Introduction

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

Leo Tolstoy

(What is Art?)

0:1 The inspiration for the study

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

0:2 **Theory of Comparative Literature**

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

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

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

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1 Inaugural Lecture at Oxford in 1857
comparative literature, being the first nation to appreciate the value of the common heritage between that nation and the European countries. In this context, the French critic François Jost (rightly points out that comparative literature is:

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

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

“Literature is one; as art and humanity are one”

0:3 **Motives of comparative study**

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

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2 *Introduction to Comparative Literature*, p.29
3 René Wellek-Czech-American critic of Comparative Literature
4 Austin Warren-American literary critic
5 *Theory of Literature*, Section I, p.58
languages. Secondly one can have a balanced view of literary merit. Thirdly, a particular literature cannot be a separate entity and so it must be studied in relation to other literatures. Comparative literature study aims at studying different national traditions as reflected in their respective literatures.

0:4 **Translation as a tool**

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

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

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

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⁶ British Professor and critic of Comparative Literature
could be direct or indirect as well. Only translations could make obvious these effects. In order to study the influence of one writer on another, it is necessary to start from clear references, for which a thematic study should be undertaken by comparatists. Thematic study implies the study of literary styles. Genres, movements and periods, have equal importance in the studies of comparative literature. The modern forms are more or less related to the aesthetic elements, and comparative literature seeks to find out the relations between these elements, leading to the rediscovery and revaluation of great literary figures of other cultures.

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

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

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

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

7 Translation theorist and critic of Comparative Literature
8 Comparative Literature: A Critical Study
any facet of cultural comparison. In his work, *Comparative Literature in an Age of Multiculturalism (1995)*, Roland Greene remarks-

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The comparative methodology of juxtaposing the selected oeuvres of the poets is largely adopted in the study. Since the span of analysis is across national and linguistic borders, the distinguishing as well as exclusive traits of the individual poets will be of much importance in formulating the comparative assumption in this work. The vastly differing geographical, linguistic and cultural milieus of these two poets,—one a national French poet and the other, a regional Indian poet writing in Malayalam *prima facie,*
endow the theme of the dissertation with an innate hue of diversity. Such an ambitious task would naturally entail a renewed research into the dedication of the poets to their muses and their ultimate contributions to poetics. The analysis, while attempting to illuminate from a fresh angle, the amply researched oeuvre of Verlaine and the lesser studied one of Changampuzha, cannot but be aware of the limitations of the task at hand. The present study is the first of its kind on the specific theme of analysis, and is hoped that it would be of relevance since no work has so far been known to have been undertaken on the topic. At a time when the birth centenary celebrations of Changampuzha have just concluded, this study is hoped to assume significance as it would help in isolating the originality of the poet's works, extricating the garb of the French influence. Ultimately, this study aims at creating a wider appreciation of the impact that the French writers have had on Malayalam writers, thus shedding new light on the benign foreign influences that served to enhance the beauty of our cultural heritage.

0:7 **Statement of Hypothesis**

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

Though the native language attains great development on its own soil, it is truly enriched by broadening its horizons to receive the changing trends in other languages. This study also works on the hypothesis that being aware of the literature and cultures of other lands and adapting them to suit
the needs of one's own literary traditions will only serve to embellish the beauty of the literature and not impoverish it.

0:8 The corpus of the study

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

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

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

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

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

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

Design and lay-out of the dissertation

The dissertation is organized in the following manner. Apart from the various theories of comparative literature elaborated at the beginning, the Introduction elucidates the title of the dissertation, pointing to the purpose of taking up this study and its scope, stating the hypothesis on which the study is based, the main works involved, and the methodology adopted. Part I-Presentation of the topic is divided into three chapters. Chapter I- deals with the respective biographies of both poets, exposing the ambience which triggered their creativity, leading to the creation of their works. Chapter II reveals the social background of the poets, and Chapter III dwells upon the literary movements directly influencing the poets in their creativity namely,- Symbolism and Aesthetics. Part II of the dissertation entitled Aesthetics is also divided into three chapters. Chapter IV discusses the Evolution of aesthetics in Verlaine and Changampuzha. Chapter V juxtaposes the works of both poets in order to unravel the aesthetic elements, and is entitled -
Aesthetics-Works in Juxtaposition. In Chapter VI – Aesthetics - Themes and Styles, deals with the treatment of themes common to both poets and the versification techniques used to enhance the aesthetic quality of their works respectively. The **Conclusion** gauges the extent of the aesthetic appreciativeness of Verlaine and Changampuzha, leading to the determination of the positions held by them in their respective literatures, providing the answers to the questions raised at the beginning of the investigation.