

THE AESTHETICS OF PAUL VERLAINE AND
CHANGAMPUZHA KRISHNAPILLAI –
A COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE

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By

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Certificate

This is to certify that the dissertation entitled – **The Aesthetics of Paul Verlaine and Changampuzha Krishnapillai - a comparative perspective**, is a bonafide record of research work carried out by Smt. Ansy Sebastian, under my guidance and supervision and that no part of the dissertation has been presented before for any degree or award.

Kochi-22
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Declaration

I hereby declare that the dissertation entitled - **The Aesthetics of Paul Verlaine and Changampuzha Krishnapillai - a comparative perspective**, has not previously formed the basis of any degree, diploma, associateship, fellowship or any other similar title or recognition.

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Introduction

“Art is a human activity consisting in this, that one man consciously, by means of certain external signs, hands down to others feelings he has lived through, and that other people are affected by these feelings and also experience them.”

Leo Tolstoy
(*What is Art?*)

0:1 The inspiration for the study

A contemporary of Changampuzha, the noted Malayalam critic and linguist, Kesari Balakrishnapillai (1889-1960), who translated many French works into Malayalam to inspire the upcoming writers of his times, in his preface to Changampuzha’s famous work entitled- *Spandikunna Asthimadam* (The Throbbing Tomb-1945), says that he was struck by the strong resemblance that Changampuzha bore Verlaine regarding character traits and style of creativity. The critic arrived at this inference while going through the ‘Symbolist Manifesto’ (1866) of Jean Moréas and Sir Arthur Symon’s ‘The Symbolist Movement in Literature’ (1899). He even says that it would not be an exaggeration if in these descriptions, Verlaine’s name could be substituted by that of Changampuzha, and that of French literature by Malayalam literature! This observation has served as the stimulus in taking up research in the concerned area, trying to gauge the depth of the influence of Verlaine on the creative genius of Changampuzha as well as his originality of composition. This work is expected to have implications however small, on the domains of comparative literature and comparative aesthetics, but since it is not a strictly theoretical one due to several

constraints, it can be regarded as a practical attempt at a descriptive and explanatory analysis of the theme chosen for study.

0:2 Theory of Comparative literature

Comparative literature is a comprehensive term, encompassing the totality of human experiences. Etymologically, the term denotes any literary work or works in comparison with any other literary work or works. Therefore, it can be said to be the study of inter-relationship between any two or more than two significant literary works or literatures. There existed varied opinions among scholars on the relevance and scope of comparative literary studies since as early as the 19th century, when the German writer-Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749-1832) made observations, amidst a conversation with his secretary on 31st Jan. 1827, on 'weltliteratur' (world literature). French scholars were some of the first to mention 'littérature comparée' (comparative literature), as a useful subject. The British poet and cultural critic Mathew Arnold observed:

“Everywhere there is connection, everywhere there is illustration. No single event, no single literature is adequately comprehended except in relation to other events, to other literatures¹”

For over a century, the term 'comparative literature' has been practically in use in France, as a well-known standard term, especially at the Sorbonne University. Laying focus on the comparable effect that the French term “La Littérature Comparée” implies, it is closest in meaning to the word ‘compared’ in English. In fact France has been hailed as the cradle of

¹ Inaugural Lecture at Oxford in 1857

comparative literature, being the first nation to appreciate the value of the common heritage between that nation and the European countries. In this context, the French critic François Jost (rightly points out that comparative literature is:

"an overall view of literature, a humanistic ecology, a literary 'Weltanschauung', a vision of the cultural universe, inclusive and comprehensive²"

The underlying suggestion is that all cultural differences disappear when readers take up great works; art turning out to be an instrument of universal harmony and the comparatist being instrumental in facilitating the spread of this harmony. In fact in their "Theory of Literature," Welleck³ and Warren⁴ depict the comparatist as someone with a vocation, as a kind of international ambassador working in the comparative literatures of the united nations. They go on to state that-

"Literature is one; as art and humanity are one"⁵

0:3 **Motives of comparative study**

A comparative study is the most useful technique of analyzing the work of art. The qualities of a particular literary work can be more effectively recognized by comparing it with other works in different

² *Introduction to Comparative Literature*, p.29

³ René Wellek-Czech-American critic of Comparative Literature

⁴ Austin Warren-American literary critic

⁵ *Theory of Literature*, Section I, p.58

languages. Secondly one can have a balanced view of literary merit. Thirdly, a particular literature cannot be a separate entity and so it must be studied in relation to other literatures. Comparative literature study aims at studying different national traditions as reflected in their respective literatures.

0:4 **Translation as a tool**

The significance of translation in comparative studies is quite important, as thereby, the similarities and dissimilarities between two different literatures are brought out, fortifying the field of research. Translations should be as close to the original work as possible, for without successful translations, the comparative approach will lose its impact. According to Henry Gifford⁶:-

- The original works and their translations are not obviously one and the same.
- Translation is an instrument however fallible, without which vast areas of world literature would be lost to us.

A comparative literature study considers the impact of translations. René Wellek has pointed out that the work of art is never caused by another work of art. The study of influence implies the study of analogy and tradition. Analogy can be defined as resemblance in style, structure, mood or idea between works which have no other connection. Influence

⁶ British Professor and critic of Comparative Literature

could be direct or indirect as well. Only translations could make obvious these effects. In order to study the influence of one writer on another, it is necessary to start from clear references, for which a thematic study should be undertaken by comparatists. Thematic study implies the study of literary styles. Genres, movements and periods, have equal importance in the studies of comparative literature. The modern forms are more or less related to the aesthetic elements, and comparative literature seeks to find out the relations between these elements, leading to the rediscovery and reevaluation of great literary figures of other cultures.

0:5 **Importance and necessity of comparative studies in modern times**

Comparative literature has been occupying a considerable place in literary research from the beginning of the 20th century. It has broadened its domain of work to encompass not only the national and international boundaries, paving the way for the emergence of the universality of human relationships. A practical aspect of this discipline has been highlighted by Susan Bassnett⁷ as she opines:

“Comparative literature involves the study of texts across cultures; it is interdisciplinary and is concerned with patterns of connections in literatures across both time and space⁸”.

This is a fact which can be taken as a guideline for a pragmatic and contemporary approach to the discipline, enabling a foray into research on

⁷ Translation theorist and critic of Comparative Literature

⁸ *Comparative Literature: A Critical Study*

any facet of cultural comparison. In his work, *Comparative Literature in an Age of Multiculturalism* (1995), Roland Greene remarks-

“Comparative literature is the laboratory or workshop of literary studies, and through them, of the humanities. Comparative literature compares literature, not only as accumulations of primary works, but as the cultures, histories, traditions, theories and practices with which those works come.⁹”

In the modern period of multiculturalism, comparative literature studies play a vital role. In the background of globalization, comparative studies help a lot in fostering relationships and has become an intellectual discipline. Two prominent names come to mind while considering the initial efforts in this field in India and abroad- that of the eminent European writer Goethe and the other-Nobel laureate Ravindranath Tagore from India. In 1906, Tagore used the term ‘Viswa Sahitya’ for comparative literature, while Goethe coined the term-‘Weltliteratur’ for the study of the literatures of different countries. Tagore’s remark in the context is significant:-

“From narrow provincialism we must free ourselves, we must strive to see the works of each author as a whole, that whole as a part of man’s universal creativity, and that universal spirit in its manifestation through world literature¹⁰,”

Tagore is thus credited for advocating universality and interactions between literatures across and within nations.

⁹ ‘Their Generation’

¹⁰ R.K.Dhavan,(ed.), *Comparative Literature*, Behari Publications, New Delhi, 1987,p.2

In fact linguistic diversity and the ensuing phenomena of multilingualism and multiculturalism have significant roles to play in the development of heterogeneous societies. Healthy interaction between cultures and their literatures can pave the way for a wider understanding of the cultural differences, making a rich panorama for the study of comparative literature.

0:6 **Purpose and scope of the study**

The present study is entitled **The Aesthetics of Paul Verlaine and Changampuzha Krishnapillai - a comparative perspective**. The purpose of the study is to compare the poetic genius of the French poet Paul Verlaine (1844-1896) and that of the Malayalam poet Changampuzha Krishnapillai (1911-1948), within a descriptive framework. The investigation will hopefully answer the questions-

Has Changampuzha been indeed influenced by Verlaine, if so, to what extent? Can the aesthetic appreciation be justified in both poets as illustrated in their works?

The comparative methodology of juxtaposing the selected oeuvres of the poets is largely adopted in the study. Since the span of analysis is across national and linguistic borders, the distinguishing as well as exclusive traits of the individual poets will be of much importance in formulating the comparative assumption in this work. The vastly differing geographical, linguistic and cultural milieus of these two poets,-one a national French poet and the other, a regional Indian poet writing in Malayalam *prima facie*,

endow the theme of the dissertation with an innate hue of diversity. Such an ambitious task would naturally entail a renewed research into the dedication of the poets to their muses and their ultimate contributions to poetics. The analysis, while attempting to illuminate from a fresh angle, the amply researched oeuvre of Verlaine and the lesser studied one of Changampuzha, cannot but be aware of the limitations of the task at hand. The present study is the first of its kind on the specific theme of analysis, and is hoped that it would be of relevance since no work has so far been known to have been undertaken on the topic. At a time when the birth centenary celebrations of Changampuzha have just concluded, this study is hoped to assume significance as it would help in isolating the originality of the poet's works, extricating the garb of the French influence. Ultimately, this study aims at creating a wider appreciation of the impact that the French writers have had on Malayalam writers, thus shedding new light on the benign foreign influences that served to enhance the beauty of our cultural heritage.

0:7 **Statement of Hypothesis**

This study proceeds on the assumption that comparing the creative output of the two poets will provide greater insights into the styles, the themes, and the sensibilities of the poets, and help to reveal the universality of human emotions.

Though the native language attains great development on its own soil, it is truly enriched by broadening its horizons to receive the changing trends in other languages. This study also works on the hypothesis that being aware of the literature and cultures of other lands and adapting them to suit

the needs of one's own literary traditions will only serve to embellish the beauty of the literature and not impoverish it.

0:8 **The corpus of the study**

The main works of Verlaine which form part of this study are:

- **Poèmes Saturniens (1866)**
- **Fêtes Galantes(1869)**
- **La Bonne Chanson (1870)**
- **Romances Sans Paroles (1874)**
- **Sagesse(1881), and**
- **Jadis et Naguère(1884)**

The following works of Changampuzha are selected as the main source of study:

- ***Bashpanjali(1935)***
- ***Ramanan (1936)***
- ***Onapookal (1940)***
- ***SpandlkunnaAsthimadam (1945)***
- ***Swararagasudha(1948), and***
- ***PadunnaPizhaju (1949)***

Besides focussing on the afore-mentioned works, there will be passing references to the other compositions of both poets as well.

0:9 **Methodology**

The methodology of comparative literature will be made use of in this study. One of the basic tenets of comparative literature is that studying two literatures or two literary genres in juxtaposition leads to a better understanding on the socio-cultural reality implied or expressed in the corresponding work. Though the subject matter of the study belongs to two diverse linguistic and geographical backgrounds, namely French and Malayalam literatures, there can be valuable linguo-cultural aspects which will lend new significance to the study.

0:10 **Design and lay-out of the dissertation**

The dissertation is organized in the following manner. Apart from the various theories of comparative literature elaborated at the beginning, the **Introduction** elucidates the title of the dissertation, pointing to the purpose of taking up this study and its scope, stating the hypothesis on which the study is based, the main works involved, and the methodology adopted. **Part I-Presentation** of the topic is divided into three chapters. Chapter I- deals with the respective biographies of both poets, exposing the ambience which triggered their creativity, leading to the creation of their works. Chapter II reveals the social background of the poets, and Chapter III dwells upon the literary movements directly influencing the poets in their creativity namely,- Symbolism and Aesthetics. **Part II** of the dissertation entitled **Aesthetics** is also divided into three chapters. Chapter IV discusses the Evolution of aesthetics in Verlaine and Changampuzha. Chapter V juxtaposes the works of both poets in order to unravel the aesthetic elements, and is entitled -

Aesthetics-Works in Juxtaposition. In Chapter VI – Aesthetics - Themes and Styles, deals with the treatment of themes common to both poets and the versification techniques used to enhance the aesthetic quality of their works respectively. The **Conclusion** gauges the extent of the aesthetic appreciativeness of Verlaine and Changampuzha, leading to the determination of the positions held by them in their respective literatures, providing the answers to the questions raised at the beginning of the investigation.

Part 1 - Presentation

Chapter - I

Biography and the works of the poets

1:1 Paul Verlaine -an introduction

Born in Metz, on 30th March 1844, Verlaine was the only child of his parents-Nicolas-Auguste, an infantry captain, and Elisa-Stephanie Dehée. The much longed-for child was naturally doted upon by his mother and an orphan cousin raised by the Verlaine family- Elisa Moncomble. Together, they showered him with their love and forgave all his caprices. When he was seven years old, Verlaine's father resigned from the army, and moved his family to Paris. Young Verlaine got enrolled at the Lycée Bonaparte. This was a turning point in his life, as it was a sudden departure from the warmth of the foyer, to the adventurous, audacious world of his peers. Very often at the beginning, he used to flee to his home in tears, to be greeted with cries of joy and embraces. But the following morning, he was taken back with gentle force. By and by however, Verlaine's weak character, influenced by his comrades, submitted to foreign influences, and a mingling of vanity, insolence, scoffing wit and boastful bravado tempted the soft, dreamy boy, if only for short periods. He committed himself to his Parisian education, both literary and erotic. A tempestuous child, Verlaine was prone to extreme fits of fury, foreshadowing his personality as an adult. In his early teens Verlaine

already possessed his own inner poetic voice. Emotionally unstable, he wrote about escaping from the world in his early poems:

“Aigle au reveur hardi. “Eagle, open your wings
Pour l’ enlever du sol, To the fearless dreamer,
Ouvre ton aile! And take him away!

At the age of fourteen, he sent Victor Hugo, his earliest known poem - **Le Mort (The Dead One)**. At sixteen, he chanced upon a copy of Baudelaire's **Les Fleurs du Mal, (Flowers of Evil)**, which needless to say, completely altered his perceptions about life as well as art.

By the time he received his baccalaureate degree in 1862, Verlaine was an avid reader of the contemporary poets he would soon befriend in literary cafés and salons. For a short span, he did a stint at legal studies abandoning which, he became more and more involved in literary pursuits. He had by this time become strongly addicted to alcohol and absinthe, and also patronized prostitutes – earning the ire of his father, who refused to finance his ‘wayward habits’. Using his influence, his father got him a job as an insurance clerk at first, and later had him inducted in civil service. Rather than doing his job diligently Verlaine was more interested in frequenting the cafes of the ‘Latin Quarter’¹ His father’s death in 1865, left him to his own whims and fancies, overlooked by an indulgent

¹ Abode of bohemian writers and artists

mother, for whom the deeds of ‘pauvre Lelian²’ were but passing youthful fantasies.

Verlaine published his first work **Poèmes Saturniens** (Saturnien Poems) in 1866, with the help of his beloved cousin, Elisa Moncomble. The volume was true to the Parnassian ideals of detached severity, impeccable form, and stoic objectivity. The death of Elisa before long, plunged him into the depths of despair, manifested in his growing intake of alcohol and absinthe. This often led him to violent excesses, of which mostly his mother used to be the victim.

In 1869, he published his second collection- **Fêtes Galantes** (Gallant Celebrations) set in a medieval setting. In this collection he used visual and spatial imagery to create poetry that has been described as “impressionistic music.” The same year he fell in love with Mathilde, the sixteen –year old half-sister of his musician friend, Charles De Sivry. Everyone hoped that this alliance with Mathilde Mauté would halt his descent into depravity. Verlaine regarded Mathilde as a “creature of light,” who would help him overcome his vices. After the year-long customary period of engagement, he married her in 1870. The poems in the collection **La Bonne Chanson** (The Good Song-1871) refer to this happy period in his life. Before long, however, he resumed his drinking habits with renewed vigour, initiating scenes of domestic violence. The advent of Arthur Rimbaud –“the adolescent Satan” into the household, on an invitation by Verlaine, spelt the total ruin of their marriage. After he

² An anagram of Verlaine

abandoned Mathilde and took up with Rimbaud, Verlaine published **Romances Sans Paroles**(RSP - Songs without Words-1874), a collection of verse strongly influenced by this affair. Their relationship was stormy and frequently punctuated by quarrels, until Verlaine shot and wounded Rimbaud during a jealous argument in 1873. Consequently, Verlaine was arrested and sentenced to two year's imprisonment at Mons –a Belgian prison.

While in prison, the poet underwent a conversion to the Catholic faith of his childhood. The work **Sagesse** (Wisdom -1881) is an outcome of this religious experience. After his release from Mons he tried to get reconciled to Mathilde – but by then she had obtained a legal separation. He then travelled to England, and later returned to France to become a teacher of French and Latin. For years he tried to live a new life. However, caught between the aspirations of religious faith and the temptations of the flesh, he yielded to the latter. On his return to Paris in 1882, after almost ten years of sojourns outside the capital- Verlaine sought at first, with only moderate success, to reinstate himself into the literary world that had begun to forget him. The death from typhoid of a student protégé, Lucien Létinois, whom he had taken under his wings and for whom he had more than a paternal regard, was devastating to his fragile psyche. It was followed by an unbridled lapse into the excesses of alcohol and indiscriminate sex: the former leading eventually to another prison stay (two months in the town of Vouziers for several violent physical attacks against his mother), the latter, helping along with assorted lawsuits, virtually to lead him to penury, owing to his relationships, with unscrupulous casual partners. **Jadis et Naguère** (Formerly and Lately)

was brought out at the beginning of 1885, still at Verlaine's own expense, by Léon Vanier. This collection contains the famous 'Art Poétique' (Poetic Art-1886), exposing the poet's perception about poetry, and laying the tenets of Symbolism, as also the poem 'Langueur' (Languour) - the manifesto of Decadence.

After the death of his mother in 1886, he was left almost totally without financial resources, and lived in slums and hospitals, cared for by two elderly prostitutes, spending his days drinking absinthe in Parisian cafés. He continued to write poetry, but its quality had considerably declined. But as his talent was on the wane, his literary reputation grew. Young poets admired his works and sought him out. In 1894, he was elected France's "Prince of Poets" by his peers. He was invited to lecture in England by Arthur Symonds and others interested in the new doctrine of Symbolism. He was to some extent relieved by a subscription arranged by a committee of literary men. He died in January 1896, aged fifty-one.

1.2.Changampuzha Krishnapillai – an introduction

Changampuzha as he was called for short, was born on 11th October 1911, into a modest but dignified Nair family at Edappally, Kerala. In³ keeping with the matriarchal system, he lived in the maternal home and his father also stayed with him. An advocate's clerk by profession, Changampuzha's father was a harsh disciplinarian, keenly watching over his son to the extent of disallowing him to mingle freely

³ As expressed in his autobiography -*Thudikunna Thallukal*(Vibrant Pages)

with the local kids, for fear of imbibing their loose, “unethical” ways. The family lived quite comfortably during this period. A tempestuous child, Changampuzha constantly demanded the attention of his mother. When he was ten years old, tragedy struck the family in the shape of the sudden demise of his father. Though the young poet felt a secret elation at being freed from the rigours of discipline, he had to wage since, a constant battle against poverty, with a younger brother and his mother’s family to reckon with. The life of ease and comparative luxury suddenly changed to one of continuous struggle for existence. Moreover, in the aftermath of the Second World War, it was a period of great economic depression. An intelligent lad, he did quite well at his studies, displaying poetical skills at a very early age. It was in poetry that he found solace to his sorrows. Nevertheless, he held an optimistic view of life.

Due to financial constraints coupled with his frequent romantic adventures and their consequences, his academic pursuits suffered intermittent lapses. He was able to complete his school education only by the age of twenty-three. His formative years were governed by an over-indulgent mother and grandmother, with no authoritative force to check his dissolute habits. As a result, while moving into his teens, Changampuzha left no stone unturned in the exploration of his emotional and erotic adventures, causing considerable disgrace and grief to his loved ones. With agreeable physical features and amicable disposition of mind, Changampuzha made friends easily, Raghava Menon being one of them. Both hailing from Edappally and poetically inclined, they struck a strong bond of friendship while in middle-school. Together, they breathed a new

life into Malayalam poetry and came to be known as ‘Edappally Poets,’ raising many an eyebrow in literary circles, for their daring experiments.

The All Kerala Literary Convention held periodically at Edappally, provided the opportunity for the ‘Edappally Poets’ to become acquainted with the great Malayalam poets of the time namely, Shri Ulloor S. Parameswara Iyer, Vallathol, Punassery Nambi, Ramavarma Appan Thampuran, P.K. Narayana Pillai, G.Sankarakurup, and the like. Both Changampuzha and Raghavan Pillai served as volunteers for these meetings and these occasions were fruitful in moulding their literary perceptions. While pursuing his studies at St. Mary’s School, Alwaye, Changampuzha got acquainted with the renowned teacher at the Sanskrit school—Shri Kuttipuzha Krishnapillai who first instilled in him a thirst for world literature by loaning him numerous books of world-renowned authors and holding discussions on them. Changampuzha painstakingly studied English for the purpose. Later, while completing his studies at S.R.V. High School, on the occasion of another meeting of the All Kerala Literary Convention, he had the good fortune to get better acquainted with the noted poet Prof. G.Sankara Kurup, who loaned him the book “An Anthology of World Poetry” which widened his perception of world literature. The book was returned only after a year, by which time Changampuzha had translated about 150 poems into Malayalam!

When Changampuzha joined Maharajah’s College for his Intermediate studies, he was twenty - three years of age and already three of his compositions – **Bashpanjali** (Tearful Homage -1934) **Hemantha**

Chandrika (Moon of Spring -1934) and **Aradhakan** (Admirer -1935) had been published. Teachers and students alike were thrilled to have a poet in their midst. His English Professor Mr. N. V. Narayanaswamy was instrumental in enriching his interest in world literature. With the publication of the pastoral elegy **Ramanan**, in 1936, in remembrance of the sudden demise of his friend, Raghavan Pillai, Changampuzha attained celebrity status. Being jilted by his lady love, the timid and sensitive Raghavan Pillai had taken his own life. It is this tragic deception that has been portrayed in the work, earning him instant popularity. At a time when the portals of knowledge were thrown open to all and sundry, Changampuzha's **Ramanan**, was widely read and appreciated by all strata of society, making him the poet of the masses. He chose a diction accessible to the common man and infusing it with music, spoke of the dreams, desires and deceptions of the ordinary mortal. He seemed to champion the cause of the common man.

After the successful completion of his Intermediate course, Changampuzha decided to pursue a B.A.Honours Degree in Malayalam at the Arts College, Thiruvananthapuram. As an established poet, he had a lot of admirers and fans, mostly ladies. Moreover in the first year, one of Changampuzha's own works – **Ramanan** was prescribed in the programme, adding to his fame and popularity. Much to everyone's astonishment, after the end of the first year at Art's College, Changampuzha – the poet of love, yielding to tradition, married a girl chosen by his family members! After his 'arranged' marriage, he returned to Thiruvananthapuram to resume his studies amidst severe financial difficulties. The generosity of a friend helped him make ends meet.

However due to his manifold activities and distractions, he managed to clear his course only with a third class, snuffing out his chances of becoming a College Professor.

Changampuzha worked for a short while at a tutorial college run by a friend, before obtaining a job at the military accounts office at Pune. Being away from his family made life difficult for him. Fortunately for him, the Assistant Military Accountant General was a Keralite and a fan of his works. Upon learning his identity and problems, the Assistant Accountant General took measures to get the poet transferred to Kochi. So grateful was Changampuzha for this favour that he dedicated the 13th edition of **Ramanan** to the ‘Assistant Military Accountant General – A.P.B. Nayar Esq.’

His stay at Kochi (Karuvellipady) along with his family was a tranquil period. His second child, a daughter, was born during his stay here. However, besieged with an arthritis complaint, Changampuzha decided to consult a famous doctor, whose wife happened to be an ardent admirer of his works. The doctor, after a detailed examination, advised the poet to undergo regular treatment at his clinic, taking sufficient rest. Under the strict surveillance of Devi, the doctor’s wife, Changampuzha regained his health, but not before he had captivated her heart. Devi, a woman of great beauty and grace, was also a poetry lover, being able to recite Malayalam verses charmingly. Eventually the treatment sessions turned out to be occasions for poetical discussions, leading to the union of hearts as well as minds, - which went largely unnoticed by the others. The poet

quickly regained his health, upon which Devi engaged him to give tuitions to her young child, so as to be able to continue their relationship. Later she advised him to take up legal studies at Madras, where he could stay with her elder sons doing professional studies there. That way they could correspond with each other without any hindrance until further plans could be hatched. They even exchanged rings to bind their relationship. So enamoured was Changampuzha of Devi that he even had the idea of eloping with her!

Changampuzha did take up legal studies at Madras after quitting his job. While there, he had an attack of typhoid and was admitted to a hospital in a delirious state. During this period, Devi's sons who had been caring for him, intercepted a love letter written by their mother to the poet. In the uproar that followed, the lovers were forced to sever forever their platonic relationship and Changampuzha returned to Edappally, defeated and humiliated, with family ties broken. He became more addicted to alcohol and ganja. Finally through the mediation of one of his wife's uncles, a reconciliation was brought about and the family was reunited. Soon after, the poet was offered the post of editor of the publishing house- 'Mangalodayam', at Trichur. The stay at Trichur was a happy period. The company, under the guidance of Changampuzha, started reaping profits. But gradually he reverted to his old habit of drinking at the behest of low-profile publishing houses who were exploiting him to protect their vested interests. The company started incurring losses again, and Changampuzha quit his job to return to Edappally. Before long, he was diagnosed as suffering from tuberculosis. Upon learning about the illness of the poet, his fans donated generously to help meet the expenses of the treatment. It

was decided to take the poet to Coimbatore for better care, but before that could materialize, he met with his end on 17th June 1948.

Changampuzha, in the short span of thirty- seven years(of which only seventeen were really productive), performed the remarkable feat of producing fifty-seven compositions, including a novel and innumerable translations! A man with a broad vision and always open to the changing trends in world literature, he revealed in his Presidential address –*Sahitya Chinthakal* (Literary Musings) at the Second Annual Conference of the All Kerala Progressive Writer’s Association, held at Kottayam in 1945- that he was considerably influenced by Verlaine’s ‘Poetic Art’ (1866), which is an exhortation to poets to shun verbalism and infuse poetry with music. He stated definitively that the future of Malayalam literature lay in its association with the latest trends in world literature, the knowledge of which would only serve to embellish and enrich the native language.

At a time when Malayalam poetry was laden with the cumbersome structures of the Sanskrit literary tradition, this perception of Verlaine was gladly welcomed by Changampuzha, who was desperately seeking a means to evolve a simpler style, appealing to the common man. Though the poems of Kumaran Asan⁴ and Vallathol⁵ were a break- through from the classical tradition, they were not free from verbalism. Hence Verlaine’s insistence on simplicity of diction and musicality made a great impression on Changampuzha, and he decided to make striking

⁴ N. Kumaran Asan-Malayalam poet who initiated a revolution by giving importance to lyric poetry.His main focus was on social issues.

⁵ Vallathol Narayana Menon –also a lyricist, championing the national movement.

innovations in Malayalam poetry, much to the consternation of the scathing critics of the time, who spared no effort in playing down his fame and popularity!

1:8 Verlaine's role

In the works of **Verlaine**, two impressions predominate- that only the self is important, and that the function of poetry is to preserve moments of extreme sensation and unique impression. The aptitude of the poet to receive all sorts of impression from outside (owing to the initiation of Poe and Baudelaire) predisposed him to this aesthetic, along with the artistic context of the epoch. Incidentally, it was in 1874, the date of the publication of the **Songs without Words** that the famous painting of Claude Monet "*Impression, soleil levant*" (Impression: Sunrise) was exhibited for the first time. The impressionism of Verlaine is based on a double fusion: fusion of the state of a soul and a landscape, but also between the diverse sensations, Thus the image, the colour becomes sound.

“The deceptively fine days brightened my poor soul all day
And there they shone in the copper-coloured sunset⁶”

In this couplet, the sound gets converted in movement, in vibration in space, and materializes as a tremor of excitement. Other effects of synaesthesia blend the auditory and gustative impressions (sharp guitars, long sobs of the violin). Like painters, Verlaine delighted in fractionalizing the visual field to benefit detail at the expense of

⁶ Poem VII of **Sagesse**(Wisdom)

composition(the sky⁷, a tree⁸, the clock⁹, a bird¹⁰) He sought to render the sensation by substituting the logical presentation (linking words) by simple introductory words (“It’s here¹¹”)

The poet, with his fine-tuned sensibility is considered to be uniquely equipped to convey to others the truth of the Ideal. Words seem to acquire magical properties, making possible their use as ‘symbols’ rather than ‘dictionary equivalents’. Verlaine’s earliest works, **Saturnien Poems** and **Gallant Celebrations** give evidence of the suggestive evocation of mood and the haunting verbal music, which were to become important elements in the art of the aesthetes. Perhaps his finest collection is **Songs without Words**. In the same year that it appeared (1874), he wrote ‘Poetic Art’- a poem setting forth his aesthetic ideas. Verlaine emphasizes musicality (“Music above all”) and points out another aesthetic ideal with his call for a poetry of suggestion rather than statement, creating a reality free from definition or discursive comment (... the grey song/ which joins the vague to the precise”)....

1:9 Changampuzha’s art

A ‘litterateur’ of broad vision and wide reading, **Changampuzha** was of the firm opinion that the progress of Malayalam literature depended on the latest developments in world literature. Much impressed by the

⁷ From the poem- ‘Le ciel est pardessus le toit...’

⁸ (The sky above the roof is....)

⁹ Ibid

¹⁰ Ibid

¹¹ From the poem ‘It’s Here...’ (Arietta I-RSP)

Romantic and Symbolic movements, the works of Baudelaire, Verlaine and Rimbaud, had impacted his compositions. As expressed in his **Sahitya Chinthakal**¹², Verlaine's poem 'Poetic Art', in particular, with its exhortation to abandon rhetoric, giving importance to music alone, was highly influential in fixing his poetic perspective.

In the choice of theme as well as structure, one is impressed by the brevity and simplicity of Changampuzha's poems, to say nothing of its sheer musical quality. Like Verlaine, he has laid focus on the intensity of the emotion expressed at the moment, choosing a metrical structure borrowed from the folk tradition, which he believed was most suitable to convey the idea to the reader. The very first poem he wrote, impresses one by its aesthetic appeal, uttered by a flower-girl:-

“Oh who will, oh who will buy
This crowning ecstasy of my garden¹³?”

Then again from his famous work “**Ramanan**,” the words of the heroine Chandrika:-

“Never have I seen a mind so-
Wonderful as a bouquet of flowers!”

Changampuzha's prosody is perfectly attuned to his aesthetic perception. Instead of modelling himself blindly on the style of his predecessors, he evolved a style of his own, best disposed to convey the 'highs' and 'lows' of his emotional travesties. Changampuzha displayed

¹² 'Literary Musings'-1945

¹³ From the poem 'Aa Poomala' (That garland of flowers)-A **Tearful Homage**

an extraordinary talent in picking out mellifluous words with which to fill his poems. Like Verlaine, he could portray pictures through words, turning his sketching environment musical.

A lover of the beauty of sound, form, music and imagination, Changampuzha wishes in the poem 'Soundaryapuja' (Adoration of Beauty)

"If bliss is intoxicating,
I would always want to be inebriated"

In his preface to the work **Sudhangatha**, Changampuzha speaks of the way his creativity works. He says that in certain emotion-filled moments, his poetic heart, surging with tremors of excitement, used to overflow with words of inspiration, as if in a trance. For a real artist, creativity is like a dream, wherein an invisible power is working within him, making him produce what he does. Doing the bidding of that invisible force is what art is all about. He says that he has very often written poems; at times he has done so without being aware of it. In the second instance, he used to be totally oblivious to his surroundings, without forethought, without fixing the metre, a sudden inspiration sprung from within! Upon reading it, he finds to his astonishment that it is rhythmical! During those inspired moments his heart and mind used to be drenched with music, possessing an allure like none other, in the ecstasies of which he used to get enthralled. At times while writing a poem, having reached mid-way, he has this sudden inspiration, after which he has no difficulty at all in finishing the composition. It is Changampuzha's opinion that a poem is a 'creative dream'. There is hardly a poem in his collection

which does not contain the word 'dream' in it. And it is mostly a self-centered dream. In the opinion of the writer and critic Prof. M.K. Sanoo, Changampuzha was gifted with the 'Midas touch', being able to turn into gold whatever he could lay his hands upon. Imaginative renderings of word meanings underwent an alchemical transformation at his hands, transporting the readers to ecstatic heights- which he believed to be the ultimate goal of poetry and which attracted him to the perception of the French Symbolists. There is perhaps no other Malayalam poet who has focussed on the individualistic experience as Changampuzha, as revealed in the wide usage of terms in his poems like 'I, mine, my, and the like.

As against the Cartesian attitude of "I think, therefore I am"- it was Changampuzha, in Malayalam literature, who first switched over to the stance-"I feel, therefore I am," of the Romanticists. Each poem of his was an acute portrayal of the intensity of the emotion experienced at the moment, making the reader also partake of the experience.

It is an undisputed fact that every individual is a product of the society of which he is a member. The following chapter aims at analyzing the social background of the poets concerned, to find out the role played by the milieu in shaping the creativity of Verlaine and Changampuzha.

Chapter II

Social background of Verlaine and Changampuzha

“Society is a product of man. There can be no social reality apart from man. Yet it may also be stated that man is a product of society. Every individual biography is an episode within the history of society, which both precedes and survives it. Society was there before the individual was born and will be there after he has died. What is more, it is within society, and as a result of social processes that the individual becomes a person, that he attains and holds on to an identity, and that he carries out the various projects that constitute his life. Man cannot exist apart from society. The two statements that society is the product of man and that man is the product of society are not contradictory.”

Peter Berger (*“The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion”*)

As man is essentially a human being, his life can be fully understood only in relation with his social relationships. And for its well-being every society adopts a set of norms which ensures its safe and harmonious existence. These unwritten norms when violated, stirs up a hornet’s nest, resulting in the ostracization of the individual.

The aftermath of the Industrial Revolution in France, following on the heels of the French Revolution, saw the slow but steady ascendance of the middle-class or the 'bourgeoisie,' with its own values and view-points. By and by, wealth and power accrued by the bourgeoisie, made it a powerful force in the French society, with a say in all matters from morality to literary expression and the fine arts. The 'art for art's sake' dictum was a revolt against the utilitarian philosophy of the middle class, and made an impact in all fields, ushering in changes everywhere. The very fabric of society - the family, seemed to shake at its foundations.

2:1 Verlaine-the man

Verlaine lived at a time when the values hitherto cherished by society were being questioned, and new perspectives sought. After the death of his father, Verlaine, who was already a frequenter of the 'Quartier Latin' (Latin Quarter¹), grew more dissolute, overlooked by an indulgent mother. However, when he fell in love with the sixteen-year old Mathilde Mauté, it was hoped that he would lead a normal life thereafter. **La Bonne Chanson** (The Good Song-1870), exposes Verlaine as the impatient lover, expressing his longing to be one with his fiancée, whom he adoringly called "the creature of light." But very soon after marriage, his old vices returned, and he even did not hesitate to use violence against his wife and infant son, under the influence of alcohol and absinthe. The entry of Rimbaud into the household, on an invitation by Verlaine in sheer appreciation of his poetic talents, dealt a severe blow to domestic felicity altogether.

¹Favourite haunt of wayward poets and writers

Acting against the conventions of society, Verlaine developed a homosexual relationship with Rimbaud, and leaving his wife and son, wandered off with him through Paris, London and Belgium. Together, they scandalized the Parisian society by their ‘bohemian²’ behaviour. In their quest for emotional fulfillment they left ‘no stone unturned,’ leading to a ‘total derangement of the senses,’ considered as the ideal state for creativity. Their relationship however, lasted only for about eighteen months. On Rimbaud’s insistence about returning home, Verlaine in a jealous fit of rage, fired at him with his revolver, at a Brussels hotel, wounding him slightly. A Belgian court, strongly influenced by the immoral behavior of the two men, sentenced Verlaine to the maximum penalty of two year’s imprisonment, which was eventually shortened by good conduct to seventeen months.

Ironically though, it was during these wanderings that Verlaine created his finest work of short lyrics – **Romances Sans Paroles** (Songs without Words-1874) which emphasized resonance above words. It contains beautiful renderings like:

“Je pleure dans mon coeur
Comme il pleut sur la ville
Quelle est cette lueur
Qui pénètre mon coeur?”

“Like city’s rain, my heart
Rains teardrops too. What now,
This languorous ache, this smart
That pierces, wounds my heart?”

² A bohemian is simply an artist or ‘litterateur’ who, consciously or unconsciously secedes from conventionality in life and in art. (*Westminster Review*, 1862, (2))

pupils-Lucien Letinois, a peasant's son, with whom he is said to have a homosexual relationship. According to some, Lucien took the place of his own son Georges, whom he could get to see and live with. Twice with the help of his mother, he bought farming lands in the countryside to be managed by the boy's parents. But each time, he ran into debt and was forced to return to Paris. While on the farm he used to seduce the farm boys causing considerable embarrassment to his mother. The sudden death of his protégé- Lucien of typhoid left Verlaine devastated. Three years later, his devoted mother, who had always stood by her son, and who had been the victim of his violent excesses, died, leaving him without financial resources. The same year, he came to know of the re-marriage of Mathilde. There remained nothing more to halt his demoralization. For the rest of his life, he lived in and out of pubs and hospitals, taken care of by two elderly prostitutes.

The publication of **Sagesse** (Wisdom -1881), was followed by **Jadis et Naguère** (Formerly and Lately - 1884), **Amour** (Love-1888), and **Parellèlement**(On Parallel Lines-1889). The last, containing much licentious verse, was to run 'parallel' to the more edifying **Sagesse** and **Amour**. Verlaine's poetry suffered a steep decline henceforth, with verses full of an often maudlin sensuality, sometimes relieved by bursts of savage humour. But as his talent was on the wane, his literary reputation grew, with the younger generation poets seeking him out and honouring him with the title 'Prince of Poets'. He was somewhat relieved by a subscription by a committee of literary men.

2:1:1 The trend of the times

During the period when the 'art for art's sake' was gaining momentum, it seemed to be the order of the day to uphold strongly the view of 'sex for sex alone,' in contrast to the church view of 'sex for procreation alone.' Indeed the nineteenth century in France witnessed a dramatic increase in same-sex eroticism, a development that can be traced both to literary trends and to historical change. After 1850, with the birth of literary movements such as realism, naturalism, decadence and symbolism, gay and lesbian sexuality became a significant subject in the national literature. It could be said that constituting more than simply a new 'theme,' these new representations changed the course of literary history.

In 1791, the revolutionary penal codes did away with laws that had criminalized homosexuality, a reform that was maintained in the Napoleonic Code of 1804. Yet it was not until the 1830s, at the height of Romanticism, that lesbian and gay male characters began to appear in French literature in significant numbers. This period witnessed an interest in ambiguous gender and mobile sexuality, that included androgyny, transvestism, and hermaphroditism. The most significant contributions to this literature came from the authors Théophile Gautier, Georges Sand and Honoré de Balzac.

French literature of this period seems to confirm historian Michel Foucault's assertion in 'History of Sexuality' that homosexuality as a specific identity emerged in the second half of the nineteenth century. He attributed the 'discovery' of the homosexual to the medical community.

Defined largely in terms of perversion or degeneration, or often allied with criminality and prostitution by sexologists, gay male and lesbian sexuality came of age in literature at a time when the European medical profession was subjecting it to close and largely unsympathetic scrutiny. Sexologists also helped to establish a new vocabulary – including such terms as ‘homosexuality,’ ‘uranism,’ ‘inversion,’ ‘lesbian’ as a noun and ‘the third sex,’ all of which entered the French language during the second half of the 19th century.

In the late 1840s, Charles Baudelaire³, publicized a collection called ‘Les Lesbiennes’ (The Lesbians) that never appeared. In 1857, however, he published, **Les Fleurs du Mal** (Flowers of evil), in which the lesbian is a central figure, represented above all in three poems entitled ‘Femmes Damnées: Delphine et Hippolyte’ (Damned Women: Delphine and Hippolyte), ‘Femmes Damnées,’ and ‘Lesbos.’

On publication, these poems along with four other poems were considered as immoral by the Second Empire court and censored from the work : they were not restored until 1949. Whether ancient or modern, lesbian love was sometimes depicted as naively innocent, sometimes as lasciviously excessive. Some authors, like Baudelaire, turned the lesbian into a highly aestheticized figure who mirrored the artist’s outcast and misunderstood existence.

³ Great French poet of mid-19thc. whose writings ushered in Symbolism. Hailed as father of ‘modernity’ in poetry.

The birth of modern gay literature in France can be attributed to Verlaine and Rimbaud. The mark that they left on the traditions of the lyric and of gay male literature is stunning. Verlaine's first attempts at erotic verse produced 'Les Amis'(Friends): he was one of the only poets of the period to cross over from portraying lesbianism to depicting gay male sexuality, a much more daring undertaking at the time because it had not yet been condoned by literary tradition.

Verlaine's conflicted sexuality also became manifest in the late 1860s. Although taken up with a friend and literary collaborator Lucien Viotti, whose 'ephebic body's exquisite proportions' he later described, Verlaine pursued a relationship with Mathilde Mauté, whom he married in 1870. In his work **The Good Song**⁴ he sang with chaste sensitivity of her youthful beauty and of the marriage of their souls. In spite of the joy experienced in her vibrant presence, Verlaine was deeply distraught when Viotti died in combat the same year.

The physical and literary relationship with Rimbaud produced poems that pushed French verse to new extremes. They penned audacious poems on gay sexuality, the most renowned of which is the collaborative 'Le sonnet du trou du cul' (Sonnet on the Posterior Hole) – of which Verlaine wrote the quatrains, Rimbaud the tercets. Verlaine wrote a number of poems that appear to be inspired by his relationship with Rimbaud, moving and often melancholic poems, depicting a lover sometimes vulnerable in sleep. 'Vers pour être calomnié' (Verses to be slandered) and 'L'espoir luit comme

⁴ La Bonne Chanson

un brin de paille dans l'étable' (Hope shines like a blade of straw in the stable) and others, particularly the magnificent 'Crimen Amoris,' describing the triumph of a graceful young prince. Much later, Verlaine turned to explicitly erotic verse, writing 'Hombres'(Men) in 1891. This collection includes fifteen often explicit poems celebrating gay male sexuality. Rimbaud's **Une saison en Enfer**(A season in Hell-1873) offers his most direct and seemingly autobiographical reference to a gay couple. 'Délires I (Delights I) presents the confession of the 'vièrge folle'⁵ - resembling Verlaine, who recounts his seduction by the young 'époux infernal'⁶ resembling Rimbaud.

Verlaine's Rimbaud tears were turbulent and impassioned. With other poets, they formed a group called the 'vilain bons hommes'⁷, and in cafés, they filled a notebook with bawdy poems that survived as the 'Album Zutique.'

2:2 **Changampuzha- the man**

The society in which Changampuzha lived followed strict societal traditions and customs, failing which, the members would have to face the scorn of the elders and be alienated from the mainstream. In his autobiography "Thuddikunna Thallukal" (Vibrant Pages) the poet narrates an incident in his childhood - which perhaps formed the basis for his 'perverse' sexual cravings. When he was five years old, his father, wishing to

⁵ 'crazy virgin'

⁶ 'hellish husband'

⁷ 'villainously good men'

invoke divine blessings at the initiation ceremony of education, took him to a famous temple quite distant from his native place. They spent the night at the house of a friend, whose young, seventeen - year old daughter accorded them a warm reception. The little boy was constantly in the company of 'Ammu Chechi' (Sister Ammu) - as he called her, but without him being aware of it, she exploited him sexually!

During the period of his primary education, his constant companion was 'Kochammu' (Little Ammu) with whom he is said to have spent many a delightful moment. As he advanced into his teens, the magnetic attraction towards the opposite sex grew only more intense. His scandalous affairs with older women caused considerable embarrassment to his family members, leading to his being treated by the society as a 'pariah⁸.'

Changampuzha's wide reading brought him into contact with the stalwarts of western literature. Conditioned by the view points expressed in the Jewish physician Max Nordau's 'Degeneration'. whose Malayalam translation, diffused among the disciples of Kesari Balakrishna Pillai, had also come to the notice of Changampuzha, who arrived at the realization that his mind and life style had become 'degenerate' enough to form a fertile ground for creativity. As revealed in his Sahitya Chinthakal, he was impressed by Paul Verlaine's exhortation to infuse verses with music ('Poetic Art') thereby laying emphasis on resonance than meaning. Changampuzha's novel experiments with the Dravidian metre, bringing it within reach of the common man and infusing it all with music, won him the

⁸ outcast

admiration and popularity of the masses as well as the ire of scathing critics, for whom any deviation from tradition was completely unacceptable. As it was a time when the portals of education were thrown wide open to all, irrespective of caste or creed in Kerala, the written word caught up fast among the masses. It was thus that copies of Changampuzha's **Ramanan** sold like 'hot cakes' and those who could not afford to buy it, even made copies by hand! Undoubtedly, Changampuzha became a poet of the masses, whose emotions and aspirations found a voice in his writings. Moreover, his adaptations of folk tunes in his works, Instantly adhered him to the masses. Needless to say, his popularity invoked the jealousy of the convention-bound literary godfathers, lying in wait for an opportune moment to pounce upon him with their harsh criticism. Changampuzha's deviation from the paths of morality and decorum, or, in other words, transgression of societal norms, provided an additional tool for them to attack and denounce him.

The fine-tuned sensibilities of Verlaine and Changampuzha prompted them to explore endlessly all the avenues of sensual pleasure, whether they conformed to the norms of the society or not.

In the poem '*KarayumNjan*' (I shall weep) from the collection *NeerunnaThichoola* (The Searing Furnace), Changampuzha lays bare the hypocrisy of the society-

"I shall weep, I shall weep, Oh world
Will you hang weeping poets,
If weeping is cowardice –
Is yelling a sign of boldness?"

Changampuzha, like Verlaine, impulsively indulged in the emotion of the moment, quite unmindful of the consequences of the situation. For both of them, the present moment was all important and they blissfully engaged themselves in its vagaries, trying quickly to transpose the ecstatic moment in all its hues into verses imbued with music, unconcerned of vexing the conscience of the society.

Changampuzha, in his poem ‘*Ecstatic Delights*’ (*Diadem*) expresses unabashedly:

“In the pure white cup of red wine resides-
A joy unfathomed in the recesses of the temple...”

And again in the poem ‘*Pleasing thoughts*’ (*Swaragasudha*):

“As good as honey, taken without adding water
Good old toddy, poured-
In a white glass, tasty,
Savoured along with fish and meat
Inducing laughter, jokes
Merry-making surpassing,
Heavenly delights even!
Away with you, philosophy!”

Indeed it was his vow-“ Whatever life withholds from me, I shall wrest from life.” (‘*Firm Resolve*’- *Swararagasudha*).

During Changampuzha’s College days, there was no dearth of fans , especially ladies. As the author of *Ramanan*, he enjoyed great popularity

among students and teachers alike. This poet of love, however, surprised everyone by yielding to an ‘arranged’ marriage, fixed as per tradition by his mother and uncles. The bride, a coy 18-year old was the daughter of Changampuzha’s teacher of class I, and a native of Edappally too! The family believed that the marriage would put a halt to his ‘vagabond’ ways. Like Verlaine, Changampuzha was very much aware of the sincere love of his spouse, but try as he would, he was incapable of circumventing temptation, easily succumbing to wine, women, inebriants and drugs. It was simply incomprehensible to him that society frowned upon his relationships with other married women, especially his liaison with ‘Devi,’ wife of the doctor treating him for arthritis, herself a great admirer of his poetry, and a charming woman. Changampuzha had plans to elope with her, after handing over a cheque for Rs. 1000/- to his wife for maintenance! The strong protests of Devi’s family, especially that of her grown-up sons forced him to retreat, severing all relationships.

Unlike Verlaine, Changampuzha could not escape societal pressures and flee into a world of his own. There were financial constraints as well. Openly transgressing boundaries set by the society could only earn him repugnance and ostracisation. Convinced as he was of his mission as a poet,

“I was born a singer
Time changed me into a devil...
Now again time is trying to
Transform me into a singer⁹.”

⁹ *Padunna Pizhaju* (The Singing Devil)

he expected society to accept him wholeheartedly and give due respect to his genius, for after all he was its bard. Instead the brickbats he received confused him totally, making him almost an exile on his own soil.

2.3 Accursed Poets

Pursuing a lifestyle against the societal conventions usually results in alienation or ostracization. It is this condition of the genius that Verlaine exposed in his 'Poètes Maudits' (Accursed Poets-1888). Such characters, feeling confined by the norms and expectations of society, try to break free of these confines in unusual or illicit ways, and may seem to be mentally ill, anti-social, or nihilistic. As early as Freud's "The Interpretation Of Dreams"¹⁰, the idea of transgression is contrasted with that of an unsatisfied desire, able to reach satisfaction in spite of everything that might restrain and prohibit it, via the detour of dreams even. Like sociologists, psychoanalysts find that every law is accompanied by criminal infractions of that law - infractions which the law highlights and describes. It was perfectly natural that in a dialectical movement, the interest shown in everything that can prevent a desire being fulfilled—and in particular the formalized, absolute and non-negotiable limits represented by laws and taboos- should shift to what can corrupt them, deviate them, or violate them,- in other words, to the mechanism of transgression, with the focus on ethical debates.

Changampuzha acutely felt the pain of this isolation from the public at large, which he expressed in his poem '*In the shadow of grief*' (***Mark of prosperity***):

¹⁰ 1900a.ch.3

“God granted me not the petals-
Of the flower of life, but its thorns!”

As Baudelaire expressed it: ”There is in everyman at every moment two simultaneous aspirations, one towards God, the other towards Satan. The urge towards God, or spirituality, is a desire to rise: the urge towards Satan or animality, is a joy in descent. A Joy. That was the rub, and it explains why Baudelaire lived within the limits of humanity, with many admirers following along his trail.

In his poem ‘L’Irrémédiable’ (The Unremediable), Baudelaire shows how we are all trapped, in a nightmare whirlpool, on an endlessly descending staircase, in the ice of the pole, in a snake-pit, and- most helplessly of all - in our own natures, which allow of no illusions once we have learnt to see into them. He concludes the poem by saying:

“Face to face melancholic and transparent,
As a heart that has become its mirror!
Well of truth, bright and dark,
Wherein trembles a ghastly star,
An ironical, infernal lighthouse,
Torch of satanic mirrors,
Consolation and unique glory,
-The conscience in the Evil!”

The next chapter shall analyse the literary trends in vogue during the period, to get a better understanding of the ambience which nurtured the creativity of the poets.

CHAPTER – III

Symbolism and Aesthetics-Literature

3.1 The Poets and their milieu – an overview

While undertaking a study of Verlaine and Changampuzha, it would only be pertinent to allude to the different art concepts prevalent during their respective life times, in order to understand the environment in which their creativity flourished. As statistics indicate, Changampuzha was born just fifteen years after the death of Verlaine. Therefore, the literary trends in Verlaine's times could not but have influenced and even moulded the creativity of his successors in the world literary arena, eventually crossing all linguistic barriers and geographical dimensions.

By the end of the 18th century in Europe, after the rigidity of the Classical period, it was the Romantic school with its emphasis on the individual's personal experience, that gained supreme importance. It was most strongly embodied in the visual arts, music and literature. In the words of Charles Baudelaire, "Romanticism is precisely situated neither in the choice of subject nor exact truth, but in the way of feeling." For the first time, there was a definite shift of focus from the Cartesian stance of "cogito ergo sum" (I think, therefore I am) to "I feel, therefore I am," of the Romanticists. Indeed the Romantic movement created a tumultuous sensation, sending ripples and waves in literary circles, the world over.

However, the excesses of sentimentalism and subjectivity paved the way to a return of form and a certain impassivity of portrayal. Verlaine first associated himself with this school, known by the name- ‘Parnassian,’ whose function was to restore the Muses of poetry back to their lofty abode of Parnassus, from where they had been brought down by the Romanticists, to cater to the tastes of the common man.’ The poets of this school ‘chiselled’ their verses to perfection, much like the craftsmanship of a sculptor. Verlaine first showed an inclination towards Parnassianism, as manifested in his first work “**Poèmes Saturniens**” (Saturnien Poems¹-1866). In fact, some of his poems were published in ‘Le Parnasse Contemporain’ – the mouthpiece of the school. But before long, he got fed up with the impassivity advocated and sought other means to express himself.

In the middle of the 19th century, science made new advances in the field of biology. Darwin’s theory of evolution, and Gregory Mendel’s studies in genetics showed that man was the product of heredity and environment, and could be explained in those terms. In literature, this doctrine was called Naturalism, whose pioneers were Flaubert², Zola³ and Ibsen⁴. They adhered to the same principles as the Classicists, displaying precision of language, economy of form, lucidity, logic, with everything in its proper place.

In contrast, the ‘Decadent’ (Latin for ‘falling away’ and related to the decline of the Roman empire) movement laid emphasis on the autonomy of

¹ Poems written under the influence of the planet Saturn

² Gustave Flaubert-French writer and novelist, Author of *Madame Bovary* .

³ Emile Zola-influential French writer, twice nominated for the Nobel Prize in Literature.

⁴ Henrik Ibsen-Norwegian playwright, theatre director and poet, considered ‘Father of Naturalism’.

art, hostility of the artist to middle-class values, the superiority of artifice to nature and the search for sensual pleasures. The ‘decadents’ became known for their interest in the morbid, perverse, and the bizarre, their freedom from morals, and often sensational social behaviour, and hyperaesthetic temperaments.

Much of the literature of the latter half of the century (fin de siècle), including Charles Baudelaire’s poetry were often characterized as ‘decadent’ for their lurid content or moral vision. In a similar vein, Verlaine used the term ‘**Poètes Maudits**’ (Accursed Poets) in 1884, to refer to a number of poets like Mallarmé, Rimbaud, himself and others who had fought against poetic conventions and suffered social rebuke or had been ignored by the critics. Verlaine’s poem ‘**Languueur**’ (Languour) which appeared in the review, ‘Le Chat Noir,’(The Black Cat) was considered by many as the mouthpiece of decadence. However, with the publication of the “Symbolist Manifesto” in 1866 by Jean Moréas, it was the term ‘Symbolism’ which was most often applied to the new literary movement.

Arthur Symons⁵ in his work “The Symbolist Movement in Literature” (1899) has truly opined –

“Without Symbolism there can be no literature, indeed not even language. Words themselves are symbols. Symbolism began with the first words uttered by the first man as he named every living thing. In a symbol, there is concealment, yet revelation....”

⁵ British writer and critic.

Originating as a revolt against the rigid conventions and precise description of Parnassian poetry as well as the machine-like treatment of human beings and society by the Naturalists, the Symbolist movement soon shot into prominence. The most important prophet of **Symbolism** was the American poet Edgar Allan Poe(1809-1849), who strongly influenced Baudelaire, who in turn introduced him to the French literary circles, through his critical essays. Poe's works, translated by Baudelaire, and Verlaine's contemporary- Stéphane Mallarmé received instant acclaim in France, but took some time to be recognized in his home country.

Poe's aesthetic doctrine as set out in his critical writings was that poetry is not utilitarian, is independent of moral values, and is the product of conscious and careful workmanship, rather than of inspiration. A poem written merely for the poem's sake, does not lack in nobility or dignity. Théophile Gautier, a French writer, picked up Poe's idea and upheld the slogan coined originally by Victor Cousin,-'art for art's sake,' in defiance of those who advocated that true art had a moral purpose. Aestheticism is the doctrine of art that maintains this autonomy.

It emphasizes form rather than content and upholds the view that the value of art lies in its aesthetic appeal, rather than in any ulterior motive that may be assigned to it. This principle was taken up by the French Symbolists of the mid-19th century, who in their search for an Ideal Beauty and Ultimate Reality applied the poetics of aestheticism not only to the work itself, but also to its creator whom they considered to be a 'priest in the religion of beauty'. According to Poe, "*Poetry has for its immediate object, pleasure*

not truth.” Man is born with an instinct for Beauty, and in the world of nature he finds much to satisfy it. But mere imitation of nature, however truthful it might be, cannot be poetry. Following in the footsteps of Baudelaire, Mallarmé, Verlaine, Rimbaud and others adopted Poe’s perception, of appreciating poetry for its own sake.

3:2:1 Aestheticism-A note on the Western concept

Aestheticism⁶, generally considered as the philosophical study of beauty and taste, is a branch of philosophy related to the fundamental nature and perception of beauty and ugliness. It is the knowledge (of beauty) as it is obtained through the senses, - not knowledge acquired through reason. The actual word derives from Greek ‘*aistheta*’ –“things perceptible by the senses,” and the Greek ‘*aisthetes*’ denotes “one who perceives.” Aesthetics studies new ways of seeing and of perceiving the world. It is a sub-discipline of axiology, a branch of philosophy, and is closely linked to the philosophy of art. Scholars in the field more broadly define aesthetics as a “critical reflection on art, culture and nature”

Aestheticism is thus the term given to a movement, a cult, a mode of sensibility or rather a way of looking at and feeling about things in the mid-18th century. Aesthetics attempts to explain the human reaction to beauty, and whether this reaction is objective or subjective: for instance, whether beauty is a universal concept, or whether environment, living conditions,

⁶ Beardsley, Monroe.C.-*Aesthetics from Classical Greece to the Present*,1966

class, gender, and race- affect a person's taste and what is considered beautiful.

Aestheticism is defined in many ways: as the study of the principles that guide the formation and evaluation of art, as the philosophy of art, and as aesthetic theory. Aesthetic experience results from a specific mode of perception and cognition. To the early Greeks, art was not an inborn talent or a divine gift of only the chosen few. It was something learnt or acquired by practice and was indicated by the term '*techne*'. For Aristotle and Plato, art was primarily mimetic, representing or imitating reality.

The first contributions to aesthetic theory come from ancient Greece, and the first Greek thinker whose views on the subject are to be taken into consideration is Socrates. He considered the beautiful as coincident with the good, and both of them resolvable into the useful. Every beautiful object is so called because it serves some rational end, whether for the security or the gratification of man. Socrates appears to have emphasized the power of the beautiful object in furthering the more necessary ends of life. The really valuable point in his doctrine is the relativity of beauty. Greek philosophers initially felt that aesthetically appealing objects were beautiful in and of themselves. Plato tends to identify the self-beautiful with the conceptions of the true and the good, and thus there arose the Platonic formula '*Kalokagathia*⁷'. He felt that beautiful objects incorporated proportion, harmony and unity among their parts. He emphasizes unity in its simplest

⁷ Ancient Greek term meaning nobility, goodness. A Platonic teaching based on philosophy of a bodily, moral and spiritual whole.

aspect as seen in evenness of line and purity of colour. He recognizes in places the beauty of the mind, and seems to think that the highest beauty of proportion is to be found in the union of a beautiful mind with a beautiful body. He had but a poor opinion of art, regarding it as a trick of imitation (mimesis). Regarding poets and their works, Plato was of the opinion that poets attained excellence not by following any regulations of art; their beautiful melodies were uttered in an inspired state of mind, possessed by a spirit beyond themselves.

Aristotle, Plato's exemplary disciple, undertook a more serious investigation of the aesthetic phenomena, leading by scientific analysis to the development of certain principles of beauty and art. Along with a theory of the arts of poetry and rhetoric, he gives us in his treatises, certain general, certain general principles of beauty: and scattered among his other writings we find many valuable suggestions on the same subject. He seeks in the 'Metaphysics' to distinguish the good and the beautiful by saying that the former is always in action, whereas the latter may exist in motionless beings as well. He further distinguished the beautiful from the fit, and in a passage of the 'Politics' set beauty above the useful and necessary. He helped to determine another characteristic of the beautiful, the absence of all lust or desire in the pleasure it bestows. The universal elements of beauty, Aristotle finds in the 'Metaphysics'- to be order, symmetry, and definiteness or determinateness.....In the "Poetics" he adds another essential, namely, a certain magnitude: it being desirable that the object should not be too large, while clearness of perception requires that it should not be too small.

Aristotle's views on art are an immense advance on those of Plato. He distinctly recognized (in the 'Politics' and elsewhere) that the aim of art is immediate pleasure, as distinct from utility, which is the end of mechanical arts. He took a higher view of artistic imitation than Plato, holding that so far from being an unworthy trick, art implied knowledge and discovery, that its objects not only comprised of particular things which happened to exist, but contemplated what is probable and what necessarily exists. Aristotle was the first to adopt the term 'catharsis' to tragedy - till then a purely medical term meaning 'purgation' or 'cleansing.' By evoking the emotions of pity and fear in the mind of the audience Aristotle believed that a purification of these passions were effected. This is perhaps the point of greatest interest for aesthetics in the whole of his theory.

According to the Neo-Platonist writer Plotinus, (whose remarkable observations from among the later Greek and Roman philosophers are noteworthy), objective reason (nous) considered as self-moving, becomes the formative influence which reduces dead matter to form. Matter when thus formed becomes a notion (logos), and its form is beauty. Objects are ugly so far as they are unacted upon by reason, and therefore formless. The creative reason is absolute beauty, and is called the more than beautiful. There are three degrees of manifested beauty; that of human reason, which is the highest, that of the human soul, which is less perfect through its connection with a material body; and of real objects, which is the lowest manifestation of all. As for the precise forms of beauty, he supposed, in opposition to Aristotle that a single thing not divisible into parts might be beautiful through its unity and simplicity. He gives a high place to the beauty of colours in which material darkness is overpowered by light and warmth. In

reference to artistic beauty he said that when the artist has notions as models for his creations, these may be more beautiful than natural objects, which is clearly a step away from Plato's doctrine towards our modern conception of artistic idealization.

In 1750, Alexander Baumgarten, the German philosopher often cited as the first philosopher of aesthetics, published 'Aesthetica', a treatise on the criticism of taste considered as a philosophical theory 'Aesthetics', which had always meant sensation was re-defined by Baumgarten, to mean taste or 'sense' of beauty. In so doing, he gave the word a different significance, thereby inventing its modern usage. In his 'Metaphysica'-1739, Baumgarten defined taste, in its wider meaning as the ability to judge according to the senses, instead according to the intellect. Such a judgement of taste is based on feelings of pleasure or displeasure. A science of aesthetics would be for Baumgarten, a deduction of the rules or principles of artistic or natural beauty from individual 'taste.' Adopting the Leibnitz –Wolffian theory of knowledge, he sought to complete it by setting against the clear scientific or 'logical' knowledge of the understanding, the confused knowledge of the senses, to which he gave the name '**aesthetic.**' Beauty with him thus corresponds with perfect sense-knowledge. Reducing taste to an intellectual act and ignoring the element of feeling, Baumgarten clearly makes himself an intellectualist in aesthetics, the Arguing from Leibnitz's theory, Baumgarten concluded that nature is the highest embodiment of beauty, and that art must seek its supreme function in the strictest possible imitation of nature.

After Baumgarten, Immanuel Kant was one of the first philosophers to develop and integrate aesthetic theory into a unified and comprehensive philosophical system, utilizing ideas that played an integral role throughout his philosophy. In his “Critique of Judgement”, Kant tries to bridge the gap between two aspects of human nature. The very word ‘aesthetics’, whose Greek root means ‘of the senses’, aids Kant to get from the sensory to the supersensible. Beauty is experienced through the senses, but points us beyond mere sensation. According to Kant, beauty imitates the harmony within our dual human nature as free and physical beings. Beauty ultimately refers to the subjective experience of this harmony rather than to any property in the object that promotes the experience. Hence aesthetic experience is ‘subjective’: but because all humans are susceptible to the experience of harmony, this response possesses a ‘universality’ usually absent in subjective judgements. He wants the experience of the beautiful to signify that humans live in an ‘intelligent’ universe, where precepts generated by human reason are in tune with the nature of the universe itself. The experience of beauty tells us that the mind and the world fit. According to Kant, judgements of beauty are sensory, emotional and intellectual all at once.

In the view of Ferdinand Schiller, the aesthetic appreciation of beauty is the most perfect reconciliation of the sensual and rational parts of human nature. For Hegel, all culture is a matter of ‘absolute spirit,’ coming to be manifest to itself, stage by stage. Art is the first stage in which the absolute spirit is manifest immediately to sense-perception, and is thus an objective rather than subjective revelation of beauty. For Schopenhauer, aesthetic contemplation of beauty is the most free that the pure intellect can be from

the dictates of the will; here we contemplate perfection of form without any kind of worldly agenda, and thus any intrusion of utility or politics would ruin the point of beauty. Ferdinand Schelling is the first thinker to attempt a Philosophy of Art. According to Schelling a new philosophical significance is given to art by the doctrine that the identity of subject and object – which is half-disguised in ordinary perception and volition – is clearly seen in artistic perception. The perfect perception of its real self in the work of art is accompanied by a feeling of infinite satisfaction.

The only elaborated system of aesthetics in French literature are those constructed by the ‘spiritualistes,’ the philosophic writers, who under the influence of German thinkers effected a reaction against the crude sensationalism of the 18th century. They aimed at elucidating the higher and spiritual element in aesthetic impressions, appearing to ignore any capability in the sensuous material of affording a true aesthetic delight. J. Cousin and Jean Charles Lévêque were the principal writers of this school. The latter developed an elaborate system about the subject. All beauty is regarded as spiritual in nature. The several beautiful characters of an organic body- of which the principal are magnitude, unity, and variety of parts, intensity of colour, grace or flexibility, and correspondence to environment – may be brought under the conception of the ideal grandeur and order of the species. These are perceived by reason to be the manifestations of an invisible vital force. Similarly the beauties of inorganic nature are to be viewed as the grand and orderly displays of an immaterial physical force. Thus all beauty is in its objective essence, either spirit or unconscious force acting with fullness and in order.

Celebrating the joys of individual freedom, the writings of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, - hailed as the 'Father of the Romantic Movement,' exercised a great influence on many writers of the period. His enthusiasm for nature and appeal to the emotions was instrumental in paving the way for Romanticism. His exhortation to go back to nature was the most powerful regenerative force of the late 18th century. His work 'The Social Contract' (1762) contained the slogan "Equality, Liberty, Fraternity," which became the watchword of the French Revolution, and later on, the motto of the Republic. The aesthetics of Rousseau's one-scene lyric drama 'Pygmalion' had a profound influence on future writers, in its emphasis on the work of art being an externalized self of the artist. Thus the work was given priority over the artist.

Basically the aesthetic movement centered on the doctrine that art exists for the sake of beauty alone. In other words, art is an end in itself and need not be (or should not be) didactic, politically committed, propagandist, moral- or anything else but itself, and it should not be judged by any non-aesthetic criteria (eg. whether or not it is useful). It can be considered as a reaction against the prevailing social philosophies and the ugliness and hypocrisy of the Industrial Age. Aesthetic works are sometimes described as 'autotelic' (from the Greek 'autoteles') i.e 'complete in itself,' a concept that has been expanded to embrace 'inner directed' or 'self- motivated' human beings.

In his 1891 essay “The soul of man under socialism” Oscar Wilde⁸ wrote:

“A work of art is the unique result of a unique temperament. Its beauty comes from the fact that the author is what he is. It has nothing to do with the fact that other people want what they want. Indeed, the moment that an artist takes notice of what other people want, and tries to supply the demand, he ceases to be an artist, and becomes a dull or an amusing craftsman, an honest or dishonest tradesman. He has no further claim to be considered as an artist.”

The aesthetes developed the cult of beauty which they considered the basic factor in art, life should copy Art, they asserted. They considered nature as crude and lacking in design when compared to art. The main characteristics of the movement were suggestion rather than statement, sensuality, massive use of symbols and synaesthetic effects, that is correspondence between words, colours and music.

Aestheticism in poetry as in art is closely identified with the Pre-Raphaelites and shows a tendency to withdrawal or aversion. Many poets of the period strove for beautiful musical effects in their verses rather than for sense. They aspired to sensuousness and to what has become to be known as ‘pure poetry’. They also revived archaistic modes and archaic language and revived an extensive use of classical mythology as a framework for expressing ideas. Medievalism and the interest in chivalry and romance was an important part of the aesthetic cult.

⁸ Oscar Wilde was an Irish writer and poet, fluent in German and French also..

The major implication of the new aesthetic standpoint was that art had no reference to life, and therefore had nothing to do with morality. Art not life, Art instead of life, or as an alternative to life. Life as art, or as a work of art. The outstanding example of the aesthete's withdrawal from life is J.K. Huysman⁹'s *A Rebours* (1884), in which the hero, seeks to create an entirely artificial life. Much of the attitude of the new wave was neatly summarized by Villiers de l'Isle Adam when his hero in *Axel* says: "Live? Our servants will do it for us"

Ultimately, the most influential ideas arising out of aestheticism, are emphasis on the autonomy of the artist in his endeavour, and the independent existence of beauty as reflected in the form and content of a poem, and in the importance of craft and technique in the writing of a poem.

3:2:2 Indian Aesthetics - A glimpse

From antiquities to the contemporary, Indian art has had a strong link with 'Soundarya Shastra' or aesthetics. Indian aesthetics¹⁰ dates as early as 300BC, and is understood as the theorization of the beautiful. Its definition in the context of Indian rhetoricians is of a state of heightened bliss, which transcends pleasure, declaring kinship with the spirit rather than the corporeal self. The theory of Indian art practice is housed within the 'rasa theory,' as stated by Bharatha Muni in his 'Natya Shastra (3rd century BC). Over the centuries, philosophers and theoreticians have contributed greatly

⁹ Joris-Carl Huysman, French novelist. Famous work - *A Rebours* (Against the Grain)

¹⁰ Indian Aesthetics, from *Encyclopedia of Aesthetics*, Oxford University Press, 1998

to the development of Indian aesthetics, Shilpa shastras, written in consonance with the requirements of the Agama of liturgical texts, are among the most significant contributors to the understanding and comprehension of ancient Indian aesthetic practice.

Ancient Indian aesthetics have placed a distinct emphasis on the artist being the subjective beholder, expressing himself/herself in a highly detached and objective fashion. He meditates upon his experience and is able to give form to the formless. Thus the role of art is multiple – it is a means of self-expression, a record of the experiences of the artist, a form of communication satisfying man's need to be part of a group, a way of searching for and understanding the virtues of life. Bharata distinguishes eight or nine rasas: love, humour, pathos, anger, heroism, terror, disgust, wonder, and serenity. Artworks are regarded as expressing one or more of these rasas. In his 'Natyashastra,' an extraordinary text on the theatre arts, Bharata enunciated the theory of art that focusses on the idea of 'rasa' for the first time, around the beginning of the Christian era. The 'Dhvanyaloka,' penned by the famous aesthetician Anandavardhana, revolutionized Sanskrit theory by proposing that the main goal of good poetry is the evocation of mood or 'flavour' (rasa) and that this process can be explained only by recognizing a semantic power beyond denotation and metaphor, namely the power of suggestion or 'dhvani.' On the basis of this analysis, the 'Locana' or 'Eye' of Abhinavagupta, develops a theory of the psychology of aesthetic response.

Etymologically, 'dhvani' is 'reverberation' or 'suggestion.' According to the 'dhvani'¹¹ theory, the content of a good poem may be divided into two parts. One is directly expressed through the power of denotation of the words, and may include the meaning hinted at by their power of connotation or 'lakshana.' The other, taken to be the soul of poetry, is the unexpressed or suggested meaning i.e. vyanga, i.e. 'revealed,' or 'dhvani,' sometimes linked with the denotative and connotative meanings of the words.

The observations of the Sanskrit poetician Kuntaka regarding 'vakrokti'¹² or 'oblique expression' also forms an integral part of Indian aesthetics. The aesthetic delight is enhanced with the usage of 'vakrokti,' which, emanating from the creative faculty of the poet endows poetic language with strikingness. The actual meaning is deviated to imply something else. Etymologically, 'vakra' means crooked, indirect or 'ukta'-poetic expression or speech.

The aesthetic experience is described as the 'tasting of flavour' or 'rasaswadana.' Rasa literally means the essence of a work of art. Rasa is bestowed not made. Arguably the most important term in Indian art theory, rasa lays claim to several definitions. In its most obvious sense, 'rasa' refers to the sap, juice of plants or extract. Rasa also denotes taste and flavor,

¹¹ The Origin and Development of the Theory of Rasa and Dhvani in Sanskrit Poetics- Tapasvi Nandi, 1973

¹² *Kuntaka's Vakrokti and Literary Criticism: A Critical Estimate of Kuntaka's Vakrokti Theory of Criticism in Sanskrit Poetics*-Shikarapura Krishnamurthy, 1994

relating to consuming and handling either the physical object, or taking in its non-physical properties that yield pleasure.

When *rasa* is applied to art and aesthetic experiences, the word signifies a state of heightened delight or ‘*anand*’, the kind of bliss that can be experienced only by the spirit. *Rasa* experience is not the physical understanding of a creation, but the emotion, or empathy – as opposed to sympathy. The artist creates a situation that the viewer enters – a world of illusion, ‘*maya*’ – that leads the viewer to a state of empathic bliss.

*Rasaswadana*¹³ or the tasting of flavor is dependant upon several elements coming together in harmony. ‘*Bhava*’ (the mood/emotional state), ‘*vibhavas*’ (determinants), ‘*anubhavas*’ (consequents) and ‘*vyabhicharibhavas*’ (complementary emotional states). Though *rasa* is defined as one and undivided, it is one or more of these nine *rasas* through which the aesthetic experience takes place. Out of these nine, one sentiment or flavor dominates; a work of art propels a spectator toward, or becomes an occasion for a *rasa* experience. The artist evokes the core of feeling, removing veils, peeling away disguises, until we experience its essence. The pleasure one experiences comes from being able to relish the quality of feeling without being subject to it. Furthermore art provides resolution to the welter of conflicting emotions, demonstrating the inter-related nature of all the opposing feelings to which humans are subject and showing that life is held together by one thread that unites many apparently opposing threads. The system of correspondences between macrocosm and microcosm, linking

¹³*Natyaśāstra, Rasa Theory of Indian Aesthetics*-Gargi Bhattacharya,

the gross and the subtle, sense perception and human emotive states, paves the way for such an aesthetic experience of unity. The movement from the deeply personal dimension of emotion to its more universal quality creates an experience of liberation.

Aestheticians are emphatic in recognizing that the 'taste' of freedom experienced in art is not the same as 'moksha' (liberation), achieved through spiritual pursuit: the aesthetic experience is temporary and vicarious, while spiritual attainment is a more permanent condition that pervades one's entire existence. Nevertheless, a profound work of art suggests and points toward the spiritual state. It is not the case, as in some Western views of art, that the taste of liberation experienced through an artwork is a mere imitation of the actual experience or an illusory experience. The difference is one of degree and depth, not one of value.

The initiation of Changampuzha into the artistic medium was thus through the highly developed and complex theories of Indian aesthetics dominated by a rigid Sanskrit tradition. The extraordinary talent in Changampuzha was instrumental in his mastery of the western poetics of his era and imbibing it to perfection. Employing his remarkable intellectual acquisition for enriching Malayalam poetry, Changampuzha endowed it with musicality and dynamism.

Verlaine's 'Art Poétique', hailed as the manifesto of Symbolism heralded a new phase in the history of French poetry. Feeling rather stifled

by the meticulously sculpted verses of the Parnassians, the French literati was eagerly awaiting a break, which was provided by Verlaine, who almost donned the role of a 'saviour' in the context. The 'imprecise' or 'indefinite' assumed importance and intrigued the reader. In fact, it could be said without a shadow of doubt that the 'Art Poétique' is one of the great honourings of the Indefinite, expressing man's urge to be in the unboundaried and intangible realm. French poetry had always been musical. But no poet had insisted that poetry be nothing but music:

"Music, music first and foremost
Choose those metres odd of syllable
Supple in the air, vague, flexible,
Free of pounding beat, heavy or terse...

Verlaine was very much aware that if music is honoured, verbal correctness and valid perception would automatically follow. Verlaine's flexible usage of the conventional alexandrine metre to suit his needs, only served to enhance the beauty of his verses, setting an example to his successors.

Part II

AESTHETICS

CHAPTER – IV

Evolution of aesthetics in Verlaine and Changampuzha

“The most essential thing of all art, whatever it may be, lies in the connection. This rapport in poetry, is of ideas, pictures, sentiments, and especially of sounds, all stirred up by a particular rhythm, just like colours and lines in the case of painting, of volumes and proportion, in sculpture and in architecture, and of timbre and movement in music.”

Paul Claudel (Preface to The Anthology of Mexican Poetry)

4:1 **Influence of Baudelaire**

From ancient times, a knowledge or ‘science’ of correspondences existed, a good part of which eventually got lost with time. However, historic myths, art work, hieroglyphics and sacred literature are proof of that knowledge. Plato’s philosophy of ideas is the source of the theory of signatures, the theory of universal analogy and the theory of correspondences. That there are correspondences between the material and the spiritual worlds and that the world can therefore be read like a book, revealing the secrets of the spiritual world- is the most common thread of

this doctrine. Another common thread is that the senses, which diffusely allow us to experience the material world, can be united as one, enabling our complete grasp of spiritual harmony, of the ideal world. In the doctrine of correspondences, the senses have occupied an important place, enabling the leap from the material to the spiritual.

Throughout time, though individual senses have enjoyed varying degrees of attention, the sense of smell has not been very popular, but it is markedly emphasized by two users of the doctrine, the 18th century Swedish scientist, theologian and mystic-Emmanuel Swedenborg (1688-1772) and the French Symbolist poet Charles Baudelaire (1821-1867), who in his turn was strongly influenced by the writings of the American poet-Edgar Allan Poe. He gave olfaction¹ a unique place in his writings and elevated it to a stature never before seen in the history of poetry. Dubbed ‘un gourmet d’odeurs’ (a gourmet of odours), for him perfume was timeless and much adored. His most original contribution was to render fragrance, a mode of aesthetic perception, evoking poetic inspiration. In his own words-

“My soul floats on ...perfumes, as the souls of other men...float on music.”

In Swedenborg’s opinion, there is a correspondence between natural and spiritual levels: each person lives in both levels at once.

¹ *Charles Baudelaire: Poet of the Perfumed Word*-Marlene Goldsmith in the ‘Perfume’ Magazine’, December 30,2011’

Eternal life is an inner condition beginning with earthly life: gradual redemption occurs through personal regulation of inner states. In Charles Baudelaire's poem 'Correspondences' (Correspondances) with a direct reference regarding the title to the Swedenborgian concept, the connection between Nature and the metaphysical world is revealed. Synesthesia is said to "put the reader in contact with a forceful sensory presence, a primitive wholeness or synthesis of impression." Derived from the Greek 'syn' (meaning union) and 'aesthesia'(sensation), the term synaesthesia is used to signify-"production from a sense impression of one kind, of an associated mental image of a sense impression of another²". Baudelaire transfers through synesthesia – in which sounds, colours and scents are tied together to create mental images, and where all senses are stimulated through the mind's eye, a dramatic French Symbolist impression of Art and Nature on to the reader.

Baudelaire started his career as an art critic, whose erudite appraisals of art exhibitions (Salons) won the admiration of art lovers. His artistic perception enabled him to evolve his own style in poetry writing. In his review of the 1846 Salon, Baudelaire includes a quotation from the German Romantic writer E.T.A. Hoffmann, whose writings especially the '*Kreiskleriana*' had a great influence upon him in the period before encountering Edgar Allan Poe.

"It's not just in dreams and in the slight delirium that precedes sleep, but also when I am awake, when I hear music, that I find an analogy and an intimate connection among colours, sounds and perfumes. It seems

² Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy

to be that all these things have been created by a single ray of light and that they have to combine in a wonderful concert.

The smell of brown and red marigolds produces a particular magical effect on me. It makes me fall into a deep rêverie, and then it is as if I hear in the distance the deep low tones of the oboe.³”

The sense of correspondences is not just linking the physical and the emotional, the concrete and the abstract, but also binding together the different sensations, and is central to Baudelaire’s appreciation of the natural world. It is what infuses, most famously his sonnet ‘Correspondences’. This poem teaches us how, depending upon its fragrance, the perfumed word evokes synaesthesia.

Correspondences(Correspondances)

“Nature is a temple in which living pillars
Sometimes utter a babel of words;
Man traverses it through forests of symbols,
That watch him with familiar glances.

Like long echoes merging in the distance
In a deep and stormy unity,
As vast as midnight and as vast as clarity,
So can each scent and hue and sound to each respond.

Some perfumes are as fragrant as an infant’s flesh
Sweet as an oboe’s cry, and greener than the spring
-While others are triumphant, decadent or rich.

Having the expansion of infinite things,
Like ambergris and musk, benzoin and frankincense,
Which sing the transports of the mind and every sense.”

³ Chap.11, 425 -26

(“La Nature est un temple où de vivants piliers
Laissent parfois sortir de confuses paroles;
L’homme y passe à travers des forêts de symbols
Qui l’observent avec des regards familiers.

Comme de longs échos qui de loin se confondent
Dans une ténébreuse et profonde unité,
Vaste comme la nuit et comme la clarté,
Les parfums, les couleurs et les sons se répondent.

Il est des parfums frais comme des chairs d’enfants,
Doux comme les hautbois, verts comme les prairies,
Et d’autres, corrompus, riches et triomphants,

Ayant l’expansion des choses infinies,
Comme l’ambre, le musc, le benjoin et l’encens,
Qui chantent les transports de l’esprit et des sens.”)

Baudelaire’s poem is without doubt a symbolic representation of the connection of the self to its surroundings, taking the reader on a journey through nature’s correspondence with consciousness. The ‘forest’ of symbols that one may walk through one’s entire life is a metaphor for the connection between all things outside of oneself to all things inside oneself: everything that man experiences, perceives and senses, are all a gateway to one’s soul – the key is to observe everything and realize the connection. Synesthesia is used throughout the poem with ‘echoes’ and ‘the living columns’ that breathe ‘confusing speech,’- with ‘perfumes,’ ‘colours’ and ‘sounds’ that correspond, - with ‘odours’ that are as ‘fresh as baby’s skin,’ with green meadows and ‘mellow’ oboes. These ‘infinitely vast sensory experiences sing the ‘sense’ rapture and the soul’s. It is significant that the poem ends with the word ‘sens’(senses). However, by binding word (parole) and symbol (symbole) together through the rhyme, Baudelaire does say that language is neither

transparent nor purely abstract, but that it carries within it the promise of an ultimately decipherable meaning.

In his art criticism, he says that Nature is a dictionary, which the painter consults and transforms into the work of art. The temple here is a temple of words, something less to be worshipped than to be interpreted and translated. The tercets explore an area – the sense of smell—that is central to Baudelaire’s experience, and so demand particular attention. Many hail Baudelaire as the great olfactory poet of France, the one, who most keenly and in the most complex ways both responds to the sense of smell and succeeds in conveying it. The sense of smell, is more limited in comparison with the senses of sight and hearing, and less precise. Yet as insisted by Marcel Proust, the two senses of taste and smell, more fragile and more tenacious than the rest, are those that linger on after all else has gone. All these experiences of synaesthesia bring pleasure, a sense of peace and harmony with the world⁴. There are others which are darker, connected to heavier, more powerful fragrance, and perverse recesses of the human psyche; still others elicit spiritual and creative aspects of existence. Ambergris is a secretion coming from the intestines of the sperm whale. Musk is also a secretion produced in the excretory follicles under the abdominal skin of the male musk deer. These are both fecal, animalic fragrances and evoke decadent instincts and emotions, such as lust, greed and sloth. These fragrances emanating from Baudelaire’s ‘flowers of evil’ or from the dark void of existence, and its aroma of absence, open on to an infinite world of boredom and suffering. Benzoin and frankincense are gummy resins, collected as seepage from

⁴ The ‘Perfume’ magazine (December 30, 2011), article of Marlene Goldsmith.

trees. These scents alter consciousness, culminating in mystical states. Theirs is an ecstatic, luminous, infinite world.

In 1847, Baudelaire happened to come across some of the translations of Poe's works in French periodicals, and was deeply affected by them as he recognized in him a kindred spirit. In Poe's '*Tales of Mystery and Imagination*,' he found 'an insatiable love of the beautiful' which had assumed the potency of a morbid passion. For the next seventeen years, Baudelaire applied himself unceasingly to the task of studying and translating Poe. The French literary world owes it to Baudelaire for introducing Poe's views to it. Following in the footsteps of Baudelaire,- Stéphane Mallarmé, Verlaine, Rimbaud and others adopted the perception of Poe, of appreciating poetry for its own sake, And the principle of poetry demonstrates strictly and basically, the human aspiration towards a superior form of beauty. It is this admirable, this immortal instinct of beauty, which makes us consider the earth and its sights as a glimpse, as a celestial correspondence.

In the chapter 'Analytic of the Beautiful' of the "Critique of Judgement," Kant states that beauty is not a property of an artwork or natural phenomenon, but is instead a consciousness of the pleasure that attends the 'free play' of the imagination and understanding. Following closely on his heels, Poe defines beauty as "the pleasurable excitement of the soul as it reaches for a perfection beyond this earth." In "The Poetic Principle," Poe says that "in the contemplation of beauty alone we find it possible to attain that pleasurable elevation or excitement *of the soul*,

which we recognize as the 'Poetic Sentiment'. The beauty that he worships is a *supernal* beauty, a heavenly and unearthly beauty that elevates the soul: An immortal instinct, deep within the spirit of man is thus plainly a sense of the Beautiful⁵. It is no mere appreciation of the beauty before us – but a wild effort to reach the beauty above. Inspired by an ecstatic prescience of the glories beyond the grave, we struggle, by multiform combinations among the things and thoughts of Time, to attain a portion of that Loveliness whose very elements, perhaps, appertain to eternity alone.

According to Eastern philosophers, consciousness is beauty and creation is an expression of consciousness. Beauty is present in all creation. In the eastern perspective beauty is considered as the nature of existence - as Satyam, Shivam, Sundaram, an objective phenomenon, while Western thought sees it as a perception, more or less subjective. Adi Shankara in the 'Soundarya Lahiri'- (Ecstasies of Beauty), speaks of the god of love- Kama, aiming all five flower arrows at the person before him, in order to awaken the five senses, giving rise to an ecstasy which creates bliss, making one appreciate everything one comes across, from a thorn to a snail to even a sea urchin. The ancient sages or rishis have always adored Beauty or 'Soundarya', making it a characteristic of the Divine. Satyam or truth, Shivam or benevolence, tranquility and divinity, and Sundaram or the beautiful, are the traits attributed to divinity.

⁵ xiv,273

In the aesthetic movement, the poet as 'seer' held the position of high priest in the religion of beauty. "In the beginning was the Word,"(John1:1) but this word now belonged to the poet. The 'prophetic tribe' of poets, in Baudelaire's phrase, had extra-lucid powers, a belief that led in Rimbaud's incantations, to the idea that the poet possesses the "alchemy⁶" of the Word. And Baudelaire considered all great artists to be first and foremost, great transfigurators. The artist of genius, like an alchemist knows how to extract from nature the hidden power and harmony. The essence of genius resides in what Baudelaire defines "supernaturalism." And it is via the imagination -"the queen of faculties," according to Baudelaire, that the artist is able to perceive and render this supernaturalness. The imagination thus stretched is not fantasy, but a 'semi- divine' faculty, which perceives first of all, beyond the frontiers of philosophical methods, the intimate and secret connections of things, the correspondences and the analogies.

According to Baudelaire, the duty of the great artist, if he looks and makes us look towards infinity, is to transform the most prosaic reality by virtue of his imagination. He will know how to extract the poetic dimension and the part of intemporal beauty of contemporary subjects, thus expressing 'nascence.' In fact, the term 'modernity' has been coined by Baudelaire to designate the fleeting, ephemeral experience of life in an urban metropolis and the responsibility art has, to capture that experience. The notion of the "uncanny" (bizarre) will help the artist to discover beauty in the most mundane or commonplace things. "Beauty is always bizarre" says Baudelaire, "I do not mean to say that it is voluntarily, coldly

⁶ Alchemy-a medieval form of chemistry aiming at transforming base metals into gold.

bizarre...I mean that it always contains a bit of strangeness, naïve strangeness, not intellectual but unconscious, and it is this strangeness that causes it to be particularly beautiful. That is its trademark, its characteristic. Reverse the proposition and try to conceive of a commonplace beauty.”

4:1:1 **Fleurs du Mal** (Flowers of Evil), Baudelaire’s masterpiece depicts the alchemy of the transformation of evil into sublime beauty. The impact of this work on successive generations of aspiring poets is so deep rooted that it needs to be analyzed in some detail. ‘Fleurs’ or flowers in poetry connote the innocent and pure surge, and invoking often the young and desirable woman, and ‘Mal’ is associated with the dismal, the crude, the hideous. In this work, Baudelaire seems to affirm that there is a beauty characteristic of evil. Wretchedness and beauty, disgrace and purity blend together and unite. The preposition ‘du,’ more than hinting at a sense of belonging, points out also to the origin. Therefore, flowers (poems) are extracted from evil: this reading of the title lays emphasis on the very function of poetry, (or for that matter any art), that of transforming evil or ugliness into beauty. Poetry is thus considered as an ‘alchemy’ of the despicable reality: notion summed up by Baudelaire in a captivating verse(invocation to Paris, capital of ‘evil’):

“You gave me your filth, I made gold out of it!”

(“Tu m’a donné ta boue,j’en ai fait de l’or”)

Indeed, **Fleurs du Mal** expresses the changing nature of beauty in modern industrializing Paris during the 19th century. In this work, Baudelaire talks about human destiny, and his poems, sometimes realistic, sometimes idealistic, mainly deal with the conflict between good and evil. Challenging traditional dualities, he finds beauty in incongruous things and good in perverted ones. His highly original style of prose-poetry influenced a whole generation of poets including Paul Verlaine, Arthur Rimbaud, Stéphane Mallarmé among others. In his dedication of the prose-poem-**The Spleen of Paris**, the poet mused;-

“Who among us has not dreamt, in moments of ambition, of the miracle of a poetic prose, musical, without rhythm and rhyme, supple and staccato enough to adapt to the lyrical stirrings of the soul, the undulations of dreams, and sudden leaps of consciousness. The obsessive idea is above all, a child of giant cities, of the intersecting of their myriad relations”

The **Flowers of Evil**, which was important in the symbolist and modernist movements, had as subject matter themes relating to decadence and eroticism. Deeply rooted in his Catholic background, Baudelaire’s imagination and moral nature were viewed through his gloomy conception of humanity doomed by original sin and is not alleviated by any assurance of salvation. However, Baudelaire does assign to man’s spiritual nature a dimension of eternity. After Pascal, Baudelaire is seen to ascertain the duality of man. He sees within himself the two tendencies tearing him apart: the one taking him towards the ideal, the other towards worldly matters. Caught between the two, he remains motionless, with the disheartening sentiment that art, beauty, and love (temporary refuges) could restrain only for a moment his will too weak, - that he might find only a fleeting oblivion in the feverish towns and their artificial paradises,

in wine, and debauchery – and that only death can remove from him ‘the annoying sight of eternal sin.’

The 1861 publication of 126 poems was arranged in six thematically segregated sections of varying lengths.

- Spleen and Ideal
- Parisian Scenes
- Wine
- Flowers of Evil
- Revolt
- Death

Baudelaire always insisted that the collection was not “a single album,” but had “a beginning and an end,” each poem revealing its full meaning only when read in relation to the others within the “singular framework” in which it is placed. A prefatory poem-‘Au Lecteur’(To The Reader) makes it clear that Baudelaire’s concern is with the general predicament, of which his own is representative. The opening lines of the preface, identifying Satan with the pseudonymous alchemist Hermes Trismagistus, and calling boredom(ennui) the worst of miseries, sets the tone of what is to follow:

“If rape or arson, poison or the knife
Has wove no pleasing patterns in the stuff
Of this drab canvas we accept as life-
It is because we are not bold enough!

The preface concludes-

“It’s ennui –his eyes brimming with spontaneous tear
He dreams of the gallows in the haze of his hookah
You know him reader, this delicate monster
Hypocritical reader, my likeness, my brother!”

Though the literal translation of ‘ennui’ is ‘boredom’, it is actually a feeling of deep despair coupled with boredom, leading to a sort of lethargy or inaction. Ennui is Baudelaire’s great enemy, which probably explains why he wrote so slowly. His ‘Spleen’ cycle (spleen in the 18th century meant depression) revolves around this theme, where he describes a human with memories to being like “un cimetière abhorré de la lune” (a graveyard hated by the moon). It is a malaise infecting the individual in spite of depravity or immoral behavior and something that was felt strongly by those decadents influenced by Baudelaire. Also important was the aesthetic sensibilities of Baudelaire’s poems, in which he presented the grotesque as beautiful, of which the most striking example was that of ‘Une Charogne’ (The Rotting Corpse). This poem describes a corpse that he and his lover found on the wayside, while walking one sunny morning in June. In his ‘Hymne à la Beauté,’ (Hymn to Beauty), Baudelaire describes beauty as walking on corpses.

Besides bestowing beauty upon the grotesque, Baudelaire also challenges the traditional relationship between morality and aesthetics that argues that beauty equals goodness. Morality was irrelevant to Baudelaire and to both the decadents and the symbolists that followed; that which is beautiful is simply so, regardless of notions of good and evil. In his

pastorals, Baudelaire turned away from the norm of presenting the countryside as beautiful and instead praised the city, as illustrated in the poem 'Le Crépuscule du Soir' (The Evening Twilight), where demons and personified prostitutes mingle with robbers, whores, and swindlers. Urban life and the lower classes scorned by society are presented as alive, vital: the everyday ugliness of human life becomes more beautiful than the emptiness of a pretty countryside landscape.

The collection may best be read in the light of the concluding poem 'Le Voyage', as a journey through self and society in search of some impossible satisfaction that eludes the traveller. Opening with a series of poems dramatizing contrasting views of art and beauty, with the artist depicted as martyr, visionary, performer, pariah and fool, focus then shifts to sexual and romantic love, with the first person narrator of the poems oscillating between extremes of ecstasy ('ideal') and anguish ('spleen') as he attempts to find fulfilment through a succession of women like Jeanne Duval, Appollonie Sabatier, Marie Daubrun, and the like. Describing an erotic cycle, each set of love poems, leads from intoxication, through conflict and revulsion, to an eventual ambivalent tranquility born of memory and the transmutation of suffering into art. Yet, attempts to find bliss through love, finally amounts to nothing. 'Spleen and ideal' comes to a close with a sequence of anguished poems, several of them entitled 'Spleen', in which the self is shown imprisoned within itself, with only the certainty of suffering and death before it. There are frequent references to blood, corpses and death, especially in the poem 'A Martyr' - describing a decapitated female corpse in detail, and 'A Voyage to Cythère', in which scavenging birds and animals destroy a human body. The words used to

describe these horrific images are fashioned in such a way that they become almost beautiful, an aesthetic often mentioned by Baudelaire. “It is one of the astounding prerogatives of art that the horrible, artistically expressed becomes beautiful...” Baudelaire often referred to the ugliness of the modern world and the beauty he saw in the bizarre.

The second section “Parisian Scenes”, (Tableaux Parisiens) describes a 24hour cycle in the life of the city, through which the Baudelairean traveller, now metamorphosed into a ‘flâneur’ (‘stroller’) moves in quest of deliverance from the miseries of self, only to find at every turn, all too vivid images of suffering and isolation that remind him pertinently of his own. Some of Baudelaire’s greatest poems, is included in this section, notably ‘The Swan,’ (Le Cygne) where the memory of a swan stranded in total dereliction near the Louvre, becomes a symbol of an existential condition of loss and exile, transcending time and space. Having gone through the city forever meeting himself, the traveller returns, (in the much shorter sections that follow), successively to drink (‘Wine’), engage in sexual depravity (‘Flowers of Evil’) and in Satanism (‘Revolt’), in quest of the elusive ideal. His quest is useless, as revealed in the final section ‘Death’ (La Mort). Continuing beyond death, his journey is an everlasting, open-ended odyssey that, will take him into the depths of the unknown, always in pursuit of the new, which by definition, is always elusive.

4:1:2 The Saint and the Sinner

Baudelaire always saw himself as a fallen angel. Love meant the loss of innocence- “faire l’amour, c’est faire du mal” (to make love is to cause hurt), he wrote. But at the same time, love is also the highest pleasure, and doing evil intentionally is a source of lust. He felt sympathy for the prostitute, who revolts against the bourgeois family values. That was probably why he had a long lasting relationship with the prostitute Jeanne Duval.

The section entitled ‘Revolte’ (Revolt) depicts rebellion against God. The three poems in this section illustrate the importance of Christian symbolism in Baudelaire’s poetry, not as a positive force, but as a source of contrast between Christianity and Satanism. The last of the three poems ‘Les Litanies de Satan,’(Satan’s Litany), resembles a liturgical formula with its repeated cry to Satan to take pity on the speaker as well as its closing prayer addressed to Satan. Besides, the text glorifies Satan in a language usually reserved for God or Christ.

There are poems from other sections of the collection echoing the worship of Satan, such as the concluding line of ‘Le Possède’ (The Possessed) –

“O mon cher Belzébuth, je t’adore” (Oh, my dear Beelzebub, I
worship you).

Baudelaire's speaker views in these poems, the suffering of humankind as a direct result of God's inability or unwillingness to defeat Satan. This viewpoint becomes evident in 'Le Reniement de Saint-Pierre'(The Denial of Saint Peter), in which Baudelaire writes that God laughed while Christ was crucified, and continually ignores the cries of his followers, and that St. Peter was right to deny Jesus because he failed to rule for eternity. Though not a staunch believer, Baudelaire needed the Christian framework to provide a point from which he could diverge. Without Christian images,-which are quite common in his poems, he could not demonstrate the power of evil.

The future Symbolists had already chosen Baudelaire as their inspiration, by the time of his death. In the early 1860s critics began to recognize Baudelaire's influence in the writings of the next generation of poets, and these younger artists dedicated some of their poems to him. Later, on 1st February 1865, Mallarmé published an article in 'The Artist', in which he described the ability of **The Flowers of Evil** to draw him into a "surprising landscape which lives in my eyes with the intensity of those created by profound opium." At the end of that same year, Verlaine published his important review of Baudelaire in the magazine "Art", an article that increased the reputation of both its author and its subject.

In the historical view of French poetry of the 19th century, Baudelaire played a transitional role. Retaining the traditional forms and subjects of the Romantics, his approach to language, novel view of beauty,

and position of persona, signify a departure from Romanticism, preparing French poetry for the Symbolist movement. Baudelaire also avidly promoted 'dandyism,' described as "a cult of the self", giving rise to a "new kind of aristocracy," which valued elegance and above all distinction. Elegance and distinction involved sexual license as well, along with other freedoms. Actually, Baudelaire began writing the poems that would appear in the **Fleurs du Mal**, while living a life of self-conscious dissipation in Paris.

In his poem "Enivrez – vous" (Get Drunk – The Spleen of Paris), Baudelaire gives the exhortation to be inebriated with anything that suits one's taste.

"Always be drunk. Therein lies everything: it's all that matters,
So as not to feel the dread burden of time breaking your shoulders
And crushing you to the earth, never stop drinking
But what? Whether wine, poetry or virtue, the choice is yours
Whatever it is, get drunk"

4:2 Adaptation of Baudelairean aesthetics by Verlaine

Paul Verlaine came across Baudelaire's **Fleurs du Mal** (Flowers of Evil) at the age of fourteen, and needless to say it got him very excited, altering totally his perception of art. Rejecting all social conventions of the time and treating subjects hitherto considered taboo, like lesbianism, it was a complete upsetting of the existing value systems. The irony in the conception that beauty could be derived from the evil and bizarre things in

life, was most fascinating for Verlaine and his peers. Verlaine adopted Baudelaire as his intercessor. “It is to Baudelaire that I owe the awakening of poetic feeling, and what is deep in me,” he wrote, and his youthful discovery of Baudelaire brought sensual craving and artistic ambition surging to the surface. At the age of 21, Verlaine wrote, “It is Charles Baudelaire who presents the sensitive man, and he presents him as a type, or, if you like, as a hero.” He is a seer, “with his sharpened, vibrant senses, his painfully subtle mind, his intellect steeped in tobacco, his blood burned up by alcohol.” And Verlaine abandoned himself to Baudelaire’s heroism. His addiction to drinks, especially absinthe, made him insanely violent. No other poet was so weak to the press of destiny. All his creative virtue is reversed strength; it is weakness.

Verlaine was always only a human being, a weak human being, who did not even know how to “count the transgressions of his own heart.” Probably, it was this very lack of individuality which produced something much rarer – the purely and entirely human. He threw himself into the arms of all dangers – women, religiosity, drunkenness and literature, resulted only in oppression and suffering. The drops of blood, sweat and tears ensuing from this experience got transformed into magnificent poems, imperishable events, primaeval human emotion clear as crystal. Two factors were responsible for this; an extraordinary candour in both virtue and vice, and his complete unconsciousness, which was unfortunately lost in the first waves of fame.

However, it was the genius of Verlaine that discovered a language imbued with music, most suited to wed and translate the discordance of the self and the world inherited poetically from Baudelaire. This “accord discord” is characterized, regarding themes, by a rather unstable but miraculously maintained equilibrium in Verlaine’s poems between anxiety and the love of life as revealed in his work **Fêtes Galantes** (Gallant Celebrations-1869) or familiarity and mystery as in **Poèmes Saturniens** (Saturnien Poems-1866).

In the context, one is reminded of the work ‘Fear and Trembling’ of the Danish philosopher Soren Kierkegaard- the father of existentialism. The philosopher draws attention to Christianity’s ‘inverted dialectic’ which demands that we exercise ‘double vision’ to see in worldly things their spiritual opposites, like hope in hopelessness, strength in weakness, and prosperity in adversity. The conflict of duality between the coordinates of good and evil, tranquility and anxiety, religiosity and agnosticism seems to be characteristic of all humans and it surfaces with doubled force in Verlaine as well as in Changampuzha.

For example, in this poem from the collection **Gallant Celebrations**, an undefinable anxiety seems to lurk in the shadows, without any apparent cause.

Clair de Lune (‘Moonlight’)

“Your soul is a select landscape
Whither goes masks and Bergamasks

Playing the lute and dancing, and half-
Sad under their strange disguises.....”

Those adorable and delightful masked creatures do not seem to believe in their happiness. At first, one hears certain barely audible sounds, towards the end of the collection, a subtly managed crescendo, bringing about anguish and despair. True to Mallarmé’s dictum, the strategy adopted by Verlaine was to use subtle suggestion instead of precise statement (rhetoric was banned) and to evoke moods and feelings by the magic of words and repeated sounds and the cadence of verse (musicality) along with metrical innovations. ‘My Recurring Dream’ from **Saturnien Poems** is a typical poem of this genre:

Mon Rêve Familial (My Recurring Dream)

“Often I dream this poignant fantasy
Strange, of an unknown woman whom
I love and who loves me, and who seems new
Each time and yet who seems the same....”

4:2:1 **Verlaine and cantatas**

Among all the poets to use musical images, Verlaine was the most influential, setting a clear precedent. Verlaine’s poetry contains examples of a musical terminology that have often been cited by scholars: the playing of the lute and singing in a minor key in ‘Clair de lune,’ (Moonlight), the violins of autumn in ‘Chanson d’Automne,’ (Autumn Song), the piano that kisses a fragile hand in the fifth of

the 'Ariette Oubliée' (*Forgotten Tunes*) in **Romances Sans Paroles** (Songs without Words) and the musical references seen in these titles themselves. By using such terms, Verlaine created vivid images that establish a mood and bring the element of sound to the forefront. To demonstrate the overall effect of the use of music in poetry, blending the auditory and visual senses, the poem 'Nevermore' from **Saturnien Poems** could be analyzed. Incidentally, this title which appears twice in the collection reminds one of Poe's poem – 'The Raven' with its oft – repeated refrain 'nevermore.'

Nevermore

“Memory, memory, what do you want of me? Autumn
Makes the thrush fly through colourless air,
And the sun casts its monotonous glare
On the yellowing woods where the north winds hum.

We were alone, and walking in a dream,
She and I, hair and thoughts wind-blown.
Then, turning her troubled gaze on me,
‘Your loveliest day?’ in her voice of fine gold,

Her voice, with its angel's tone, fresh, vibrant, sweet.
I gave her my answer, a smile so discreet,
And kissed her white hand with devotion.

-Ah! The first flowers, what a fragrance they have!
And how charming the murmured emotion
Of a first 'yes' let slip from lips that we love!”

(Souvenir, souvenir, que me veux-tu? L'automne
Faisait voler la grive à travers l'air atone,
Et le soleil dardait un rayon monotone
Sur le bois jaunissant où la bise détone

Nous étions seul et marchions en rêvant,
Elle et moi, les cheveux et la pensée au vent.

Soudain, tournant vers moi son regard émouvant:
“Quel fut ton plus beau jour?” fit sa voix d’or vivant.

Sa voix douce et sonore, au frais timbre angélique
Un sourire discret lui donna la réplique,
Et je baisai sa main blanche, dévotement.

-Ah! Les premiers fleurs, qu’elles sont parfumées!
Et qu’il bruit avec un murmure charmant
Le premier *oui* qui sort des lèvres bien-aimées!)

An important feature of this poem is the pervasive use of words that refer not specifically to music, but sound in general. The word ‘monotone’ in the first stanza (‘Et le soleil dardait un rayon monotone’) effectively depicts the steady beating down of the sun. The beloved in the second stanza has a voice of living gold, a sweet and sonorous voice, with an angelic timbre. Mellifluous in their own right these phrases connote singing in such a way that establishes not actual music, but the beauty of the woman being described. The last three lines also contain reference to sound, with the charming tinkling that escapes from the beloved’s lips.

An analysis of the VIIth ‘Arietta’ of the collection **Songs without Words**, is a good example of the way Verlaine sets the mood of the poem by using certain sound patterns.

“Oh sad, so sad was my heart “O triste, triste était mon âme
Because, because of a woman. A cause, à cause d’une femme.

My heart flew from her side- but oh!, Je ne suis pas consolé
I knew no solace for my woe.. Bien que mon coeur s’en soit allée...

The repetition of words and cadence makes poignant the inner turmoil or 'angst' (word introduced by Kierkegaard, denoting fear or apprehension), and the reader is made to empathize with the poet's sentiments.

4:2:2 Verlaine and Mallarmé

Mallarmé, one of the leaders of the Aesthetic school, and the theoretician of the movement, came under the spell of Baudelaire, when he read **The Flowers of Evil** at nineteen years of age. No doubt he was profoundly influenced by it. He was of the opinion that like any sacred thing, the art of poetry must be accessible only to those initiated into it. Unlike the spoken language used in daily conversations, the significance of the poetic language should be veiled and implicit. He considered it the task of the poet to purify the language, by means of which he would try to express the inexpressible, the absent, the symbol, and not the thing. Trying to practice alchemy with words, Mallarmé tried to create a kind of poetry, where the word as symbol would have a new mobility and would achieve new intensities and refinements of meaning. In his opinion, each poem, built around a central idea, or symbol, or metaphor, consists of subordinate images that illustrate and help to develop the idea. For him, "To name an object would be to destroy three-fourths of the enjoyment of the poem, which consists of the happiness of guessing little by little: to suggest, that is the dream. Therefore the poet should not paint the object, but the effect that it produces, as there should always be an enigma in poetry, and the aim of literature, it has no other – is to evoke objects".

As proved by Baudelaire, the physical universe then is a kind of language that invites a privileged spectator to decipher it. This endeavour might not yield a single message so much as a superior network of associations, in which symbols help to evoke particular states of mind. The nominal subject of Mallarmé's sonnet - 'Le vierge, le vivace et le bel aujourd'hui' (1885), is of a swan trapped in a frozen lake. Significantly, in French, *cygne* (swan) is a homophone of *signe*, a sign. The overall effect is of overwhelming whiteness, and the presentation of the narrative elements of the description is quite indirect.

The virgin, vivacious, and beautiful today

“The virgin, vivacious, and beautiful today
Will it fracture for us with a wild wing-blow
This solid lost lake whose frosts haunted below
By the glacier, transparent with flights not made?”

A swan of time past remembers it's he
Magnificent yet struggling hopelessly
Though not having sung a liveable county
From the radiant boredom of winter's sterility

His neck will shake off this whitest agony
Space inflicts on a bird that denies it wholly
But not earth's horror that entraps his feathers
Phantom assigned to this place by his brilliance
The swan in his exile is rendered motionless!
Swathed uselessly by his cold dream of defiance.”

(“Le vierge, le vivace et le bel aujourd'hui
Va-t-il nous déchirer avec un coup d'aile ivre
Ce lac dur oublié que hante sous le givre
Le transparent glacier des vols qui n'ont pas fui!”)

Un *cygnet* d'autrefois se souvient que c'est *lui*
Magnifique mais qui sans espoir se *déliv*re
Pour n'avoir pas chanté la région où *viv*re
Quand du *stérile* *hiv*er a *resplendi* *l'ennui*..."")

The recurrent i-sound suggests the barren coldness of the physical scene which runs through all the end rhymes, dominating several of the lines internally, and is of course the vowel of the master-word *cygne* (*swan*). It is not merely a subjective reaction to hear the French *i* -as a desolate sound in itself, made more desolate by the sense –associations of such words as *cri*, *agonie*, *bise*, *givre*, *hiver*, *sterile*, *exil*, *ennui*. Most of these words have been introduced in the poem by Mallarmé, in which the words or lines containing the most telling assonances have been emphasized.

The swan's plight can be considered as an allegory applied to the poet or artist haunted by an ambition he is unable to achieve. When the day dawns each day, he is full of hope that he will finally manage to launch himself toward his goal, but he repeatedly finds that he is not only able to do so, but that the more he hesitates, reflects, ponders, the more he succumbs to a fatal inactivity.

Whiteness being symbolic of woman, this poem can be interpreted also as depicting the helplessness of the woman to rise above the earth to reach great heights.

4:2:3 Verlaine and Rimbaud

Verlaine's consort - the boy poet **Rimbaud**, avid reader that he was, had fallen under the Baudelairean charm while in his remote village of Charlesville. He was also interested in the occult and alchemy, laying his hands on all available material in this regard. As he reveals in his '*Alchemy of the word*' (**Delirium II-A Season in Hell**) - "I invented the colours of vowels: A black, E white, I red, O blue, U green,-I made rules for the movement of every consonant, and I flattered myself to invent a poetic verb with instinctive rhythms that would be accessible later to all the senses...".The extremely personal quality of poetry that he developed is believed to be an after-effect of the prolonged use of absinthe, introduced to him by Verlaine who was addicted to it. The use of absinthe, hashish and opium in the 1860s to intentionally 'derange the senses' on behalf of art was quite common among artists. It will be of relevance to consider in the context, the oeuvres of the Russian writer Dostoevsky, which are examples of 'heightening of reality.' If poets like Baudelaire, Verlaine and Rimbaud purposely adopted means of deranging the senses, writers like Dostoevsky were 'naturally' inclined to gain insights into the human existence. He was an epileptic, and the extreme fantasy in his work, especially 'The Idiot', has been ascribed to his morbidity- which afforded him potential to achieve unusual insights about the human condition. Rimbaud's '**A Season in Hell**' (1873) is considered to be an outcome of the complete disordering of the senses. In his letter to his former teacher Izambard, he says, "I am working to turn myself into a seer... it has to do with making your way towards the unknown by a derangement of all the senses. And it's wrong to say 'I think', one should say 'I'm thought' and the entity 'I' is another being altogether. (Je est un

autre). By saying so, Rimbaud was being more avant-garde, than the writers of his period, intimating like Hegel before him, that the subjective self, the 'I' is constructed, the other constitutive, implying that within it are multiple components opposing sameness, what today we call multiple selves. Rimbaud realized the value of writing not only of internal things, but also of ordinary things as experienced through the unique subjective self, which made it necessary to construct poetry in a new way, including synesthesia, as Baudelaire had done, such that chaos was captured in correct form, as depicted in the poem 'Drunken Boat' "-O let my keel split! O let me sink to the bottom."

A Season in Hell: Delirium II, Alchemy of the Word

"...Poetic quaintness played a large part in my alchemy of the word.
I became adept at simple hallucination; in place of a factory I
Really saw a mosque, a school of drummers led by angels,
Carriages on the highways of the sky, a drawing -room at the
Bottom of a lake, monsters, mysteries: the title of a melodrama would
raise horns before me
Then I would explain my magic sophisms with the hallucinations of
words!
Finally I came to regard as sacred the disorder of my mind. I
Was idle, full of a sluggish fever, I envied the felicity of beasts,
Caterpillars that represented the innocence of limbo, moles, the sleep of
virginity
My temper soured. In kinds of ballads I said farewell to the world."

The end of his experiments with the thought of inventing "a poetic language accessible someday to all the senses" caused him to write-"As I wept I saw gold- I could not drink"(Rimbaud pp.51-53). It could be said

that Rimbaud sought his own sort of 'talking cure', an alchemical transformation of his psyche's contents to gold through language.

“**The Drunken Boat**”(1871) is another illustration of Rimbaud's genius in conveying to the reader the synaesthetic impression of a boat tossed upon the seas, filled with water, and as if inebriated :

The Drunken Boat

“As I was floating down unconcerned rivers
I no longer felt myself steered by the haulers.....
...Lighter than a cork, I danced on the waves-
Which men call eternal rollers of victims.....”

Following in the footsteps of his idol Baudelaire, Rimbaud believed seriously in the vocation of the poet as a 'seer' or 'voyant', to expose to the reader, the intricacies, the hidden connections of things, as revealed in his “Lettre du Voyant”.(Letter of the Seer- 1870).

The 'drunken boat' is a ship that has gone adrift down some American river when its haulers were captured and killed by 'shrieking red-skins. 'Free and crewless it is carried about the seas, traversing storms, amid seascapes and landfalls of incredible strangeness and beauty. The underwater world and the sky display their terrors and marvels while it drifts for months as almost a part of them. The boat even if 'drunk' with sensation, is still a conscious identity. Finally, it grows weary of its incessant wanderings and desires to break up or else to creep into some European water- a puddle, or a toy boat:

“But truly, I have wept too much!
The Dawns are heart breaking,
Every moon is atrocious and every sun bitter:
Sharp love has swollen me up with heady langours
O let my keel split! O let me sink to the bottom
If there is one water in Europe that I want, it is the-
Black cold pool where into the scented twilight
A child squatting full of sadness, launches
A boat as fragile as a butterfly in May.”

The poem could be considered as reflecting Rimbaud's own life, his breaking away from Charlesville, with the intoxicating adventures of the senses that lay ahead, then the return, sobered and disillusioned after Verlaine's condemnation, to a life of his own, away from his former associates. However, it is in the evocation of the violence and colours of the sea hitherto unknown to him, that its great strength lies, and what makes Rimbaud a cosmic poet is the concordance with human experience, wrought thus. By his mastery of the image he suggests the unity of all forms of life at an intuitive level which, whether implicit or fully worked-out, is greater than that of any French poet before him, the ground work for which was laid out by Baudelaire.

4:3 Adaptation of the Baudelairean and Verlainean Aesthetics by Changampuzha

Changampuzha, by virtue of his association with the poetic world beyond his own through translations, was quite aware of the latest trends in the world literary arena. In his quest for a new language and form for poetry,

he came across the works of Baudelaire, Verlaine, Rimbaud, Mallarmé, and others and was much impressed by them. He translated Baudelaire's 'Correspondences' into Malayalam, under the name 'Pratheekangalude vanavidhiyil' ('Along the forest path of symbols'). The perusal of Baudelaire's **Flowers of Evil** led him to pen a poem with almost the same meaning – '**Papathinde Pushpangal**' ('Flowers of Sin') from the collection **Srithilakam**, 1944) in which he says:

“...may I embrace you wholeheartedly
....Oh sin, offer me your poisonous
Flowers, let me make a garland of them
And wearing it, I shall proclaim to the world,
My gratitude on your behalf!”

The lure of sin, for Changampuzha seems to be as compelling and attractive as it had been to Baudelaire. The idea is reinforced in **The Singing Devil** (1949) level which, where the inglorious sight of the peacock, the symbol of sin, with its red, gleaming eyes, carrying in its beak a deadly, writhing snake does not at all deter the poet who wishes to-

“Most eagerly clasp to the bosom
Embrace you wholeheartedly...”

After portraying himself as the devil in the guise of the serpent or vulture, the poet depicts the uncontrollable impulse of evil within himself, so much so that one is not prone to think of a singing devil but a singer in the guise of the devil.

“Displaying the dazzling dots of-
Its beautiful blue tail feathers,
Stretching out its slithery neck, resplendent with-
The seven colours of the rainbow,
Pulling out its outstretched hood.....
How I long to clasp-
You to my bosom.”

These two compositions are testimonials to the impact of Baudelaire’s ‘Satanism’ (the pursuit of evil for its own sake, with full consciousness of what is right or wrong) on Changampuzha. Perfectly aware of the selfless devotion of his wife, the poet constantly seeks novel adventures in love. The feelings of sadism, masochism and melancholy, inherited from Baudelaire, are also rampantly seen in the works of Changampuzha. To quote from **The Singing Devil** :

“I shall lull you to sleep, and then
Drain you of your warm blood...”

Then again in ‘My Poem’ of the collection **The Throbbing Tomb**

“Playing on my veena so harshly,
I almost broke its strings”

Also in the preface to **The Tearful Homage**:

“Maybe it’s right- this world
Maybe a true haven of delights....
Unfortunate creature that I am, whatever

I set my eyes upon, was a pathetic sight...”

The extent of Changampuzha’s admiration for Baudelaire is to be seen in his act of affixing two of the latter’s verses as a preface to his famous work **Ramanan** (1936);

“...Ah, thou didst not comprehend
The dead wept thus, thou woman frail and weak”

Changampuzha was sure that his mind was ‘degenerate’ enough to create poetry. A willing victim to ‘wine and women’, to say nothing of drugs like ‘ganja’, he aimed at attaining a total ‘disordering of the senses’, even at the expense of forsaking his family, so as to be able to produce great poetry. In an inebriated state of mind as if having a hallucinatory vision, he cries out in his poem ‘*Progress! Progress!*’ (**Amritaveeji/Immortal Vibes** -1945), that he ‘sees’ bliss in the songs of the birds, ‘hears’ it among the constellations, and experiences it through the sensation of touch also, so much so that a synesthetic effect is produced by the intermingling of the senses of touch, smell, sight and hearing.

In the poem ‘Green’ (**The Throbbing Tomb**), Changampuzha lays focus on the colours of the rainbow, probing their significance and hidden connotations.

“Among the seven colours, I salute you O green,
I delight in lauding you.....just like Nature does
Your place in the middle with three colours
Flanking you on either side, lends you prominence...”

The poet goes ahead in his derivations of hidden connotations. The ‘dhvani’ of his descriptions, leads one to associate the colour violet as symbolic of Shiva – the patron deity of dance, while indigo represents sculpture. The colour blue is representative of painting. Yellow stands for Vedanta, while orange represents music. The colour red is connotative of danger, as well as of love and marriage. It is also symbolic of revolution. Among all the seven colours, Changampuzha finds however the colour green, symbolic of poetry or literature, the most endearing, as it possesses a miraculous power to heal wounds and scars. It is the most vibrant among all, an oasis in the scorching heat of life’s conflicts! Green, the colour of life, of nature, and while blending with the gold-laced attire of the beloved has a stunning effect!

Also Changampuzha tries to discover the significance of certain consonant or rather phonetic clusters in the Malayalam language. In his poem ‘**In a slumber**’ (*Swararagasudha*-1948), he tries to grasp the connotations behind the phonetic clusters like like/ng/nj/nt/nd/mp/ and so on, attributing meaning to them to suit his fantasy. To the poet in his drowsiness, these sounds seem like semi-nude, dancing mermaids, trying to impart meaningful gestures. /nj/ for example, seems to stand for ‘coquettishness’, reminding the poet of the tinkling of anklets, in the

backdrop of the crescent moon viewed fleetingly in the mist. Like the smile of the midnight flowers in the pale moonlight, denoting shyness, seems to beckon him, from behind the door. The phonetic cluster /ng/ stands in shaded radiance, bearing as it were, the bouquet of happiness. Adorned with a joyousness is the epitome of art. And last but not the least comes ‘lips apart, trembling, in expectancy of a kiss!

Verlaine’s clear perception regarding the form and content of poetry is set forth in his poem ‘Poetic Art’ (“**Formerly and Lately**”-1871)

‘Poetic Art’(Art Poétique)

“Music first and foremost! In your verse,
Choose those meters odd of syllable,
Supple in the air, vague, flexible,
Free of pounding beat, heavy or terse...

Choose the words you use-now right, now wrong-
With abandon: when the poet’s vision
Couples the Precise with the Imprecise
Best the giddy shadows of his song:....

For Nuance, not colour absolute,
Is your goal: subtle and shaded hue!
Nuance! It alone is what lets you
Marry dream to dream, and horn to flute!...

Take vain eloquence and wring its neck!...

Let your verse be aimless chance, delighting
In good-omened fortune, sprinkled over
Dawn’s wind, bristling scents of mint, thyme, clover...
All the rest is nothing but worthless writing.”

In his treatise '*Sahithya Chinthakal*' (1945) Changampuzha speaks of being impressed by these words of Verlaine which eventually moulded his own poetic outlook. Keeping in tune with Verlaine's exhortation on music, Changampuzha dared to make daring innovations in Malayalam poetry, much to the consternation of the poetic doyens of the time. Laying aside the cumbersome Sanskrit prosody, he relied on the Dravidian metre, resorting to the folk tradition of music, making verses more supple and appealing to the taste of the common man.

Changampuzha evolved his own ideas on art as made explicit in his poem '*Art*' (*Diadem*):

Art

“What is art? A ‘vigour’ more valuable
Than life dear friend,
Divine zest, flights of imagination, revealing
Celestial dreams surpassing everything,
Nothing more brilliant, more binding
Than that divine love-knot,
Joining hearts- so unfathomable
Its influence on earth....”

Indeed, by virtue of the ‘flights of imagination’, the poet is empowered to expose the splendours of the tomb as expressed in **The Throbbing Tomb**, where two nightbirds perched on boughs above his sepulchre seem to take stock of the rumblings or rather throbbings within, which seem to say:

“In spite of returning to dust,
Each atom of mine, still
Drenched in souvenirs of love
Dances dreamily, oh my Goddess!...”

Continuing in the same vein, the beauty of life beyond the grave is very well brought in the poem ‘*Skeletal Flowers*’, where the poet describes the phantoms of two lovers coming out of their graves for a stroll in the moonlight, with the woman asking her beloved in an endearing tone whether bones would sprout flowers emanating perfumes like those presently hovering in the air - to which he replies:-

“Bones do not flower usually- but the ones that do
May possess such a magical property...
The fragrance spreading around, my dear,
Is indeed proof of our own bones flowering”

In order to imbibe the art of the great masters of world literature Changampuzha painstakingly studied English, so that he could, through translations acquaint himself with their works. It was this yearning for innovation and improvisation that brought him close to the French Symbolists. The supreme importance that Verlaine gave to music and his exhortation to shun eloquence even to the point of strangulation, turned out to be a clarion call for Changampuzha to do the same in Malayalam poetry.

Indeed our bard unearthed the oral elements in early Malayalam folk poetry by reviving the primordial 'Pattu'(song) tradition, thereby raising Malayalam verse to dizzy heights of musicality. Little wonder that the noted critic and writer Dr.M.Leelavathy calls him the "Orpheus" of Malayalam verse.

According to the great poet and statesman Leopold Senghor:

"I insist that a poem is only perfect when it becomes a song; word and music combined. Poetry must rediscover its beginnings, the time when it was sung and danced".

Changampuzha seems to have succeeded in achieving this basic objective of poetry, judging by the popularity of his compositions.

In order to gauge the depth of the aesthetic appreciativeness, the next chapter shall attempt to juxtapose the significant works of both poets. Three important works each of both poets shall be studied in juxtaposition.

CHAPTER – V

Aesthetics - Works in juxtaposition

In order to create new readings across cultures, ‘placing’ or ‘juxtaposing’ of texts has been found to be very useful. Sieberg Praver defines placing as:

“... the mutual illumination of several texts, considered side by side: the greater understanding we derive from juxtaposing a number of (frequently very different) words, authors and literary traditions” - eventually leading to the idea propounded by Mathew Arnold that everywhere there is connection, that texts are part of a great intertextual tapestry.

For a genuine appreciation of the aesthetics of Verlaine and Changampuzha, it would only be appropriate to juxtapose their works, especially their first compositions.

5.1 Poèmes Saturniens versus *Bashpanjali*

Though the creativity of both poets started bearing fruit right from their childhood days, their first works got published in their early twenties. Verlaine’s “Poèmes Saturniens” (Saturnien poems) published in 1866,

bore resemblance to the personal philosophy of Baudelaire regarding its title. Like his idol, Verlaine considered himself to be born under the evil effects of the planet – Saturn, as made explicit in his dedication of the work to Eugene Carrière¹, making him prone to depression, laziness, melancholy, with tendencies towards drug abuse and alcohol. Firmly believing in this predestination, in Saturn's influence in reserving for him the 'good part of misfortune and bile,' he expresses sentiments echoing this rather sorrowful and pessimistic frame of mind. It was customary for the Parnassians to resort to mythological themes and here we catch a glimpse of Verlaine affirming his belief in the signs of the zodiac in charting out his destiny.

The work is divided into four sections:- 'Melancholia' (Melancholic Moments), "Eaux-fortes" (Etchings) 'Paysages Tristes' (Sorrowful Landscapes), and 'Caprices' (Whims). True to the Parnassian style to which Verlaine bore an affinity at the beginning, the poems in this section manifest a detached severity, impeccable form, stoic objectivity, all the while attempting to "clothe the idea in a sensitive form", in the manner of the Symbolists.

'Melancholia' expresses the sensitive condition of the soul of which the poem 'My Recurring Dream' is a typical example. In a dream-like state, the poet is reminded here of a happy encounter, evoking in him the image of the ideal woman who would be able to understand him. But

¹ Eugène Anatole Carrière – French Symbolist painter, best known for the monochrome palette. His work influenced Picasso.

the existence of the woman is made illusory by the indetermination of the memory and the remote nature of the woman loved. Verlaine deliberately creates a vagueness and imprecision in the poem leaving the reader to make his own inferences- ‘to portray not the thing, but the effect that it produces was the dictum of the Symbolists. This priority of suggestion and evocation over direct description and explicit analogy was what fascinated Changampuzha.

His first creation *Bashpanjali* (Tearful Homage-1934) was composed when he was 23 years old. The preface has a touch of melancholy and feeling of helplessness at the apathy of the well-to-do towards the marginalized ones in society - a reflection of the Marxian ideology gaining momentum in post-independent Kerala steeped in the feudalistic tradition, with all its irregularities. However, one finds that deep down in Changampuzha, there glowed an incurable idealism which saw the world in primary colours. In the preface to *Bashpanjali*, the poet says:-

“Maybe it’s right – this world
May be a source of unique joys
May be a wave in the milky sea....
Whatever fell on my ears
Was the cry of pity!
Whatever my burning soul suffered
Were sighs deep and hot...”

Towards the end, the poet says, echoing the sentiments of his friend Raghavan Pillai:

“If only a young mind
Were moved by tears,
Then I would call myself fortunate
That alone will be my satisfaction...”

The reference to tears is suggestive of a myriad of emotions, basically exposing a love of life and a love of one’s fellow beings.

However Verlaine’s Prologue does not echo this melancholic frame of mind. After alluding to Hindu and Greek mythologies with which he seemed to be well-versed, he traces the origins of French literature, while speaking of the role of the poet as a lover of beauty, with the azure sky as his flag and ideal, his law,- thereby already emphasizing the aesthetic quality of poetry.

Changampuzha’s poem ‘Promise’ subtly paints a picture in words, like Verlaine’s ‘Voeu’ (Vow). The poet creates the image of a lover quietly entering his beloved’s room and without awakening her, leaves as quietly, after an embrace. The reader is made to feel the magic of the moment.

“Love-lorn, dearest one
I will come beside you tonight,
Through the bolted doors
.....and without
Your knowledge even, I shall
Embrace you, leaving promptly...”

Verlaine on the other hand, while reminiscing on the love -frolics of the past, displays a yearning for the soothing presence of a woman who really understands him;

“Ah, the love frolics! first mistresses!.....
Oh for the soothing and stimulating love of a woman,
Soft, thoughtful and mild, and never taken by surprise,
And who sometimes kisses you on the brow, like a child”

This yearning for mild and endearing women has found many incarnations. In the poems to his bride, Mathide Mauté, it is the tender song of the troubadour; in the hours of his mystical conversion it becomes a tender prayer and Madonna cult; in the years of his decadence it appears as a pathetic echo, a stumbling plaint and dreamy childhood desires-the precious hour between sin and sin. Sometimes this secret desire is expressed tenderly and longingly in verse as if preserved in a fragrant shrine, safe-guarding precious possessions. These are pure, wonderful lines like the following, full of longing and renunciation:

“Je voudrais, si ma vie était encore a faire,
Qu’une femme très calme habitât avec moi.”

(If I had to live my life all over again,I wish
That a serene woman lived with me)

5:1:2 In the section, “Eaux-fortes” (Etchings), Verlaine paints a beautiful picture in words, of the elements in nature, reminiscent of the scene of the world’s creation, probably:

Marine (Sea-Scapes)

“The sonorous ocean
Palpitating under the eye
Of the moon in mourning
And palpitating still,

While a stroke of lightning
Brutal and sinister
Cracks the bistrous sky
By a long, bright zigzag cleft...

And while in the sky,
Where the hurricane roves,
Thunder roars
Most formidably.”

In an almost equally impressive style, Changampuzha paints the picture of the day-break in his poem ‘Morning Flowers’ (Prabhathe Pushpam). The brush strokes, far from being powerful and brutal, are those of pervading freshness and serenity.

“The sky’s coquettish radiance
Waking up the world with a kiss
Spraying my eyes mildly
With the cool essence of the rainbow
Elevating my soul from sweet slumber –
To divine heights.”

5:1:3 The section “Les Paysages Tristes” (Sorrowful Sceneries), has the famous ‘ Autumn Song’ of Verlaine:

“The long moan
Of the violins
Of autumn
Rend my heart
With a languorous
Monotone.”

Incidentally this song had been used in the invasion of Normandy during World War II, as a camouflage for the military operations.

This blending of the poet’s inner sentiments with nature, or the desire to become one with nature in joyful as well as sad moments, is portrayed in the works of Changampuzha too. In the poem ‘Wish’ (Aasha), Changampuzha says :

“If only I were a white cloud,
I would just now kiss that I’ll star.
I’ve always yearned to hold close –
To my bosom, the crescent of the sky...”

5:1:4 The last section of **Saturnien Poems** entitled ‘Caprices’ (Whims) has the popular ‘La Chanson des Ingénus’ (The Song of the Naïve):

“ We are the guileless
With flat headbands, blue eyes,
Who live almost unknown,
In novels that are hardly read...”

Such whimsical, yet true philosophical thoughts are to be found in Changampuzha’s works as well. The poem ‘In the Darkness’ has these words:

“...My failure is that I preserved
A sincere heart in a hypocritical world
If pure friendship is forsaken
Success is sure to woo you!”

5:2 **Romances Sans Paroles versus Spandikunna Asthimadam**

Verlaine’s work *Romances Sans Paroles* (Songs Without Words - 1874) is considered to be his most exquisitely lyrical and impressive work. It would be only be apt to juxtapose this collection with one of the most significant works of Changampuzha namely, *Spandikunna Asthimadam* (The Throbbing Tomb-1945).

Romances Sans Paroles, is perhaps the most representative of the originality of Verlaine, corresponding to a precise evolution of his poetry, under the double omen of music and impression. The title of this collection, borrowed from the German composer – Felix Mendelssohn, emphasizes this musical ambition. ‘Romances’ are compositions for singing to be played on the piano, characterized for their brevity, naïve

simplicity, and sentimental content, interwoven in a musical plot. The suffix 'sans paroles' underlies the emphasis of resonance over words. One is strongly reminded of Samuel Becket's play, 'Act without Words' which underlies the importance of action over words or dialogue, exposing the absurdity of life.

Divided into four short groupings - 'Ariettes Oubliées' (Forgotten Tunes), 'Paysages Belges' (Belgian Landscapes), 'Birds in the Night' (English title retained) and 'Aquarelles' (Watercolours), this work written between 1872 and 1873, grew out of Verlaine's nostalgically coloured recollections of an idealized life with his wife Mathilde Mauté on the one hand, (a life tragically beyond his grasp), and impressionistic sketches of his turbulent, on-again, off-again year-long escapade through Belgium with his friend – cum paramour- Arthur Rimbaud. The collection was published in 1874 in the provincial town of Mons, while Verlaine was imprisoned for the notorious flesh wound inflicted on Rimbaud during a lover's tiff in Brussels. A second edition was brought out in 1887, at the height of Verlaine's celebrity, unfolding a poetry of sensation, of evocation; a poetry which paints as well as sings, and which paints as the painter Whistler does.

5:2:1 The atmospheric, suggestive quality of Verlaine's symbolist style is prevalent throughout the 'Ariettes Oubliées', which section contains nine numbered poems. These poems are called 'poetry of sensation', and rightly so, as they are not meant to express philosophical meaning or moral lessons, but only 'fleeting moments of feeling.' In order to amplify

the mood of the poems, four of the ‘Ariettes’ use epigraphs as introductions.

‘C’est l’extase...’ the first poem in this series begins with the epigraph, “Le vent dans la plaine/ Suspend son haleine” (“The wind in the plain suspends its breath”), taken from a song by Favart. The relationship between the epigraph and the poem is found in the presence of sounds and specifically words related to wind or breath:

“C’est l’extase langoureuse,
C’est la fatigue amoureuse,
C’est tous les frissons des bois
Parmi l’etremte des brises,
C’est, vers les ramures grises,
Le chœur des petites voix.

O le frêle et frais murmure!
Cela gazouille et susurre,
Cela ressemble au cri doux
Que l’herbe agitée expire....”

(Here is languorous ecstasy,
Here is amorous fatigue,
Here is all the shivering of the woods
Among the embrace of breezes,
Here is, toward the gray branches,
The choir of small voices.

Oh the frail and fresh murmur!
The babbling and whispering,
That resemblance to the sweet cry
That the agitated grass breathes out,
You would say, under the water that swells,
The muffled rolling of pebbles).

The poem contains numerous examples, including breezes, murmurs, babbling, whispering, rolling pebbles, the breath of the grass, and exhalation. Frequently these words include /s/ sounds, as in ‘frissons’ and ‘sursurre,’ which resonate with the many other /s/ sounds in the text. These and other repeated sounds maximize the aural quality of the text and exemplify the symbolist’s emphasis on the words themselves, in this case as onomatopoeia.

The opening line, “Here is languorous ecstasy,” highlights the poem’s ambiguity; the word ‘here’ indicates no setting and no specific characters observing the atmosphere that Verlaine describes. The sense of ambiguity continues until the third stanza, favouring evocative language over definite meaning.

The third ‘Arietta’-‘Il pleure dans mon coeur’ begins with the epigraph- “Il pleut doucement sur la ville” (It rains gently on the city). The published edition lists the author of this epigraph as Rimbaud, although the exact source of the text is not known. The subject of the epigraph, however has a clear relationship to the poem, which compares the actual rain to the sadness ‘raining’-- as tears-- in the speaker’s heart. To form this comparison, Verlaine juxtaposed the word ‘pleurer’ (to weep) with the verb ‘pleuvoir’ (to rain), to create a strong visual image for the speaker’s sadness.

“Il pleure dans mon coeur”

Il pleure dans mon coeur
Comme il pleut sur la ville,
Quelle est cette langueur
Qui pénètre mon coeur?
O bruit doux de la pluie
Par terre et sur les toits!
Pour un Coeur qui s’ennuie
O le chant de la pluie!

Il pleure sans raison
Dans ce choeur qui s’écœure.
Quoi! nulle trahison?
Ce deuil est sans raison.

C’est bien pire peine,
De ne savoir pourquoi,
Sans amour et sans haine,
Mon coeur a tant de peine!”

(Like the rain battering the city, my heart
Rains teardrops too. What now,
This languorous ache, this smart
That pierces, wounds my heart?)

Oh sweet sound of the rain
On the earth and on the roofs
For a heart that is bored
Oh the song of the rain!)

The speaker’s heart, which directly or indirectly serves as the focus of action in each stanza, is the central character in the poem. The sound of the word itself appears several times, in the multiple statements of the word ‘coeur,’ as the root of the word ‘s’écœure’, and in the rhyming words ‘pleure’ and ‘langueur.’ In the first stanza ‘coeur’ is the last word of the first and last lines, and it thus frames the stanza as the location of the

metaphorical rain and the penetrating languor. The second stanza focuses on the rain as a source of comfort for a bored heart, which, by indirect reference, the reader infers to be the speaker's heart.

The poem represents a true lyric moment- a description of the speaker's mood with no element of a narrative. The speaker does not know what caused the sadness and therefore does not describe events that could have led to these emotions. The speaker's heart is also isolated from other characters, with no addressee present in the poem. The persona experiences a specific mood – sadness - without an explanation of its cause. The emotion seems to be atmospheric, a parallel to the rain.

5:2:2 Most of Changampuzha's poems of the collection Spandikunna Asthimadam (The Throbbing Tomb) seem to echo the sentiments of Verlaine, especially that of sensuousness and a vague sadness.

"Ananda Lahari" (Ecstatic Delights)

Holding you close, while
Caressing your curly locks,
On a clear moon-lit night, I remain
Immersed in a languorous ecstasy...
Drenched in the beautiful moonlight
In the sensuous bridal chamber –
Shall we not wholeheartedly embrace
Those ecstatic delights
While indulging in voluptuousness?"

Then again in the poem 'Ennitum Vannilla' (Did not come yet)

“The skies laden with dark clouds
Shower down incessant rain –
Cooling the parched earth,
Drenching it with ecstasy....
-Still my beloved did not come
To wipe away my tears!”

The sections ‘Paysages Belges’ (Belgian Sceneries) and ‘Aquarelles’ (Watercolours) reveal the second aesthetic component of Verlaine’s compositions – the pictorial Impression. The reference to watercolours point out to Verlaine’s preference for shades, so as to emphasize suggestion as expressed in his ‘Poetic Art’:

“...For Nuance, not Colour absolute,
Is your goal: subtle and shaded hue!
Nuance! That alone allows you
To marry dream to dream, and horn to flute!...”

According to Verlaine, only shades, nuances and taints are capable of portraying the complex mechanisms of the soul. The recurring themes of the collection (sorrow, regret, remembrance feeling of exile) issuing from traditional lyricism are treated here in a novel manner. First of all by a rejection of all psychology: rejecting the causes to the advantages of impressions, the poets suggests sorrow but does not explain it: but also by taking recourse to an impressionistic technique; the evocation of the landscape by a series of juxtaposing gestures, as seen in the poem

‘Walcourt’, exposing the sensitive condition of his soul. Such a procedure would naturally result in provoking the fusion of the exterior conditions of the self. The absence of verbs in most of the lines is significant and adds to the acceleration of sights viewed from the carriage-window.

“Bricks, tiles....how sweet
Such cosy cover,
Charming retreat
For man and lover!
Plants, flowers, vines
Hops in the pot,
Awnings and signs
To lure the sot!....”

On the contrary, Changampuzha is more explicit in his approach. He uses the elements of nature sometimes to act as décor, in order to create the ambience of his theme, as in the poem ‘Spandikunna Asthimadam’:

“.....As the fragrance of the laburnum
Embraces the midnight,
Draped in dew drops, seductive
And demure, the moon dances....”

Or at times, infuses them with human sentiments, making them the main characters of his narration, as in the poem, ‘Oru Katha’ (A Story);

“Savouring everyday the bright daylight
In the shadow of the parijatha, the young rose grew
From the fierce winds, the pouring rains, and the

Blazing sun, it protected the tender plant....
Sprouting new leaves, blooming, flowering
Immersed in ecstatic delights, the heart-stealer glowed”

5:2:3 Verlaine wrote the third section of this collection - ‘Birds in the Night’ in September and October of 1872. This is a single poem divided into seven sections, each with three stanzas. Most critics consider this section as an autobiographical reflection on Verlaine’s marriage and his relationship with Rimbaud. The title ‘Birds in the night’ had a connection to music, as the title of a popular cradle song by Arthur Sullivan, although Verlaine left no explanation as to why he chose this title for the section, as also the titles of several poems in this section.

Birds in the night

“ You have not had the patience
As bad luck would have it, quite naturally,
Moreover you are so young! And carelessness
That is the bitter fate of the celestial angel!...”

This portrayal of adorable innocence in the beloved’s manner and attitude is also undertaken by Changampuzha in the poem - ‘A Story,’ where he says of his dearest one:

“A countenance of dreamy innocence
A mind overflowing with love songs...”

The seven ‘Aquarelles’ were written in early 1873, during Verlaine’s travels with Rimbaud in England. The first two poems, ‘Green’

and 'Spleen' present atmosphere and emotion in a suggestive way. In fact 'Green' is a beautiful portrayal of a lover's offering to his beloved:

“Here take these boughs, leaves, fruits, and flowers. Also
Take this heart which beats for you alone. Take care-
Lest, taking with those soft, fair hands you break
This humble gift, I pray...”

If Verlaine's poem lays focus on the freshness of nature, Changampuzha's poem 'Green' is a tribute to the beautiful colour green as such, enjoying prominence as the mid-position among the colours of the rainbow, and symbolizing the literary arts. While attributing symbols to each colour, the poet does not forget to extol the soothing effect of the colour green, which when blending with the attire of the beloved has a stunning effect.

“Among the seven colours - it's green
That pleases me most.
Sweet are the dreams that its smiles
Offer me everyday. For the whole world
It's this colour which is most pleasing.....
Having a magical property
To heal wounds!...

5:2:4 The radical changes brought about by Verlaine, using subtle suggestion instead of precise statement and evoking moods and feelings through the magic of words and repeated sounds, coupled with metrical innovations, made a profound impression on Changampuzha. He sought to simplify the diction and rhythm of Malayalam poetry by resorting to the

‘pattu’ (folk) tradition of the Dravidian metre, resulting in flexibility and suppleness. He used the metres like Keka, kakali, annanada, etc. to tailor to his needs, creating more fluidity. Incidentally, like the French metre-alexandrine of twelve syllables, the Malayalam metre – oonakakali, has twelve syllables too. In the other compositions of Changampuzha as well, this fine blending of metres has proved to enhance the mellifluousness of the verses.

An important contribution from the decadent phase was the focus on sensual stimulation. The symbolists retained this sensual quality in their poetry, but to this they added vagueness, nuance, and plurality of meaning. Musicality appears to have been a driving force in the establishment of vagueness in the poetry of the aesthetic school. The poet’s goal was to express in words what they saw expressed in music; a suggestion of emotion without explicit statements of that emotion. Often the verbal meaning is veiled behind the nuance of words and sounds, making possible multiple interpretations. Verlaine’s noteworthy contribution lies in bringing out the music latent in the French language, with the predominant usage of sonorants such as nasals, (/m/n/nq/nj), laterals(/l) and continuants (/w/q/y).

5:3 **La Bonne Chanson versus Ramanan**

Paul Verlaine’s La Bonne Chanson (The Good Song-1870) was penned soon after his betrothal to Mathilde Mauté, the sixteen-year old half - sister of his musician friend Charles de Sivry. For Verlaine it was a

case of love-at - first sight and the work, twenty - one poems in all, dedicated to his lady love, represents a brief period of hopefulness. In Verlaine's own opinion, it is the most beautiful of his works and the one dearest to him. It represents the first period of peace in his life and career and is humanly his most perfect moment and poetically the purest.

5:3:1 In *La Bonne Chanson*, Verlaine speaks of the happy times spent with Mathilde, his pangs of loneliness when he is away from her, his expectations of domestic felicity and yearning for her presence, as well as his apprehensions about losing her to someone else, etc. Verlaine's mother and relatives hoped that this relationship would wean him away from drinks and debauchery. Mathilde symbolized for Verlaine, innocence and virtue and instilled in him a longing for the warmth of the foyer in the second poem.

In the third poem, Verlaine compares Mathilde's cheerful voice to music that drives away melancholic thoughts. The poet, seduced by this 'creature of light' (IV), wishes that she will upon the profound darkness of his life, shed the bright rays of love immortal and-

"I wish, guided by your beautiful eyes glowing soft,
To be led by your hand in which shall tremble mine...
Yes, I wish to walk straight and calm in life,
Towards the goal which fate has destined for me,
Without violence, remorse or envy.....
And truly I do not wish for another Paradise!"

The pangs of separation as expressed in poem X

“Fifteen long days yet and more than six weeks
Already! Surely among human anguishes
The most acute is that of being far away....
Oh! Absence! The least kind of all aches!....”

Verlaine admits his waywardness and hopes that Mathilde will encourage him to lead an upright life henceforth-

XX

“ I walked along perfidious paths
Sadly unsure of myself.
Your dear hands were my guides.
...Love, delightful victor,
Reunited us in joy.”

In the last poem in this collection the poet speaks of the advent of the spring season. He says the joy of the season had been in his heart for almost a year (i.e. ever since he met Mathilde).

XXI

“Let summer come! Let come
Autumn and winter too! And
Each season will charm me along with you
Whom Imagination and reason adorn!”

Thus The Beautiful Song reverberates with hope and joy and is all in praise of Mathilde with whom the poet longs for conjugal bliss.

5:3:2 The famous work of Changampuzha - Ramanan (1936) is a poem framed along the lines of a pastoral elegy, wherein one could trace, unlike the portrayal of *La Bonne Chanson*, the evolution of love between a shepherd (Ramanan) and a girl from an affluent family (Chandrika). Despite his misgivings, Chandrika prods him on saying the difference in social strata will not be a hindrance to their love as her parents would not object to the wishes of their daughter at all. But eventually, Chandrika retreats from her stand and yields to the decision of her parents in their choice of a better- bred suitor. Disappointed to the core, Ramanan, unable to bear the loss, commits suicide.

This poem is based on an authentic story - that of the unrequited love of Changampuzha's close friend - Raghava Menon. Hailing from the same place as Changampuzha, namely Edappally, Raghava Menon slightly older than our poet, struck a strong bond of friendship with him in their teens, especially regarding their creative talents. The Muse of Poetry had bestowed on both of them an acute sensibility and together they set out to usher in a novel way of portraying subjects and situations, doing away with convention. These 'new generation' poets came to be known as 'Edappally poets'. All while struggling against the adversities of life, they evolved a new form and language for poetry. Attuned to the popular sensibilities of the period, the 'rasas' of love and compassion became the thrust points of their exploitations, under the canopy of simple and sweet diction, infused with music. So impressive were the changes wrought by them that people started to sit up and take notice. And it was just as their wings had begun to take flight that Raghavan gave up on life altogether!

Evolving a language of pristine clarity from the crucible of life's bitter experiences, Raghavan, by nature an introvert and suffering from an inferiority complex, gave free vent to his emotions in poetry. As he says in the poem 'Perpetual Wailing' (**Garland of Dewdrops**- (1935).

“Turning over the pages thus-
In the Book of Life
I could not find a single word
Untainted by tears of grief!

Like Changampuzha, Raghavan Pillai wooed death, and longed to embrace it, seeking refuge from life's sorrows:-

“Bells! Tolling the death knell
How sweet! --- Here I come!
To my friends coming for reconciliation
Shall I bid Adieu;.....

(‘Tolling Bells’-Mathrubhumi Weekly)

The death of his dear friend dealt a crushing blow to Changampuzha who immediately expressed his grief in the poem 'Thakarna Murali' ('The Broken Flute' – *Sankalpa Kanthi*-1941) Not satisfied with that,he decided to portray the tragedy on a larger canvas, which effort resulted in the creation of Ramanan.

Ramanan portrays the effusions of love in its purest form. Nature in all its beauty and serenity forms the backdrop for the lovers' meet. A poet of nature par excellence, Changampuzha's description is incomparable:

“Clusters of green glades, brimming over and dense,
Bathed, drenched in the emerald glow,
Heart and eye stealers, sparkling
Unblemished, ideal rustic beauty.....”

The heroine of the story-Chandrika, paints an impressive picture of her lover – Ramanan's mind:-

“Never have I seen such -
A mind like a bouquet of flowers,
What a marvellous love fragrance
Such an ideal beauty!”

And all while considering it her good fortune to be able to catch hold of this treasure of love, she says confidently,-

“Indestructible in us
The bonds of eternal love-
Spheres of infinite, dreamy bliss
Flourishing beyond time and space
Setting life's sorrows to melodious tunes,
Never, never will I give it up.”

Not long after this scene, Chandrika is seen to relent her stand and yield to the wishes of her parents, regarding the choice of a groom. Ramanan, heart-stricken, puts an end to his life.

In **La Bonne Chanson**, Verlaine as a true lover, expresses his undying love for Mathilde, unable to bear the thought of being separated from her even for a moment. Changampuzha's Ramanan, also portrays love in all its intensity and purity in the first half, which is eventually followed by the betrayal of the heroine and the tragic death of the hero.

5:3:3 Post-independent Kerala was a feudal society reeling under inequalities perpetuated by caste. The communists deemed art and literature served as an apt medium of propagation in its immensely literate and captive population. Changampuzha, an active member of the 'Progressive Arts and Letters' movement led by the noted linguist and critic Kesari Balakrishna Pillai, became one of the pioneers of this movement aimed at the spread of communist ideology through literature. In a sense, it could be said his Ramanan reflected the proletariat interest through literature. The disparity in class could be said to lead eventually to the tragedy in the portrayal.

At a time when the printed word was gaining momentum, and education became accessible to one and all despite class and caste distinctions, Changampuzha's renderings establishing affinity with the common man's life and its problems, gained instant acclaim. Manual transcripts of the original printed version were made out and diffused at great speed, so much so that there was hardly a person, young and old alike, who did not hum along the verses of the poet, especially those of Ramanan.

It is a well-known fact that music elicits an emotional response without requiring specific elements of meaning. Constituting a system of natural signs, music possesses characteristics common to the movements of the soul, being thus, par excellence, an expression of the passions.

The next chapter shall deal with the common themes treated in the works of both poets as well as their respective poetic styles of composition, with a view of judging the aesthetic appreciativeness.

CHAPTER - VI

Aesthetics – Poetic Styles, Themes

“Poetry is established on the word; on the tension organized between words, that’s the ‘song’; on the mystery of the association of ideas and colourations, between memories, emotions and desires provoked by the words; and finally I would dare to say, on the occult power of the word to create the thing. So much so that, there is no poetry if there is no absolute creation, and that, all around this creation, like a permanent halo, mystery should hover around. Creation and mystery form the treasure of poetry”

Pierre –Jean Jouve

Language is the material of the poet. None other than he/she, is sensitive to its possibilities and modifications. Like the Greek divinity Sisyphus, he/she obstinately pushes the rock of language to produce the desired effect.

6:1 The themes of melancholy, death, love, sensuality and morbidity, have been the subjects of poems since the rise of Romanticism in Europe. But the manner in which they have been treated have varied along the ages. The ongoing chapter deals with the unique way in which Verlaine and Changampuzha have used the themes in their poems, stirring the reader to empathy.

6:1:1 **Melancholy** and **morbidity** were characteristic features of the fin-de-siècle writers, and Verlaine was no exception. Right from his first collection **Saturnien Poems**, the melancholic streak was evident (as in ‘Autumn Song’), continuing through **Gallant Celebrations** (‘Moonlight’), reaching **Songs without Words**. The refrain in the eighth poem of the ‘ForgottenTunes’ (Ariettes Oubliées) strongly reflects this sentiment:-

“In the interminable
Boredom of the plains,
The snow hesitatingly
Glistens like sand”

And again in the ninth ‘arietta’

“The shadow of the trees in the misty river
Fades away like smoke,
While in the air, among the real branches,
Murmur the turtle doves.

How much, Oh traveller, this bleak landscape
Rendered your own reflection pale,
And wept sadly among the high arbours,
Over your drowned hopes.”

The note of melancholy is unmistakable in the ‘Autumn Song’ (**Saturnien Poems**) also. Changampuzha, smitten by melancholy cries out in the poem ‘Superman’ (**Throbbing Tomb**)

“Having left the other day,
Without uttering a word,
Have you come back, O melancholy,
To embrace me again?”

Trying to grasp the meaning of life, he says gloomily;

‘Dream’ (**Tearful Homage**)

“What is life after all? A vague
Tinkling of bangles.
Full of music, Glowing momentarily
After that? – void, total void!”

At times when the melancholic mood dulls his creativity, the poet
cries out helplessly;

‘Morning Dew’ (Tearful Homage)

“Oh muse, have you also
Forsaken me, the stricken one?”

In ‘The bosom of melancholy’ (“Diadem”) speaks of his state of mind;

“No matter where my glances fell, I could only see
Disappointment and gloom, instead of light and peace;
Is this life? Leave me alone-my thoughts
Leave me, it’s scorching, let me depart!”

6:1:2 The theme of **death** was quite alluring to both Verlaine and Changampuzha, though their treatment of the subject varied in intensity. Death is not presented as something to be feared, but rather as a smooth transition from a coloured to a colourless screen, and as an escape from the heartless world.

He continues in 'Visitor' of the same collection-

Without my knowledge,
Who has been inundating me with kisses
With a charming demeanour,
If it were not you- death, my host?

Again in the poem 'Not anymore' of the same collection, he says-

"Longing for a long night without dawn
And deep slumber with no waking,
With no disturbance whatsoever
To break an eternal rest -That's my wish."

Then again in the poem 'Formerly and Presently'

"Prepare my funeral pyre
In an emerald green forest,
After bidding goodbye to earth, I shall
Come just now-kindly do wait!"

6:1:3 The theme of **love** is treated comprehensively in all its diverse forms by Verlaine. In **Songs without Words** he speaks of the love between a man and a woman-

"Oh sad, so sad was my heart
Because, because of a woman
My heart flew from her side- but oh,
I knew no solace for my woe....."

In the poem ‘**Green**’ (**Songs without Words**) the poet is seen longing to offer himself to his beloved:-

“Here, take these boughs, leaves, fruits, and flowers. And
Take this heart that beats for you alone.....

To you I come, still cloaked with morning dew
Breeze-frozen on my brow. Ah, let me please,
Lie at your feet, dream of the times we knew:
Precious those times, peaceful their memories”

The inexpressible anguish of a lover is expressed in the poem- “Like city’s rain.....” from the collection “Songs without Words”

After a long period of waywardness and wantonness, in the forced solitude of imprisonment, Verlaine undergoes a conversion to the Catholic faith, owing to the efforts of the prison chaplain. He returns to the faith of his childhood, and all too aware of his unworthiness, yearns to make amends, and get reconciled with God as made explicit in **Sagesse** (1881). He cries out in all sincerity expressing his desire for divine love;

“Oh, my God, you have wounded me with love.
And the wound is still fresh,
Oh, my God you have wounded me with love...

You know all that, all that,
And that I am more needy than anyone else
You know all that, all that,
But all that I have, my God, I give to you.”

After being released from prison Verlaine takes up teaching posts in England and France. While working at a school he is taken up a boy-Lucien Letinois, whom he called his ‘adopted son’. He was happy in his company and settled on a farmhouse in England with the boy’s parents, during which period he wrote **Sagesse**. But Lucien’s sudden death in 1883 left Verlaine devastated. The work **Amour** (1888) expresses his affection for Lucien.

‘Your voice deep and low...’

“That voice, that laughter, come
Back to my memory, where
I see you – living, dead-
And, hear the trumpeted
Sounds, like the glorious blare
Of some soul’s martyrdom.

In Verlaine’s latter productions there is the work **Dedications** (1890) in which he describes what each person in his life meant for him, Rimbaud being one of them.

For Arthur Rimbaud

“A human, an angel, And a demon-or,
In other words, Rimbaud! Here are you placed
In honour, though twits fancied you a whore
Smooth-faced, a budding fiend; drunk pup, disgraced.

In his work **Divyageetham**, Changampuzha speaks of the exquisite quality of love:-

“Everything is ephemeral, inconstant
The only thing that is everlasting is Love”

He further explains in the poem ‘**The deity of the house**’ from the collection **Onapookal** (1940) concerning his ladylove-

“If I had not met you on earth
I would not have known life’s beauty!
It was you who taught me, an insignificant being
How to appreciate selfless, exquisite, immortal love
in this world...”

He describes with enthusiasm the day he met his beloved;-

“TheThrobbing Tomb”

“ ...Sweet Dawn, you showed me-
That day a goddess-
An epitome of love
Auspicious deity of the household.
Thrilling even the soul-
You showed me a moonlight
I realized then that
I was all its own on earth!”

Changampuzha, besides extolling the virtues of conjugal love, was also aware of the value of maternal love. In the collection – **Goddess** (1943),

he says while observing the travails of a mother, who, lays aside her own difficulties to take care of her child :-

“What else is there on earth, more valuable than motherhood?”

He has also expressed filial love, as in the poem ‘The Visitor’

(Onapookal)

“This Onam will find
A cherished visitor in my home.....
Blessed are my eyes, both of them,
Drowned in tears of joy!”

Verlaine and Changampuzha were poets of sensuality par excellence, as demonstrated through their poems.-

In the poem bearing an English title ‘A Poor Young Shepherd’ of the same collection-

I’m afraid of a kiss
Like a bee.
I suffer and I keep watch
Without respite.
I’m afraid of a kiss!

The section ‘Whims’ of **Saturnien Poems** has this poem-

‘Initium’

The violins blended their laughter with the song of the flutes
And the ball was in full swing when I saw her passing by

With her blond hair playing on the spirals of her ear
Where my desire like a kiss sprung forward
And wanted to speak to her, not daring to...

Changampuzha had the unique skill of making the reader
participate in his own experience-

'Promise' (Tearful Homage)

“Love-lorn, beloved, I shall
Come tonight beside you....
Without at all moving my lips
I shall wake you up
Without your being aware of it,
After embracing you, I shall leave at once!...”

The poem ‘Manaswini’ from “*Swararagasudha*” is another example of
the expression of the sensual.

“Like the yellow chrysanthus cluster
That blooms radiantly at dawn,
You stood before me
Like a golden wave of ecstasy....
I reached a wonderland where bloomed
The asparagus of sweet dreams,
Where through the amalgam of vibrant emotions
I attained an ecstatic realm!”

6:2 Versification Techniques

In order to capture the attention of the reader and raise his
emotional experience to dizzy heights, Verlaine and Changampuzha
resorted to the usage of several poetic techniques regarding the form and
content of poetry, thereby enhancing the aesthetic appreciativeness of the

verses. Verlaine mainly used the verse form – alexandrine, consisting of lines of twelve syllables each, with major stresses on the sixth syllable preceding the medial caesura or pause, and on the last syllable, and one secondary accent in each half line the alexandrine is the kind of line the French used in their poetry for hundreds of years. Because six syllables is a normal breath group and the secondary stresses can be on any other syllable in the line, the alexandrine is a flexible form, adaptable to a wide range of subjects. Its structural metrical principle is stress according to sense: the form thus lends itself to the expression of simple or complex emotions, narrative description, or grandiose patriotic sentiment.

The ‘Autumn Song’ of Verlaine belonging to his first collection **Saturnien Poems**, is a typical example of his versatility. The exquisitely crafted verse affirms that Verlaine is a poet of strong emotions and appetites, with an unrivalled gift for the sheer music of poetry and an inventive approach.

The poem uses several stylistic devices and is in many ways typical of Verlaine, in that it employs sound techniques such as consonance (the repetition of ‘n’ and ‘r’ sounds that also create an onomaetopic effect, sounding both monotonous and like a violin. In the second verse, the stop consonant and pause after the word ‘choking’ reflect the meaning of the word. The sound of the words deça and dela(here and there) evoke the image of a dead leaf falling. The symbol of the autumn season is used by the poet to describe a sad view of growing old.

Verlaine's is a distillation of everyday language, Its instantaneous music is in the repeated, closed 'o' sounds that then shift slightly to the open 'o's of monotone - like a distant echo to which the mute e adds its dying fill.

The poem 'Moonlight', composed of 12 ten-syllable lines, divided into 3 stanzas, each of which possesses its own regularly alternating rhyme scheme (abab, cdcd, efef) The title of the collection in which the poem originally appeared – "Gallant Celebrations" bears considerable importance on a visual level to the interpretation of this piece. Antoine Watteau was renowned as the painter of **Fêtes Galantes**. His jewel-like renderings of men and women dressed in satins, lounging gracefully in nature's lushness, enhanced the charm of the work.

'Moonlight'

Your soul is like a landscape fantasy,
Peopled with maskers delicate and dim,
Who play on lutes and dance....
And makes the marbled fountains, gushing, streaming-
Slender jet-fountains - sob their ecstasies.

Two devices seem to be Verlaine's own contribution to decadent prosody: 'vers impairs' (odd verses), and the short, simple, song-like stanzas of "Chansons d'Automne" or those of "Il pleure dans mon coeur." Although Baudelaire had used 'vers impairs' in "Fleurs du Mal," this style had not been used by minor poets until 1884, while brief stanzas of short

lines are common in the verse of Banville and Gautier (and sometimes in Hugo's) and Baudelaire used them as the refrain of "The Invitation to the Voyage". Verlaine seems to have originated using them with repetitious assonances in a song-like manner- like the poem "Oh sad, so sad was my heart, / Because, because of a woman."

Unidentified references, unanswered questions, and the rich, yet disconnected imagery evoke the obscurity of some of the 'lunes' (moon) poems. Ex. "La lune blanche" (The White Moon) :

" Among the trees
The moon gleams white,
Hushed repartees
Rustle tonight
From leaf and vine...
O mistress mine..."

The succession of noun phrases, free of grammatical links is typical of Verlaine, as in "Walcourt":

"Biricks, tiles....how sweet
Such cozy cover,
Charming retreat
For man and lover!..."

One of the most purely lyrical of French poets and initiator of modern word-music, Verlaine showed words could be used merely for their sound to make a subtler music, an incantory spell more potent than their everyday meaning. Explicit intellectual or philosophical content was

absent in his verses, which was a continual quest leading to the discovery of the intimate musicality of the French language, striving to ‘reform’ his nation’s poetic expression.

Like Verlaine, Changampuzha published his first work “Tearful Homage” at 22 years of age. The manner in which he arranged the contents of this first publication is significant. He classified the poems in this collection according to the name of the metre used in each of them like ‘omanakuttan’, ‘maveli’, ‘thiruvathira’ ‘kurathi’, ‘gunamerum’, ‘kalyanikalavani’, ‘upasarpini’, ‘mathuramozhi’, ‘makandamanjari’ ‘kakali’, ‘pana,’ ‘malarmathinkanthan’, ‘tharattu’, ‘keka,’ ‘kalyanarupi’ and ‘annanada’. We find that in the choice of theme as well as structure, he has given importance to simplicity and brevity in these poems. Like Verlaine, he has laid focus on the intensity of the emotion experienced, choosing a metrical structure most suited to convey the idea to the reader.

For a better appreciation of the metrical pattern of Verlaine’s verses a phonemic transcription of ‘Autumn Song’ (Chanson d’Automne) and the third arietta from **RSP** (Songs Without Words) is given below :

Phonetic Transcription (IPA phonetic alphabet):

‘Chanson d’Automne’

le sãglo lã

de vjɔlã

də lotɔn

blɛs mõ koer

dyn lāgæR
mɔnɔtɔn.
tu syfɔkã
e blɛm, kã
sɔn læ:R,
zə mə suvjẽ
de zur ãsjẽ
e zə plæ:R;
e zə mã ve
o vã mɔvɛ
ki mãpɔRt
dɛsa, dɛla,
paRɛj a la
fɛj mɔRt

‘Il pleure dans mon cœur’

il plæR dã mã koer
kɔm il plø syr la vil.
kɛl ɛ sɛt lāgæR
ki penɛ:tre mã koer

o bRɥi du dɛ la plɥi
paR tɛR e syr le twa !
pur ɔẽ koer ki sãnɥi,
o læ fã dɛ la plɥi !
il plæR sã Rɛzɔ
dã sɔ koer ki koer.

kwa ! traizõ ?
 sə dœj ɛ sã rezõ.
 sɛ bjẽ la pɪr pɛn
 də nə savwar purkwa,
 sãz- amur e sã ɛn,
 mõ koer a tã də pɛn.

A phonetic transcription of Changampuzha’s poems will reflect the
 exquisiteness of his rhyming patterns.

‘Kavya Narthaki’ (**Sankalpakanthi**)

First syllable rhyming is evident here –

“kanaka chillanga kilungi, kilungi,
 kanchana kanchi kulungikulungi
 /kanaka chilanga kiluŋ:ik:iluŋ:i,
 ka:ncana ka:nci kuluŋ:ik:uluŋ:i.../

(Golden anklets tinkling, tinkling,
 Golden girdles shaking, shaking)

കാവ്യ നർത്തകി

കനകച്ചിലങ്ക കിലുങ്ങി കിലുങ്ങി
 കാഞ്ചനകാഞ്ചി കുലുങ്ങി കുലുങ്ങി
 കടമിഴിക്കോണുകളിൽ സ്വപ്നം മയങ്ങി
 കതിരുതിർപ്പുഞ്ചിരി ചെഞ്ചുണ്ടിർത്തങ്ങി

Here apart from the rhyming in first syllable of the two lines of the
 distich, the onomatopoeic phonemes/ l/and /ŋ:/of the words kiluŋ:i and

kuluŋ:i in repetition impart a magical lustre to the verse. One can almost hear the tingling of the anklets and girdles of a dancer in the words kanaka chilanga - with nasals galore. Malayalam is rich in nasal phonemes with its stock six nasals: /m n ŋ ɲ ŋ and ŋ / and this is rare occurrence and there is predilection for musicality since nasals are sonorous and impart a dynamic rhythm and flow to poetry.

Ramanan

Malaranikkatukal thingi vingi
 Marataka kandyil Mungi Mungi
 Karalum Mizhiyum Kavaru Minni
 Karayattoralasal Gramabhangi
 /malaraŋik:a;tukaɭ tiŋ:iviŋ:i
 maratakak:a:ntiyil muŋ:i muŋ:i
 karaɭum miɻiyum kavarn:umin:i
 karayaɻ:o:ra:lasal gramabhaŋ:i/

രമണൻ

മലരണിക്കൊടുകൾ തിങ്ങിവിങ്ങി
 മരതകകാന്തിയിൽ മുങ്ങിമുങ്ങി
 കരളും മിഴിയും കവർന്നു മിന്നി
 കറയറ്റൊരാലസൽ ഗ്രാമഭംഗി
 പുളകംപോൽകുന്നിൻപുറത്തുവീണ
 പുതുമുടൽമഞ്ഞലപുൽകി നീക്കി
 പുലരൊളി മാമലശ്രേണികൾതൻ
 പുറകിലായ് വന്നുനിന്നെത്തിനോക്കി
 എവിടെതന്നിരിഞ്ഞൊന്നു നോക്കിയാലെ
 ന്നവിടെല്ലാംപുത്തമരങ്ങൾ മാത്രം
 ഒരുകൊച്ചുകാറ്റൊങ്ങാൻവന്നുപോയാൽ
 തുരുതുരെപ്പുമഴയായിപിന്നെ

In this quatrain the rhyming pattern is very spectacular. The first four syllables rhyme perfectly ie: /ma/ and /ka/and moreover the last syllable in each line is made up of geminate nasal-vowel combination ie: in first second and fourth line we find /ŋ:i/ and in the third line there appears the closely rhyming /n:i/

Spandikkunna asthimadam

/ta:rakaŋ:əle: ka:ŋmito: niŋ:əl
 ta:l̥eyul:ori: pre:takuti:ram?
 hantayin:atin cit:arehasya
 menten:ariŋ:u ha: du:rastar niŋ:əl?
 pa:la pu:t:a parimałamet:i
 p:a:tirayep:uərn:ol̥kumpo:l̥
 maŋ:aŋiŋ:u mada:lasaya:yi
 manju candrika nrit:ama:tumpo:l̥
 mandamandam potip:ata:yk:e;l̥k:a:m
 spandanəŋ:əl̥ik:allarak:ul̥:il/

സ്വപ്നിക്കുന്ന അസ്ഥിമാടം

താരകകളേ, കാഞ്ചിതോ നിങ്ങൾ
 താഴെയുള്ളൊരി പ്രേതകുടീരം
 ഹന്താ, യിന്നതിൽ ചിത്തരഹസ്യ
 മെന്തറിഞ്ഞു, ഹാ, ദൂരസ്ഥർ നിങ്ങൾ?
 പാലപുത്തപരിമളമെത്തി
 പ്ലാതിരയെപ്പുണർന്നൊഴുകുമ്പോൾ,
 മഞ്ഞണിഞ്ഞു മദാലസയായി
 മഞ്ജുചന്ദ്രിക നൃത്തമാടുമ്പോൾ
 മന്ദമന്ദംപൊടിപ്പതായ്കേൾക്കാം
 സ്വപ്നനങ്ങളിക്ലൈവ്കുള്ളിൽ!

This very touching stanza which incidentally forms the epitaph on Changampuzha's tomb, is rich in imagery as well as phonetic composition of varying meters of deca and hendecasyllabic lines and 12 syllable lines with caesura at sound-sense junctures. The long lines are due to the polysyllabic lexical structure with potential to form compound words. Besides the phonetic pattern with long vowels and consonants, and consonant clusters necessitate the formation of long lines for sound-sense coordination.

6:3 “Creative Madness” (creative exhilaration) at work in the poets in question

During inspired moments of creativity, geniuses are said to gain access to a supernatural domain beyond that of the normal world view and capture visions and associations, quite beyond the reach of ordinary mortals. Since such a perspective is incomprehensible to the natural world, those holding such views are considered 'mad,' In need of medical treatment, and a potential threat to the general wellbeing of society- therefore raising the need of being separated or alienated from it.

Greek thought at the time of Hippocrates, conceived of madness “as a break with the social world and the community, whose world view we share through language – or what the Greeks called ‘Logos¹’. Indeed, literature, specifically poetry has often celebrated irrationality or madness as a state of revelation. Plato firmly believed that it was in a state of

¹ (Thiher 2000:13)

inspiration that poets uttered their beautiful melodies, possessed by a spirit not their own. That was exactly why he banished them from his ‘Republic,’ as he feared that their ‘irrational behaviour’ would pose a threat to the harmonious co-existence of individuals in society. The Romanticists believed that “madness offered poets a royal way to truth, beyond rational empiricism²”. This was echoed by poetic modernists – Nerval, for example, who defended his madness as a revelation of knowledge, believing that the poetic use of analogy and metaphor to find meaning in, and relationships between all things, meant that a poetic knowledge of the universe was superior to that offered by scientists.

Other poets from Baudelaire to modern times - actively sought the experience of madness through the use of drugs, so that they could discern “correlations unfettered by empirical limits³.” Madness and literature spring from the same imaginative capacity to entertain present worlds that do not (really) exist.” (162). One way of viewing this relationship is the Freudian analysis offered by Feder⁴ and Thiher⁵ (which emphasizes the role of the unconscious. This approach might be summarized as: in madness the unconscious, - which contains feelings and memories we have to repress in order to live in within a given social structure - is no longer successfully repressed. In poetry, many poetic techniques depend on accessing the unconscious. The unconscious may be accessed in order to recreate reality – either in poetry or in madness, when for compelling reasons, reality becomes intolerable.

² (Thiher, 2000:169)

³ (Thiher 2000:211)

⁴ 1980

⁵ 2000

The highly influential twentieth-century Surrealist movement aimed to unify conscious and unconscious states, in order to produce an unmediated representation of life. Surrealist poetry is characterized by “the creation of images that unite diverse and even contradictory levels of experience.... Images are connected not by conventional, emotional and intellectual associations, but by the process of generation itself.” Thus, surrealist poets were engaged in “continually rediscovering and recreating the world” by “opening themselves to the revelations of the unconscious, in merging with the non-human natural world, and even in rejecting the so-called rationality, which they regarded as mere rigidity⁶”.

Very often, down the centuries, artists seemed to rely on inebriants like liquor, drugs etc. to get an enhanced experience of ‘the other world.’ Charles Baudelaire was among the avant-garde artists who believed that the right temperament for creativity could be attained by a complete ‘derangement’ of the senses. The means for achieving this derangement differed from person to person. For Baudelaire, it was opium and sometimes hashish and absinthe, in the vapours of which he had psychedelic visions of the associations between the physical and spiritual worlds, the hidden connections and meanings thereof. His poem “Correspondences,” basing itself on the Swedenborgian concept, nevertheless, weaves an elaborate tapestry of interconnections.

Verlaine, following in the footsteps of his idol, took recourse to absinthe and alcohol to enhance his creativity. His frequentation of the

⁶ Feder 1980:256

‘Quartier Latin’ and associations with bohemian artists only served to strengthen his erring habits. For Changampuzha, the spurt in creativity seemed due to the intake of alcohol and ‘ganja’. In this heightened state of creativity, the poets’ sensibilities seemed to be acutely fine-tuned to capture the slightest nuance in the canvas of life and beyond it – to be etched on to the afore- mentioned tapestry. Verlaine speaks about his obsession-

“For me, my glory is a
Humble, ephemeral, Absinthe
Drunk on the sly, with fear of treason-
And if I drink it no longer,
It is for a good reason.”

Changampuzha also speaks of his weaknesses in no uncertain terms. As he expresses himself in the poem ‘On the wings of ganja’ (**The Sinners**):

“A race –life in this universe
Is a race.....
Tired am I, exhausted, a failure!
A victim of drugs, I avidly nibble away
My life with ganja and liquor....”

Though the effect of inebriants have not been scientifically proven, the prolific output of the poets under these circumstances, is indeed amazing! In the surrealist poem ‘Progress, Progress!’ (**Immortal Vibes**) Changampuzha says regarding the creative spirit, which he yearns to embrace;-

“I ‘see’ you in the sounds of birds,
I ‘hear’ you in the constellations,
I ‘touch’ you in the scents hovering around”...

The association between the senses is quite remarkably expressed. However, the artist has to pay a heavy price for his ‘out-of- the box’ thinking. Society, not comprehending the ‘queer’ working of the creative mind, considers the artist as mad. And Changampuzha denounces the practice of labelling the creative genius as ‘insane,’ and putting him on the same footing as the lunatic, who is a product of the anomalies of the cultural milieu, and meting out the same treatment to both. In his poem ‘The lute of intoxication’ (“Blood Stained Flowers”), who refusing to make compromises with the ways of the world, is sidelined and deemed to be mad, and put behind bars in an asylum. He is forced to gulp down medicines of all hues, the refusal of which would lead to physical torture.

Changampuzha shifts the onus of the problem from the artist to the society for nurturing such perspectives. Society, considering such ‘waywardness as dangerous, as dangerous, forces the artists in question into prisons or asylums, seemingly to safeguard the interests of the larger public. But in the process, creativity gets destroyed. The question arises therefore as to who is indeed mad, the individual or the society?-

“You consider me mad, but you are all-
Actually madmen-a pity you do not know it!”

It is when one thinks differently from the conventional pattern that society frowns upon you and treats you as 'bizarre.' He says bluntly in the poem 'Madiolsavam' (Drunken bout):-

“I've discovered in the silver wine goblets,
A bliss, unfathomed in the sanctity of temples”

He has never tried to conform to the conventions of society, either regarding his works or personal life, thus inviting scathing criticism from all quarters.

It is this ill-comprehension of the creative genius and his alienation from society that Verlaine has successfully portrayed in his "Poètes Maudits" (Accursed poets) His rejecting of the conventional prosody, inventing a new manner of versification, already stunned the French literary circles, added to which was his scandalous mode of life with Rimbaud, his 'époux infernal' (hellish spouse).

Speaking of the 'superb' and 'sovereign' inspiration triggering the imagination of poets, ("Saturnien Poems") Verlaine says that what is needed is willingness to work for a goal, and steadfastness of purpose. Art is not for display,

“Therefore, let's sculpt with the chisel of our thoughts
The virgin block of Beauty, immaculate Paris,
And let us bring forth through our zealous hands
Some beautiful statue in starry radiance,

So that one day, striking with gray and pink rays
The serene masterpiece, like a new Memnon,
The dawn of prosperity, daughter of morose times
May be made to resound your name in the future!!”

In Greek mythology the Muses/oracle at Delphi, - acting as Appollo’s mouthpiece, utters prophesies. Under intoxicating vapours emitted from a fissure in the rock on which the temple is located, poets may be subject to a kind of derangement labelled *furor poeticus* which help them to achieve extraordinary talent in composition under the influence of the so - called green fairy or absinthe- the peridot green alcoholic potion with hallucinogenic effects. Absinthe (*Artemis absinthium*) is the extract of worm wood and the chemical compound it contains is thujone’. Shift in sensory perception, vast improvement in cognitive power, clarity of thought and creativity are supposed to be the effects of thujone which is distilled from wormwood a wild plant.

It was a favourite with artists, writers and so on during the 19th c. For Changampuzha toddy and arrack were the intoxicants. These are two creative artists who were addicted the one to absinthe and the other to arrack or other forms of alcohol in order to plunge to the depths of depravity to gain superior creativity. They succumbed to the ill-effects of these intoxicants and met with accursed, pathetic ends. At this juncture we can think of Rimbaud the prince of degradation who adopted this way of life as an artistic device to achieve superhuman creative powers and who however did not succumb to these evils. He gave up absinthe unlike Verlaine after experimenting with it and achieving supreme creative

faculties and even deserted the muses for another goddess - the wanderlust. While it is presumptive to claim that in moments of extreme inspiration poets especially achieve divine creative powers, they do not act as mere mouthpieces of an external power. They do not act like Pythia at Delphi and deliver prophecies or act involuntarily, unaware and unconscious of their actions as in a trance. Rather the so called heightening of creative abilities is more like a revelation where the whole process is interactive with the proper understanding of the internal or external source and they augment their existing faculties as a result of the metaphysical communion with their so called muses.

CONCLUSION

A more or less detailed analysis of the life and works of Paul Verlaine and Changampuzha Krishnapillai, as well as the study of their works and the literary ambience which nurtured their creativity has led to the following conclusions, providing answers to the questions posed in Chapter I.

It has been conclusively proved that Changampuzha has indeed been influenced by Verlaine. In his *Sahitya Chinthakal* Changampuzha himself has affirmed the fact that 'The Poetic Art', has had a great impact on him. Though his poetic outlook and perception were moulded by Verlaine to a certain extent, Changampuzha has never attempted an imitation. He evolved his own style and invented a diction to appeal to the common man. By so doing he was able to enhance the aesthetic appreciation of his compositions.

The Indian aesthetic legacy, dating from 3rd century B.C. with Bharata muni's 'Natya Sasthra' and followed by Anandavardhana, Abhinavagupta, Bhamaha, Kuntaka, among others (9th and 10th centuries), as its illustrious proponents is much older and richer than that of our counterparts in the west. Though ancient Greece set the path towards aestheticism with Plato focusing on the Idea and Aristotle on the material or natural, it was only in 1750, that a treatise on aestheticism emerged in the

west, with the publication of Alexander Baumgarten's 'Aesthetica.' This was followed by the observations of Immanuel Kant and others.

Changampuzha who was nurtured in the Indian aesthetic tradition was in the quest of a novel method of expression in poetry, capable of stirring the hearts of the readers to empathy. And in Verlaine's 'Poetic Art,' (Art Poétique) he seems to have found his answer. Verlaine's exhortation to infuse verses with music, choosing a light diction, abandoning rhetoric to the point of strangulation, and creating an ambiance of veiled suggestion was what fascinated Changampuzha.

Kuntaka's 'vakrokti siddhantha' held that poetry is a play of the creative use of language, consisting in the delightful union of word and meaning, manipulated in such a way by the skill of the poet as to afford pleasure to the reader. Changampuzha lived at a time when Malayalam literature had reached a transition point, breaking away from classical rigour and trying to reach out to the common man. In the wake of the spread of literacy and a liberal education policy, it was urgently required to evolve a style and diction in poetry to meet the requirements of the day. Though the Malayalam poets Cherussery, Kumaran Asan and Vallathol had initiated the move to simplify the diction of poetry, apparently the consistent efforts of Changampuzha and his friend Raghava Menon (Edappally Poets) were responsible in bringing out a sea-change regarding choice of theme and language in Malayalam poetry. Towing in line with the sweeping changes in world literature, especially Romanticism and Symbolism, which these budding poets familiarized

themselves through translations, they breathed fresh life into Malayalam poetry, so to speak, and their creations took the Malayalam literary world by storm. With the untimely death of Raghavan Pillai, it seemed like it was the responsibility of Changampuzha to take the march forward.

From ancient times, India, and for that matter Kerala, followed a rich oral tradition of music. The verses or the slokas of the religious texts – the Vedas and the Upanishads were perpetrated by word of mouth long before the spread of literacy and the appearance of the printed word. This knowledge however, was largely the privilege of the upper classes, who alone had access to the knowledge of ‘divine utterances’. The general public had their vibrant forms like the ‘pulluvan pattu’ and the like, associated with folk music. This intuitive capacity of the mind to grasp and retain rhythmic verses must have prompted Changampuzha to resort to the tradition of folk music, to captivate the heart of the common man. In his search for brevity and extreme musicality, Changampuzha acknowledges in his treatise *Sahitya Chinthakal* that it was Verlaine’s ‘Poetic Art’ which served as the guiding light. In order to bring suppleness and fluidity to the metrical structure, he did away with the cumbersome Sanskrit prosody, replacing it with Dravidian metres like kakali, keka annanada, natholi, omanakuttan, maveli and the like. Thereby, he fulfilled the primary objective of poetry- that it must be sung and danced. This mellifluousness was created as a result of the blending of the rasas especially that of love and pathos in the right proportion in the background of wordplay. Among the nine rasas, these two are responsible mainly to move the heart to empathy.

All while taking into consideration that wordplay should be subjugated to the play of emotions, Changampuzha's famous work - *Ramanan* is an impressive example of how pathos resulting from failure of love has served to enrich the beauty of the composition on the whole, extricating its aesthetic appreciativeness. To illustrate this point, the following lines from the second part of scene 5 are being quoted. The shepherd Ramanan, feeling jilted in love, reminisces his sincere sentiments which have been callously thrown aside:

“Silvery star, gazing at you longingly-
My mind brimming over
Has not harboured
Any lustful desire!

Your love sprouts, blooming
In the delightful garden of ecstasy,
Did I chase ceaselessly,
Portraying them in my songs!

With the whole world watching over,
In front of the sacred lamp,
Below the starry tent,
With the blazing sun as witness,
You placed on my neck that day
The nuptial garland”

Participating in the emotional travesties of the poet, the reader undergoes a ‘catharsis’ as envisaged by Aristotle, thereby enabling him to purge himself of negative emotions.

Of the richness of French poetry, Changampuzha has been a heavy borrower, no doubt. But it should be admitted that he has imbibed the essence of French Symbolism, and made his own adaptations of it. There have been no blind imitations, except in titles perhaps, as in his poem entitled 'The Flowers of Sin' from the collection - *Srithilakam*, modelling himself on Baudelaire's **Fleurs du Mal**. He dared to translate Baudelaire's poem 'Correspondances' - a poem considered a challenge for translators due to its myriad nuances and connotations. The translation entitled 'Pratheekangalude Vanaveedhiyil' has been done in a very innovative manner, by retaining the essence and at the same time, making the poem appreciable to the Malayali reader. Even at the young age of 23, Changampuzha had translated into Malayalam, almost 150 poems from English regarding world literature, compiled in the "Anthology of World Poetry." This book had been loaned to him by Prof. G. Sankarakurup, then teaching at Maharajah's College, later the winner of the 'Gyanapith' award. This is proof enough of the poet's innovativeness and ingenuity.

In the work *The Singing Devil*, Changampuzha makes use of symbolic imagery to portray the horrifying picture of evil or sin, which is depicted as alluring and seductive, in the true manner of the Symbolists. The poem 'Oru Katha.' from the collection *Spandikunna Asthimadam* is also a symbolic representation of the poignant love-story unfolding in a beautiful garden between a parijatha and a chembaka ,also between a koel and a vulture - which has a sorrowful ending, as appearances have turned deceptive. "My failure is that I preserved a sincere heart in a deceptive world" cries the poet in anguish.

The analysis of the significant works of Verlaine and Changampuzha have shown many similarities in choice of theme and treatment of subject, as well as dissimilarities. It has been found that the three theories of Sanskrit Poetics - vakrokti, riti, alankara have relevance still in the modern context, as they are pointers to the fundamental principles of poetic creation. Corresponding to Kuntaka's vakrokti, the 'poetic method' has been defined as being normally indirect and suggestive. Secondly, in the west, poetry has been defined as "the art of arranging words in formal patterns as regards their sound, rhythm and meaning or any combination of the three, in order to secure within a brief compass, the utmost intensity of significance." This is the Riti of Sanskrit Poetics. Thirdly, in the modern context, the poetic method "proceeds by means of paradoxes, qualifications and innuendos and speaks constantly through analogues, metaphors and symbols." In other words, this is the rhetoric or alankara of Sanskrit Poetics.

Therefore the characteristics of Sanskrit Poetics, in many aspects depict traits similar to the tenets of Symbolism and Aestheticism. It is in matters regarding form that Changampuzha wrought a drastic change leading to a heightened relish in aesthetic enjoyment. By repeating words and sounds, Changampuzha successfully created an ambience for his ideas to flourish. In the poem. 'The Throbbing Tomb':

"Sweet dawn, you showed me
An enchanting person
You showed me a deity in the home
An epitome of love
You showed me a moonlight
Thrilling even my soul!

‘So sad was my heart’ from Verlaine’s collection **Songs without words** uses this technique to great advantage.

“So sad my heart, so sad it was,
And woman, woman was the cause,”

In the ‘Autumn Song’, Verlaine has used several sound techniques, like the repetition of ‘n’ and ‘r’sounds. In the second verse, the stop consonant and pause after the word ‘suffocant’ reflect the meaning of the word. The sound of the words, deça, dela, evoke the image of a dead leaf falling.

This onomatopoeic effect is wrought ever more impressively in Changampuzha’s poem ‘Kaavya Narthaki’ (Poetic Dancer-**Sankalpakanthi**), where the words are so arranged as to create the effect of the dance, one can hear the anklets of the dancer tinkling;

“Kanakan chillanga killungi,killungi,
Kanchana kanchi kullungikullungi...”

(Golden anklets tinkling,tinkling,
Golden girdles shaking,shaking)

This poetry of evocation and subtle nuances of Verlaine and his followers made a great impression on Changampuzha, who tried to transmit the trends to Malayalam poetry to the delight of the readers.

The ancient Indian sages have said :

“Music and literature
Are the twin breasts of Saraswati
Sweet to the core
Sweeter still as one ponders over it”

These verses clearly indicate that from ancient times music was considered an integral part of literature. A poet weaves the tapestry of his poem using not only sounds and tunes, but also images, emotive experiences, banal thoughts, all skillfully crafted into one great fusion.

Among the fine arts only literature has direct access to the human mind. Sculpture, painting, architecture, dance, gain entry into the human mind through the eye, and music through the ear. Poetry speaks through the ear and the eye. But the entry through one sense organ is more powerful than that of several, says the noted critic Mr. A. Balakrishnapillai. Therefore the sensuous pleasure derived from poetry is less compared to the other fine arts. It is to provide an equally powerful sensuous pleasure in poetry that Verlaine and Changampuzha have tried by virtue of their craftsmanship, and to a certain extent they have succeeded in their mission. Verlaine and Changampuzha were both path-breakers and harbingers of a new trend in the poetry of their respective literatures, so much so that one tends to echo Verlaine's verses:

“Music first and foremost! In your verse
Choose those metres odd of syllable,,
Supple in the air, vague and flexible,
Free of pounding beat, heavy, or terse...
For Nuance, not colour absolute,
Is your goal; subtle and shaded hue!...

Take vain eloquence and wring its neck!...

May your verse be a prophecy
Cast into the morning wind
Scented with mint and thyme...
And all the rest is literature!”

The analysis thus leads to the inference that there are aesthetic universals in the two poets such as the treatment of basic emotions such as love, hatred, pity, fear, remorse, and so on. Differentials in time, and space along with the multitude of cultural parameters accompanying the latter such as geography, language, race, and morals have impacted the evolution of the muses of the two stalwarts. This statement is almost a cliché since it is something which is to be taken for granted, but sufficient significance has to be attached to this reality, since it is of almost ontological relevance to the theme of study.

It has become quite obvious that Verlaine has imitated his predecessors like Gérard De Nerval and Baudelaire and has shared the creative impulse with Mallarmé, Rimbaud, his contemporaries. Being a symbolist, his poetry abounds in utilizing the technique of ‘suggestion’ to the neglect of ‘rhetoric’ theorized first by Aristotle. His crowning glory

was the adoption of intense musicality endowing them with the highest potential for incantation. It is noteworthy that though he disregarded the basic precept of verse that it should combine sound and meaning in optimal and harmonious proportions, his predilection for the audible aspects of verse has not undermined the comprehensibility of his poems.

Having dispensed with rhetoric, he was able to achieve aesthetic heights for his verse by wooing formal laconism and simplicity in metre and adopting varying meters ranging from tetrasyllabic to hendecasyllabic lines, unusual catchy rhyming techniques.. This was in abject contrast to the rigidity of the alexandrine with its twelve syllable lines and fixed stanzaic forms. The patriarchal notions and the misogyny of the staunch Parnassians were latent in the masculine rhyme typical of the alexandrine. Verlaine in fact broke this hegemony and often employed feminine rhyme ending with mute /e/. He was labeled a feminine poet but in reality his soft and sensuous prosody may also be interpreted as reflecting his predilection for women's equality - one of the earliest attempts in the direction along with Rimbaud who also was pro-women rights. A composite of the divine and the demonic in personality, his verse touched moral lows when he sung praises to the Dionysian and hedonistic life style, having sunk to the depths of depravity as he reveled in gay and anal sex patterns. This was bohemianism in all its immoral and diabolic traits, purposely adopted by Verlaine and Rimbaud among other French avant-garde as we have come to know in order to achieve zeniths of creativity.

If they courted intense moral degradation viewed as something akin to madness by lesser mortals and achieved inimitable and eternal poetic heights, their popularity was at nadirs during their lifetime. Verlaine had intermittent psychic flashes of the saint and the sinner and he was prone to remorse as exemplified by his switching between religious conversions and criminal and tramp modes in and out of prisons and landing ultimately in the care of prostitutes. Reflecting on the oeuvre of Verlaine some dedicated to lofty notions like the beauty of nature, love of various types, platonic and non-platonic, motherly love, passion, heterosexuality, conjugal love, sorrow, pity, fear and yet others to gay and lesbian love, with celebration of the beauty of anal sex and scatological themes, one is inclined to think that aesthetics has to be redefined in a realistic manner. Aesthetics is then the study of beauty in a complex, highly relative connotation, beauty is not solely what suits the moral requirements of the senses. Even the formidable and the ugly and the repulsive can be the subject of aesthetic study of a creative imagination. It may not please the senses but it may please the soul or the spirit in that a pleasantly worded poem on any repulsive object such as a corpse can strike a chord of empathy in the preceptor. This brings one to the conclusion that beauty is both objective and subjective and it is not necessarily accompanied by ethics or morality.

Changampuzha has emulated Verlaine and through him the stalwart French symbolists such as Baudelaire and Mallarmé. Many imitations have been composed by him, but it must be said to his credit that he has rather created them in his own anvil using the cultural traits particular to his environment. The choice of words the rhymes the rhythm

and supreme musicality are so original that the so called imitations aspire to the quality of innate creations. When Aristotle expounded his materialistic theory of literary creativity in his “Poesis” and highlighted ‘mimesis’ as the soul of creation, he attributed deep significance to the process. Nature is there for the poet or dramatist to draw inspiration for his creation, as for instance to paint a picture or to create symphony, though they are not all represented as unified wholes. It is the creative vision of the artist which makes a composite whole out of the hues or the noises or phenomena of nature like sunshine, rain, thunder, and so on. Verlaine and Changampuzha have done exactly this: they created their magnificent *magna opera* in their own crucible of experiences to enthrall generations of perceptors. This is true alchemy where the most banal or base sensations are transformed into scintillating gems of beauty !

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