Chapter I

Literature for Harmony

In the history of Literature, it has been said that there are no absolute beginnings. This can be applied to the dispute about the aim of Literature also. From very ancient times the arguments about whether Literature should have an aim have found a place in the annals of Literature. Yet it will be inaccurate to state that the dispute was there from the very beginning. Our progenitors produced Literature purely on utilitarian grounds. The earliest Literature of humanity —whether the Eastern, Greek or Hebrew—is in verse. The mnemonic power of poetry made it easy to remember the content. That may be the origin of didactic poetry.

This chapter discusses the salient features of didacticism in Literature, along with its origin, deep impact and several manifestations. After a brief discussion on the nature and function of Literature, a probe is made into the works of William Wordsworth and Ulloor S. Parameswara Iyer, in order to estimate how far didactic their works are and even if it were so, what are their peculiar differences and similarities.
These two poets have been chosen for study on the ground of conviction that both are great poets who firmly believe that Literature has a function to perform for humanity. Both think that the poet deals with "materials which are basic in human experience and therefore of widespread and permanent interest."\(^1\) They are also very influencing moralists. Wordsworth has once said: "every great poet is a teacher; I wish either to be considered as a teacher or as nothing."\(^2\) Wordsworth believed that poetry produces excitement along with an overbalance of pleasure. With his notion of pleasure as the ultimate/primary aim of poetry, he differs slightly from the neoclassicists who thought that Literature is "to instruct and delight." But to Wordsworth, pleasure thus derived, is something deeper and substantial. It is moral in nature. According to him, poetry aims at imparting pleasure, which is caused by the strengthening and purification of crude and base emotions. Poetry makes us saner and purer than before. That is why he calls poetry the most philosophical. The poet discovers the universal moral laws and communicates them to the readers. Poetry binds together the entire humanity by passion and knowledge. Thus the poet can be called the upholder of all humanity and preserver of harmony.

Wordsworth's poems are designed to extend the dominion of sensibility for the delight and benefit of humanity. He has an exalted
notion of his own call or mission. He considers poetry as the breath and
spirit of all knowledge. According to him, poetry has its own value and
significance to improve the scheme of man’s existence and recast the
world. When he recognizes poetry as the most philosophical of all genres
of literature, he is putting forward a new philosophy. He declares that his
poetry is “to console the afflicted, to add sunshine to daylight by making
the happy, happier.”³ He slowly moved from an adolescent enthusiasm
for poetry towards a serious commitment to writing. He seeks out a
readership and tries to educate them. Poetry helps to discover truth and
thus to make the readers wiser and nobler. This process is pleasurable.
Wordsworth insists on the overbalance of pleasure on reading a piece of
Literature. But it should be combined with the scope for teaching also. He
is a great moralist and his greatness in this regard lies in his
uncompromising sense of duty and the supremacy of moral laws. He
gives emphasis to those spiritual forces that lift man above the noisy
realm of everyday life and the flux of external things. Wordsworth
believes that a poet writes, not for his pleasure alone, but for the pleasure
of all. But Literature is not concerned with imparting pleasure only.
According to Wordsworth, poetry “is the breath and fine spirit of all
knowledge, the impassioned expression that is in the countenance of all
science.”⁴ To be incapable of a feeling for poetry is to be without love for
human nature and reverence for God. The poetry, to be worth of the name, must serve the purpose of life and morality. Poetry divested of morality is valueless and barren.

Ulloor S. Parameswara Iyer, one among the modern trio of Malayalam poetry, is a conscientious teacher of ethics and morals. To him poetry is undoubtedly a vehicle of sound ethical and moral thoughts. He firmly believes that poets are the reformers of the world and poetry is the solution to the problems of life: "Ulloor chose to sing the saga of action with a view to promote the ideal of universal brotherhood of man." The sheer poetical quality alone saves his works from inevitable doom. They are very much laden with maxims, refrains, guidelines and pious invocations. In spite of all these, he is a poet par excellence, whose elegance and style have not yet been outshone. Of all Malayalam poets, Ulloor stands out as an accomplished didactic poet. He wrote a number of poems delineating those values, cherished by the great sages of ancient India. He never wasted an occasion to enlighten the readers:

\[
guṇattinatre ma:ha:tmjam
\]

\[
kulatti\text{ṅ}alla ke:valam;
\]

\[
pu:vil cilappo:l ka:\text{ṅ}mi:le
\]

\[
puru po:lu\text{m Janippata}:j?^{6}
\]
(Count the man by his virtues, not by his clan
For the worms are bred in flowers often)

He lauds the virtuous:

cevikju cevija:j lo:kam - sravikjum guni tan gunam
ka:ttin varikju pa:nji:tu:m - kaitappu:mañamennume . . . 7

(The name of the virtuous shall spread
Like the fragrance from a flowerbed)

The media of any literary discourse are meaningful words. Words communicate ideas—good or bad. When a man writes something, he is communicating something: some ideas or exhortations or experiences. In such a wider sense any literary work is didactic. For instance Milton’s Paradise Lost is didactic in a sense, because it was written to ‘justify the ways of God to men.’ Even though didactic strain is discernible in any work of art, the label is rather exclusive. From time immemorial, man was in search of a beautiful and livable world. From the very first musings — however abstract and aberrant had they been—the unknown artists gave vent to their feelings and communicated their ideas. They had many a good reason to impart their findings and thoughts to others. Whether it is about the omnipotence of a presence or the coming of an evil spirit, they resort to art to represent them in a more permanent mode or medium. T.S.Eliot writes in this regard:
Poetry may have deliberate, conscious social purpose. In its more primitive forms this purpose is often quite clear. There are, for example, early runes and chants, some of which had very practical magical purpose—to avert the evil eye, to cure some disease, or to propitiate some demon. Poetry is early used in religious ritual, and when we sing a hymn we are still using poetry for a particular social purpose. The early forms of epic and saga may have transmitted what was held to be history before surviving for communal entertainment only: and before the use of written language a regular verse form must have been extremely helpful for the memory.

Thus we can safely assume that the very first Literature of all the people/culture in the world was didactic in nature. Literature, like any other form of art, is a representation of life. Since it is so, it is a painful quest for a better life. The inspiration to make this life more livable kindled the imagination of the ancient bards—no matter whether it was in the remote Greece, on the banks of River Indus or in the deserts of ancient Babylon. Thus the earliest Literature is didactic if nothing else. Any man of letters who has the intention of doing the world some good—as Keats has put—is didactic. Eliot endorses this view like this: “I suppose it will be agreed that every good poet, whether he is a good poet
or not, has something to give us besides pleasure: for if it were for only
pleasure, the pleasure itself could not be of the highest kind."

Instruction is one of the chief aims of Literature of all age and land.
The ancient aesthetics acknowledges usefulness as one of the attributes of
a good work of art. Aesthetically viewed, didactic poetry can be
considered as the first stage in the evolution of literary forms.

Then what exactly is didactic poetry? By a general agreement or
definition, it is a quality of Literature being instructive, particularly in
ethical and moral matters. Several definitions themselves show the range
and significance of the term.

“Didactic poetry is poetry used as a medium for teaching,
embodying information about morals, religion, agriculture, history etc,”
says C.M.Ing. According to M.H. Abrams, “The adjective ‘didactic’
which means ‘intended to give instructions’ is applied to works of
Literature which are designed to expound a branch of theoretical or
practical knowledge.” In Harry Shaw’s words, “Didacticism means the
practice of art or science of providing instructions. In Literature,
didacticism refers to the use of writing for teaching, for offering guidance
in moral, religious and ethical matters”. “Didactic poetry is poetry
which is primarily intended to instruct. Most commonly the label is used
for poetry that teaches a moral. It can also refer to poetry which conveys
factual information like astronomy, mathematics, or rhetoric; or systematic philosophy," says Alex Preminger. To Collingwood, "didactic poetry (Gk didaskein—to teach) is that which openly expresses its intention to convey knowledge or instruction." Another definition runs like this:

Since not every writer who hopes to teach (sway one to specifications) announces his intention, and since in any case the purpose must be judged from the work, a further application of the term has been suggested: if it seems that the idea existed before the form, the work is didactic; if the form before the idea, the work is precious; if the form and idea took shape together, the work is art. Thus 'didactic' may be used (1) as a subjective and a usually derogative term; (2) to mark an all embracing characteristic; (3) to describe a kind or category of work.”

Thus a literary work expounding some moral, political or any other kind of teaching is called didactic. All poetry instructs us either by delighting or not. But to label them all didactic is to make didacticism work through very round about channels, says C.M Ing. At the same time we must not ignore the fact that didactic strain is latent even in imaginative Literature. A widely accepted conception is that didactic
poetry is inferior to other forms of Literature. But there are so many
degrees of didacticism in Literature as A.F. Scott points out: "We may
turn from George Eliot, the 'interpreter of philosophical ideas' to Cowper
who recommended private tuition at home." Thus didacticism or
didactic poetry demands a very deep and extensive study.

A lot has been thought and written about the function and aim of
Literature. One cannot forget the fact that the powerful war cry, 'art for
life's sake' and the reply, 'art for the sake of art', constitute perhaps one
of the most illustrious chapters in the History of Literature. There are
three schools of opinion in this regard.

Firstly there is the didactic school, which emphasizes the
instructive quality of Literature. In didactic works idea is given
prominence. It rejects the perfection of form as well as the aesthetic
experience. "Pleasure is merely the avenue and sign of their proper
functioning; a by-product, not the goal." The primary function and
quality of Literature is imparting knowledge. A grave concern over the
function of Literature or work of art is not a recent development. From
the time of Homer and Hesiod we can trace a difference of opinion in this
regard. Both of them regarded poetry as the product of divine inspiration.
"For Homer its (poetry) function is to give pleasure, for Hesiod, to give
instruction, to pass on the message breathed into the poet by Muse."
This difference of opinion is the first phase of a quarrel that has persisted for the ages to come. From that age, these two sets of opinion are running parallel through the History of Literature: the argument that any work of art may instruct man and the opinion that Literature can have no aim other than to please. The didactic school emphasizes the instructive quality of Literature.

Poets traditionally held their mirrors up to nature not simply to reflect it but to occasion reflection and right action in their readers. Poet as teacher and reader as disciple: the roles are clear from Horace’s obiter dicta, maxims and specifically literary advice to Wordsworth’s remark to Sir George Beaumont that ‘every poet is a great teacher—I wish to be considered as a teacher or as nothing.’ Poets have appropriated to themselves the sacred obligation of preparing a citizenry, a prince, an individual conscience for life in this world.\(^\text{20}\) Modern critic Martha Nussbaum has a new perspective about the didactic element of Literature when she says that “a novel, just because it is not our life, places us in a new moral position that is favourable for perception and it shows us what it would be like to take up that position in life.”\(^\text{21}\)

The didactic poet gives importance to the idea or the message and not to the embellishments. They reject perfection of form as well as the aesthetic experience resulting from reading as secondary. Didactic poetry
is more concerned “with moral instruction and practical and philosophical
information than with imaginative purposes.” 22 But it can be entertaining
too. Thus it follows that poets have the historically sanctioned roles as
teachers.

The dictum, ‘art for the sake of life’ was countered by the powerful
war cry, ‘art for the sake of art.’ Those who stood for ‘art for the sake of
art’ school had altogether different notions and concepts about the nature
and function of Literature. Even though this school of thought gained
prominence only in the nineteenth century, it has roots in literary
antiquity. As we have seen already, Homer and Hesiod differed in their
opinion about the function of poetry in particular. According to Homer,
function of poetry is to provide pleasure, produced by some sort of
enchantment and he stresses this point again and again. Later on, the
argument was developed from this function of pleasure to no function at
all:

A movement that developed in Europe in the second half of
19 century that insisted on the separation of art from morality
or to put this another way, that insisted that art need not be
moral to have value. “L’art pour l’art” (Art for art’s sake)
was the rallying cry for writers who valued art for its
inherent aesthetic quality rather than for its didactic potential. 23

Aestheticism is a philosophy of art and an artistic movement with an explicit “point of view that art is self sufficient, need serve no ulterior purpose, and should not be judged by moral, political, or other non-aesthetic standards.” 24

German romanticists like Kant, Schiller and Schelling, and French writers Gustav Flaubert, Baudelaire, Mallarme and Verlaine were the early leaders of this movement. They all had agreed that art must be autonomous. Theophile Gautier wrote in his “Preface” to Mademoiselle de Maupin that art has no utilitarian value.

Aestheticism was a stage in the evolution of the Romantic Movement. Oscar Wilde was the ringleader and Walter Pater was the illustrious philosopher of aesthetic movement in England. Pater felt that:

The appreciation of art must be fresh, personal and direct; this means that the reader, observer or listener had to discard not only all preconceptions about standards of taste but all philosophical preconceptions as well. 25

Algernon Swinburne, Arthur Symons and Lionel Johnson were a few of the leaders of the English Aesthetic Movement. According to them a work of art has no why; it simply exists in its formal perfection. Mc
Neil Whistler, a representative of this trend in the fine arts, wrote: "Art is selfishly occupied with her own perfection only and has no desire to teach." Art never expresses anything other than its own independent organism. Modern critics go further to degrade moral or ethical elements depicted in Literature:

We have seen how modern critics—Fredric Jameson, Paul de Man, J. Hillis Miller—have tended to treat ethical themes as 'diversionary' or as 'displacements.' Similarly in Wordsworth's Poetry 1787-1814, the most influential study of Wordsworth in this past quarter century, Geoffrey Hartman tend to treat ethical as well as naturalistic categories as 'displacements'...

There is another school of thought, which takes a rather compromising stance. In their view true Literature both 'instructs and delights.' From Horace to Coleridge a great many scholar and writer hold this view. The great masters of Indian poetics, Anadavardhana and Pandita Jagannatha were of this opinion. Bhamaha talks about the poetic pleasure (priti) devoid of which poetry will be a mere matter of fact narration. Such a composition, he says, will bring in fame, wealth or knowledge of ethics, but will fail the test of poetry. To the Indians this was also an aim of Literature. Anyhow those who proffer this theory feel
that the line demarcating these two functions is too thin. Let us conclude this discussion with the words of Horace: “Poets aim either to benefit, or, to amuse, or to utter words at once both pleasing and helpful to life.”

Throughout the History of Religions and Civilizations, we see sages and saints, seers and prophets, saviours and incarnations who taught, directed and supervised others. For this they resorted to scriptures and books, later came to be regarded as holy books.

All the Sacred Literature of ancient civilizations is a set of moral codes put forth in beauteous verse. The Hebrew Scriptures, The Bible, Gnomic Utterances of Scandinavia and Britain, The Vedas, The Upanishads and the Mahabharata of ancient India, the charms in Anglo-Saxon verse etc. are versified observations of natural, social and moral worlds. Learning in India through the ages had been priced and pursued not for its own sake, but for the sake of religions and as a part of religious instruction. It was sought as a means of salvation or self realization as the means of highest end of life, viz. ‘mukti’ or emancipation.

The Hindu Literature of ancient India never concealed its real aim. At the very beginning of Bhagavata Purana, one of the major eighteen puranas attributed to Krishna Dwaipayana Vyasa, it is stated: “what other scripture is there which secures as this does, the immediate and
permanent presence of the Lord in the hearts of His sincere devotees?" It also describes Bhagavata as the fruit of the wishing tree and The Veda which has sipped down from the mouth of Suka (the parrot) as the pure nectar of immortality.

Rig Veda, the oldest known Literature of the world, also makes use of the power and beauty of verse to drive home the wisdom and truth of the seers of that age. In the Rig Veda, for example, the sky is treated as the father and the earth as the mother of all created things: “Sweet be our father heaven (sky) to us.”

The word ‘Upanishads’ implies an esoteric teaching. Upanishads are surely among the world’s most influential creative works. Valerie J. Roebuck remarks that an “Upanishad recounts one or more sessions of teachings, often setting each within the story of how it came to be taught.” Knowledge is imparted, disguised in the form of story/fiction. This seeking of knowledge is “to attain fearlessness” to cross beyond sorrow and to dig up the supreme treasure:

Suppose good lad, that some one were to lead a man blindfold from Gandhara and then release him in a deserted place; and suppose that he were to be blown to east, north, south or west, crying, “I have been led blindfold and released blind fold.”
And suppose that someone were to undo the blindfold and tell him, “Gandhara is in this direction. Walk in this direction.” and he being wise and intelligent, by asking from village to village, would reach Gandhara. In the same way, a person who has a teacher knows, “it is only so long until I am released. Then I will reach my goals.”

This subtle part is what all this has as self. It is truth: it is the self. You are that, Svetaketu.\(^{32}\)

According to Dr. Deussen, he who has attained the conviction “I am Brahman” attains the final salvation. This knowledge is not the means of liberation, but liberation itself.\(^{33}\)

In The Mahabharata God is pictured as the Father of all creatures:

Mountains are his bones. Earth is the flesh, sea is the blood, sky is his abdomen. Air is his breath, Agni is his Teja, rivers are nerves. The sun and moon, which are called Agni and Soma, are the eyes of Brahman. The upper part of the sky is his head, Prithvi (earth) is his feet and Disa(directions) are the hands. \(^{34}\)

The Bhagavat-Gita (The Celestial Song/The Song Divine) is a similar one, composed to educate people about the many births and deaths of man, supreme importance of one’s duty and also to make them realize the
value of service rendered without expectation of rewards. A beautiful
couplet reminds the devotees of the intention behind the incarnation of
Lord Vishnu:

\[
\text{jada: jada:hi dharmasja} \\
\text{gla:nirbhavati bha:rata} \\
\text{abhjutha:namadharmasja,} \\
\text{tada:smam srJa:mjaham.}^{35}
\]
(O descender of Bharat! whenever dharma is threatened and
adharma is on the rise, there will incarnate I.)

The Gita is full of spiritual instructions and information: “he with
whom the world is not annoyed, and who is not annoyed by the world,
who is free from self esteem, envy, fear and anxiety is dear to me.”^{36}

The Bhagavad-Gita gives the picture of God, the Omnipresent in
nature:

I am the essence of the waters,
The shining of the sun and the moon;
OM in all The Vedas,
The word that is God.
It is I who resound in the ether
And am potent in man.
I am the sacred smell of the earth,
The light of the fire,
Life of all lives,
Austerity of ascetics.37

The fundamental principles of prophets like Jesus Christ and Mohammed were disseminated among the masses by means of appealingly beautiful literary forms. The prowess of The Bible as a beautiful literary work can never be overstated. Here are the most famous starting lines of Genesis I:

In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters. Then God said. “Let there be light”, and there was light. And God saw that the light was good; and God separated light from the darkness. God called the light the day and the darkness he called night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.38

The sheer beauty of these lines can never be overlooked. One tends to believe that this beauty and power of words might have helped to drive the instructions home to the billions, down the history lane. Grierson lauds the literary and aesthetic elements in Literature thus:
Is anything again in Shelley (or in the passage I shall cite from Milton) more lyrical than that passage in the twenty-seventh chapter of what is generally now known as the Second Isaiah? — "The spirit of the lord God is upon me; because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the poor." 39

In The Bible, valuable lessons are incorporated: "But now I tell you: love your enemies and pray for those who mistreat you, so that you will become the sons of your Father in heaven (The Gospel of St. Matthew: 2). 40

The exhortations are direct and rendered in beautiful and poetic language:

And now my children listen to me;

Happy are those who keep my ways

Hear instruction and be wise,

And do not neglect it.

(Proverbs 8:32-33) 41

"The Psalms" abounds with poetic entreaties upholding divine majesty and human dignity:

O Lord, our sovereign,

How majestic is your name in
Buddhism also heavily depended on Literature to spread its ideals like non-violence, dharma and the eightfold path to salvations. The biography of Sri Buddha, Sribudhacharitham, is an excellent example. Prophet Zoroaster and great philosophers Lao-Tze and Confucius are a few others who are to be mentioned here because they also understood the power of written words and used it to appeal to the human heart.

The Secular Literature of antiquity also abounds in didactic works. First traces of didactic poetry can be seen in Greece where poems were written on husbandry, snakes and snakebites, medicine, agriculture, precious stones etc. Hesiod was perhaps the most noted didactic poet in ancient Greece. His works mingle all the heterogeneous types of teaching in Greek poetry-practical, scientific, moral, religious and historical. His Works and Days mingles moral instructions with advice on farm work. Theogony, another work of Hesiod, is an account of the Gods and creation. Empedocles and Opian wrote in verse—former Physics and latter History of Animals. “Neither were poets—the one was an historian of nature, the other a sort of biographer of beasts.”

Roman works De Rerum Natura (On the Nature of Things) by Lucretius and Georgics by Virgil outshone the Greek didactic poets.
Their poems were practical advice interspersed with fine poetry. Virgil wrote four books of georgics covering topics like ploughing, sowing, weather signs, trees, vines especially grape and olive, farm animals and bee keeping. It was like a handbook for the farmers giving them advice like: “now is the time for weave of bramble wands/the supple basket, now to dry your corn/and crush it with a stone”\textsuperscript{44} But Virgil’s poetry was fine and beautiful even when dealing with these dry-as-bone subjects. It lures the reader with its sheer poetical beauty: “My muse sweet dalliance held and youthful bold/I sang thee Tityrus, in beech-tree shade.”\textsuperscript{45} Those who esteem him as a great poet who wrote \textit{Aenid} will find it hard to conceive the fact that he wrote such practical things:

He was intend upon fusing a prosaic subject into poetry, and succeeded where the metaphrasists had failed. His poem is so perfect in its verse so charming in its digressions and so stately in its serious portions that it transcends its lowly subjects.\textsuperscript{46}

Francis Bacon says that, among the ancestors, the aim of epic poetry had been that of instruction. He says that poetic process conduces to, “magnanimity, morality and delectation; and in general it has an uplifting effect [...]”\textsuperscript{47}
It is already seen how two ancient Greeks, namely, Homer and Hesiod regarded poetry and its function. In the sixth and fifth centuries B.C., many philosophers like Xenophanes, Heraclitus, Pindar and Democritus made further contributions to these discussions. Xenophanes, for instance, censured Homer’s views on moral and ethical grounds. Theagenes and Anaxagoras contradicted to this and stood for an allegorical interpretation of Homer. They argued that then (i.e. as allegory) poetry contains moral and scientific truths. Aristophanes in his famous play, The Frogs depicts a judgment scene in which the soundness of political advice imparted by Aeschylus and Euripides are weighed to find out who is the best dramatist of the two.

Plato’s attack on poets and poetry is well known. But not equally well known is the fact that he had very particular reasons for that and he did it in particular contexts.

In the Republic where his so-called attack is fully developed, his main preoccupations are political rather than artistic. He banishes Literature and the arts because they have no political utility and may indeed exert an adverse influence on the particular virtues that must be fostered for the maintenance of his ideal commonwealth.48
In Book III of the Republic, Plato is concerned with the education of the guardians of commonwealth. He classifies their literary education under three heads: theological, moral and formal. But for that he finds the existing poetry unsuitable, as it will have a bad effect on the minds of the young. He welcomes poetry that direct the citizens or individuals to the paths of virtue and truth and that promoted the welfare state. What Plato conceives as ideal poetry has ideal forms of justice, truth and beauty as subject matter. It deals with what is great and noble in human nature. He detests that poetry which lures the reader into a state of frenzy.

Aristotle’s approach to Literature is aesthetic rather than moralistic. Throughout Poetics he discusses the factors that contribute to produce the technically finest tragedy. But like his teacher, he also thinks about the role that mimetic poetry can play in the education of the future leaders. Moreover by the notion of catharsis of such emotions like pity and fear, he means a restoration of these or like emotions to the right proportions. While putting forward such a concept, he is emphasizing the pragmatic values of Literature or art.

In the middle ages didactic Literature gained prominence in all languages. The Drama, of all, propounded religious and moral principles and teachings. This was done chiefly in Europe adapting stories and situations from The Bible. The Miracles Plays and Morality Plays of
England belong to this genre. In Morality Plays characters were the personifications of various virtues and vices. “Everyman” and “The Castle of Perseverance” are two well-known examples. Medieval theology brought in a new vitality to the discussions about the nature of reality and a new urgency to the questions as to what conduces to spiritual and moral health. Much philosophical and moral thinking were channelled into the concentration on the role of the fallen and redeemed mankind in a divinely created and directed universe. St. Augustine, a profound theologian of Christian Church, alleged that poets and dramatists attributed vicious behaviour to gods “to the end that there might be sufficient authority, for men to commit all filthiness by.” The Christian Church was at war with pagan Literature, which was sharply distinguished from Christian Scriptures.

Romance of the Rose, a great allegory of love and virtues of the middle ages, moral poems like “Cleanliness”, and “Patience” and a beautiful allegory The Pearl are a few of the early didactic works in English Literature. The Romance of the Rose to which Chaucer and some other contemporary poets looked back for guidance, was a storehouse of miscellaneous learning and moral philosophy. In the first part the poet reaches a garden, on the enclosing walls of which are painted personifications of the chief enemies of love and life: Vices like Hate,
Villainy (including bad manners, the opposites of courtliness), Covetousness, Avarice, Envy, Hypocrisy and ills as Sorrow, Old Age etc.

Another remarkable work is The Vision of William Concerning Piers the Plowman by William Langland in which the visions of the poet himself—11 of them—are depicted. The second vision is relatively important in which the seven Deadly Sins repent and set out to make confession; but on the way, gluttony is tempted into an alehouse. "The penitents go on to seek Truth, that is God the Father, but no one knows the way until Piers the Plowman puts his head and offers to guide them." Piers the Plowman is transfigured into the person of Christ himself.

The famous Renaissance critic Sir Philip Sidney places Poetry as superior to History and Philosophy as it moves and inspires men to nobler actions. The aim of poetry is delightful instruction, not the one or the other. Poetry, with an elevating influence on human soul, conveys knowledge and ethics. Sidney believes that poetry, as such does not merely give us knowledge of virtue, but moves us to virtuous deeds. In his monumental work, Defense of Poesie (Apologie for Poetrie-1595), Sidney makes it clear that poets are the first purveyors of knowledge, our 'fathers in learning.'
Like Sidney, Spenser also holds the view that the true end of poetry is ‘delightful teaching.’ He conceived his *Faerie Queene* as a textbook of morals and manners for the nobles and the gentles. The ‘eternal war of good and evil’ is the theme of the *Faerie Queene*. Moral allegory is the backbone of the poem. “Allegory was no new thing in Literature but had been used abundantly in religious Literature both apologetically and for edification,” says Herbert Grierson. Spenser’s *The Shepheardes Calendar* is also didactic in purpose. The recurring themes of his poetry are: Protestantism, Nationalism and Imperialism. Sidney also tried his best to unify the protestant powers against Rome. But his poetry does not tell it as Spenser’s. Phineas and Giles Fletcher were two brothers who followed Spenser, the allegorical and religious poet. The former’s *The Purple Island* modelled on the *Faerie Queene*, is on human physiology. Giles Fletcher wrote a vast book named *Christ’s Victory and Triumph, in Heaven and Earth, over and after Death* which depicted the life of Jesus Christ.

The 17th century saw a great attack on the Literature of restoration period. The profane, lewd, irreligious works of art were criticized severely and this shed some light on the contemporary concept of the function of Literature. Jeremy Collier who wrote the famous work *Short View of the Immorality and Profaneness of the English Stage*, observed:
The business of Plays is to recommend Vertue and discountenance of vice; to shew the Uncertainty of Humaine Greatness, the sudden turns of fate and the unhappy conclusions of violence and injustice: 'Tis to expose the singularities of pride and fancy, to make Folly and Falsehood contemptible, and to bring everything Ill under Infamy, and Neglect.\textsuperscript{53}

Sir John Vanbrugh refutes charges of licentiousness and argues that it is the business of comedy to advise spectators and tell what they should do and what they should not do by showing it all on the stage.

Alexander Pope's \textit{Essay on Criticism} and \textit{Essay on Man} are direct didactic verse compositions, on Literary Criticism and Moral Philosophy respectively. His \textit{Essay on Criticism} instructs poets in their art like Horace's \textit{Ars Poetica} and Boileau's \textit{Art Poetique}. This classical age saw the birth of the greatest allegory of all times, \textit{Gulliver's Travels}. It was an age of teaching. A number of poets wrote georgics, expounding such utilitarian arts like shepherding, running sugar plantations and making cider. No doubt, their model was Virgil. "Art of Preserving Health" by Armstrong and "Cyder" by Philip are fine examples. 'Botanic Garden,' a fine poem written by Charles Darwin provides a lot of information on the subject.
Dr. Johnson, the magisterial critic laid down clear precepts for poets. Poets have to obey certain guidelines to create good poetry. The old philosopher Imlac in his novel Rasselas, who is his mouthpiece, says:

He (the poet) must divest himself of the prejudices of age and country; he must consider right and wrong in their abstracted and invariable state; he must disregard present laws and opinions, and rise to general and transcendental truths, which will always be the same; . . . He must write as an interpreter of nature, and the legislator of mankind, and consider himself as presiding over the thoughts and manners of future generations; as being superior to time and place.\textsuperscript{54}

The epithets like, 'interpreter of nature' and legislator of mankind anticipate Wordsworth and Shelley. If a poet gives importance to the 'poetic' aspects at the cost of the 'moral, social or religious' element, then the poem has no relevance as a work of art. Dr. Johnson was of the opinion that a poet's first work is to find a moral, which is to be illustrated and established later in the work. The poet uses his vast knowledge to enforce the moral and religious truths. He declares categorically, "The end of writing is to instruct; the end of poetry is to instruct by pleasing."\textsuperscript{55}
William Cowper, known as the poet of quiet rural and domestic life was also a didactic poet. He was an Evangelical preacher, who valued doctrines and morals. He was also a patriot and a staunch Whig who stood for liberty and order. His Tirocinium or Review of Schools was typically didactic, written in recommendation of home tuition.

According to Matthew Arnold, the illustrious Victorian critic, poetry is the criticism of life and its main function is to solve the question-how to live? “The noble and profound application of ideas to life,” he says, “is the most essential part of poetic greatness.”

John Ruskin prescribes a three fold function of Literature: to enforce the religious sentiments of men; to perfect their ethical state; to do them material service. Pleasure is a mere avenue and a by-product, which ensures that these functions are well performed. To Ruskin, art is subservient to morality. Art is to teach what is noble. The proper character of art is to be teaching agencies—to instruct is their function. Art should be didactic to the people. Like Ruskin, Thomas Carlyle also believes that art should promote religion and morality. Carlyle was a true representative of the Victorian Era, during which art was infused with didactic messages, more than ever before.

Marxists view Literature as an effect of social cause as well as a cause of social effect. According to Robert Con Davis and Ronald
Achleifer, Marx and Engels defined art as a form of social consciousness. Therefore, it follows that the reasons for its changes should be sought in the social existence. Literature should serve the cause of the downtrodden and the destitute. It must have the aim of propagating the need for a change in the social set up in favour of the poor and the exploited.

Modernism discarded the idea that Literature has a function to perform. Works with any kind of moral aim or tone are derided and are considered as lowly. At the same time there is a change in the concept of didactic poetry. Poetry expressing social concerns is broadly called didactic. Eliot has made it clear in his “Social Function of Poetry”. Works of Literature that depict race-relations, racial conflicts, religious tolerance and harmony and war protests contain an element of ideology in them and they are primarily propagandistic. The modern drama, especially the post war drama and its fore runners recognize and utilise the rich scope and vast possibilities of their medium. The angry young men—John Osborne, Allan Sillitoe and Kinsley Amis—Harold Pinter, Arnold Wesker and John Arden have put up strong rebellion against the trends and tendencies of the age. Of these writers, Arnold Wesker goes on for direct moralization in his Trilogy, Chickensoup with Barley, I’m Talking about Jerusalem and Roots. Allen Ginsberg’s anti-Vietnam-War poems,
Levertov’s anti-nuclear arms' poems and Adrienne Rich’s feminist poems are a few examples to mention.

It was the custom and convention in ancient Sanskrit Literature to state the aim and purpose of a work at the beginning of the work. The masters like Bhamaha, Rudrata, Vamana, Kuntaka, Mammata, and Bhojaraja had kept this tradition in their works. According to Bharata, drama is an instrument to achieve virtue (dharma) and benefaction. It enriches the intellect and imparts instruction (lokopadesa). Bhamaha in his treatise, “Kavyalamkara” insisted that a good piece of poetry, besides giving fame and pleasure, should make the reader the master of all arts and facilitate the realization of the four aims of human life viz. dharma (virtue), artha (wealth), kama(desire) and moksha(salvation). All the masters after Bharata only reiterated and reinstated what he propounded; but of course with some additions of their own. Rudrata, for example, added elimination of suffering, averting trouble, deliverance from diseases and achievement of desired boon as aims of poetry. Those enlisted by Kuntaka are: the knowledge of the code of conduct, mental exhilaration and spiritual illumination. Mammata had before him a detailed list of the functions of Literature as envisaged by various rhetoricians from Bharata to Kuntaka and he compiled them thus:

Poetry is for achieving fame, wealth and
Knowledge of code of conduct, for the removal
Of the evil, attaining instantaneous
Highest bliss and imparting instructions
As sweetly as does anyone’s beloved to him.\textsuperscript{57}

This has been generally the view accepted by almost all the Indian masters.

But then Indian Literature is not of a monolithic structure. It has so many divisions and varieties as there are so many languages and cultures prominent in India. In all the myriad branches of Indian Literature a new vigour and awakening was visible by the dawn of 19\textsuperscript{th} century. The latent force behind this was an intense desire for political freedom and social independence. It was precipitated by many developments and events in the political and social spheres.

Along with these, the newly introduced English education, work of the reformers like Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Eswar Chandra Vidya Sagar and others, the influence of various political ideologies like Communism and Socialism, and the influence of movements like Romanticism that spread here as a result of the deep interaction with English Literature, worked together and prepared the ground for the rising of a new, progressive group of litterateurs.
Romanticism and Realism worked hand in hand to produce a penchant for social criticism in the works of the prominent writers of that time. Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, Subrahmania Bharati, Iqbal, Sarat Chandra Chatterjee and Rabindranath Tagore are a few to name. Among the writers of 20th century, writers like Mulk Raj Anand and Yaspal are known as progressive writers as they wrote for the downtrodden and the marginalized. They firmly believes that Literature cannot and should not exist in ivory towers away from the daily struggle and stress of ordinary human beings. Raja Rao and Nissami are a few of the socially committed writers of the time. Any way the great struggle for independence was a binding force that gave a sense of direction to Indian Literature. Mahatma Gandhi and his ahimsa dharma inspired writers across the length and breadth of Indian peninsula. The renascent and reformative ideals, national awakening, patriotic feelings, love and pride in the rich tradition and heritage of India, produced great works which exhorted Indians to rise and fight for freedom.

By the end of 19th century, all these traits were more or less visible in Malayalam Literature also. Until then Malayalam Literature was in a state of stupor, dreaming of the bygone glorious days. "Malayalam Literature reached the heyday of its glory during the period of Thunchath Ezhuthachan, who lived and wrote in the fifteenth century," writes Prof.
N.K Seshan. Breadth of vision, simplicity of diction and seriousness of expression are the characteristics of Malayalam Literature during that period. Like all other languages in childhood, Malayalam also borrowed profusely from the myths and legends and the folklore. These works were naturally didactic. Thunchath Ezhuthachan, the father of Malayalam, wrote great works like “Adhyatma Ramayanam”, “Mahabharatham Kilippattu”, etc, which are considered as sacred books by Keralites. These books contain moral, religious and ethical teachings. Cherussery wrote “Krishnagatha” in pure Malayalam, stating his aim as to inculcate devoutness and spirituality in the readers. Kunchan Nambiar who was the third member of the earlier triad of Malayalam poetry, laughed at the follies and foibles of the contemporary society. The manipravalam Literature, the kilippattu works on Gods and festivals, verse works on Mathematics, Astronomy and Philosophy etc. were typical didactic works.

As mentioned earlier, a new awakening was visible in Malayalam Literature in the last lap of nineteenth century. As Prof. N.K. Seshan observes:

A new movement became necessary because of the failure of the earlier movements to achieve new goals in the realm of Malayalam poetry. The time had come ripe for a new type of
poetry of imaginative fecundity, emotional intensity and linguistic simplicity.\textsuperscript{59}

It was at this juncture, Asan, Ulloor and Vallathole entered the scene. They imparted a new life to Malayalam Poetry.

Vallathole Narayana Menon wrote patriotic songs, which added vigour to the freedom struggle. His poems contained patriotic strains and exhortations to fight for the freedom of the motherland. For Kumaran Asan poetry was a vehicle for social and cultural reforms. \textit{duravastha} by Asan was a powerful tirade against caste system and untouchability.

The progressive movement in Malayalam Literature caused a hitherto unknown shift in theme in all branches. The rise of downtrodden classes into prominence was reflected in Literature also. The progressive or leftist writers went deep into the lives of the destitute and interpreted the existing social milieu from that perspective. M.P.Paul and Kuttippuzha Krishna Pillai were eminent critics who argued that Literature must be for the benefit of the society. Changampuzha Krishna Pillai, Kesavadev, Kesari.A.Balakrishna Pillai, Thoppil Bhasi, Cherukadu, Prof. O.N.V.Kurup and Vayalar Ramavarma are a few of the leaders of this movement. They believe that art has an aim to fulfill. According to them all, artists must be committed to the society. The novels, \textit{o:til\ n\in\nu} (From the Gutter), of Kesavadev and \textit{mutta\s\i}
(Grandmother) of Cherukadu depicted the poverty and squalour of the contemporary society. Poets Vayalar Ramavarma, P. Bhaskaran, and O.N.V Kurup are known as ‘Communist Trio’. They dedicated their songs to the cause of the down trodden and the exploited. Poets like Vyloppilly and Olappamanna attacked the social inequalities and evils. njalenne kamjuːnistaːkki (You made me a Communist) a play written by Thoppil Bhasi was a fierce attack on Feudalism and discrimination based on caste. Thus Malayalam has a rich tradition of being socially committed and didactic.

Didacticism is thus a major doctrine that has exerted a very powerful influence over creative ideal all over the world. Apart from ancient times, we can’t limit the scope of didacticism to that Literature which had the sole aim of instruction. “The meaning of the term didactic poetry has undergone some change,” says T.S.Eliot. “Didactic may mean ‘conveying information’ or it may mean ‘giving moral instruction’ or it may mean something which comprehends both.”

The incorporation of attractions of Imaginative Literature can be sanctioned, if it serves the aim. When instruction is in an easy and delightful way the didactic endeavour rises to the level of poetry. Whether a particular work is purely instructive or mingles with aesthetic achievement, the poet assumes the role of a teacher or philosopher. “In
selecting to express life in its continuous starving for a richer fulfilment, every artist becomes a moralist,” says W.R. Goodman. So the writer must be well versed in what he teaches. He must have a very clear perspective of the moral or ethical standards that are to be set before the world. But creativity and imagination also are very crucial. When we study the contributions of a didactic poet, the concentration must however be on the ideals and moral or ethical principles expounded by the poet, but of course with an eye to the aesthetic experience the work renders. For Horace had rightly observed: “the man who has managed to blend profit with delight wins everyone’s approbations, for he gives his reader pleasure at the same time as he instructs them.”

Taking all these into consideration, the investigator makes an attempt in the following chapter to examine critically how far William Wordsworth and Ulloor S. Parameswara Iyer are didactical poets and what are the similarities and differences that can be observed in their works.
NOTES


7 Ulloor, “di:pa:vali” 311.


9 T.S. Eliot, 18.


"Didactic Poetry" *Dictionary of World Literary Terms: Forms, Techniques and Criticism*, 1970 ed.

"Didacticism" *Cassel's Encyclopaedia of Literature*, 1953 ed.


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33 Dr. Paul Deussen, Outlines of Indian Philosophy (New Delhi: Ess Ess Publ, 1976) 33.

34 Kannath, 18-9.

36 Swami Prabhavananda and Christopher Isherwood, 25.

37 Swami Prabhavananda and Christopher Isherwood, VII.

38 Holy Bible; The New Revised Standard Version. (Nashville: Cokesbury, 1990)

39 Herbert Grierson, and J.C. Smith, Milton and Wordsworth-Poets and Prophets: A Study of their Reaction to Political Events (London: Chatto and Windus, 1956)


41 The Holy Bible; The New Revised Standard Version.

42 The Holy Bible; The New Revised Standard Version.


45 Virgil, 682-3.


48 Dorsch, 10.


51 Blamires, 56.


53 Blamires, 119-20.

54 Blamires, 173-4.


58 Prof. Seshan, 52.

59 Prof. Seshan, 55.
60 Eliot, 16.


62 Dorsch, 22.