolute change is necessary. What Turgenev intended by creating Bazarov is affected and completed through the above mentioned long conversations. Bazarov is often described as the first Bolshevik of Russian literature and which is corroborated through these responses.

“Bazarov’s revolutionary rhetoric, uncompromising ideology, and commitment to science have led some critics of the novel to label him “the first Bolshevik”, although

Lenin’s Bolshevik party was not formed until thirty years after the appearance of the novel”.66

Here we also see the development of the character of Bazarov from a mere rebel to a mature observer of the society and a visionary. By means of these stances the young character succeeds in upsetting the ideas of the old generation. The author gives expression to the voice of a new rising power through the characters of Bazarov and Arkady. Pavel rejects the thoughts of the new generation, who criticize art and literature and think values are useless to the society. He describes the common nature of new generation in following words: “First there’s almost satanic pride, then ridicule. That’s how our young people amuse themselves, that’s what wins the inexperienced hearts of young lads!”67 Earlier Bazarov had ridiculed Alexander Pushkin’s Poetry and romantic dreaming and later he rejects the world famous Painter Raphael too: “According to me, Bazarov objected, “Raphael isn’t worth a damn and they’re no better than he is.”68

By repeatedly criticizing art and the artists, Bazarov is expressing himself to be too mechanical in approaching things. Pavel reacts in a

66 Mosen,.David.S A Concise History of Modern Europe: Liberty, Equality, Solidarity UK: Rownans & little field publishers. p. 120.
68 Ibid
sentimental way to the young man’s criticisms on the elder generation’s great values. He is ashamed of the young people who are to become the future of his country. He said, “… there are our contemporary young people for you! There they are our-heirs!”

The tenth chapter of the book is occupied by many argumentative conflicts between the two generations represented by Pavel and Bazarov. Concluding the verbal fight, Bazarov explains the original reasons of the young generation’s stand.

“When you present me with a single institution of contemporary life, either in the family or in the social sphere, that doesn’t deserve absolute and merciless rejection.”

In this part of the novel, the representatives of elder generation, Nikolai and Pavel try to argue that any philosophical concept must have a positive end, but Bazarov insists that the ‘nihilist’ is only interested in “clearing the site” by destroying all the existing evils. The parent’s generation cannot understand the concept that stands totally on negative principles. The young

69 Ibid. p.42
71 Ibid., p.41
generation thinks that, all the institutions, the Russian land, country, family, governments, church are all equally ridiculous and must be destroyed.

The character of Nikolai as mentioned earlier is one who approaches the new thoughts respectfully. As a result he is ready to welcome the new ideas of younger generation. Such a stand makes him remember his childhood when he listens to the strong arguments of the new generation. He recalls the occasion when he had to quarrel with his mother. That quarrel also was a result of the gap between generation at his mother and himself.

“Once I had an argument with our late mother. She was shouting and didn’t want to listen to me . . . finally I told, she couldn’t understand me; I said we belonged to two different generations . . . she was terribly offended . . .”  

Nikolai realizes that the same kinds of differences between generations are recurring now. Through Nikolai’s thoughts the novelist makes it clear that the conflict between generations is a continuous phenomenon in the human history. And through the words of Nikolai, the novelist is suggesting that any two different generations will always fail to understand each other.

In eleventh chapter, the novelist gives a new face to Bazarov. Now he becomes an ordinary man, who has been refuting all along sentimental

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72 Ibid. p. 42
feelings. In the last part of the chapter, the two young men were about to leave Marino. They decided to visit Arkady’s uncle. Bazarov becomes happy at his friend’s suggestion, but the very thought of being a nihilist prevents him from expressing his happiness.

“In his heart and soul he was delighted with his friend’s proposal, but he considered it his obligation to conceal his emotions. It was not for nothing but he was a nihilist!”

Here the novelist points out the two conflicting aspects of Bazarov’s mind. One, being a nihilist, approaches everything through scientific reasoning; and the second, being an ordinary person, accepts everything in a sentimental way.

The ideological clashes between the older generation, who value Russian traditionalism and the views of the new generation forms an important part of the novel *Fathers and Sons*. Till the end of eleventh chapter, the novelist is drawing up a dynamic period marked by the conflicts between two intellectual streams of thoughts in the history of Russia. But in the following chapters the novel acquires a different approach. The proceeding chapters are noted for the internal conflicts within the character of Bazarov.

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It is in the chapter fourteen of the novel that Bazarov and Arkady are getting introduced to Anna Sergeevna Odintsova. This proves to be a turning point in the lives of these two young characters. Arkady is attracted to Odintsova at first sight itself. But, later he is more fascinated by her personality. While Bazarov tries to cover up his attraction for Madame Odintsova by saying derogatory things about her and by emphasizing only the physical attributes of the lady. “What a detectable body!” continued Bazarov, “perfect for the dissecting table”.

The novel enters another stage when Bazarov and Arkady reached Anna Sergeevna Odintsova’s estate. Like Bazarov, Arkady has always rejected the pleasures of art and literature, but a change in his character is revealed when he is found enjoying music with Odintsova’s sister Katya, a little before he was also ready to dance with Odintsova. It is during this stage Arkady is becoming closer to Odintsova’s sister, though he was attracted to Odintsova herself in the beginning. Even a change has come about in Bazarov’s mind, who has always thought that man’s attraction to women is determined by the physical features of the women.

Odintsova shows great interest in the Nihilist views of Bazarov. The dialogues between them cast fresh light on Bazarov’s new thoughts. Though

74 Ibid. p.61
Bazarov and Odintsova belong to the same new generation, two of them have different views on society. Anna Sergeevna Odintsova was wife of a wealthy man and after his death she inherited his enormous wealth and is living now in a Russian province. She has lived varied life filled with many experience, yet finds Bazarov’s opinion as a new school of thought.

The novelist is drawing the character of Bazarov, who is firm on his opinion about art and literature even in the new atmosphere. In the sixteenth chapter of the novel, the author is trying to present more details of Bazarov’s materialistic thoughts through his debates with Anna Odintsova. At Odintsova’s home Bazarov was looking at some photographs of Switzerland. He explains, that he was not appreciating the aesthetics of the pictures, instead he was doing so for understanding the geographical territory of Switzerland. Odintsova, who believes in the traditional views of art and literature, is surprised at Bazarov’s reply. She wonders how someone can live without artistic appreciation. She asked Bazarov: “How do you get along without it?”

Here too Bazarov repeats his same old answer that art is of no practical use for the mankind. This shows that he is unaffected by the emotional changes he has had in the presence of the young widow. Odintsova thinks that

75 Ibid. p.64
art is indispensable to life and tells her young friend that it is essential to learn about people. The young nihilist Bazarov validates his views through scientific examples:

“...I can tell you it isn’t worth the trouble to study separate individuals. All people resemble each other, in soul as well as body, each one of us has a brain, spleen, heart and lungs, all made similarly. So called moral qualities are also shared by every one: Small variations don’t mean a big thing. A single human specimen’s sufficient to make judgments about all the rest. People are like trees in a forest; no botanist would study each birch individually”.

Bazarov completely disagrees with Odintsova when she says that art helps to understand people and learn about them in a better way. On this occasion Bazarov replies like materialist who considers human beings purely in a biological category. He rejects the special emotional capabilities of human beings and places them at par with animals and plants. It could be true that biologically all men can be understood by studying one man as a sample, yet man is different from animals with regard to their thoughts and feelings. Here Bazarov reduced himself to only a medical student. Bazarov is

76 Ibid.
discussing scientific topics which have never been discussed deeply enough in Russia and he is doing it under the light of western influences. The mid-nineteenth century Russia had just started to study modern sciences. Against that backdrop Bazarov’s thoughts were new to the then society. He is making a complete deviation from the old generation’s traditional beliefs. From such a point of view Bazarov’s arguments irrespective of their truism or otherwise, is a challenge from the new generation. Bazarov is prompted to think that the society is responsible for a person’s being clever or not, or good or bad, and so on. He says that the problems in personal behaviour or conduct can only be resolved by a total change in the social set up.

“We know more or less what causes physical ailments; moral illness result from bad upbringing, all the none sense that gets stuffed in to people’s heads from childhood, in a word, the deformed condition of society. If you correct society, you won’t have any more illness”.77

Ivan Turgenev is pointing his finger to the future of Russia through Bazarov by indicating the need for a total social change, and he doesn’t give much significance to the sentimental thoughts of individual man. The character of Bazarov, himself is a part of the social transition in the nineteenth

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77 Ibid. p.65
century Russia. Through the words of the young character, the novelist also indicates the necessity of social change that should happen in the near future. Anna Sergeevna Odintsova feels at the end of the long conversation with Bazarov that there is a special attraction to his personality. Bazarov also realizes that some changes are happening to him as a result at interactions with the young widow. Though he criticized the views of romanticism during his discussion with Odintsova, he feels that a kind of romantic feeling has been working up with in him.

“In conversation with Anna Sergeevna he expressed even more strongly than before his careless contempt of everything romantic, but when left alone he acknowledge with indignation the romantic in himself”. 78

This is one of the most crucial chapters of the novel since Bazarov’s inner conflicts with his intellectual nature has been revealed for the first time. Intellectually, Bazarov still continues to fight any emotions of love, he still believes that ‘Love in ideal sense, or as he expressed it, the romantic sense, was nonsense – on unforgivable stupidly.” 79 Bazarov’s change is even noticed by Arkady, who begins to lose faith in his friend. The young nihilist’s

79 Ibid.
opinions about women, that they are different, changes after his meetings with Odintsova. In earlier days his views on man-woman relationship was entirely different.

“If you like a woman”, he used to say, “try to gain your end; if that’s impossible – well, never mind, turn your back on her – there’s plenty of fish in the sea.”

But Bazarov feels that it is somewhat different with Odintsova and now it is beginning to confront powerful internal conflict. He is caught between his nihilist attitude towards sentimentalism and romanticism on the one hand, and on the other the extraordinary romantic sensation erected by Odintsova. It is a beautiful and a touching part of the novel, when Bazarov who has been evaluating things only through experimentations and observations as a materialist is smitten by a test given by his own experience as a man. Though Bazarov is unable to acknowledge his love with Odintsova, it has a great influence on the young nihilist. Now he began to realize some fresh meaning of human life beyond the mere rejection of romanticism and yearning for change. Meeting with Odintsova forced Bazarov to feel and recognize the intense love that his parents had towards him. This change is evident as we can see Bazarov returning to meet his parents at home. Bazarov

80 Ibid.
doesn’t change fundamentally; instead, he is becoming more complete as a human being.

Back home with Arkady he gives in to the gestures of love from his parents. Bazarov’s father Vasily Ivanovich is like Arkady’s father Nickolai who is ready to embrace the ideas of the new generation. His words are proof of it: “At least I try, as far as possible, not to let any grass grow under my feet, as they say, not to fall behind the times.”

Bazarov’s mother is highly superstitious and the novelist himself says that she should have lived at least two hundred years ago. The son cannot agree with his parents in any way. Elder Bazarov considers himself to be of a progressive outlook like Nikolai and is ready and waiting for the arrival of the new generation and their achievement. Vasily tries to learn about new medical scientists and read their books. He accepts that generation gap is an inevitable historical phenomenon.

“Someone new has taken Rademacher’s place and you idolize him; but in twenty years or so, perhaps, they’ll probably be making fun of him.”

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82 Ibid. p.90
Bazarov comments about his own father in the same way that he commented about Nikolai. He scorns his own father in almost the same way as he laughed at Nikolai. Both fathers have attempted to keep up with modern developments and Bazarov cannot appreciate the efforts. He rejects whatever his father claims to be progressive:

“I’ll say this to console you”, said Bazarov. “Now a day we make fun at medicine in general and don’t bow down before anyone.”

Here too what we see is a young Nihilist, who rejects everything that is existent at the moment. He is always persuaded by a basic urge to refute everything. Bazarov’s mother is similar to Fenechka, that is, of old Russian belief who is concerned with the household duties and looks after her husband. She is ripe with superstition and traditional customs and her sole concern is keeping her family happy. The author notes:

“Arina Vlasevna was genuine Russian noblewomen of old school; she should have lived some two hundred years earlier…she was very devout and emotional, believing all sorts of omens, fortune-telling, charms and dream...she was afraid of mice, snakes, frogs sparrows, leeches, thunder,

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83 Ibid
coldwater, drafts of air, horses, goats, read headed people...she’d never read a single book, except for

Alexis, or the cottage in the Forest . . .”\(^8^4\)

Twenty fourth chapter of the novel presents the duel between Bazarov and Pavel. It should be noted that some months earlier, Bazarov would never have consented to the dual. Because it implies standing up for one’s honour or principles a dual is in direct opposition to anything a nihilist could advocate. Besides this, dueling for the sake of honour is the height of romantism. He always stands against all kind of romantic practices. The dual between Pavel and Bazarov also proves that there exist the difference and approach towards each other. As part of the dual, Pavel is wounded slightly and he tries to maintain the right for Bazarov to shoot again as was earlier agreed upon. But Bazarov refuses it and he assumes the role of doctor. For the first time in the novel, Pavel Petrovich realizes that Bazarov can still be an honorable man. He is then impressed with what an honorable person Bazarov is. It is ironic that Bazarov had to participate in something so romantic and as alien to his beliefs as a duel before Pavel could see any worth quality in him. That is, Bazarov had to perform something in Pavel’s world before Pavel could evaluate Bazarov’s importance.

\(^8^4\) Ibid. p.93
The twenty sixth chapter of the novel, in which Bazarov speaks to his long time friend and follower Arkady, is very significant. He tells to Arkady, who is different from himself, that he has fallen in love with Katya and reached in romantic life of dreams thus:

“You’ve behaved sensibility you’re not made for our better, tart, lonely existence. There is no arrogance in you, no malice, there’s only youthful audacity and youthful forever, that’s not commensurate, our task... Your aristocrats can never get any further than noble submission or noble indignation, and all that’s nonsense…you’re a fine fellow but you’re still a soft, liberal gentleman ...”\textsuperscript{85}

Bazarov does analyse Arkady’s character correctly as he is leaving. He also hints at his friend’s inability to stand by his ideas and the lack of inner strength for it. In their final embrace, there seems to be recognition they have travelled along some good paths together and they will never see each other again. There is finally no bitterness or regret among them but just a parting.

At the same time Arkady withdraws himself from nihilism and materialism while rejecting all aspects of romanticism and art forms. Still he agrees with Bazarov in his understanding of the Russian Social system. This

\textsuperscript{85} Ibid. p. 141
way it can be said that Arkady attains a certain maturity towards the end of the novel. He is ushered in to that change by Katya and their love. In the last part of the novel, the author presents a heart rending condition of Bazarov’s illness with typhus. Though earlier he had rejected all romantic sensibilities, towards his end he expresses his wish to see Anna Sergeevna Odintsova. On his death bed, he expresses his wish to see Odintsova. In life he could neglect everything, but death. Bazarov also faces this unpleasant and ultimate reality of life.

Even while confronting death, face to face, he doesn’t relinquish his radical thoughts. As long as Bazarov is conscious he refuses the ministration of the church and thus remains true to his beliefs in this respect. His parents want to give him a last religious Sacraments. But he is completely uninterested in such practices: “I won’t refuse, if it would provide you some consolation”, he said at last, “but I think there’s no need to be hurry. You yourself say I am better.” Bazarov’s these words carry every thing including his sympathy for his parents. Through these words the author shows Bazarov’s ardent position against the traditional religious customs of his society.

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86 Ibid p.150
The Novelist has presented the last meeting between Anna Odintsova and Bazarov in a touching way

“Farwell” he said with unexpected strength, his eyes gleaming with their last light, “Fare well . . . listen… you know, I didn’t know, I didn’t kiss you then… Blow on the dying lamp and let it go out...” She pressed her lips to his forehead. . .”87

Bazarov, who once rejected all aspects of romanticism and sentimentalism, is now realizing its significance and influence in human life. Though he failed in love and life, his thoughts, show the way for the future of Russia.

“Bazarov, the representative of the raznochintsy and nihilism, is not only a remarkable powerful portrait. He is also represented as the victor in the conflict and a model for whole succeeding generation of nihilists who strove to renounce the past and work for revolutionary future”.88

The novelist, through the character of Bazarov, represents a tumultuous face of the Russian social history. The arguments between Pavel and Bazarov representing two different generations, were also part of that history. The young characters like Bazarov and Arkady, through their experiences are

87  Ibid 152-153
reforming the attitudes of the previous generation by rejecting traditional values. At the same time the character of Pavel Petrovich accepts some sorts of changes of the new times, which is evident as he welcomes the marriage between Nikolai and Fenechka. But earlier his old aristocratic view was a hurdle in accepting such a practice.

The last chapter does make it clear that Arkady’s transition is complete. He becomes the practical man of business who still adheres to many of the more advanced ideas, but at the same time does not reject all the old values found in art, literature and music. Arkady finally admits that how much he has changed and how much Katya has been instrumental in his transition.

An overview of *Fathers and Sons* reveals the conflicts of different ideas/ generations along with internal conflicts of different characters. The title of the work suggests its central theme. Taking the title literally, the reader is confronted with two sets of characters: the fathers in Nikolai and Old Bazarov and the sons in Arkady and Bazarov. By taking the title in a broader sense as indicating a generational rather than parental and filial comparison, Pavel, the brother of Nikolai, may be added to the group of fathers. The ideological conflicts have always been between the two generations. Sometimes these conflicts are between two persons belonging to two different generations and at some other times they are between the views of two generations. Literary critic A M Skabichesky wrote:
“Nobody thought about any antagonism between the older and younger generations until 1862. We differentiated between revolutionaries, adherents of piecemeal reforms, and reactionaries and owners of serfs, only on political ground without any distinction of age. Turgenev’s novel highlighted the gap between fathers and children, the people of 1840’s and 1860’s.”^89

PART-B

THALAMURAKAL

Introduction

This is an attempt to analyse O.V. Vijayan’s novel Thalamurakal (Generations) from a different perspective. A few reviews of Thalamurakal have already been published though far too less compared to Vijayan’s other novels. Most of these studies were about characters belonging to ‘Ponmudi Tharavad’ who were engaged in the search for their identity or about the characters of different generations, engaged in their attempts at crossing barriers set by the caste systems. Whereas this study tries to evaluate characters appearing in different generations in the novel form a new perspective. There are many characters in this novel right from the very

beginning to the end who challenges these systems disagreeing with the views of their past generations.

Vijayan’s last novel *Thalamurakal* was published in 1997. The novel is both historical and autobiographical. Through the novel Vijayan attempts to sketch four generations of Ponmudi Tharavad (household) in Palakkad, who are financially sound but socially backward caste. From the beginning to the end of the novel, we can see their diverse attempts to overcome the backwardness of their caste identity. Each of the characters is facing their own crisis in different ways. Along with this internal conflict the members of different generations of the family also confront challenges from the existing social laws and values; as a result it emerges in to conflicts of generations.

The story runs through a series of facets related to power, wealth, education, religious conversion, communism and atheism revolving around the members at the Ponmudi family. Though all of them try to overcome their caste identity, each of them adopts their own way to achieve their goal. The novel gets an international face when its characters leave their regional boundaries and try to move across nations. Vijayan is also one of the first Malayalam writers with an international outlook. Auschwitz concentration camps, Typhoon in Hong Kong, the assassination of Soviet dissidents like Hungarian Imre Naji were as much subject matter as like Palakkad and Ariyakkod.
Mainly the four generations of the Ponmudi family appear in the novel but at some occasions, characters from other generations appear too. Like in some other novels, we can’t see the direct fight between the generations in the novel but we witness that clashes took part with in the socio-cultural consciousness of different generations. The perspective of each generation is based on that particular age’s socio-cultural and economic relations. In most cases the intolerant attitude of the older generations is unable to cope with the outlook of the new generation. The young generation too is unable to imbibe the tradition laid by their predecessors. Many have figured OV Vijayan as anti-communist and others have stamped him the title of propagator of Hindutwa. But through the novel, Vijayan is proclaiming his breakaway from such accusations. Vijayan is pointing to the practical falls of Communism rather than to Communism as an ideology. *Thalamurakal* is a notable response to the allegation that Vijayan does not criticize Hindutwa even though he strongly opposes militarization of Communism.

The Novel *Thalamurakal* narrates the story of a lower fraction of the society who is on self-exploration based on the particular apprehension of casteism of India. Novel breaks the common logic of historical narration and aligns to history. Novel at many junctures develops into international and national domains transgressing the history of the family and the society. That is how; Hungary, Nazism, Germany, Second World War and Stalin are being discussed in the novel.
3.4 Challenges against social order: A journey through generations

O.V. Vijayan’s novel *Thalamurakal* records the two century long struggle of an Ezhava family – Ponmudi, to achieve a status of their own. They aspire to achieve a social status beyond their caste identity – an existence that is free from their sufferings in a society governed by hierarchical based caste system. They aspire to make their own individual space and identity irrespective of the fact which caste they belong to. Ponmudi is an affluent landlord family who are the natives of small village in Palakkad. The family has a history of generations. When the novel begins Chamiyarappan leads the family as its head. Chandran is the grandson son of Chamiyarappan. The novel describes the experiences of Chandran on successive pages.

The caste backwardness and the search for true identity is core issue that Ponmudi family bothers the most. The novel is not presented in a chronological order. Most of the chapters are based on the reflections of the time specs wore by Chamiyarappan. Krishnanammavan (Krishnan uncle) Chamiyarappan’s father’s brother was once the family head of Ponmudi in the eighteenth century. To overcome his guilt conscience of caste backwardness, Krishnanammavan tried to master Sanskrit language. Yet not being satisfied, he even goes to Varanasi (Banaras) to further attain command over this language. And to decorate his self imposed Brahmanical organic body, he
borrows the sacred thread *Poonul* from his Brahmin friend named Bavathrathan.

Pangelappan is yet another character who functions as one among the many generation heads of Ponmudi family. This character too goes through the self torment of caste backwardness when he tries to overcome it by violent means when he attempts to wash the dirt marks his daughter bore on her cloths while stepping fourteen yards back *Ezhavapad* just to give way to a higher caste Nair passerby. Interestingly, Rekkanakan, a Cheruma servant too helps Pangelappan to fulfill his desire to finish the Nair passerby forever in reaction against to the caste shame felt.

Kalpathi Satyagraha turns out to be a turning point of Chamiyarappan’s life. He actively participated in the Styagraha. Subsequently, he was brutally beaten by Brahmins while protesting. As a revolt, he embraces Christianity through religious conversion and changes his name to Theodore. Chamiyarappan diverts his thoughts towards atheism and communism at the later phase of the novel.

As the story moves on to the next stage, we find Pavithran, the only son of Chamiyarappan, unable to carry forward his idealism. Chamiyarappan considers him as a fellow good for nothing. Therefore, he envisions Gopalan, his brother’s son as the successor of Ponmudi family. As a result, Gopalan is sent abroad to Glasgow for pursuing higher education. But later instead of
returning to Ponmudi, Gopalan moves to London to pursue his career prospects. And here he converts to Islam and renames himself as Imtiaz Hassan. It is also here in London that Gopalan falls in love with a Jewish girl Jessica Bloom and marries her. At last, this character ends up his life at a German Nazi concentration camp.

Appukaranavar is yet another embodiment of caste ridden guilt conscious man who tries to overcome his inferiority of caste backwardness by keeping a poor Brahmin girl Shivakami as his concubine. And at one instance he even satisfies his seething anger of not being able to recite Gayathri Mantra by raping her. And through this act he tries to overcome the guilt of being unable to recite the Gayathri mantra.

Velappan, the son-in-law of Chamiyarappan a Subedar Major in Malabar Special Police, he tries to overcome his caste inferiority by wielding his British power. Sometimes, on the basis of the same Colonial reputation he even enters the teashop, which was only meant for Brahmins. During the period of Malabar rebellion, when he was engaged in suppressing the Mappila Lahala (a Muslim peasant’s uprising in 1921 as part of Khilafath Movement), accidently kills forty Cheruma youth. This heinous act disturbs the peace of mind of Velappan. He faces yet another inner conflict when he tries to arrest a nationalist leader called Sathayamurthy. At later phase this morally conscious stricken Velappan denies the order of his superior to shoot
the representatives of Telengana struggle, a set of college students and ultimately he resigns from the post. After his resignation he tried to regain his identity in the form of a PWD contractor but utterly fails in his new enterprise. Chandran, the grandson of Chamiyarappan, after completing his schooling, goes to Madras for higher education. Unfortunately he returns before appearing for the final examination. Meanwhile Chamiyarappan tries his luck by becoming a Christian convert and further turning in to an agnostic rationalist. At a later stage he tries to find out answers of life in communism. Ultimately all his attempts to discover his real identity results in losing his mental balance. Still he is not able to relieve himself from the duty of being an ardent admirer of Joseph Stalin.

Christian Conversion and migration from Travancore to Malabar also are prominently depicted in the novel. Muthu, a distant relative of Ponmudi family embraces Basel mission and gets converted to Christianity. Manikora, a migrant peasant from Travancore is symbolic representations of Christian migration to Malabar. These migrants introduced new farming culture in Malabar. The ups and downs of Communist movement in Malabar are also an important facet of the novel.

At later phase of the novel we find Chandran returning from Madras and actively participating in communist activities. But he too later loses his faith in the ideals of the party, as he thinks that the party is blindly imitating
Soviet Union. He is also critical of the Soviet Union’s interfering in the internal politics of Hungary. After a major loss of time in Amsterdam, Chandran’s next destiny is as a project officer in a Human rights organization. It results in making him financially sound and in turn helps his parents to sustain their livelihood. After completing his project at Amsterdam, Chandran moves to Hong Kong, a multicultural capital and a centre of five continents. Here he becomes an arms dealer and at the same time meets a German girl called Rose Mary Vagnor, daughter of a German military officer. Rose Mary’s Father had a soft corner for Jews and this fact is revealed when he denies participating in shoot out against them in Nazi Germany.

At the concluding phase of the novel, the story takes a U-turn when the Anjela storm hits Hongkong. The car, by which Chandran and Rose Mary, were travelling, was swallowed by the storm. Though the couple died, the infant lying in Rose Mary’s Womb miraculously survives. The outlived child, Theodor Val Wagner is brought up in an orphanage in Hong Kong. After attaining the age of maturity, the legacy of his parents is inherited by him. And time comes when he wishes to return back to the Ponmudi Tharavad. The last lines of the novel conclude with Theodore Val Wagner’s seen standing on the remains of his forefathers now the time has come Theodore Val Wagner to return.
3.5 Traditional beliefs Vs. New ideas

In human history living contexts and experiences of each generation are different from others. Hence, it results in their differences regarding view of life. A particular social milieu and norms at a given time and space influences the thoughts of the specific generation and the same applies to different generations of different times. And this very conflict of generation gap is evident when we analyse the first few lines of the novel. As the novel opens, the young Chandran, the central character, is struggling with the hegemonic aspects of *Valmiki Ramayana* in Ponmudi Tharavad. The first chapter itself is named Rama Bhanam, it means the arrow of Rama, Rama is considered as the iconic protector of *Varna Dharma*. Devaki Amma, the wife of Chamiyarappan one of the major character of the novel, is pious lady who has deep rooted faith in the traditional values and beliefs of Hindu religion. She does not become an atheist or a communist like her husband. When Devaki Amma tries to teach her grandson Chandran to recite the manthra of Lord Rama, the boy’s reply is that “I don’t like this Rama”. Exclaimed by the reply of the grandson, Devaki Amma, who worships Rama as God, is disturbed and indignant, as if the religions tradition has been challenged by a

small boy as Chandran, she immediately responds by saying “Child, contempt of Rama is Sin”. ⁹¹

As a traditionalist, she views the scorn of Rama as only a sin. It is her strong religious belief that forces her to shut the mouth at a curious boy of third generation like Chandran. Whereas the picture about Rama, the boy gets forms his friend Chelli, a boy belonging to Cheruma community, is different. From Chelli, Chandran learns that it was Rama, an incarnation of god belonging upper caste shot an arrow and killed Shambooka of the lower caste for performing penance. Even as a child, Chandran questions the belief of Old generation. There is an episode in Valmiki Ramayana, which narrates a story in which Shambooka, the Shoodra ascetic ventures into penance, a practice forbidden to low castes and out caste. This incident was brought to the attention of the so called God incarnate, Rama, who as a result got infuriated. At the same point of time, in a separate incident, a young Brahmin died of no reasons, which was later ascribed to the penance being performed by the low caste shoodra ascetic. Rama himself picked up the murderous arms instead of issuing orders to the trained executioners, and travelled the long distance to the place where the low caste ascetic was performing penance and killed him. The reason being as he went against the tradition of Brahmanical rules.

⁹¹ Ibid
In the light of his newly-learned knowledge it is in the beginning of the twentieth century, that *Ramayana* is read from unconventional perspectives and their different interpretations are being made against the backdrop of Renaissance values and western influences.

‘Another significant aspect of Dalit literature is the deconstruction of the myths, whose very basis is questioned by the Dalit writers. The Dalit treat Ekalavya as their great grandfather, Shambooka another Dalit in *Ramayana* was killed by Rama on the behest of Vasishtha just because of his caste. Dalits worship Sambooka’. ⁹²

From these new readings, it is brought out that the killing of Shambooka by Rama was an instance of Aryan dominance over the low-caste people. This knowledge reaches Chelli, at first and later become Chandran’s opinion. Thus the revelation of the conflicts of generations represented by the grandmother who believes contempt of Rama is sin and Chandran who places Rama in the status of the anti-hero backed by his new-knowledge and its historical reason is obvious.

Another important character of the ‘Ponmudi Tharavad’ is Krishnanammavan (Krishnan uncle) who appears towards the end of the

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eighteenth century. Krishnanammavan too is very much present in the novel as a rebel to traditional beliefs and customs. In fact it is one of the grandfathers of O.V. Vijayan, who makes the appearance in the novel as Krishnanammavan. Krishnanammavan begins the study of Sanskrit breaking restrictions that were the norm in line with the labour divisions based on the Chathurvarna system. He does this at a time when caste-imposed restrictions were very strong in the eighteenth century. Where the social code-systems were determined by the interpretations of Manusmruthi (The sacred law book written by Manu) and even travel to Varanasi to continue his studies, wearing poonool (sacred thread) of the Brahmin that he borrowed from Bavadratan Namboothiri. There is a speech made by Krishnanammavan before he sets out on his expedition to the fortresses of knowledge that was the privilege of the high born. “My aim is to prove that whatever a Brahmin, wearing a poonool (sacred thread) can achieve and also be accomplished by a low caste person even beyond learning the diction and style of Sanskrit.93

When he sets out to pursue Sanskrit learning, he is fore-warned by his friend Bavathrathan Namboothiri citing the tragic example of the coloured Ekalavya of the legends. But he sets out to give deliverance to divine language from the hands of the high-borns. He wanted to give it the needed touch of the law caste person. According to Manusmrithi a person, who

belonging to the lower hierarchy of the caste system had to be punished pouring molten-lead in to his ears, if he happens to hear the words of the *Vedas*. Krishnanammavan is engaging himself in this revolutionary act defying all these norms and regulations. The novelist recalls the stories of Ekalavya and Sambooka to highlight the Arya-Dravida conflict that has raged all along, and this is part of the general characteristics of the novel. Krishnanammavan, the character is defying a system the people of high-caste established and followed by his forefathers. And therefore, he is also challenging his own predecessors. Thus, through Krishnanammavan the novelist has expressed the conflict of views and also the generations. Here, Krishnanammavan is prompted to engage in such challenge despite his social backwardness by the strength of his wealth. He is challenging the system through learning Sanskrit, grounding himself in a system determined by wealth. This is proved through his actions. By breaking the social rules, he wanted to show the world the potentials of the so called low-level people.

The character, Bavathrathan Namboothiri of the novel, though he can’t break the shackles imposed by the caste systems, wins in the given social contexts of the eighteenth century by becoming a friend of low-caste Krishnanammavan. Besides, to an extend he scorns at the traditional beliefs. Rairunni Nair, the cook is perplexed to witness Bavathrathan Namboothiri’s readiness to share coffee with Krishnanammavan. Rairunni Nair who recites *Bagavad Gita* as a daily routine cannot comprehend and accept this. What
makes him anxious is the teaching of *Bagavad Gita* that racial mixing should not be entertained. He fears that when one crosses the barriers set by the system and share coffee with a low-born, traditional rule are compromised. But this view is met by Bavathrathan Namboothiri with Scorns. He says “If social mixing suggested by *Gita* is true, Namboothiri’s going for secret marriages will have to be massacred by Kalki.” He asks that wouldn’t racial mixing happen when Namboothiri Brahmins sleeps with women of low-caste in the secrecy of the night.

‘The strategic role of the *Gita* in the perpetuation and legitimization of Brahmanic hegemony and its *varna* system has been reiterated in the narrative, exposing its anti-Bahujan ideological history. Along with *Manusmruthi* it served as the key text that prohibited *Varna* mixing and Bahujan learning for centuries, and legitimized caste as god given”.

Thus, Bavathrathan Namboothiri too rebels, through in a minimalistic way. The values set by past generations.

Finding themselves amongst wealth and comforts there at, each patriarch of the Ponmudi Tharavad, wonders what they lacked. Inspite of

95 Shekar .S.Ajay. Representing the margin; Caste and Gender in Indian fiction, NewDelhi: Gyan books. 2008.P.119
having everything else, they were terrified of their caste-backwardness. There is no deficiency of wealth and prosperity for him but still he feel something is missing. It was not economic one but the symbolic one. The same question is asked by Mundachiyyammal a high caste women who comes for alms to the rich Ponmudi home to its patriarch Appukaranavar. She asks “Hey Appu, what on earth do you lack”\textsuperscript{96}

Appukaranavar is dumb to this question but he answers to that question by calling Mudachiyyammal’s daughter Shivakami to his home as his concubine. He has been enabled to put this challenge backed by the strength of his wealth. Appukaranavar forces Brahmin women Shivakami to recite \textit{Gayathrimanthra} sitting naked. When he is not able to pronounce the Sanskrit words correctly he realizes his inferiority. Appukaranavar eases his anger upon the high caste by making the naked Shivakami to recite \textit{Gayathrimantra} and also by making her surrender to his carnal desires. “In a low tone Appukaranavar tried to imitate her, but failed. He could not tolerate her listening to his futile attempts. The lips that recited the Brahmanyam of Gayathri were molested by the rape of \textit{avarna} and he gave up Sanskrit eternally”\textsuperscript{97}


\textsuperscript{97} Ibid, p. 28.
His attempt is a symbolic act of breaking as under the value basis of Brahmanya and the use of *Gayathrimantra* adds to its effect. Appukkaranaavar is accomplishing, through in a cruel way, something which was never done before him owing to the rules and restrictions imposed by caste system. It was possible, in those days for a high-born person to keep a girl or a women belonging to lower caste as his concubine, but by the sheer power of wealth, it was unimaginable for a law-born to keep a woman of high-caste as concubine or servant. That is what is done through the domination of *Gayathrimanthra*. Appukkaranaavar, in this own vein, accomplishes the defeat of the rules set by caste-based social norms and customs. He comes to conflict with his past generation through his own way.

Pangelappan of the Ponmudi Tharavad appears as a character in the third chapter of the novel. Pangelappan uses arms to avenge with the help of Rakkanakan, the cheruma servant; against the caste harassment of his daughter had to suffer from valiya Nair of Kanoth House. Pangelappan’s daughter Sumathi was insulted by his cry ‘Fhaa’- the shout that ordered the lower caste people to make way for the upper caste. When she meets Kanoth Nair on the way, she is made to forget that she hails from a rich family and reminded that she belongs to a lower caste. Thus fourteen *Ezhavapaadu* she withdraws (The rule that people belonging to the lower caste had to keep a certain distance when they meet people of the upper-caste existed well into the middle of the twentieth century in Malabar and Travancore). Thus, she
falls in to the dirt of insult and disgrace. Pangelappan, in the wake of his daughter’s disgrace, takes the help of Rakkanakan and exacts vengeance upon Kanoth Nair. Pangelappan tells Rakkanakan that the insult meted out to in base on the caste system was an effrontery on both of them. “Rakkanaka... We both are in the same mud, we must wash this off... You are my brother from now on....”

The common experience of disgrace and injustice unites the two untouchable persons in solidarity against the upper caste dominated system. Pangelappan and his Cheruma assistant joined hands to avenge this shame. Pangelappan and Rekkanakan smeared with the dirt of lowliness defeat Kanoth Nair using weapons. Here Pangelappan is throwing away the habits of his predecessors who bowed before the dominance of the upper castes. He raises the sword against the caste-determine customs of the past generations under the power of wealth. Through Pangelappan is seen the challenge posed against his old generations who willingly accepted the laws of caste-system. Inspite of the existence of the evil customs, such an act, was made possible by the power of money to break beyond the concepts of crime and punishments. Because of that the sporadic challenges put forth by the downtrodden people in history are shared by Pangelappan also.

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98 Ibid. p.26
Chamiyarappan alias Theodore, one of the central characters of the novel *Thalamurakal*, stands his ground agitating against his social milieu and challenging his predecessors. The whole life of his is a counterpoint against the existing social system. He tries to discover new realms, which his predecessors never dared to enter. These paths or new realms were almost alien to his past generations is being discovered Chamiyarappan are also reflected in the struggle of a common man against the social evils in the history of Malabar also.

Chamiyarappan does not fail to realize that the problems endemic to the caste system prevailing in his times is not exclusively his own, but the problem of entire society. It is out of this realization that he ventures to take part in the Satyagraha of Kalpathi. In one sense, his partaking in the movement can also be drawn parallel to Malabar’s social renaissance movement. He is prompted to challenge the centuries old caste system out of an enlightenment which resulted from the renaissance movements.

The character of Chamiyarappan originates from O.V. Vijayan’s maternal grandfather. The Kalapathi Satyagraha is an important chapter in the annals of Palakkad’s history too. (Kalpathi Agrahara was a centre of caste discrimination in Palaghat. A strict restriction was imposed on the low caste people to walk through the streets of Kalpathi Agrahra. A group of Ezhava youth decided to remove this restriction by walking through the street with the
help of Arya Samajis, when they took the road leading to Agrahara, the upper caste Brahmins unleashed violent attack on them. The Brahmin’s attack resulted in wrath among the law caste people and the angered protesters decided to convert themselves into Christianity. Some of the prominent Ezhava families, including Vijayan’s maternal grandfather, embraced Christianity. Those who became converts to Christian faith were permitted to walk through the streets but those who remained as Hindu’s were not permitted. The Kalpathi Satyagraha in which Chamiyarappan and his people were cracked down upon by the Brahmins resulted in embracing of Christianity by him. Their attempt is transcend from an inequitable, unjust social system towards a new identity. This path of an open struggle was a way that had never been taken by his predecessors. Whatever resistance the fore fathers of ‘Ponmudi’ put up were sporadic and spontaneous. Chamiyarappan tries to overcome the lowliness of his backwardness by converting himself to Christianity, thus abandoning the ways of resistance followed by his predecessors. In the beginning of the twentieth century, Christian missionaries were very active among the people of the backward communities and castes. Many people were taking a new route to God to overcome their backwardness of caste.

Social movements in Malabar were the impact of the English education and the western renaissance ideals. It is under these circumstances that the revolutionary ideas in Chamiyarappan were born and took shape. It is against
this backdrop that the character of Chamiyarappan takes refuge under Communism and atheism apart from Kalapathi Satyagraha and Christian conversion. None of these forms of struggle was acceptable to his predecessors. Therefore, it was a dual challenge for both against his predecessors as well as the prevalent system. Through Chamiyarappan, the novelist has expressed conflicting views between the older and the newer generations. So it can be definitely maintained that each and every stances of Chamiyarappan are down to a conflict of generations as well.

As time moves on, Chamiyarappan slowly draws himself back from the communist movement when he realises that his son-in-low Velapan’s British employment would affect him personally and the movement’s prospects. Nonetheless, he continues till the end to be an ardent admirer of Soviet leader Joseph Stalin. It was Chamiyarappan who had sown the seeds of workers movement in Palakkad but this fact was unknown to many of his young comrades. Thus these issue also creates a conflict between the former and later generations. In a new age, while joining the party, and enjoying its conveniences, many of the new generation youngsters are unaware of Chamiyarappan’s history and sacrifice. They club him as a ‘feudal remains’. Moreover the new party leaders fail to understand Chamiyarappan who comes to them to resolve the labour dispute of Mangalam, a local place, of Palakkad and also to give a moral support to his pitiful son-in-law Velappan. It is thus here a young comrade advising Chamiyarappan in the party office.
“Every problem has its political side, sir, and it could be difficult for a person like you, who hails from a feudal family, to understand politics. Be aware that the times are changing”.99

Here, Chamiyarappan refutes the charges made against him by his successors. The comrades of new generation in power fail to understand Chamiyarappan’s stance. Here also the conflict of generations is unraveled. And one thing to be noted is that here the ideology of O.V. Vijayan according to which the new generation is not able to carry on a full scale the legacy of Communism is reflected through Chamiyarappan’s views.

In the novel the character Velappan is treading an altogether different path. His job as subedar major in the British Malabar Special Police Department is helping him in overcoming his limitations. Like many of the representatives of the Ponmudi Tharavad, Velappan is also finding a way of his own to overcome his caste induced backwardness. He is enabled in his cause by the factor of British power. And the phase of helplessness which he goes through is revealed through his helplessness after his retirement from the imperial police service. Unlike Travancore, Malabar was directly under the British rule. In such circumstances Velappan’s British police designation  

helped him to cross caste-based discriminate barriers. The British uniform rescues Velappan from the rigid hierarchical system of caste. New vistas unknown to him and his caste are opened up before him. On his train journey to Nilambur, the station master of an upper caste Brahmin invites Velappan and his wife, to have breakfast at the canteen reserved only for the Brahmins. The train waits for him over half an hour at this unimportant station. This is in contrast to the experience of his predecessor and father in law Chamiyarappan had at the hands of the Brahmins, when he led the anti-caste discrimination rally to Kalpathi Agraharam. Velappan too was a victim of the inhuman and brutal caste system that was prevalent in Malabar till the middle of twentieth century. There was rule that if a law-caste person drinks tea from high-caste Chappen Nair’s tea-shop should wash his dishes himself. Valappan had suffered from this discrimination during his childhood. In those days he could not raise his voice against it, but when he becomes, a British police officer, he returns to Chappan Nair’s teashop and refuses to wash the dishes. Velappan throws the unwashed plate into a corner of the shop. When Chappan Nair, who represents the upper caste ideology of Savarna, reacts to this, Velappan slaps on his face and walks away.

“A blow on the face… Chappan Nair began to cry loudly. Velappan came out of the teashop. The small crowd on the road outside she shop gave him way. The British Emperor’s shining
emblem of crown on Subedar Velappan’s shoulder put up a challenge“.

Like previous generations of the Ponmudi family, Velappan too challenges the caste-system which they were subordinate to. The reaction against the aged Chappan Nair, who represents old values and caste-customs, is also a reaction to the old generations. Chappan Nair saw the Ezhava Velappan beneath his uniform; Velappan’s identity as low caste and his identity as the British officer are contrasted here. He is showing vengeance using the British given power upon the disgraces and shames once he had to put up with. Thus the strength of the British power helps him to overcome his limitations. Velappan, who is a product of colonial modernity, questions the values of the old generations. Later, a view that the backward communities, including Ezhavas enjoyed better social justice under the British colonial rule than under the indigenous feudal system is also revealed. It is part of tradition that people like Kumaranasan, an eminent Malayalam poet, held such view. Those days, communally backward people were kept away from educational institutions on the grounds of their low caste but after the advent of the British they were admitted to educational institutions. Besides, such people also got jobs in the British army. It was such revolutionary changes that made Ezhavas like Velappan part of the British power establishment.

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Velappan’s uniform enables him to circumvent the otherwise inexorable social laws. Velappan who represents social and educational changes ushered in by colonial rule, is challenging the values of generations belonging to this feudal times. In this way, it rises to the level of the conflict between generations.

Along with the social conflicts, Velappan faces an inner conflict too, while suppressing the nationalist movement he faced a kind of inner clash between the British uniform and the identity of an Indian. Such incident occurs when he arrests a congress leader Sathyamurthy

There were only ten steps to climb up to the stage but it appeared like an insuperable mountain to him. He gathered all his strength and climbed the first step ……finally when mounted the stage, Sathyamurthy was waiting for him; when he handcuffed the leader, Velappan’s eyes filled with tears and he finally saw Sathyamurthy smiling at him’.  

The story of the settlers of Travancore in Malabar comes in the novel as an important social issue of Malabar’s history of two centuries. The phenomenon of migration from Travancore got strengthened in the early decades of the twentieth century and it resulted into massive changes in

101 Ibid p. 81
Malabar’s agricultural pattern and social life. The new phenomenon brought about a new culture of farming in Palakkad which had been cultivating traditionally paddy, vegetables and palm. By the entrance of the new settlers, the traditional way farming has been changed with the introduction of the new cash crops like rubber. Chamiyarappan appears as a character who comes in conflict with the new ways of farming which dominated cash crops like rubber. Chamiyarappan views the new settlers as invaders of their land, who reject traditional methods of farming. The character of Manikora becomes the symbol of new migrant culture. Chamiyarappan who belonged to the traditional tribal culture finds it difficult to accept the changed ways of the new generation.

“Vijayan, who loves the palm tree, hates the rubber tree.

The cash crop rubber is the Kalpavriksham of the migrants. The seeds sown in the nurseries are the seeds of destruction. The palm tree has the character of the tribal culture, but rubber has the invader’s crookedness”.

Chamiyarappan looks at the Travancore settlers and their culture fearfully “I could not for some reason get on the bus; the bus was full of migrants and Mani koras”. 103

He accepts the reality with pain “The hillside and plots are turning rubber plantations. The old granaries and barn are disappearing, Chamiyarappan witness”. 104 Through these monologues of him, Chamiyarappan is becoming the representative of those who cannot identify themselves with the new travels. Chamiyarappan, who has challenged his past generation’s ways, in his turn finds difficulty in accepting the trends of the new culture which is coming to existence after him. Through this way, Chamiyarappan too becomes a link in the chain of the inevitable conflicts of generations of human history.

It has already been stated in this study regarding the dispute between Chandran, who is one of the main characters of the novel and a representative of the latest generation and his grandmother in his childhood. It is noteworthy that Chandran also transforms later in his life. Chandran, who is the member of the now declining ‘Ponmudi Tharavad,’ returns from Madras where he had gone for his higher studies without appearing for his final examinations. He comes to know about Communism through his grandfather Chamiyarappan.

104 Ibid.
The young Chandran also is choosing that road. Yet, he disagrees with many of the stands of the then Communist party. Through the character of Chandran Vijayan revealed his own opinion about the Stalinist-political stands and the blind allegiants of Indian communist parties to Soviet Russia. Even Though he is sympathetic towards his ordinary comrades who have traditionally come to respect Russia and China, he does not basically agree with those stances. That is why Chandran is criticizing the Soviet Invasion in Hungry and he is engaging in an argumentative debate with his native comrades. When Soviet Union ousted the Hungarian popular communist leader Imre Nage, the native comrades, along with their mother organization took a blind pro-Russian stand. Chandran rejects the arguments of his local comrades and he says “While Imre Nage is executed, is it necessary to praise it back in Palakkad and Mangalam”. In his childhood, it is the knowledge he gained from Chelli, which makes him disown Rama as a hero. Likewise, he criticizes the traditional communist believes through the knowledge, he gained from new international circumstances. Here also the conflict of generation in which the traditional communist ‘believes’ of the past generation who blindly followed the Russian way and Chandran, with new knowledge, who is ready to criticize Russian stands are revealed. Through the character of Chandran, it is O.V.

Vijayan’s own opinions that are expressed. The author has always been a critic of the practice of communism and its failures to find the Indian identity.

In the twenty first chapter of the novel, the author is explaining the implications of the novel through the thoughts of Chamiyarappan’s daughter Pankajakshi “The story of Ponmudi Tharavadu has been also the story of the conflict of Dravidian and Aryan”

The history of Ponmudi family comes full circle throughout the novel, through this conflict of Aryans and Dravidians. Each one of Ponmudi Tharavadu engaged in the attempts of getting on upper hand over the Aryan ideology. The novel is a continuum of the Arya-Dravida struggle of domination within the system of the caste. These struggles also have the nature of the differences of the generations: the traditional legal system on one side, and the persecuted low-caste’s resistance on the other. If one sees these two things from the view of two generations, it will make the novel’s continuing nature of the conflicts.

Like in other novels, in Thalamurakal there are characters belonging to different generations, who don’t come to conflicts with one another too often. But there are many characters who engage in fights and conflicts with the existing systems and traditions of different generations. Through these

characters the traditional values and the challenging new ideas are also engaging in the conflicts. From a close perspective one can understand that the characters reach such viewpoints influence by historical, socio-political and economic reasons. All the characters are creations of the then existing social situations.