CHAPTER III

THE PROGRESSIVE WRITERS MOBILIZATION: A STRUGGLE FOR IDEOLOGICAL HEGEMONY

Just as in the peasant and labour front, attempts to organize writers and to bring them under the influence of communist ideology, was made by the communists as a part of their organizational strategy. This resulted in the emergence of several proletarian literary movements and organizations at the international level and also in the introduction of the theory, ‘socialist realism’ in the world literary arena. In India, this was quite evident in the formation of All India Progressive Writers’ Association and its regional branches. As a strong hold of Communist ideology, its implications were well established in Kerala with the formation of Jeeval Sahitya Samiti and later Purogamana Sahitya Sangham.

International Proletarian Literary Movement and The Adoption of Socialist Realism

Proletarian literature – like the proletarian Communist movement – attacks the relationship between labour and capital. In the fullest sense, it calls upon all working people and discontented intellectuals to associate directly – to organize against capitalism itself, to attack the problem of social class at its roots. Marxism provides the scientific theoretical guide for this effort. “There can be no great literature without great idea content. The deeper a talented writer thinks, the more his work will offer the reader. The problem of social class is the deepest of all; by attacking it, writers will strengthen their portrayals and critiques of every form of oppression.”
During the Russian Revolution a movement was initiated to put all arts to the service of the dictatorship of the proletariat and this resulted in the formation of Proletcult, an acronym for Proletarskie kulturno-prosvetitelnye organizatsi (Proletarian Cultural and Educational Organizations). It served as an umbrella organization for numerous burgeoning working class cultural groups. Then the first attempt to coordinate international effort to promote proletarian art and literature was made in August 1920 during the second Comintern Congress. It established a Provisional International Proletcult Bureau and called for the organization of conferences on proletarian culture, the formation of Proletcult groups and the eventual convening of a World Proletcult Congress. Although groups emerged in a few countries, the movement failed to get off the ground and planned Proletcult congress did not take place. Later in September 1924, under the initiatives of the Fifth Comintern Congress, a statement was addressed “To the Proletarian and Revolutionary Writers of All Countries”, urging them to assist in the foundation of a red literary international.

The First International Conference of Proletarian and Revolutionary Writers took place in November 1927, and were attended by writers and artists from fourteen countries, who were in Moscow for the tenth anniversary of the October Revolution. To assist its efforts for the formulation of proletarian and revolutionary writers’ associations in capitalist countries, an International Bureau for Revolutionary Literature (IBRL) was set up. By the time of the Second Conference of Proletarian and Revolutionary Writers took place in November 1930, the IBRL was renamed the International Union of Revolutionary Writers (IURW) and twenty-five member executive council was elected. The new designation coincided with a change in character, in that the IURW would be
henceforth not a union of individuals, but of writers’ organizations. Its task would be to coordinate the movement in the various countries, exchanging information as well as literary and theoretical material.\textsuperscript{5} To this end the IURW established as its official organ the magazine \textit{Literature of the World Revolution}, later called \textit{International Literature}, which appeared bimonthly, in separate German, English, French and Russian editions.

Meanwhile, by the early 1930s, the most important move towards the mobilization of writers under the banner of Communist ideology was made in the Soviet Union. Soviet writers, with Government support, formed the Union of Soviet Writers (Soiuz Sovetskikh Pisatelei) in April 1932.\textsuperscript{6} The first All-Union Congress of Soviet Writers held in Moscow from 17 August to 1 September, 1934, which included over two hundred speeches and reports.\textsuperscript{7} The key-note speeches by Karl Radek, A.A. Zhdanov, Maxim Gorky, Nikolai Bukhari and A.I. Stetsky established the general tone of the Congress. Gorky described the “new Soviet man” that literature should portray: “A new type of man is springing up in the Soviet Union. He possesses a faith in the organizing power of reason.... He is conscious of being the builder of a new world, and although his conditions of life are still arduous, he knows that it is his arm and the purpose of his rational will to create different conditions and he has no grounds for pessimism”.\textsuperscript{8} In his opening address Zhdanov introduced socialist realism in the following terms. The responsibility of writer is “to know life so as to be able to depict it truthfully, but not to do so as a detached observer depicting objective reality, rather to depict reality in its revolutionary development. A Soviet Writer should work from the basis of real life, and his literary treatment of it should be infused by his commitment to socialism”.\textsuperscript{9} Both
Zhdanov and Gorky refer to Stalin’s phrase all artists, were to be “engineers of the human soul”.

As conceived by Zhdanov and Gorky, the First All-Union Congress of Soviet Writers declared ‘Socialist Realism’ the reigning method of Soviet literature.\(^{10}\) Socialist realism was best characterized by the watch words accessibility (dostupnost), the spirit of the people (narodnost), and the spirit of the party (partinost).\(^{11}\) It demands truthfulness from the artist and historically concrete portrayal of reality in its revolutionary development. Under these conditions, truthfulness and historical concreteness of artistic portrayal ought to be combined with the task of the ideological remaking and education of laboring people in the spirit of socialism.

‘Socialist Realism’ gave the writers, a newest and most powerful artistic method, but it was not born out of nothing without a basis of earlier literature. Socialist realism inherited and developed further the main principle of the realism of the 19th century, that of presenting true, faithful reflection of life. It inherits and develops further and puts forward a true and clear program of activity for the radical transformation of society, for the liberation of the working masses from exploitation, for the construction of a new socialist society. It is based on the Marxist-Leninist world outlook, which gives writers and artists the possibility of understanding in depth and clarity the laws of the development of society, of penetrating to the core of events and of people’s characters, which arms them with a correct, scientific political and ideological outlook.\(^{12}\) Thus the essence of socialist realism can be stated as reflecting life with truthfulness and in its revolutionary development.
Ralph Fox, the remarkable young man who died for his convictions while fighting the Fascists in Spain, has given the best definition of social realism in his book *The Novel and the People*:

“The revolutionary task of literature today is... to bring the creative writer to face with his only important task, that of winning the knowledge of truth, of reality... (he) must always engage in a terrible and revolutionary battle with reality, revolutionary because he must seek to change reality.”

Socialist realism, then, is the acute awareness of the social forces that surround the individual, their power to influence the lives of the man and women-for better or for worse-and the overall interaction of the individual and society. This relationship is creative and dynamic, for in the process not only the individual’s character and destiny changes, but the individual, at least the more dynamic individual, helps to change the social condition. The true reflection of life in its revolutionary development seeks not only to reveal the principal processes of life, but to express what is new and revolutionary, to show its birth in struggle with the old, with the reactionary, which resists it with the utmost fury and desperation. Socialist realism seeks to link true reflection of life with the tasks of educating the workers. This means that in their works these writers accomplish a most important task. They not only communicate much knowledge about social life, they also attack the remnants of the past in the consciousness of masses of the people and educate the workers to become warriors for the construction of socialist and Communist society.
The fundamental principle of the literature of socialist realism is the principle of Communist partisanship. The writer, as a member of society, cannot be neutral towards events he observes in the environment which surrounds him, towards the various problems of society, towards classes and the class struggle. “To live in society and to be free of society is an impossibility”, Lenin has said.\(^{14}\) Marxism-Leninism has established that in a class-divided society, the various political, social, moral, artistic, etc., viewpoints of all people (and so also of writers) have a class character; in them are reflected the interests, needs, demands of this or that class. So the literary creations of writers too bear a definite class stamp; in the artistic images of literary works are embodied the ideals, the demands of this class. The phenomena, problems and characters of the people they depict are shown and evaluated by the writer from the class position which he represents. The appraisal, in literary works, of events and human actions from the viewpoint of the interests of a certain social class, is called partisanship in literature.\(^ {15}\) There is bourgeois partisanship and Communist partisanship, depending upon the interests of which class the writer defends. The principle of Communist partisanship demands that the writer should reflect life in his works from the standpoint of Marxist-Leninist ideology, of the revolutionary interests of the struggle carried on by the proletariat under the leadership of its Marxist-Leninist party.

Another important characteristic of the literature of socialist realism is its national form and socialist content. Every people have its language, its traditions, and its cultural and psychic distinctions. “Every nation, whether great or small, has its qualitative distinctions, its specific features, which pertain only to it and which no other nation possesses”, Stalin has said; “these distinctions are the contribution which every nation
puts into the general treasury of world culture and which adds to it, enriches it.” As a result, true literature, rooted deeply in a people, will bear in an inescapable manner the stamp of these distinctions in the mental and spiritual world of the people will be born on the terrain of the best cultural traditions of the people, will express the demands, the struggle, the efforts, and the dreams of the people. Such is the literature of socialist realism, which stands close to the efforts and aspirations of the people. The ‘national form,’ in literature, means that this literature is created in the national language, that it reflects the best national traditions, the distinct psychic character of the nation, and is intelligible to the people.

The choice of characters in the works of socialist realist literature is also determined by the inner content of this literature, by its principal aim, which is the affirmation and strengthening of the new socialist relations, the construction of socialism and Communism, the struggle against imperialism and its servants, the modern revisionists, etc. Since the objective of this literature is to bring to life the new, the progressive, the positive, it is natural that its principal protagonist should be “the positive hero, the fighter who destroys the old and creates the new, who defends the interests of the people, the hero inspired by the lofty spirit of partisanship and class struggle, who rejects bourgeois and revisionist ideology, who is ready to sacrifice even his life for the cause of socialism and Communism.”

In this connection, Enver Hoxha told the 5th Congress: “The Party requires that at the centre of creativity should be placed the heroes of our time – workers, peasants, soldiers, people’s intellectuals and revolutionary cadres, young people educated by the
Party, those who with self-denial and heroism work and fight for the construction of socialism, for the defense and flowering of the socialist homeland.” Thus the heroes of the anti-Fascist national liberation war and of socialist construction are presented and they were served as the examples for socialistic realistic heroes. This approach influenced the progressive writers of the world and this resulted in the emergence of new literary movements and revolutionary writings in all the world literature. The emergence of Progressive Writers’ Movement in India can be seen as a part of this movement.

**All India Progressive Writers’ Association (AIPWA)**

The foregrounding of the lower classes and the under privileged groups in the literature written during the 20th century in India was a very significant change. The silenced and suppressed classes of the peasants and hard working lower castes were portrayed in the literary writings in 1920s and 30s. There were several sympathetic portrayals of the *dalits*, untouchables and the rural poor in the works of upper class writers such as Prem Chand, Tagore, Shiva Sankara Pillai, Ismat Chugtai, Mulk Raj Anand and others. These writers changed the course of Indian writing. Although writing across the country in different languages, they followed certain common directions, creating a common aesthetics. Coming together briefly in the Progressive Writers’ Movement during the 30s, these writers experienced a strong sense of cultural bounding with one another.

The formation of AIPWA was the culmination of a process, which started with the publication of a book *Angare* and with the inspiration of the Anti-Fascist Writers’ Conference.
The book *Angare* (Burning Coals),\(^{20}\) which was published in December 1932 marked a major turning point in Urdu literature particularly and Indian literature in general. The volume contains ten works: five stories by Sajjad Zaheer, two by Ahmed Ali, a story and a play by Dr. Rashid Jahan and a story by Mahmuduzzafar, all written in Urdu and extremely radical in temperament. The initial reaction from both the religious and civil establishment to the publication of *Angare* was one of outrage. Newspapers and journals published angry editorials and articles denouncing the book.\(^{21}\) Later on 15 March 1933, the book was banned by the Government of the United Provinces under section 295A of the Indian Penal Code on the ground that it was against the religious sentiments of the Muslims.\(^{22}\)

In reply to this widespread denunciation, on 5 April 1933, five months after the publication of *Angare*, the authors issued a statement from Delhi. It was drafted by Mahmuduzzafar and published in *The Leader* (Allahabad) on the same date, entitled In Defense of *Angare*, Shall We Submit to Gagging?\(^{23}\) The statement clarifies the truthfulness of the authors and their themes and stood firmly with their views. Further it states: “They (the authors) stand for the right of free criticism and free expression in all matters of highest importance to the human race in general and the Indian people in particular.” The statement concludes with a proposal which states that: “Our practical proposal is the formation immediately of a League of Progressive Authors, which should bring forth similar collections from time to time, both in English and various vernaculars of our country. We appeal to all those who are interested in this idea to get in touch with us. They may communicate with S. Ahmed Ali, M.A., Jalal Manzil, Kucha Pandit, Delhi.”\(^{24}\)
The idea of forming a League of Progressive Authors was announced for the first time in this statement. Meanwhile, in late 1932, Sajjad Zaheer returned to London in order to avoid the scandal that following the publication of *Angare*. There he was exposed to Marxism and he met several leftist writers, including Ralph Fox. During a conversation with Fox, the idea of a Progressive Writers’ Association was mooted. With Fox’s help, a group of six or seven individuals began to organize an association as Indian Progressive Writers’ Association. One of the most important individuals in this group was Dr. Mulk Raj Anand. It is difficult to identify the exact date of the first meeting of this Indian Progressive Writers’ Association in London. In writing about the establishment of the London group, Zaheer states: “Some Indian students held the first meeting of the Progressive Writers’ Association in London in 1935.”

A draft was prepared by the Mulk Raj Anand as the manifesto of the Association. An edited version of the manifesto was published in India in the October 1935 issue of *Hans* (Swan), the prestigious Hindi literary journal edited by Premchand. Another draft, which is significantly different from that published in India, appeared in the *Left Review* (London) of February 1936. This manifesto in its various *avatars* is the most basic document in the development of socialist realism in India because it attempts to set forth some basic definitions of terms.

The second phase of the pre-history of the AIPWA is the meeting of writers, which was called the International Congress for the Defense of Culture and met in Paris from 21-26 June 1935. The Congress was organized by some of the most distinguished names in French letters like, Andre Gide, Henry Barbusse, Romain Rolland and Andre Malraux. All of them, except Malraux had some connection with India. This event was
broadly in line with the policy officially adopted a few weeks later by the Seventh World Congress of the Comintern, which called for a united front of the working class and all peace-loving people against Fascism and war. The Congress brought together about two hundred writers from fifteen different countries. Sajjad Zaheer and Mulk Raj Anand were the two Indian writers to be present in the meeting attended by the galaxy of European writers. The other Indian delegate, who was present in the congress, was Madam Sophia Wadia.

Gide’s opening address was entitled “In Defense of Culture”.\(^3\) In it, he claimed that “individuals and their peculiarities can best flourish in a Communist society” and also quoted Malraux’s statement that: “Communism restores fertility in the individual”. Speaking of the relationship between art and society, Gide commented that “art lapses into artificiality when it gets out of touch with the realities of the life.” According to him, “the function of literature is to communicate. That literature which communicates best is the most worthwhile; it is a literature which “informs, propounds, and creates”; such literature must... inevitably is a literature of opposition: to the shams and conventions of culture.”\(^3\) Thus, Gide’s speech was the basic text for his idea of relations of Communism and literature. Later, E.M. Forster made a spectral appearance on the opening evening and gave his speech entitled “Liberty in England”.\(^3\) “I am not a Communist”, he squeaked, “but perhaps I would have been where I younger and braver.”\(^3\) Forster states that he wants “greater freedom for writers, both as creators and critics…. And I want the maintenance of culture.”\(^3\)

At the conclusion of the conference, an international centre of progressive literary movement of the entire world was established in Paris and it was a big stride in the path
of the creation of international culture. The London Progressive Writers’ Association of the Indians, decided to get itself affiliated to this international literary centre. Zaheer and Anand profited greatly from the Paris meeting and the idea of an All-India Progressive Writers’ Association firmly shaped in their mind. Zaheer also met Louis Aragon, who took a leading part in organizing the progressive movement of French writers and intellectuals. Then Zaheer departure from Paris to India and he describes it: “A period of life came to an end, and like every end it was poignant, carrying pathos of its own. The second and more important period had yet started. Hopes and yearnings, schemes and plans were agitating in my mind”.37 These “Hopes and yearning, schemes and plans” developed in the first meeting of the All-India Progressive Writers’ Association.

The First All-India Conference of Progressive Writers’ met in Lucknow on April 10, 1936 under the leadership of Sajjad Zaheer and a group of Marxist intellectuals. This meeting can be called a confluence of socialist trends till then flowing in different directions and also a source, as Carlo Coppola calls it, “from which the socialist and realist movement in India flowed, a movement which, next to Mahatma Gandhi, produced what is probably the most powerful literary effect upon the Indian creative writing during the first three quarters of the twentieth century.”38

The choice of the place and the date was very significant. In April the annual meeting of the All India Congress was scheduled to be held in Lucknow and Jawaharlal Nehru had been chosen to preside over its sessions. Within the Congress, Nehru was the leader of the Left-wing and Sajjad Zaheer had invited him to address the Conference. In his speech, Nehru indicated his warm support to the Conference.39 Sarojini Naidu, a well known Congress leader sent the Conference a message of encouragement and support.
Other outstanding leftist leaders including Jai Prakash Narain, Yusaf Mahraly, Indulal Yajnik, Kamala Devi Chathopadhyaya and Miran Iftakhar-ud-Din participated in this.

The Conference was presided over by Prem Chand and this selection was tactically wise. He was a master of Urdu and Hindi and was at the highest pinnacle of fame, having written about a dozen novels, two plays and almost two hundred short stories.\(^{40}\) His sympathy for the new literary movement made it acceptable to the orthodox litterateurs. Presiding over the sessions of the Conference, the key sentence of his presidential address was: “We have to change the criteria of beauty”.\(^{41}\) He felt that beauty was not confined to an upper class women with a well-made-up face; there was beauty in the women working in a field, perspiring freely and tending a sleeping child at the same. Prem Chand also rejected the theory of art for arts’ sake, saying that the artist must rebel against the outmoded mores of the society, devoting all of his energy to economic and political freedom. “Our literary taste”, Prem Chand, while addressing the conference went on, “is undergoing a rapid transformation. It is coming more and to grips with the realities of life; it interests itself with society or man as a social unit. It is not satisfied now with the singing of frustrated love, or with writing to satisfy only our sense of wonder; it concerns itself with the problems of our life and such themes as have a social value.”\(^{42}\) Munshi Prem Chand’s presidential address to the foundation conference of the AIPWA is a remarkable piece of literary criticism integrating the best in the Indian and world culture, Indian patriotism with international humanism. Later, in his novel *Godan* (1936), published in the year of his death Prem Chand made his position very clear. P.C. Joshi in an erudite analysis writes “In his fully matured novel *Godan*, Prem Chand’s
heightened literary sensibility is able to shake off the constraints of the Gandhian social outlook and captures all the major contradictions of the village life.”

The literary and political role, which the Progressive Writers’ Association was to develop, became evident in the resolutions adopted by the Conference and its Manifesto, which had been drafted a year earlier in London. The Manifesto clearly stated that:

(1) It is the duty of Indian writers to give expression to the changes taking place in Indian life and to assist spirit of progress in the county by introducing scientific rationalism in literature….

(2) It is the object of our Association to rescue literature and other arts from the conservative classes in whose hands they have been degenerating so long, to bring arts into the closest touch with the people and to make them vital organs which will register the actualities of life as well as lead us to the future we envisage.

(3) We believe that the new literature of India must deal with the basic problems of our existence today—the problems of hunger and poverty, social backwardness and political subjection.

(4) All that arouses in us the critical spirit, which examines institutions and customs in the light of reason, which help us to act, to organize ourselves, to transfer, we accept as progressive.\(^4^4\)

The resolutions contained a ringing denunciation of Mussolini’s aggression against Ethiopia, of the Japanese attack on China and of the British Government for suppressing the press and civil liberties in India. One of the resolutions urged the writers to help prevent the start of World War II by entering into the working alliances with all
progressive forces.\textsuperscript{45} The constitution of the Association, which was drafted by Muhammad al-Zafar, Sajjad Zaheer and Abdul Ali of Lucknow University, was adopted by the Conference.\textsuperscript{46} Zaheer was elected as the General Secretary of AIPWA with the responsibility of organizing provincial and linguistic associations. An All-India Council envisaged by the constitution was to be composed of delegates from the provinces and was required to meet at least twice a year.

No doubt the Communist Party of India backed the movement and of course, Sajjad Zaheer was a party member, and later he became the general secretary of the Communist Party of Pakistan. Further, it was cemented, when the Home Department, Intelligence Bureau, in a secret report stated that the Progressive Writers’ Association “is connected with the Comintern via the Indian Student’s Secret Communist Group.”\textsuperscript{47} On this ground, under the General Communist Notification under the Sea Customs Act, dated the 10\textsuperscript{th} September 1932, the Government confiscated copies of the Association’s publication, \textit{New Indian Literature}.\textsuperscript{48} The report also observed the move of PWA leaders to raise this question in the parliament.\textsuperscript{49}

Meanwhile, after its first Conference, the AIPWA spread rapidly all over India. Branches were opened at Calcutta, Bombay, Poona, Ahmadabad, Patna, Aligarh, besides those which existed before the Conference. It also produced profound impact on the literary works produced in different Indian languages. The most positive impact of the Association was on the growth of a literature which can be loosely described as ‘socialist’ as far as its themes and moods are concerned. There was hardly any literature in India now which did not respond to the growing and expanding socialist ideas. As a distinct Indian language, Malayalam was also influenced by this literary awakening.
Formation of *Jeeval Sahitya Samiti*

Malayalam literature began to take a new turn by about 1936. A younger school came into prominence who drew inspiration mainly from Left-wing politics and were supported by a school of powerful critics who tore the veil of insincerity and false sentiment from the writings of the earlier writers. They made a frontal attack on the so-called literature of reaction and ushered in what has since come to be known as “Purogamana Vadam” or the Progressive School.\(^5\) The economic depression, caused by the 1914 World War, the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia, the desire of equality in the minds of the low caste people and the workers and peasants and the emergence of socialist ideology, the socio-political conditions which prevailed in Kerala, all these culminated its formation in Kerala.

The formation of *Jeeval Sahityam* in Malayalam was an endevour made by the Communists, who stood firmly with the peasant-working class organizations, in developing a new literary form regarding their vision.\(^5\) By receiving inspiration from the AIPWA, left-socialist intellectuals in Kerala took initiatives to start a Progressive Writers’ Association in Kerala. C. Achutha Kurup, M.S. Devasdas, E.M.S. Namboodiripad and K. Damodaran were the chief figures, who were associated with its organizational process. Due to their efforts a conference was summoned on 20th April 1937 at Thrissur and it was attended by about hundred members form Travancore, Cochi and Malabar regions.\(^5\) The prominent members, who participated in this conference were, K.A. Damodara Menon, P. Kesava Dev, N.P. Damodaran, C. Narayana Pillai, K.K. Warrier, P. Narayanan Nair, A. Madhavan, N.C. Sekhar, P. Chandrahasan, Cheriyan
Manjooran and others. The conference was presided over by C.K. Narayana Swami, who was the Co-Publisher of the Bombay Cronicle.

Three papers regarding the introduction to the progressive literature were presented in this conference. The presented papers are “Innathe Malayala Sahityam Jeeval Sahityamano?” (Is Today’s Malayalam Literature a Life Oriented one?) by N.P. Damodaran, “Keralathinu Pattiya Jeeval Sahityam” (A Suitable Life Oriented Literature for Kerala) by K. Damodaran and “Jeeval Sahityathinte Bhavi” (The Future of Life Oriented Literature) by E.M.S. Namboodiripad. In his paper, N.P. Damodaran argued that “The present literature in Kerala has no relation with people’s life; it is a mere remnant of the past. We have to correct the literature according to the changing age.”

Through his paper K. Damodaran pointed out that: “the literature can be divided into two – Literature of Escape and Literature of Expression. Literature of Escape denotes the literary creations which were written for escaping mentally from the surroundings and our present literature is like that. The literary works which depict man with his real life comes under the second category and that kind of works are needed.”

Active discussions were conducted on these papers and all of the participants supported the new literary genre introduced by the conference. Some opposite opinions emerged regarding the name of the association. Several opinions were put forwarded as the translation of Progressive Writers’ Association and finally it was decided to accept the name Jeeval Sahitya Samiti. A. Madhava Menon was appointed as the secretary of the Sangham and a committee consisting of P. Narayanan Nair, E.M.S. Namboodiripad,
K.K. Warrier, I.C. Parameswaran Namboodiri was selected for its preliminary organizational tasks.\textsuperscript{58}

**Jeeval Sahityam: Aims and Objectives**

On 25\textsuperscript{th} May 1937, A. Madhava Menon wrote an article in the *Mathrubumi* daily about the aims and objectives of the *Jeeval Sahitya Samiti*. About the aims, he wrote: “To liberate our literature and art, which are decaying under the monopoly of orthodox reactionary class and to establish a close connection with the people’s life and thereby change it as a force to lead us towards a better future.”\textsuperscript{59} Further he stated that: “We are rejecting it as reactionary, which makes us to retreat from the action. We are accepting it as progressive, which revive our critical and rational thinking for the evaluation of our systems and organizations, and inspire us to organize, to act and to transform.”\textsuperscript{60} Through this article, he put forward the following as the objectives of the *Samiti*:

(i) To establish units of *Jeeval Sahitya Samiti* in different parts of Kerala in order to make unity among the progressive writers and their activities;

(ii) To publish books and short write ups, which were styled as *Jeeval Sahitya*;

(iii) Co-operate with the other literary organizations, which does not possess the opposite ideology and maintain a united activism;

(iv) To produce progressive literature and translate it form other languages, and thereby oppose the policy of cultural reaction. Through these measures accelerate and promote Indian freedom movement and communal reorganization process;
(v) To protect the interests of the writers, who were associated with the Jeeval Sahitya Samiti; and

(vi) To struggle for the freedom of expression.61

The Jeeval Sahityam tried to accelerate the class struggle in the ideological sphere by giving inspiration, support and propagation to the progressive front of the writers. It was the beginning of the conscious class interventions in reading and writing.

Later, on 19th July 1937, E.M.S. Namboodiripad published an article in the Mathrubhumi weekly entitled “Jeevat Sahithyavum Soundarya Bodhavum” (Living Literature and Sense of Beauty) which also served as the initial manifesto of the movement.62 In this article E.M.S. replied to the criticism that progressive literature denied or at least downgraded the role of beauty. This was perhaps the first serious attempt to apply social, historical and Marxist criteria in the evaluation of art and literature in Malayalam. Both the founding of the PWA and E.M.S.’s article in 1937 were epoch-making events which served as the launching pads for the great take-off movement in Malayalam literature and arts during the coming years.

In his introduction to a collection of his early articles in 1974 E.M.S. evaluates these events and the development that followed thus:

“When the Jeeval Sahitya movement took shape in 1937, the central controversial issue between its founders and traditional writers was this: Whether art is for art’s sake or for the sake of social progress? The protagonists of Jeeval Sahitya argued that the aim of literature should not be just social progress in general. The central thrust of social
progress should be politics of anti-imperialism, anti-feudalism and socialism, they asserted. The other side opposed this.”  

63 In order to consolidate its activities, the *Samiti* held conferences at different parts of Kerala. The *Mathrubhumi* Daily of 2nd June 1937 published an announcement that “a conference of the *Jeeval Sahitya Samiti* is to be held at Kozhikode on 12th of this month.” It was published in the name of K. Damodaran, Socialist Party office, Kallayi.  

64 The Kozhikode conference was presided over by P. Narayanan Nair. In his speech, K. Damodaran evaluated the functions and growth of *Jeeval Sahitya Samiti* after its Thrissur conference and argued that: “the writers should adopt a progressive attitude in the selection of themes and its presentation. The subjects associated with the daily life of the people should portray in a simple language with a heart touching manner. For this, the poets should return to his real world.”  

65 In the next year, a conference was held at Thrissur under the presidency of A.D. Hari Sharma. In 1939, *Jeeval Sahitya Samiti* held a conference at Bakkalam, in Kannur District. E.M.S. was the chief organizer of this conference.

It was during this period the Second World War started and it prevented the organizational activities of *Jeeval Sahitya Samiti*. Though the ideology, which was propagated by the *Jeeval Sahitya Samiti*, got momentum, it lost its organizational stability with the outbreak of the War. During this period, the Communists of Kerala conducted large scale pro-Soviet and anti-Fascist and anti-Jap campaigns and also initiated constructive works like Grow More Food Campaigns. For this purpose, they utilized literature and art and tried to mobilize the writers under their banner, in order to
strengthen their struggles and carry their propaganda at grass root level. Those writers, who expected the socio-political progress through the paths of socialist-Communist ideology and the writers, who were non-socialists but have faith in humanity and freedom, joined together for the creation of a new world. Thus the movement initiated by the socialists continued to grow in Malayalam literature and its result was the founding of *Purogamana Sahitya Prasthanam* in 1944. Hence, the leftist movements of this period like anti-Fascist and anti-Jap movements, Grow More Food Campaign, campaign against colonial exploitation and pro-Soviet campaigns can be seen as their initiatives to ideological propaganda through cultural interactions.

**Second World War and Anti-Fascist Movements in Kerala**

The Second World War commenced in Europe with the declaration of war on Poland by the German leader, Hitler on 1 September 1939. On 3 September, the Viceroy, Lord Linlithgow, proclaimed India a belligerent against Germany without consulting the popular governments in the provinces and popular representatives in the Central Legislature. Soon after the outbreak of the war, the leftists i.e. the Congress Socialists, the Forward Bloc and the Communists started anti-war and anti-Government propaganda. The Communist Party, in line with the Comintern position, treated the war as an inter-imperialist war. At the same time, with the imposition of direct British rule, the Communists became subject to the 1934 ban, and their hide-and-seek with arrests and imprisonments began once again. By May 1941 almost the entire Communist leadership was in jail, along with a very large number of the Party’s 5,000 membership.66
Things took a completely different turn after the Nazi attack on the Soviet Union on June 22, 1941. As Britain became an ally of the Soviet Union, this brought about a change in the complexion of the war. The Communists and the Left progressives in the INC thought that Soviet Union, China and India might be endangered by the emerging strength of the Fascist forces. The Communists also planned to revise the policy towards Britain in new context. But unlike other Communist parties, the Indian Communist leadership, most of it in prison, found it difficult to turn from the long-established position of hostility to British imperialism, to treating it as an ally in a world-wide alliance. At last, Communist leaders held in the Deoli Camp prepared their ‘Jail Document’ in December, in which they argued forcefully for a change of policy to one of ‘People’s War’. It said “India’s war of struggle should be undertaken by India herself, supporting the British in the war does not mean that we are surrendering to them. The character of the war has changed. We should provide selective support and at the same time we should fight for safeguarding our basic interests. To more in this direction, we must politically mobilize all working people, workers, peasants, tenants and the landless.” The entry of Japan in the war in the same month and its quick successes in South-East Asia brought India closer to the theatres of war and made the shift of policy still more urgent. By this policy the Communists opposed the Quit-India resolution and it was made the reason for their post-war expulsion (1945) from the Congress, and has been raised at various times since then to question their patriotism; but there is no doubt that if one concedes that the defeat of Fascism was the primary need of the world at that hour, then the position the Communists adopted was unexceptionable. While this decision resulted in the release from detention of the Communist leaders and ultimately in the
lifting of the ban on the Communist Party in 22 July itself—thus enabling it to function as a legal Party for the first time. But at the same time, it continued to oppose the British government’s provocative policy of repression.

In Kerala, before the change of policy of the Party, the Left-wing KPCC took up a large propaganda programme against the war throughout Malabar. They held several meetings and openly attacked the “imperialist war” and mobilized the primary School Teachers, Textile Workers, Beedi Workers, etc. against the war.71 But later, the decision of the Communist Party to interpret “Imperialist War” as “People’s War” changed their policies. They accepted the people’s war theory and proclaimed that they are ready to cooperate with the government.72 In Travancore, all the leaders released from the jail met at the residence of M.N. Govindan Nair at Pandalam in May 1942. Besides P. Krishna Pillai and his wife, K.C. George, P.T. Punnoose, C.O. Mathew and K.V. Pathrose were there and they decided to form an ad-hoc Travancore Party Committee with K.C. George as secretary and this was to function from Thiruvananthapuram.73 The meeting pledged unconditional support of Britain in the war, and appealed to the people, “not to all on their own grievances to interfere with their duties to other freedom loving countries” and requested the Travancore Government to release the State Congress leaders recently arrested and to withdraw the order restricting the freedom of speech and movement of certain State Congress leaders.”74 The Travancore Coir Factory Workers Union and the All Travancore Trade Union Congress also passed resolutions stating the threats of Fascism and appealed the people to support the struggle against Fascism.75

A report, submitted by P.C. Joshi on 15-3-1943, stated the policy and plans of work of the Communist Party, after it got legality from the Government. The plan of the
work includes: Release Gandhi and the congress leader’s campaign; Food Campaign; Production Conferences and; Grow More Food Campaigns.\textsuperscript{76} Under the guise of cooperating with the authorities with these activities, the Party used every opportunity to proselytize the Communist ideology. Though the Communists in Kerala totaled no more than 5000 men and women at anytime during the war, they responded with a vigorous campaign of organization and communication. “Men into the \textit{Kisan Sangham} (Peasant Organization), women into \textit{Mahila} (Women’s) \textit{Sangham}, children into \textit{Bala} (Children’s) \textit{Sangham},”, became the slogan. The goal? “Not a single soul in our land who is not in some organisation.”\textsuperscript{77} As Britain was an ally of the Soviet Union, the ideals and achievements of socialism, Marxism and Communism began to enter our country through books, booklets and periodicals and this gave the emergence to radical writings in Malayalam.

A number of meetings were held by the Communists in different parts of Kerala, to carry anti-Fascist propaganda. In these meetings, a number of resolutions were also passed in support of anti-Fascist and anti-Jap agitations. These meetings were also utilized to propagate Marxian ideologies and progressive cultures. In a meeting of All Kerala Soviet Friends’ Conference, which held on 3-5-1942 at Thrissur depicted the cultural advancement of the Soviet Union. The meeting issued a leaflet, stated the new trend inaugurated by the Soviet Union that “dispelled the illusion that ‘Art is for Art’s Sake’ and established the facts that ‘Art is for the Sake of man’”.\textsuperscript{78} Noting that at anti-Fascist meetings the Communist speakers devoted more time to the importance of establishing a national government and the necessity of guerilla training at Malabar, a
Madras official reported that “Malabar Comrades were 10 percent anti-Nazi and 90 percent anti-British Government.”

Meanwhile, in a “Memo on Political-Practical Activity in Kerala since August 9”, prepared by P.C. Joshi, reported the active role of the Communist Party in the anti-Fascist agitation. He holds the view that Communist Party was the only force to save the Jap aggression and it is the “First Party throughout Kerala-first in mass influence, first in the number of cadres it can throw into the field, first in organisation.” The Party used all most all mediums to conduct propaganda against the Fascist threat.

A number of Leaflets, Pamphlets, Handbills and Song Books also were published under the auspices of the Communist Party and they produced much influence on the people. These include the calls to different classes in the society, like “People’s War and the Kisans”, “To the Workers of Kerala”, “To the Students of Kerala”. Calls were also addressed to the Hindus and Muslims, and the need for the unity of all sections of the society, like “Build Unity”, “Hindus and Muslims Unite for Congress-League Agreement for National Government”, “To the Muslims of Kerala”, “An Appeal to the Patriots”, “Through Unity to Victory”, etc.

A collection of anti-Jap and anti-Nazi songs written by K.P.R. Gopalan in jail entitled Call for Battle was also published by the Party. P.C. Joshi in his report stated that: “4260 copies of this book have been sold and these songs have been sung in chorus in thousands of meetings all over Kerala.” Another collection of songs entitled Unite to Defend the Motherland, which was also written by K.P.R. Gopalan and printed under the auspices of the All Kerala Students’ Federation, was also published. M.P. Bhattathiripad,
composed a song entitled *Struggle Times*, intended to mobilize the people for national resistance against the Jap-Fascists. P.C. Joshi argues that this song “contains our entire party policy expressed in the simplest language.” A number of meetings and processions were also conducted against the Fascist threat.

Special mention must be given to the leaflets published in Travancore, entitled “To the People of Travancore”, “Revolution Imminent in Travancore-Patriots wake up”, “An Appeal made by the Ambalapuzha Taluk Committee of the Indian Communist Party”, “To the Workers of Kerala” and “The Poor Karshaka Thozhilalis of Kuttanadu”. All of them were proscribed or confiscated under Dewan’s order. All these leaflets projected the growing famine, starvation, food shortage and unemployment, and exhorted the people for a united movement to successfully overcome the situation. The Government also through an order forfeited the copies of the following leaflets entitled “Countrymen Work United”, “Release Gandhi Unconditionally”, “A Memorandum Submitting before the Government of Travancore” and “A Memorandum submitting before the Price Control Committee”. All of them were also proscribed or confiscated.

The War created much economic crisis in almost every part of Kerala. The import and export trade came to a standstill due to lack of shipping facilities in wartime. The war affected the import of rice from Burma and Siam and worsened the food situation in the State and brought poverty, starvation and unemployment to the working-class. The employers reduced the labourers and wages. The prices of the essential commodities had risen and the labour unions demanded at least 25 percent hike in wages. Further, the shortage of essential commodities in the market was accompanied by black marketing and hoarding. Tenant farmers were evicted from their holdings and there was no demand
for agricultural labour. The wages in the farm-sector was also reduced considerably. The repressive policies of the Government further aggravated the discontent of the people and caused unrest. More police force was deployed in Quilon and Alleppey to suppress the anti-government and labour agitations. The Government deprived the people of many of their rights. The local press was gagged.

The crisis affected the working class more than any other section of the society and food difficulties overshadowed all else in Travancore. In Travancore and Cochin, the Communists started a combined ‘constructive work’ and they began forming ‘Food Committees’ that included the representatives of all possible organizations, ranging from the Hindu Mahasabha to the Muslim League. The Communist Party assigned Thirumumbu and K.P. Muhammad Koya to led the Party fraction of “Food Front”. The Party promoted the interest of the public by enhancing the supply of food grains and by taking precautionary measures against cholera. The Party committee also started “Squad Work” for the prevention of cholera and for increased food production. They also organized ward war committees in different parts of Alleppey.

The songs depicted economic oppression on peasants, especially in the context of the Great Depression, and projected socialism as the alternative framework for the well being of peasants.

Several poems depicting the pathos of the common people were published in different publications. Arunodayam, a monthly even published a special issue on “The Tragic Situation in Sherthallai”. Varanathu K.P. Sasthrikal, contributed a poem in it,
describing the miserable plight of the famine sticken people of Sherthallai. The poet enquires;

“Why there should be two lakhs of people,
Who suffer penury and whether it is not a boon to disappear in the Sea,
Why should there be a God and at the same time
Such a piece of land and such a miserable life and people.”

In the same issue, Varghese Kalathil wrote a poem narrates how a suffering mother is in quest of a well to make an end of her life with her dear child and requests the patriots of Kerala “to come up with help before people drown themselves in wells.”

The Kottayam Taluk Committee of the Travancore Agricultural Labourers Union published a collection of songs entitled Bhakshana Paattukal (Food Songs) in 30-06-119 (M.E). In the title page it was stated that;

“To protect our country!
To end starvation!
For the success of paddy harvesting!
To end black marketing!
Countrymen Unite!”

These collections of songs were intended to depict the growing food crisis, the problem of black marketing and the growing threat of Jap Fascism. It asked the workers and peasants to unite and line up against our enemies and oppose Fascism. The Inspector General of the Police reported to the Chief Secretary to Government that “this publication does not seem to be objectionable.”
A Malayalam booklet entitled *Karshaka Paattukal* (Peasants Songs), which was printed at V.V. Press, Thrissur and published at the instance of Cochin Ryots Association made some impact on the poor peasants. The booklet is reported by the C.I.D. Inspector, Kottayam, to have been distributed at a public meeting under the auspices of the Cochin *Karshaka Mahasabha*, held at the Post Office Maidan, Ernakulam, on 31-3-1940. It was reported that the book “has a tendency to accentuate class hatred amongst landlords and their tenants and that it advocates socialism.” The booklet, *Karshaka Paattukal*, contains six parts, viz., (i) Then and now (ii) Organize (iii) Let repression end (iv) Has the secret been thought of? (v) Killing without taking a life away and (vi) Should starvation end. Through its entire verses, the *Paattukal* portrayed the pathos of the peasantry, particularly from the hands of landlords and their laws, and asked them to stand united to check the oppose.

Meanwhile, the Communists intensified their union activities. The coir workers, oil factory workers, toddy tappers, *beedi* workers, boat crews, fishermen, agricultural labourers and tenant farmers were organized on trade union basis. The unions opposed wage reduction, retrenchment and eviction of the tenant farmers from their holdings and hoped to improve their lot through collective bargaining. The unions also demanded distribution of food grains and kerosene through fair shops and the introduction of public distribution system. The Inspector General of the Police reported to the Chief Secretary to Government that: “almost all the labourers are Communists and that every labourer has an organization, viz. Coir factory Workers’ Union, Kannitta Labour Union, Karshaka Thozhilali Union, Beedi Thozhilali Union, Riksha Thozhilali Union, etc. The office bearers of all these unions are either Communists or are at heart in sympathy with
Thus, it was in this background, in order to strengthen their movements of peasant-labour mobilization process, the Communists initiated the revival of *Jeeval Sahitya Samiti* and tried to render the service of Malayalam writers.

**Formation of Purogamana Sahitya Sanghatana**  
*(Progressive Literary Association)*

Though the first Progressive Writers’ Conference in Kerala was held in January 1944, its ground work was started in July 1943 with the formation of an organizing committee, which was elected by a small meeting termed *Purogamana Sahitya Sammelanam*. This committee issued a statement entitled “Keralathile Sahitya Karanmarod”, which was published in the *Mathrubhoomi*. It urged that “the writers have the responsibility to guide the people and give inspiration to the people, who are living in darkness.” It explained the war, economic crisis, and famine and its pathos on the people, and commented that “A writer, who understands this situation, will not be able to stay as a romantic poet, because his surroundings provide strong life realities to depict.” It urged that “to prevent the reactionary tendencies and to the existence of literature and the writers, we have to make our pen as swords. To achieve this end, we have to work as united and more consciously.” Similarly, a number of articles were published during this period in support of the necessity of an Association for the progressive writers and also to criticize the efforts.

The formation of PWA was initiated by the Communist Party. On 31st October 1943, M.S. Devadas, published an article in *Mathrubhoomi* entitled “Purogamana Sahityam”, which urged the necessity for an organization of the writers to conduct
Regarding the role of Communist Party in the Progressive Literary Movement, he commented that: “The Party’s intervention in this literary movement is aimed at to give organizational inspiration to the artistic consciousness, literary taste and cultural advancement, which were growing among the peasants and labourers.”

The first Progressive Writers’ Conference held at Shornur in January 1944 was a continuation of the _Jeeval Sahitya Samiti_, which was formed in 1937. Though it was initiated by the Communists and attended by their followers, at the time of the Shornur conference, it attracted almost all the literary figures of Kerala. Earlier, it was decided to organize the first conference at Ernakulam and a welcome committee was formed for this purpose. Regarding this, the Weekly Report dated 10-9-43 states that: “A Progressive literary conference has been arranged to be held at Ernakulam in the second week of this month under the auspices of the Communist Party. Many of the Communists of Calicut are likely to attend the conference.” But later it was proposed to conduct it at Shornur. The Shornur Conference was held under the leadership of the Malabar Communists. A secret police report on Kottayam District reported: “The Printed bit notice in connection with the meeting of All Kerala Progressive Writers’ Association arranged to be held Shornur (Cochin State) on 29-01-44 are distributed in the town by Communist C.J. Thomas.”

In this conference, the name _Jeeval Sahitya Samiti_ was replaced with _Purogamana Sahitya Sanghatana_. The prominent literary figures, who attended in this conference were P. Kesava Dev, Thakazhi Sivasankara Pillai, Joseph Mundassery and Ponkunnam Varkey and it was presided over by M.P. Paul. Serious debates were
conducted on preparing a manifesto for the association and finally P. Kesava Dev was entrusted with the responsibility to prepare a draft of the manifesto.\textsuperscript{113} Regarding the Communist leadership of the literary conference, Thakazhi Sivasankara Pillai stated: “We have to accept the fact that the Communist Party has a good conviction on how to make use of the literature and writers.”\textsuperscript{114}

It was the time of the Second World War and the anti-Fascist movements of the Communists. Naturally, the speeches of most of the participants echoed the need for an anti-Jap and anti-Fascist voices from the writers. Some of orators praised the Soviet Union as a hopeful land, which gives expectation for a better future.\textsuperscript{115} All these were criticized by a group and considered it as a part of Communist propaganda. While concluding the debate, M.P. Paul said that “viewing all these through the eyes of human progress, which is the aim of the Progressive Literary Association, all these were important for this context and could not consider as a part of Communist propaganda.”\textsuperscript{116}

The conference elected M.P. Paul as the President of the Progressive Literary Association of Kerala and also elected C. Achutha Kurup and P. Kesava Dev as its secretaries. The conference accepted the constitution and added the following as its aims:

(a) To produce and translate literature of progressive character;
(b) To conduct struggle against the reactionary powers and promote freedom and literary advancement;
(c) To establish a close connection with art and literature to the life of common people and its realities;
(d) To develop an attitude of literary criticism, which obstructs the reactionary tendencies and promote progressive thoughts; and
(e) To fight for the freedom of expression and protect the interests of the progressive writers.\textsuperscript{117}

This conference inaugurated the second stage of the Kerala’s Progressive Writers’ Association.

**Progressive Writers’ Conferences**

It was in the period of great progress in the progressive literary movement, that the second conference of the Progressive Writers’ Association was held a Kottayam on May 29 and 30, 1945.\textsuperscript{118} At this time writers like N.V. Krishna Warrier, S. Guptan Nair and Nagavalli R.S. Kurup also participated with this movement. The conference was inaugurated by Hareendranath Chathopadyaya and presided over by Changampuzha Krishna Pillai. M.P. Paul was assigned with the welcome speech and in his speech, he stated that: “the progressive literature was developed from the consciousness that literature have an inseparable relation with the human life, which spread in the all spheres of communal body and is not only the reflection of the life but also an important member of it.”\textsuperscript{119}

Harindranath’s inaugural speech stressed the role of the great literature to reconstruct the human history in a new way. He said that: “the intention of art and literature is to give necessary power for action, otherwise it stay as a merely dead one. Art is an unseperatable part of human life and a real artist is a brave active soldier.... A writer should take inspiration from the miserable life of the common people.”\textsuperscript{120} Further he pointed out the controversy over the writers’ intervention in the political matter and commented that: “I think this is foolishness to say that the writers did not touch the
political matters. Today nobody can lead a life without any kind of political relationship. So it is meaningless to say to exclude political matters from the portrayal of human life.\textsuperscript{121}

Changampuzha started his speech with an evaluation of Malayalam literature and stated that “the roots of inspiration to the writers lie in the whole life of the common people.”\textsuperscript{122} He estimated that two groups existing in the present society – a group of oppressors and a group of oppressed, and asked the writers “Which group you belong to?” He pointed out that “the writer should be a humanist and he should take part with the side of the common people and struggle against injustice and violence. The first and foremost aim of the Progressive Writer’s Association was to remind this duty to the writers.”\textsuperscript{123} Changampuzha placed the Communist Party as a Party, “based on an economic ideology focused on human virtue and progress, and working in a dedicated and active manner with a view to brought a new social order, which leads to world peace and brotherhood. Its only aim is to promote human virtue.” And commented that “if it is trying to propagate its ideologies through the Progressive Writers’ Association, we couldn’t blame on it”\textsuperscript{124} While concluding his speech he remarked that: “Nobody produces artistic works for their own happiness. As a social animal, a writer’s literary production should be aimed at the realization of his objective or propaganda. The literary works of all ages and all nations, in one way or other propagated some ideologies among the people. Hence the duty of art and artists should be the cultural progress of human community.”\textsuperscript{125}

Kuttipuzha Krishna Pillai, G. Mundassery, T.N. Gopinathan Nair, R.S. Kurup and Ponkunnam Varkey were also participated in this conference. The speeches delivered by
the participants in this conference were printed and published in 1946 entitled “Purogamana Sahityam Enthinu”.\textsuperscript{126} As the Secretary of the PWA, Ponkunnam Varkey wrote an introduction to this book. In this he stated that: “A real artist could not be blind to his surroundings. He will not become a cowardly person, who fears to portray the political matters and even the imprisonment. He should draw inspiration from the people and should become the producer of inspiration to the people.” Finally he exhorted the writers:

“Rise up your pen!
It is sharper than the sword.
O! The throbs of revolution!
Blow like a tempest
To the roots of injustice.”\textsuperscript{127}

During the course of the period this book created much debates in the literary arena of Kerala and a number of works criticizing the Progressive Literary Movement also appeared. Thus, this conference became a milestone in the history of literary movement in Malayalam. A number of new writers emerged and it resulted in the publication of a number of progressive literary works in Malayalam.

But soon the circumstances began to change and the national freedom struggle movements created violent clashes in Vayalar, Punnapra, Karivalloor, Kavumbai and Golden Rock regions of Kerala. In this period to become a member of Progressive Writers’ Association and a progressive writer was not safe like in the past. Thus in order to give a theoretical and ideological perspective to the movement, the Communists issued a leaflet entitled “Purogamana Sahityam Purogamikkan”.\textsuperscript{128} K. Damodaran, M.S.
Devadas, C. Achutha Kurup, E.M.S. Namboodiripad, K.K. Warrier and C. Unniraja were the authors of this leaflet. Through this, they separately analyzed the questions, ‘what is progressive’ and ‘what is literature’ and thereby gave a new definition to the progressive literature. It asked the writers to accept the new programme as a part of mass revolutionary movement. The important shift introduced in this document regarding the ideology of the Progressivism was, as E.M.S. wrote in several times; (1) Politics is the heart of progressivism and (2) Imperialistic domination is the basic cause for all kinds of social injustices and all progressive institutions are the part of the struggle against the imperialistic domination. This leaflet created an ideological division among the progressive writers and Joseph Mundassery wrote a critical note on this and published it in the Mangalodayam. It was in this circumstances, the Progressive Writers’ Association called its Thrissur conference in 1948.

The Thrissur conference was inaugurated by Dr. Mulk Raj Anand and it was presided over by M.P. Paul. The Communist writers prepared a new manifesto for the PWA and presented it. The manifesto stated: “Today we are witnessing the growth of class struggle everywhere in Kerala. The peasants, workers and middle classes started their journey towards freedom, democracy and socialism. On the other hand, with the support of the colonial white chiefs, the jenmi – capitalist classes are trying to suppress this movement with gun and lathi. In this struggle, which side the progressive writer took part? Whether in the democratic front of the common people or in the frantic front of the reactionary classes? The first one was the front of strikes, renunciation and the ultimate victory and the second one was the front of short term victorious men, who pledged their heads to the reactionaries and finally become the victims of insult from all the people.”
The manifesto criticized most of the magazines, weeklies and newspapers for their support to the reactionaries and also for carrying anti-socialist and anti-Communist propaganda. Regarding the emerging controversies among the progressive writers, it evaluated that the reactionary tendencies propagated by these channels also made some interventions in the PWA. The Manifesto pointed the following as the progressive social principles:

(i) A new democracy consisted of the ending of *jenmi* system and the nationalization of large scale industries;

(ii) Stern and constant struggle against the medieval *Naduvazhi* customs such as autocracy of native rulers, untouchability, unapproachability and bondage of women;

(iii) Protection to the minorities; Strengthen socialism based on democratic nationalism and class structure against all religious and communal fanaticism;

(iv) Progressive mass literacy; Modern scientific knowledge against superstitious beliefs; and

(v) Opposition to the world colonialist’s front; Friendship towards socialist-democratic forces.\(^{132}\)

For the realization of these principles, the manifesto stated that: “We shall join any of the progressive political party of our own choice to conduct fruitful struggles for the realization of these principles. We believe that we also have the freedom to stand as independent. Though we are official members of parties or not, we understand that, we
are a part of the democratic front which is led by the parties and persons, who lead the struggles for a progressive united Kerala.”

M.P. Paul, who presided over the conference opposed this manifesto and commented that “it doesn’t seem to be a manifesto of the writers. It seems like the manifesto of the cultural front of a political party.” Thus the manifesto did not get acceptance. Thus this conference resulted in the emergence of separatism in the organization. The controversy over art for art’s sake also created this kind of separatism.

**Ideological Difference and Break Up of the Movement**

After, the Thrissur conference of the Progressive Writers, in which the Communists presented revised manifesto, the Communist and non-Communist progressive writers who collaborated in the pre-1947 period fell out with one another and the non-Communist writers took up anti-Communist positions on a number of issues. Some of the arguments advanced by them against the Communist Party and Communist writers were: (i) Communism is relevant in the economic and political fields, but not in the field of art and literature; (ii) Communist writers, in their anxiety to incorporate progressive content, failed to pay attention to the beauty of the form of literature; (iii) the Communist Party was trying to impose on the writers an iron military discipline which destroys the aesthetic refinements of the writers; so on and so forth.

From the Communist side, E.M.S. Namboodiripad, rejected all these criticisms and pointed out that, “the main weakness of the stand adopted by the non-Communist theoreticians of literature consists in their blindness to the fact that, the history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles. Freeman and slave, patrician and
plebeian, lord and serf, guild-master and journeyman, in a word, oppressor and oppressed, stood in constant opposition to one another, carried on an uninterrupted, now hidden, now open fight, a fight that each time ended, either in a revolutionary reconstitution of society at large, or in the common ruin of the contending classes... Our epoch, the epoch of the bourgeoisie, possesses, however, this distinctive feature: it has simplified the class antagonisms. Society as a whole is more and more splitting up into two great hostile camps, into two great classes directly faces each other: Bourgeoisie and Proletariat."\(^{136}\)

In the Communist’s view, the impact of the class struggle is all-pervasive. It touches every aspect of human life, individual as well as collective. In some aspects of human life, the reality of class struggle is apparent and cannot be concealed. Such, for instance, are the directly economic questions of wages and profits, rent, interest and prices, and so on, where the tenant and landlord, the worker and capitalist, the creditor and debtor, and so on, fight their battles openly and before everybody. There are, however, several other aspects of human life where class struggle is more hidden. Such are the fields of art and literature, together with philosophy, religion, science and technology, and so on. Many of the ideas and theories may appear to be totally unconnected with any class and, therefore, above class struggle. Closer examination would, however, show that behind the apparently ‘above class’ character of these ideas, theories, art forms, etc is the reality of class struggle which is, in one way or another, reflected even in the greatest works of art and literature.

On the other hand, the non-Communist writers held that the Communist writers did commit the mistake of trying to find a direct and mechanical connection between the
economic and political struggle of the working people and the creative production of the literary workers. They argued that the aesthetic quality of a work of art is something independent of, and standing above, the economic and political struggles of the working people. In this way, the Communists emphasized only the economic and political manifestations of the mass struggle, while the non-Communists put excessive reliance on the creative talent of the individual artist.

On the attitude of the non-Communists, the Communists even evaluated that “the attempts of the non-Communist theoreticians of literature to put literature in isolation from the economic and political struggles of the working people, their accusation of ‘Communist domination’ in the Progressive Writers’ movement-these were the reflection of the cold war propaganda internationally and the Congress-sponsored anti-Communist offensive nationally.” 137

These differences developed into a furious public controversy which took over political dimensions. The literary and philosophical attacks on Communists coincided with the reign of terror unleashed by the Congress governments against the Communists and the mass movements led by them. From underground shelters and under pseudonyms, Communists hit back at their detractors. The bloody clashes which took place in various centers in Kerala like Kavumbai, Munayankunnu, Padikunnu, Pariyaram, Onchiam and the heroic tales of the Thelengana struggle gave a particularly sharp edge to the spirited response of the Communists. 138 The political line of the CPI adopted at the 2nd Congress at Calcutta which was later to be given up as sectarian, rendered a self-righteous tone to the Communists repartees. All these led to a split in the PWA in 1949 and some of the highly respected supporters and leaders of the movement such as critics
M.P. Paul and Joseph Mundassery, creative writers like Thakazhi Sivasankara Pillai and P. Kesava Dev crossed over the fence to the other side and Communists and their close associates were isolated. E.M.S. along with a band of talented Marxists like M.S. Devadas, C. Unniraja, K.K. Warrier and others put up a stiff fight on behalf of the Marxists. Though the Communists’ position was flawed on a number of points the controversy was not a futile exercise.

In the meantime the fourth Progressive Writers’ Conference was held at Kollam during the first week of the May 1949 and most of the Communist writers did not participate in it. The conference was inaugurated by K.A. Abbas. In his inaugural speech he stressed the need for unity among the progressive writers and commented that “Today’s need is to establish a united front comprised of all the progressive sections, which stands for peace and a socialist order.” In the later stage of this conference, a controversy emerged over the membership issue. One group held the view to give membership only for the writers and the other group led by the Communist held the opinion to give membership for all those who are interested in the literary matters. The proposal of the Communist led writers was rejected and this caused the boycott of the Communist group. It was the beginning of an official split in the organization.

Then the Communist writers, who supported the Calcutta Thesis of the Party, organized a Progressive Writers’ Conference at Thrissur during December 1949 and it was presided over by Kishan Chand. It was a new beginning and a number of young writers now joined their hands with the Communist ideology. Writers, who later emerged in the forefront of Malayalam literary field such as O.N.V. Kurup, Vayalar Ramavarma, D.M. Pottekkatt and others came in the Communist writers’ front through this
conference. This conference asked the writers that besides writing progressive literatures which exhorts social progress, “directly intervene the struggles aimed at social progress in order to attain intensive personal experiences to write progressive literature.”\(^{140}\) The conference redefined the progressive literature as “a literature which gives readiness and enthusiasm for the struggle for a socialist order and also for the struggle against the oppressions and injustice which prevailing in the society.”\(^{141}\) It was termed by the other writers as *Poruthunna Sahityam* (Fighting Literature). The conference urged the writers to produce literary works by adopting the socialist realist method.\(^{142}\)

Apart from the overt political controversies between the Communists and non-Communists, there emerged two continuous issues which were more of a literary character than political. The first of these, as we saw earlier was around the slogan of “Art for Art’s sake”. Though the controversy subsided to a large extent by 1943-44, when the PWA was reorganized with the widest possible participation of writers of different political and ideological persuasions, some points still remained unresolved. The post-independence period, and especially 1950s brought in a number of Marxist classics and writing on Marxist aesthetics by authors like Christopher Caudwell, Ralf Fox, Georgy Lukacs and others. All these helped E.M.S. and other Marxist critics to deepen their understanding of literary issues. Armed with these new insights and enriched by the experience of literary activism of about a decade and half, E.M.S. introduced some new ideas in Malayalam literary criticism. These may be summarized in his own following words:
“That literary production should have a social ideal to realize, that the writer should write with the objective of social progress – all these are incontrovertible. But the problem is not resolved by asserting this alone, because, there are great men and women of letters in world literature, who were not conscious of the ideals, which emerge out of their creations. But the creations of many of them directly serve the cause of social progress. But when they were composing their works they may not have been conscious of any such ideals. On the contrary, there are instances of writers who were subjectively holding views opposing social progress but wrote works which went against their subjective predictions.”

The second important issue which in the late forties and early fifties led to furious controversies was about the relative primacy of ‘form and content’. The Left-wingers in the movement with E.M.S. at its head argued for the primacy of content over form. Though in his landmark article in 1937 E.M.S. took a judicious and balanced position with regard to the question of form and content, his articles from underground with the pseudonym “P.S.”, tended to take an extreme position on the decisive role of content in a work of art. The opponents under the captainship of Prof. Joseph Mundassery who was later to be the Education Minister in the first E.M.S. Ministry, and a powerful supporter of PWA, and the Communist movement, took an equally extreme position on ‘form’. He coined the phrase Roopa Bhadrata as against Bhava Bhadrata, “Perfect Form” and “Perfect Content” respectively. The controversy, quoting “chapter and verse” by both sides raged on for months and years.
Meanwhile, the non-Communist writers organized a meeting at Kottayam under the president ship of M.P. Paul. This committee formed a new literary organization called Purogamana Sahitya Samiti.\textsuperscript{146} Thus the All Kerala Progressive Writers’ Association became two separate organizations. Subsequent years witnessed the ideological battle through the writings and it was mainly conducted through the publications such as Lokavani, Purogathi, Pravaham, Desabhimani, Mangalodayam and Communist.\textsuperscript{147} A number of books were published by the ideological supporters of two groups in order to clarify their stands. Joseph Mundassery published a book entitled Roopa Bhadrata and V.T. Induchoodan, who was the convener of the Art and Literary Committee under the State Committee of the Communist Party, published a book entitled Art and Marxism.\textsuperscript{148} E.M.S. and M.S. Devadas, who were in underground, also wrote articles by giving other names.

In 1950, once again the Communist writers took efforts to create a unity among the writers and they issued a statement aimed at the rejoining of the Progressive Writer’s Associations. A statement was jointly issued by C. Achutha Kurup, Induchoodan, D.M. Pottekkatt and P. Raman Menon and entitled as “Thettippirinja Aikya Munnani” (The Separated United Front).\textsuperscript{149} N.V. Krishna Warrier wrote a reply to this statement and pointed out a common suggestion that: “the writer should be given freedom in his creative activity and he should not work under the control or obligation of a political party.”\textsuperscript{150} From the Communist side, M.S. Devadas responded to this through an article wrote by using the name M.B. Menon and entitled as “Purogamana Sahitya Aikya Munnaniyum Rashtreeya Karyangalum” (Progressive Literary United Front and Political Affairs) and pointed out that, “in the matter of progressive literature, it was possible to
establish unity, while disunity was prevailed in political matters. He also made a self-critical evaluation and hoped to create a united front of Progressive Writers.”\textsuperscript{151} At this time, Mundassery wrote a note to welcome the initiatives for creating unity among the progressive writers, in which he stated that “the urgent responsibility of the progressivists is to unite oppose the reactionary opinions and interests which create barricades to people’s progress.... If there were no difference of opinions regarding the realization of people’s interests for a political justice which formed out of a socialist order, then a united fight could be established among the progressive writers.”\textsuperscript{152}

In this unity of opinions, the progressive writers assembled at Ernakulam in 1954 and prepared a draft manifesto, based on interdependence, democratic belief and socialist aim. Then a conference was arranged at Kottayam and they accepted this manifesto for the later activism. Though in the next year a conference was held at Edappally under the president ship of G. Sanakara Pillai, the organization did not last longer.

Though it was an inter-conflicting period, PWA contributed a number of writers to Malayalam literary scenario. Writers such as O.N.V. Kurup, Vayalar Ramavarma, Thirunelloor Karunakaran, Ponkunnam Damodaran, D.M. Pottekkatt, Puthussery Ramachandran, P.J. Antony and Eroor Vasudev came in the forefront of the Malayalam literature with their powerful writings, which drew inspiration from the Progressive Writers’ Movement.
END NOTES


7. The Proceedings of the Congress were published straight away in a substantial volume (later reprinted in 1990, Moscow) and a selection of the speeches was even brought out in English the following year as *Problems of Soviet Literature*; a


30. We can see some significant differences in the manifesto appeared in the *Hans* and *Left Review* versions. For a comparative study on these versions, Vide, Carlo Coppola, *op.cit.*, pp.9-12.

31. Gide was the translator of Tagore’s *Gitanjali*, Barbusse assisted Evelyn Roy, wife of the then-deported Communist organizer M.N. Roy, to form the Committee Pro-Hindu to agitate for a reversal of the expulsion order from France, Rolland’s
interest in India is eloquently evidenced by his books on Ramakrishna and Vivekananda and also his association with Tagore and Gandhi. Though Malraux did not then have a direct connection with India, his interest in Asia and the struggle between and among Fascism, Communism and imperialism is evident from his writings.

32. This speech is printed under this English title in *Life and Letters*, September 1935, pp.12-18, trans., by Edmund Stevens. It also appeared in *International Literature*, 10, 1935, Moscow, pp.81-85. In the *Left Review*, 1, 1935, pp.447-452, it is titled “The Individual”.

33. Ibid.


35. Ibid.

36. Ibid.


41. Vide, the full-text of the Presidential Address of Prem Chand delivered in the First All-India Progressive Writers’ Conference, under the caption “The Nature and Purpose of Literature” in Sudhi Pradhan, *op.cit.*, pp.52-59.


44. Vide, the full-text of the Manifesto and Resolutions in Appendix VII.


46. Vide, the full-text of the constitution adopted by the First All-India Progressive Writers’ Conference in Appendix VIII.

47. *File No.41/17/36*, Home, Political, 1936, NA, New Delhi. Vide Appendix IX.


The other names put forward as the translation for Progressive Writers’ Association was, *Udyal Sahityam, Purogamana Sahityam, Puroga Sahityam, Mun Nokki Sahityam*, etc.

E. Sardarkutty, *op.cit.*, p.50.


71. *Fortnightly Report*, October and November 1939, KSA, Thiruvananthapuram. The report for the second half of October 1939 says “Malabar had the greatest number of anti-war speeches”.


73. R. Ramachandran Nair, *op.cit.*, p.43.


82. Ibid.
83. Ibid.
84. Ibid.
86. Vide, the copies of these leaflets in *Ibid*.
87. *File No.695/44*, KSA, Thiruvananthapuram. Vide Appendix XI.
90. *File No.321/44/C.S.*, KSA, Thiruvananthapuram. Vide, the Party Letter No.18 issued by the Kerala Branch of the Indian Communist Party regarding different fractions and assigned leaders in Extract from the weekly report dated 10-9-43. Vide Appendix XII.
91. *File No.289/44/C.S.*, KSA, Thiruvananthapuram. The Inspector General of the Police to the Chief Secretary to Government, The Inspector General of the Police reported that in the guise of these activities, the Communists have been doing propaganda work. Vide Appendix XIII.
93. *File No.289/44/C.S.*, KSA, Thiruvananthapuram. The Inspector General of the Police to the Chief Secretary to Government. Vide Appendix XIII.


97. *File No.169/44/C.S.*, KSA, Thiruvananthapuram. Copy of the booklet “Food Songs”. Vide Appendix XIV.


104. *File No.289/44/C.S.*, KSA, Thiruvananthapuram. The Inspector General of the Police to the Chief Secretary to Government. Vide Appendix XIII.


107. On 10th October 1943, Govindankutty Nair wrote an article entitled “Purogamana Sahityam” (Mal), in which he criticized the movement towards an association of


112. P.G. Govinda Pillai, states that, it was at the instance of E.M.S. Namboodiripad, the name of the organization was changed into *Purogamana Sahitya Sangham* (Progressive Writers Association). Vide, his article “E.M.S as a Literary Critic and Cultural Activist”, *The Marxist*, Vol. 14, No. 01-02, January-June 1998.


118. E. Sardarkutty, *op.cit.*, p.56.


121. Ibid., p.86.

122. Ibid., p.87.

123. Ibid.

124. Ibid., p.88.

125. Ibid.

126. E. Sardarkutty, op.cit., p.57.


128. Ibid.


130. Vide, the note in Mangalodayam, Vol.8, No.22, 1121 Vrischikam (ME).

131. The Notification presented before the Progressive Writers’ Conference held at Thrissur in 1948. Vide Appendix XVI.

132. Ibid.

133. Ibid.

134. E. Sardarkutty, op.cit., p.59.


136. Ibid.

137. Ibid.

138. P. Govinda Pillai, op.cit.


143. P. Govinda Pillai, *op.cit.*


147. E. Sardarkutty, *op.cit.*, p.61. Unfortunately all the documents regarding this controversy are unavailable.


