1. MYSTICISM

The great periods of artistic and cultural activities have always produced great poets of mystical outlook on Nature and life. The fourteenth century had a great mystic in Dante. When the Renaissance and Humanism opened a new epoch, Italy had its own metaphysical 1 like Pico della Mirandola. All this happens, as if, at the end of all perfection of every great period, the mystic "snatches the torch and carries it on".

Mysticism is as old as religion. Historically it has its association with the Indian Rishis who lived and moved and had their being in the spiritual consciousness. The Sanskrit language which was moulded and fashioned by them, gave the first revelation of mystical experience, the attempt of the individual soul to realise the presence of God. The Hebrew or even the Zoroastrian 2 does not seem to have the

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1. **MYSTICISM**

The great periods of artistic and cultural activities have always produced great poets of mystical outlook on Nature and life. The fourteenth century had a great mystic in Dante. When the Renaissance and Humanism opened a new epoch, Italy had its mystics, and in England the metaphysicals like Donne and Vaughan appeared. All this happens, as if, at the end and perfection of every great period, the mystic "snatches the torch and carries it on".

With the arrival of Christianity, the history of mystical experience in England, enriched both life and literature alike.

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the absoluteness of spiritual tone which is inherent in the Indian languages.

Some of the most profound forms of mystical thought are to be found in the Upanishads. Mysticism is the keynote of the great hymn of Krishna, the Bhāgavat Gītā. Buddha taught some of the highest forms of mystical discipline to attain 'Nirvana'. Two centuries later Plato's Dialogues gave us some of the most sublime thoughts about the relation of the human soul with God. Later Plotinus carried Plato's philosophy to its mystical conclusion. Between Plato and Plotinus had come the new revelation of Christ, which gave to Europe some of its greatest mystics. With the arrival of Christianity the history of mystical experience in England, enriched both life and literature alike.

Pseudo Dionysius was the first to apply the word mysticism to Christian experience of God in his great treatise Mystical Theology. The mystic is defined in C. E. D. as "one who seeks by contemplation and self-surrender to obtain union with or absorption into the Deity or who..."

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believes in spiritual apprehension of truths inaccessible to the understanding". In Creative Intuition in Arts and Poetry & Jacques Maritain draws a distinction between poetic experience and mystical experience. They are distinct in nature. Poetic experience is concerned with the created world and the enigmatic and innumerable relations of beings with each other. Mystical experience deals with the principle of things in their incomprehensible and supermundane unity. Mystical experience tends towards silence and es termination in an immanent fusion with the absolute. The mystic can be of two types, the religious mystic and the philosopher mystic, although often the two are welded together. Deen Inge has admirably defined the scope and nature of religious mysticism as "the attempt to realise, the presence of the living God in the soul and in Nature, or more generally as the attempt to realise in thought and feeling, the immanence of the temporal in the eternal, and of the eternal in the temporal".

"The religious poet seeks to tone down or cover up the mundane taint, since he does not know how to transcend it totally (1) by a strong thought element, the metaphysical way (2) by a strong symbolism, the occult way". 4 The first

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course is followed by John Donne, the 17th Century metaphysical poet. William Blake in the 18th Century took the second way. It is the alchemy brought to bear in either of these processes that transforms the merely religious into the mystic poet. It was in his Songs of Innocence that Blake first showed the mystical cast of his mind. Their underlying theme is the all-pervading presence of divine love and sympathy, even in trouble and sorrow. The powerfully pregnant lines from his Auguries of Innocence are mystical/philosophic.

To see a world in a grain of sand
And a Heaven in a wild flower,
Hold Infinity in the palm of your hand
And Eternity in an hour.

Blake had the wonderful gift of transmuting the baser metal of mundane experience into the gold of a deep mystic and spiritual experience.

"The root of mysticism is", says Gerald Bullett, "an experience, in greater or less degree an ecstatic one. It is a feeling rather than thought (though coloured by thought); not a 'mere' feeling, not a sentimental or fanciful feeling, but a spiritual sensation as real and concrete as hunger and.

thirst, and one in which a man's whole being is engaged....

.....something distantly approaching it is perhaps experienced at moments by nearly all sensitive people when they find themselves alone with

"The silence that is in the starry sky,
The sleep that is among the lonely hills"5

Among the poets of the 19th Century who enriched the mystic approach we could reckon most of the great Romantics and Tennyson and Browning among the Victorians. Miss Underhill maintains "that the apprehension of the Infinite life immanent in all living things by poets like Shelley, Wordsworth, Tennyson and Browning is a form of mysticism, but when this power is raised to its 'highest denomination', and 'faith has vanished into sight' then 'we reach the point at which the mystic swallows up the poet',6 And then the poet becomes the mystic.

Wordsworth who came to regard Nature as a source of his religion 'the visible embodiment of God' reveals that here:

All have the same faculties, but, while the first live only in the surface of things, the last live always the whole of that universe about of which the natural world is only an appearance.
Nor, less I trust,
To whom I may have owed another gift,
Until the breath of this corporeal frame
And even the motion of our human blood
Almost suspended, we are laid asleep
In body, and become a living soul.

A casual reading of Tintern Abbey, Immortality Ode and The Prelude convinces one of the deep and consistent tendency in Wordsworth to embody in his poetry mystic pre-
ception that compels the reader to take a pause and lose himself in pondering. For him matter of the universe was but the venture of a great and indwelling spiritual power in Nature. He is not a mere mystic, but a poet of a high order. He is most convincingly poetical when he is most truly mystical.

The great German mystic Boehme made a distinction between different degrees of human development which may be usefully recalled in attempting to judge both life and contemporary literature. He compares the world to such a fruit as a plum or an apple and says of its inhabitants that some are rind-men, some pulp-men and others are kernel-
men. All have the same faculties, but, while the first have delicate taste, a more acute sensitiveness, and a sense of live only in the surface of things, the last have got into touch with the central life within.' 7

7. A.R. Reade, Main Currents in Modern Literature, p.106.
A survey of Malayalam poetry of the New Age shows that the pulp-men are more in evidence than the kernel-men with a greater understanding of life. The result is a marked absence of mystic consciousness in a great deal of it. The emergence of a poet like G. Sankara Kurup, with a definite mystic apprehension, in the Age, therefore, assumes great importance. Mysticism is not new in Malayalam poetry. It has its heritage in the Sanskrit language, rich in its mysticism. Yet at a time, when the unity which the mystic seeks and finds in the inner world of reality was being denied again and again in the outerworld, it was G. Sankara Kurup who gave a lead for the rest in the language, in a big way, as a mystical writer. In this pioneering work, he has been influenced by Indian and English writers. Assimilating the rich culture of India and the most familiar aspects of English thought in the 19th Century popular to English Romantic poets, he introduced in Malayalam poetry a new mystical conception.

It is not merely by addressing one's beloved as Goddess that one attains mysticism. A finer temper, a more delicate touch, a more subtle sensitiveness, and a kind of esoteric wizardry are necessary to tune the body into a rhythm
of the spirit. The other line of mysticism is common enough, that is to express the spirit in terms of the rhythms of the flesh. Tagore did this literally and this is the way in which G. Sankara Kurup also followed. Tagore brought the spirit nearer to our planet, close to human consciousness, being clothed in earth, and flesh and blood, made vivid with the colours and contours of the physical existence. So Tagore boldly declared: "Mine is not the deliverance achieved through mere renunciation. Mine rather the freedom that tastes itself in a thousand associations".

It is in this vein that G. Sankara Kurup seeks in his poems a new intensity of vision and emotion, a mystic inwardsness that catches alive the deepest rhythms of the spirit.

In his most famous poem Odakkuzhal (The Flute) the poet is conceived as flute and the Divine Singer of the world dwells within it as music. But for that presence, the flute will be mute. The poet says:

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This frial figure,
Left in unknown land
To wither unseen;
Was turned into a reed
By your benign grace
Full of your breath
The reed of my being
Is vibrant with life.
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8. G. Sankara Kurup, The Bamboo Flute, Translation V.V. Menon; Mazhilp. p. 15.
In *Niss Geetham* (The Song of the Night), the night (i.e., life) gazes at the sky (i.e., the holy spirit) thrilled by its mystery and finds the same wondrous attitude in all material forms. This trance-like absorption of the temporal in the eternal is in the poet's own words:

> Each blade of grass and each mountain peak Rapt in amazement, gaze and gaze at you.

As the song continues, the night experiences this rapture, this light and glory flooding it from every side. The celestial penetrates, as it were, into the soul of things and makes the unclean and the ugly throb and glow.

The mystic poet often reveals a wistful melancholy. The desire of the 'moth for the star, of the night for the morrow' stimulates the poet's soul. It is this hungering after eternity that makes the poet dissatisfied with the show of life. G. Sankara Kurup echoes this discontent in the last lines of *Niss Geetham*:

> Change O! God this crude metal of my life That is stained, into a shining copper plate.

Another poem that reveals G. Sankara Kurup's mystic outlook is *Nadee Geethi* (The Song of the River). Here, again,

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9. Translation, cf. the Original Text at the end, No.31.
10. Translation, cf. the Original Text at the end, No.32.
what we find is the identification of the lower with the higher. The River (representing mortal life) on its long and circuitous course, hopes to embrace in the end, the vast and boundless ocean (the Immortal). The poet believes that this universe is the expression of a completeness and from this faith grew his mystic faith in Nature.

That embrace and the fusion
Is perfection infinite
Its joy, how beyond words.11

In another poem Sakshalkaram (The Fulfilment) a dew-drop minna mirrors the infinite deeps of space, becomes a miniature edition, however transiently, of the entire Universe. The tiny dew-drop addresses the infinite sky in a buoyant ecstasy of rhythm which infects the reader as well.

what if my life be transcient,
For it gave me the vision divine.12

The essence of the poem is the quest of the mystic of the unseen, unknown, and the infinite from the seen, known and the finite.

The earliest dream of humanity is also the last fulfilment. The Vedic Rishis sang of the marriage of heaven

11. Translation. cf. the Original Text at the end, No.33.
12. Translation. cf. the Original Text at the end, No.34.
and earth - Heaven is my father and this Earth, my mother. William Blake was also a fiery apostle of that dream.

The Marriage of Heaven and Hell is considered to be the high water mark of Blake's intellect. The Hell, he explains, is simply the body, the energy of life. It is not merely with earth - the sense and life and matter that are to be uplifted and affienced to Heaven, but all that remains hidden in the bowels of the Earth - all these have to be laid bare to the solar gaze of Heaven, burnt or transmuted as demanded by the law of that supreme Will.

The theme of Sankara Kurup's poem Kante Veli (My Marriage) is the ultimate union of the Heaven and the Earth. Instead of the conventional symbols, the poet, taking after Tagore, conceives here of the marriage of the poet with 'Death' - not the ordinary spirit of death but the new spirit, that is the 'incarnation of Love', the very hand of Heaven itself. It has come to the earth to purify and transubstantiate every thing here into the spirit of Heaven.

The Mighty one Never allows any one, Once conducted to His home, To visit her Native land Again A pity. None returns to tell Whether the harem Is Heaven or Hell.

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Kante Veili and Blake's poem *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* both illustrate with sustained power the drama of the soul's resistance to the heavenly wooing and its final surrender.

G's images are drawn from the grandest moods of Nature, and often have a cosmic quality. One of his recently published poems *Viswadarpanam* (1959) (*The Cosmic Panorama*) is an attempt to take a peep into the 'Great Beyond', the eternal, ever-unfolding, intensely bewitching universe only dimly conceived by the most advanced of physical sciences and to come face to face with the indefinable, creative impulse which lies at its root. One quiet night under a star-filled sky, the eyes of the poet are lost in the mazes of the infinite. He struggles hard to retrieve them, but cannot do so ........... until he realises that, he must surrender his very heart to that cosmic mystery. It is a great and splendid experience, recounted in great and splendid terms - a matchless adventure of the soul which demands for its expression the most exalted imagery to which the human imagination can attain. The poem reveals 'G' as an outstanding example of the practical mystic. He moves with equal sureness in the inner realms and in the realm of appearance. The Nature imagery and the religious imagery are both triumphantly used;
My imagination, soaring delightedly,
Lights upon that inflorescence,
The Milky way,
From there, a flower stalk shoots forth;
It's flower, the Sun,
Around its pistils of rain bow colours,
The earth hovers, a butterfly.14.

Now the great pictures are conjured up in the poet's imagination.

Naturalism and mysticism both find a good expression in some of Sankara Kurup's poem. On the naturalistic side he deals with the simplest phases of life, with the love of flowers, hills, streams, the blue sky and the brooding stars, and yet "the mystical vision of the poet is always always transforming these familiar things touching obscure aspects, and spiritualising the veriest commonplace into something strange and wonderful".

2. SYMBOLISM

In his thoughtful study The Heritage of Symbolism, C.M. Bowra affirms that the Symbolist movement was fundamentally mystical. The symbolist habit was linking of everything.

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else. Inevitably symbolic poetry is obscure; but the
obscenity is neither the result of carelessness nor does
it result from a perverse desire to mystify or
confuse the reader; it is apparently the very condition
under which such a revelation can be given to a society
that is steadily acquiescing and steadily increasing both
in subjectivity and materialism. It is addressed not to the
many who are perpetually in a hurry, but to the few who are
prepared to see the symbol behind the word, and the world behind
the symbol.

Symbolism is derived from *Symballein*, a Greek word
which means to throw together. The essential quality of a
symbol is therefore the drawing together of the two worlds
it presents, the concrete material world of roses and stars
and the otherwise invisible world revealed through them.

In the broadest use of the term, a symbol is something

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1. Some symbols are conventional or public. eg: The Cross, the
rose etc. Their symbolic meanings are widely known. Some
poets use private symbols which are not widely known, a
usually by elaborating pre-existing associations of an object
which they develop for themselves and these set a more diffi-
cult problem. In his *Four Quarters* Eliot makes constant
use of the symbols of the Fire and the Rose. The *vindicative but
purgative*; the *vindicative symbolises* The first symbolises God's
judgement or wrath, which is not vindictive but purgative; the
other symbolises human achievement which reaches its supreme
height in the perfect man Jesus Christ.
standing for something else. Smoke is a symbol of fire; a flag is a symbol of a country. When the symbol is used as a literary figure it is more than an artificial or arbitrary sign. A symbol is itself a member of the class which it represents. The terms Symbol and Symbolism are generally employed either when there is a set or cluster of images of a similar kind in a literary work or when the image is used on an extended scale to represent a complex meaning. A symbol is given usual stress perhaps by repetition within the literary work, or from one of the author's works to another, and so it is highly potent, richly suggestive. It is this stress, this dwelling-on that distinguishes the symbol from the metaphor. The user of the metaphor says 'My love is a red rose' or 'My rose', but he is writing about his love. The symbolist Blake is writing about a rose:

O Rose, thou art sick
The invisible worm
That flies in the night
In the howling storm.

A rose which stirs a train of thought about the destruction brought about by the furtiveness, deceit and hypocrisy too—which is thus a rose and something more than a mere rose.

If an image is used in a poem as a separate identity it is not most probably a symbol. On the plane of independent
images we get symbolic, allegorical and emblematic images.
The first is an identity sufficient unto itself. The second, though apparently independent, is equated to a concept; yet in its activity is given some freedom its characteristics and motives being those concerned with that concept. The third, while being apparently free, is bound in dependence to either an arbitrarily decided moral or lesson, or to a definite comparison. We shall do wrong if we think of symbols as single poetic images, used to obtain some literary effect; a rather symbol is a language in each of whose parts a whole is implied, and each symbol in some measure makes known to us that whole, as a whole, and in its wholeness.

Symbolism is a very old convention in literature. It is precisely the visionary poets who best know how to make use of the traditional language of symbols. Living imagination alone has the key to the meaning of tradiotional symbols and the greater our imaginative insight the greater our understanding of these is likely to become. Those who are familar with the universal language of symbolic discourse immediately recognise the symbol; while those on the contrary, who do not know may may read even Shelley's Ode to the West Wind under the impression that its images are merely descriptive of material appearances. Spenser's Faerie World, Milton's Paradise, Shelley's River Journeys in
light-sailed boats, Blake's images of Judgement, and the city of Byzantium in Yeats' 'Byzantium poems' are all examples of symbolism and evoke the same unseen world. "Concrete imagery is the life of language; that which by its nature eludes exact expression can only be suggested, or hinted at, by resort to symbolism."  

The shooting of the albatross in *Ancient Mariner* is an excellent illustration of what Coleridge meant by a symbol. The incident is symbolic of all sin, but is also a particular example of sin; since it illustrates a lack both of manifest respect for life and of humility towards the natural order. In Wordsworth's *Michael*, a pastoral poem, the heap of stones from the unfinished sheepfold is a symbol of the tragic frustration of Michael's whole life. Other Romantic poets also have employed symbols in their poetry. But Blake's persistent and sustained symbolic mode of writing had no close parallel until the symbolic movement of the followers of the French poet Baudelaire during the later half of the 19th Century. 

When the Romantic movement was well past its first fine rapture, Edgar Allan Poe's critical writings in America

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these were arbitrary, obscure and even impenetrable. Although
laid down the lines of the symbolist programme which was
not always successful, the ambiguities thus obtained often
meant to make poetic expression, intense, musical and
infinite suggestive. The French Symbolists, Baudelaire,
as a whole and especially to the individual line or lesser
Rimbaud and Mallarme, followed and their poetry has had a
profound influence on 20th Century English poetry. In the
book The Symbolist Movement in Literature, Ernest Arthur
Symonds describes Symbolism as an attempt to spiritualise
the exteriority of symbols as an aspect of the Romantically,
and language and symbols that captured emotions which are
always more exciting than the explicit. Logic and grammar
was a defiant gesture of protest against the old and the
fearless search for a new mode of authentic expression. The
rhythm should grow incantatory wings, and the cardinal symbols—
words should be the open sesame that throws symbolic gateways
of continuous meaning developed through Symbolism are to be
found in Yeats' Byzantium and Eliot's Waste Land.

The greatest single influence upon the English poetry
of the 20th Century has been the Symbolist movement, as it
developed in France and as it was incorporated into English
and not a foreign plant in English poetry. Early poets have
verse through the writings of W.B. Yeats, T.S. Eliot and Hart
occasionally recourse to it. But, with G. Bernard Shaw and
Crane. The symbols used by the symbolists mark a break with
poetic tradition. Conventional symbols were fixed and widely
understood, but the new poetry required new symbols, and often
these were arbitrary, obscure and even impenetrable. Although not always successful, the ambiguities thus obtained often supplied richness to the poetic texture, depth to the poem as a whole and compactness to the individual line or lesser units of the poem. The symbolists believed in stating things indirectly, mystery was desirable; the implicit is always more exciting than the explicit. Logic and grammatical of clear communication were discarded. In their place was used a language that expressed the free associations of the mind, and images and symbols that captured emotions which are sometimes beyond language. Among these writing in English Hart Crane comes closer to the French symbolists in method than does any other poet. Some of the most notable works of the age are symbolic in every element, in their settings, their agents, their actions, and their language. Instances of continuous meaning developed through symbolism are to be found in Yeats' Byzantium and in Eliot's Wasteeland.

Just as mysticism, symbolism, as a mode of expression, is not a foreign plant in Malaysian poetry. Early poets have occasionally resorted to it. But, with G. Sankara Kurup the

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2. Byzantium and Sailing to Byzantium are two of Yeats' finest poems.

3. A poem by Eliot, which marked a veritable revolution in modern English poetry.
symbolic system in poetry developed and flourished. The use of symbols is found invariably in all major Malayalam poets. Asan’s Fallen Flower is a symbol for human life. *Vandinte Pattu* (The Song of the Beetle) is yet another poem in which the poet uses the symbolic mode of expression. The lion and the eagle there represent greed and cruelty — the men who revel in wealth and power. The beetle that sings and flies about freely, amply enjoying nature is the singer of ideal joy (poetry itself).

In the use of symbols or symbols’s multiplicity unparalleled in the world of Indian literature, the poems of Vallathol’s *Krishna Parunthinode* (An Ode to an Eagle) is a symbolist lyric. The eagle is a symbol of spiritualism and the cranes, of gross materialism. The ‘eagle’ represents an Indian Sage reed deeply in the Vedic lore and the ‘crane’, that characterise their poetry, such as a reverence from the white man with his clever designs to thrust his burden on others.

Changampuzha Krishna Pillai and Belamani Ama$\textsuperscript{5}$ are two other poets of the Age who have made effective use of symbols.

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1. Translation: cf. the Original Text at the end, No. 35.
in their poems. If Vazhakkula⁶ (A Bunch of Plantain) is for Changampuzha a symbol of social revolution, for Balamani Amma 'the dawn' is not only the dawn we see every day, but a symbol of the innocence and purity of the human child (the dawn of the poem is the child of Earth). The mother Earth cannot help to keep the child away from the 'burden of human destiny'. she says:

Yet, my child, yours shall be the peace
Only toil brings,
Yours shall be the vision of bliss.
Come to you through tears of sorrow.⁷

In the use of symbols G. Sankara Kurup is unparalleled in the New Age. It is with him a poetic instinct. Probably it is the mystic outlook that made him a symbolist. His symbols unlike those of many French and English symbolists are quite intelligible. They also do not have the weaknesses that characterise their poetry, such as a severance from common life and the belief that music is the end of poetry.

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5. Nalappat Balamani Amma is a very popular poet, she has published seventeen volumes of poetry and received the Sahitya Akademi Award of Malayalam in 1966.

6. From Rakte Pushpangal, an anthology of poems by Changampuzha. The poem Vazhakkula is equally famous as Ramanan.

7. From Thirty Poems, Balamani Amma. An English translation of thrity poems by the poet herself.
In KANISHKA Professor Kunhan Raja's words: "As a lyricist and as a poet who uses symbolism as his main technique, G. Sankara Kurup has a high place among the poets of today. His work has a la lapidary quality, but what differentiates him from others, who specialise in the jewelled phrase, is his wide use of symbolism in expressing his thoughts".  

The first poem in which G. Sankara Kurup used the method of the symbol is 'Tomorrow' (1931) in the collection Surya Kanti. Its concept is that of a happy tomorrow and 'when all are equal, all can enjoy free air and light equally and when the privileges that are inherited and the powers that are confiscated by unjustifiable force all wither away'. When the anthology was published, the great contemporary critic A. Balakrishna Pillai, commended the poems, but ridiculed him for the romantic tendencies in it. According to him 'one who could give a lead in realism was wasting himself in the field of romanticism'. The criticism penetrated into his heart, but soon he recovered from the shock of it for he knew that his 'function was to enliven, beautify and enrich poetry, whose very life is imagination, with new experiences and sojourns, through pastures fresh and untrodden'. So he began with a fresh energy, aiming at

8. C. Kunhan Rajah, Contemporary Indian Literature, P. 140.
progressive idealism, a broad international outlook, idealistic patriotism and an ultimate faith in humanism.

G. Sanakara Kurup came to the limelight as a symbolist with the publication of Himisham (The Moment) "His lyrical sensitiveness conceives new worlds and realities germinal within the womb of time. Each infinitesimally small moment slips into the swelling tide of the past. From the unborn future it comes dizzily down into the present to disappear in a flash into the abyss of what has been. The poet's fancy tries to bind the filament limbs of these glittering little fairies with the slender thread of words". To the poet these fleeting moments are butterflies and the shadow cast by their wings, eternity:

The shadow that your wings throw 9
Is the heaven that we view in wonder.

Ore Theeyu (The Same Fire) is a fine instance of a complex system of symbols using common objects of life. A small country cigar (a beedi) and a white cigar (a cigarette) are the symbols used in the poem. They stand for a half-naked, illiterate and dark-faced labourer and a sophisticated

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9. Translation. cf. the Original Text at the end, No. 57.
arrogant and unpatriotic townsman respectively. The former is simple and honest while the latter cunning and dishonest. The burning piece of coir in the shop is a symbol of a 'good tomorrow' that the labourer is expectantly looking forward to. The smoking sophumer is the visionary god of the priestly class. The poem ends with a rousing message:

Burn bright, and so spread a new light
Not a smoky fire, the foul smell may be there
On a funeral heap, tomorrow perhaps you lie
Like a 'country cigar' on a burning furnace lip.10

Thus goes the complex group of symbols and significations in Ore Theepu. It is a matchless poem with a social theme, drawing distinction between economic and social class-consciousness. G. Sankara Kurup also, but this is unjustified. In fact in his poem, he has perfectly realised symbolisms like heaven and earth. The poem is a symbol of time. Time is capable of washing away the dirt of a complex social life:

Bent double, with a load she can't bear,
There goes, the washerwoman poor,
Along the bank of a long canal
That carries the dirt of the whole village.11

10. Translation. cf. the Original Text at the end No.37.

11. Translation. cf. the Original Text at the end, No.38.
The solid cloth (the load) is a symbol of the evils
of society and time (the washerwoman) its purifier.

There are many more such gems of symbolist poems
like Anweshanam (The Search) and Muthukal (The Pearls)
in G. Sankara Kurup's collections. These symbolist lyrics
invariably show that symbols are to him just a means and
never an end in themselves.

When poets try to translate their mystic experience
into poetry using symbols it is usual that their style
becomes difficult and obscure and scares away the average
devotees of poetry. This complaint is heard about
G. Sankara Kurup also. But this is unjustified. In fact
in his best poems he has perfectly realised symbolism
in terms of poetry just as in Francis Thompson's 12 Hound
of Heaven where the Hound stands for God, and though we cannot

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12. One of a group of devotional poets who impressed their
scientifically-minded and materialistically inclined
generation in the beginning of the 20th century with the
presence of a divine and mystical power in this Universe.
The Hound of Heaven is the best known of Thomsons
poems.
explain word by word the whole poem we can at once comprehend its full significance.

Symbols add a great deal to the expressiveness and suggestiveness of the poems of the New Age. Many Malayalam poets believe with W.B. Yeats that, 'the symbol is often the only fitting speech for some mystery of disembodied life'. And so the English symbolist poets are to them one of the most powerful sources of influence on their art and thought.