THE ROLE OF LETTERS IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF POLITICAL CONSCIOUSNESS IN MALABAR.

Chapter-VII

THE ROLE OF LETTERS IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF POLITICAL CONSCIOUSNESS IN MALABAR.

There was no public platform for the people of Malabar to discuss matters of public importance before the 20th century. The first and important realm for open discussions was developed when the lawyers of different courts began to assemble. They freely talked about all matters that they thought relevant; some of the matters were of public importance. In Sarada, a novel by Chandumenon, there is a description about the club of the advocates and the matters of discussion.

Another major public space for discussion was opened up when many newspapers began their publication. They discussed vital issues of the masses. The fore runners of the Malayalam dailies had their role in developing a public space for discussions among the masses.

The first of these newspapers was Keralapatrika published by Chenkalathu Valiya Kunhirama Menon. This was founded in Calicut in 1884 as weekly newsletter. The editor of the newspaper had participated in the conferences of the Indian National Congress. He was the secretary of the Indian National Congress for eight long years.
Once he was fined Rs.51/- for criticizing the Government. It had criticized the drain of wealth from India to England.\(^1\)

Another important newspaper that put before the people issues of public importance was *Mitavati* by C.Krishnan. It reported the events in the First World War much better than any other newspaper. *Mitavati* had argued much for the betterment of the backward classes. It had criticized the Indian National Congress that it had no programme for the backward classes. He also blamed the leadership of the Indian National Congress being an upper caste organization.\(^3\) He strongly supported the *Vaikom Satyagraha* and warned the Governments that there would be upheavals like the Russian Revolution, if the Governments tried to keep the people in slave like condition.\(^4\) He also called up on every community to hold political activities.\(^5\)

The *Mathrubhumi* was considered to be the nationalist newspaper. It provided the people with a political path in the national struggle. Most of the political figures in Malabar were linked with the activities of the *Mathrubhumi*. K.P.Kesavamenon, K.Kelappan, K.Madhan Nair, Madhavanar, Kurur Nilakantan Nambudiripad etc. were prominent figures.

They tried to bring before the people issues that were very much important in the perspective of political activists. The editorials of the *Mathrubhumi* were politically stiffened for brainstorming the masses. Mass reading of newspaper was begun after the founding of the *Mathrubhumi* in 1923. It published articles of political importance to bring them before the masses.

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2 Ibid, p.11
3 Ibid,p.142
4 Ibid,p.148
5 Ibid,p.158
The Mathrubumi published special issues on major political events. There was a hartal supplement following the Simon Commission boycott on 3rd February. It called up on the people to make the boycott a success.6

The Mathrubhumi wrote:

"Nobody knows how long the Civil Disobedience movement will last. But it is the duty of the people of Kerala to support it with money and prayer. It also brought to the people the Salt Satyagraha in a touching manner.7

The Mathrubhumi inspired the people with emotional events took place during the political struggle. The story of A.V.Kuttimalu Amma, who went to the prison with her two-year-old baby, evoked strong feeling among the people. It also reported about the magistrate forcefully taking the tali off of Mrs.Prabhu.8

Politically the Mathrubhumi was with the National Movement. The preaching of this newspaper was considered to be a political activity. People discussed the topics published in the national dailies and formed their opinions. Till the birth of the Mathrubhumi, the reading of newspaper was confined only to the upper sections of the society. It changed the reading habit of the people in a positive way.9

The Mathrubhumi also initiated a literary movement in Malayalam for inculcating the spirit of Nationalism.10 The series of articles written by K.Kelappan and others, Particularly criticizing the social evils, superstitions and orthodoxy, contributed to the philosophy of Indian Nationalism.

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6 The Mathrubhumi, February 2, 1928.
7 Ibid, April 11,1930.
8 Mathrubhumiyute Charithram, Vol.1, p.349
9 Ibid, p.119
10 Ibid, p.50
These tracts and the articles were highly instructive and the term *Mathrubhumi* formed to be a synonym of Nationalism.\(^{11}\)

Following the path of the *Mathrubhumi*, another newspaper –*Al-Ameen* was published from Calicut in 1924 under the leadership of Mahammed Abdurahiman. It began as tri-monthly. The main aims of the paper were making the people aware of importance of independence and self-reliance. It also equipped the people with political and administrative awareness.\(^{12}\)

*Al-Ameen* was a sword against injustice and atrocity. It was responsible for making the world known about the facts relating to the Malabar Rebellion of 1921.\(^{13}\)

*Prabhatam* was another newsletter that spread radical information. The *Prabhatam* began in 1935 from Shoranur as fortnightly edited by E.M.S.Nambudiripad. It contained the ideology of Socialism. Keraleeyan and P.Krishna Pillai also had helped him.\(^{14}\)

Many articles in the *Prabhatam* were critical of the Government and its policies. There appeared an article in the *Prabhatam* a strong criticism of C.P.Ramaswami Ayyar against his oppressive rule. It instigated the people to hold strong stand against such oppression. This article was written by P.Krishna Pillai.\(^{15}\)

There were strong criticism about the policies of the Indian National Congress and the relevance of Socialism. E.M.S.Nambudiripad,

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\(^{11}\) Ibid, p.127


\(^{13}\) Ibid, pp.204-207

\(^{14}\) Ibid, 126.

\(^{15}\) *The Prabhatam*, March 27, 1939
A.K.Gopalan, P.Krishnapillai etc. wrote many articles in the *Prabhatam* to make the people favour the Socialist ideology.

Besides the *Prabhatam* and the *Mathrubhumi*, the *Malayala Manorama* also played a role in the field of social reform movement. The *Malayala Manorama* wrote many editorials about the temple entry of the *Ezhavas*. It also wrote that since the *Ezhavas* began to boycott the temples, the income of the temples drastically decreased. It strongly recommended that the *Ezhavas* were to be admitted to the temples.\(^{16}\) It also brought to the people about the rights of the women.\(^{17}\) All these newspapers provided enough matters for the people in meddling the affairs of the society.

**Public Speeches and their influence.**

An important medium of imparting the political ideas was public speeches by eminent politicians. Many of the important personalities have recalled their experience of being spell bound by eminent speakers. Ikkanda Warrier remembers great speeches by Bupendra Basu, Surendranath Banerjea, Srinivasa Sastri etc. in the Madras Session of the Indian National Congress in 1914. All these speeches pulled him to accept the path of politics in his later life.\(^{18}\)

V.Karunakaran Nambiar remembers an important speech by M.P.Damodharan, which was in 1941 at Thalasseri. The Individual *Satyagraha* was announced. He decided to perform the *Satyagraha* in the open field just before his house. There were thousands assembled to hear what he had to say.

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\(^{16}\) *The Malayala Manorama*, October 21, 1921

\(^{17}\) Ibid, July 12, 1919

\(^{18}\) P.S.Velayudhan, *Ikkanda Warrier*, p.6
The speech was like this:

"Our beloved Panditji has been under rigorous imprisonment for four years. The judgement was made by the Kharakhpur Munsiff. This issue came up in the British Parliament. The Secretary to the Indian affairs replied that Nehru could appeal in the Higher Court. Yes, Nehru has given appeal not in the lawless British Court but to the conscience of the Indian people. The judgement on his appeal is being written by the old hands in Wardha; I am a letter in that judgement."

The police who were camping there arrested him on the spot. V.Karunakaran Nambiar observes that if M.P.Damodaran had called up on the people to go to the jail, about ten thousand of them would obey, so magical was his speech.

M.N.Kurup describes another incident in the biography of A.V.Kunhambu that goes like this:

When Kelappan reached Trichambaram, the atmosphere there was that of a celebration. Kunhambu and Krishnan reached there. There were thousands of people assembled to hear what Kelappan would say. He spoke about National freedom, Harijanodharanam etc. in simple language and with great enthusiasm. Kunhambu then decided to become a Congressman.

The importance of the public speech was that even the ignorant person could understand the political situation in a vivid manner. So many leaders were engaged in public speeches in the villages to amass the support of the masses. A.K.Gopalan was one among them.

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19 Karunakaran Nambiar, Chinthakal Spandanangal, Sahitya Academy, Trichur, 1991, pp.93-94
20 Ibid
21 M.N.Kurup, A.V.Kunhambu, p.35
The Founding of Reading rooms and Politicization of the Masses.

As the National Movement got momentum and mass education was given much consideration by the nationalists, many Vayanasalas and libraries were begun. They played a greater role in developing the political background favourable for radicalizing the masses and giving an impetus to the National Movement.

We have discussed more than once that the knowledge of the letters had been the monopoly of the upper sections of the society. So the common people had no role to play in the world of letters.

In Kerala some people had shown much interest in collecting books and reading them. Many of the prominent Taravadus, houses of feudal lords and palaces had good libraries. But this fortune was confined to a minority group. This was quite natural because the majority of the people did not have the knowledge of the letters. When they attained education, the picture changed amazingly. The acceptance of the English education and the knowledge about the libraries functioning in the western countries brought about the idea of public libraries.22

There were a number of libraries and reading rooms in the beginning of the 20th century. But a deliberate attempt to build them for a specific purpose began only with the National Movement.

The first public library in Malabar was founded in Thalassery in 1921. The second one was built in Calicut in 1924. Another was started in Kannur in

22 Kerala Grandha sala Sangham, Trivandrum, Grandhalokam Supplement, 1971, p.21
1927. Even before the founding of these libraries, there were a number of small libraries in the villages but they did not live long owing to various reasons.23

The caste restrictions were prevalent in almost all parts of Malabar and thus the entry had been purely on the basis of caste consideration. But this picture began to change later.

In 1928 a library was started at Vellinezhi. There were no caste restrictions in the entry.24 Till then there were no serious attempts to found libraries.

An organized move to build libraries officially in Malabar was begun when Sivarama Menon was invited to Malabar by the District Board in 1931.25

By the end of 1930s the Peasant Unions were founded out of what began as groups of peasants reading together. In order to teach the masses any ideology, the presence of reading rooms was important, the leaders of the Peasant Unions believed. So reading rooms became such a vital part of the new political culture.26 The more the people became interested in learning the letters, the more they became attracted towards reading books and attaining knowledge.

Due to the increase of literacy, people began to read more and more. There was a competitive mood among the people in constructing reading rooms and libraries.

23 Ibid, p.22
24 Vellinezhi Gramapanchayath, Vikasana Rekha,p.11
25 Kerala Grandha sala Sangha, Trivandrum, Grandhalokam Supplement, 1971,p.22
26 Dilip.M.Menon,Caste, Nationalism and Communism in South India,p.150.
In 1933, the Mottammal Desapriya reading room started functioning. The leader of the reading room was Kunhananthan Nair. They determined to address the problems of the peasants, teachers etc.27 So the people began to show greater interest in the activities of the reading rooms. Reading rooms increased in countryside and towns. Each caste built them. There were 28 registered reading rooms with 2802 members in 1924. The number rose by 1932 to 50 with 6635 members.28

In 1937 K.Kelappan led the first Malabar Vayana Sammelanam at Calicut. The Malabar Vayana Sala Sangham was organized with E.Raman Menon chairman and K.Damodaran secretary.

All those who led the movement were political activists. So the movement could not go ahead as the leaders were preoccupied.29

Along with the National Movement a strong attempt was made in Malabar to build libraries in large numbers. The political leaders believed that it was their major responsibility. But they could not run them long due to lack of spare time.30

In the beginning of the movement, most of the names given to the libraries were related to the Puranas. As the Congress Socialist Party was founded, the activities of the libraries and the reading rooms got momentum. From then on the names of martyrs were also used for naming the libraries and reading rooms.

27 Kannapuram Grama panchayath, Vikasana Rekha, p.11
28 Ibid, p.145
29 Kerala Gradhasala Asngham, Trivandrum, Grandhalokam Supplement, 1971, p.23
30 Ibid, p.37
Sree Harshan was a Harijan who had lost his life while he was in Kannur central jail. His name also was given to a library.

In 1935, the Kakkodi Gramina Vayanasala was built. In 1937 another reading room namely Haindava Prarthana Samiti was also founded. This was more inclined towards the Hindu ideology. The ideological conflict between the two reading rooms continued. As a result the progress of both the libraries was halted.31

The reading rooms ranged from buildings made of brick to sheds made of mud with straw roofs sticking the daily newspapers, and sometimes libraries were also founded in similar way. The name of reading rooms reflected three successive historical currents. Those set up by the caste associations had names like Gramaparakshini and the Vidyabhiyearthishini at Kattur, which indicated their purpose, were among the oldest. Then the congressmen set up many libraries. They named them after national figures like Motilal Nehru (Thalipparamba) and Sreeharsha (Kalliyassery).

The others reflected the national aspiration like the one by Bharathiya established at Naniyur, which was called Bharathiya Mandiram. In later years the reading rooms changed names like Abu-Chatukkuty, those who were shot down in a strike associated with the struggle of beedi workers.32

One of the novelties of the organization of the reading rooms was the communal drinking of tea, as one read the newspaper and the others

31 Kakkodi Grama panchayath, Vikasana Rekha, pp. 5-6
32 Dilip M. Menon, Caste, Nationalism and Communism in South India, p. 145
listened. Literacy programmes to determine the influence of a newspaper can be misleading, if only because newspapers were read communally.\(^{33}\)

The communal reading of newspapers brought about many remarkable influence among the people. Even the illiterate common man could understand the problems of the people and the country.

The *Mathrubhumi* brought to the people the political activities of the Indian National Congress. The reading habit of newspapers reached to the masses and they began to show leaning towards the political struggle. The working class and others used to read the *Prabhatam*, which provided them with radical ideas. The teashops and the barbershops also provided space for open discussions.

After reading the newspaper aloud, there would be open discussions on politics, war, Government and all about. Politicization of the common man was one of the results of these open discussions. The reading rooms were stocked with newspapers like the *Mathrubhumi* and the *Prabhatam*.\(^{34}\)

Through the reading rooms and the tea shops and newspapers a whole new world was imagined, and discussion built up a collective memory of organization, strikes and campaign against the landlords as well as the victories of attaining of reduced working hours, more wages and low rent.\(^{35}\) With this knowledge the common men got elated.

Soon these libraries and the reading rooms became the breeding ground of the Indian National Congress and the Congress Socialist Party. An example

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\(^{33}\) Ibid, p.146

\(^{34}\) Dilip M. Menon, *Caste, Nationalism and Communism in South India*, p.146

\(^{35}\) Ibid, p.147
can be traced from the biography of E.M.S. Nambudiripad. There was a reading room called *Yuvajana Vayanasala* in a building near the school. A hand-written magazine was released from the *Vayanasala* namely *Yuva Chaithanyam*. Narayanan was the brain behind the magazine. The founder of the *Vayanasala* was one Kunhikkannan master, who was from north Malabar. He used to give books to the people on the National Movement. He was also a regular reader of *The Hindu* daily.

Rama Poduval and Raman Nair were supportive of the National Movement. They also were from north Malabar. Raman Nair master wore only *Khadi*. They also got some students with full of spirit of the National Movement. The children from the Mankada, Ayiranazhi, Kadannamanna and Aripra Kovilakams were among them. Ponnunni Raja of Aripra Kovilakam was more active. Subramanian and N.P. Narayana Menon also were supporters of the National Movement. They met at the *Vayanasala* and discussed about the National Struggle. These meetings and the reading of various books made E.M.S. Nambudiripad a different man.36

Another description by Thikodiyan is apt to be quoted:

"To awaken the conscience of the society, rejuvenate youth with the spirit of freedom, eradicate inequality, a village reading room was decided to be set up. There was also a move to construct a library as well. There was an attempt to reconstitute the ailing Board school. Kelappaji decided that the finance to repair the equipment of the school could be found by conducting a drama."

"When the activities of the *Vayanasala* went on, the youngsters became so happy. A number of people came to the library daily. Many workers also attended the reading room. Kunhikkannan Nambiar, the right hand of K.Kelappan, took the leadership of the youth. The Village rose from slumber. The *Santhana Gopalam*

36 Appukkuttan Vallikkunnu, *Ariyappedatha E.M.S.*, pp.110-11
drama by Kuttamath was performed. The comedian in the drama, Komu Nair mocked at imperialism."  

Keraleeyan helped the local people to start Sree Harshan Vayanasala.

E.K.Nayanar writes:

"The Vayanasala was near our school. It was a blessing to me that I could directly go to the library after the classes were over. Almost all the people of the area reached there. One would read the newspaper aloud. Many doubts would be raised from many quarters. The leaders would clear them. Leaders like Keraleeyan would give his opinions. A good political discussion would be there. About 50 people were present there every day. The Vayanasala had issued a hand written magazine."  

"In 1935, when the golden jubilee celebration of the Indian National Congress took place, a celebration was also held at the Vayanasala. The Vayanasala drama troop performed the play Pattabakki. The Vayanasala soon became the center of care of Kalliaisseri. A Kisan Union was also founded."  

In 1936 the Pookkanandathil reading room was established by the Karshakasangham. There was a night school in the reading room. The teacher was Kallyadan Kunhikrishnan Nambiar.  

In 1937 at Irinave, the Sanmarga Dayini Vayanasala was opened. It decided to strongly fight casteism and untouchability. It also tried to bring the people in to the national mainstream.  

In the same year, the Karshakasangham leaders started Desiya Yuva jana Sangham Vayanasala. In 1939, at Perumbala, the Vidyarthi Samajam was founded with a good reading room.  

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37 Thikkodiyan, Arangu Kanatha Nadan, pp.27-31  
38 E.K.Nayanar, Samaratheecchoolayil, p.16-17  
39 Kannapuram Grama panchayath, Vikasana Rekha, p.22  
40 Ibid, p.22  
41 Ibid, p.12  
42 Chemmanad Gramapanchayath, Vikasana Rekha, p.13
The Government soon realized that the growth of reading rooms would be a threat to safeguard the interests of the Government, as these institutions were propagating revolutionary ideas.

In Kannur a number of libraries were founded during the National Movement but the Government banned their activities in 1940. This reveals the importance of the libraries and reading rooms.

The radicalization of the society was a major task the libraries and the reading rooms had taken up knowingly or unknowingly. The activities of the libraries and the Vayanasalas brought about social revolution in north Malabar. They became the breeding grounds for political activists. The Janmis and the Government could not tolerate all these.

The libraries had also taken up social activities as well. In 1947-48 about 12 Harijan pupils were admitted to the school of Choondayil Namboodiri under the leadership of Ananda Thirtha. In Odayammad School also some Harijan pupils were admitted. The caste leaders could not tolerate it. The police tortured the people brutally. The Irinave and Mottammal libraries were torched. Even though the libraries had no direct link with the activities mentioned, the Janmis and their supporters believed that the libraries had played a vital role in spreading the dangerous ideology of ‘equality to all’. So they were not ready to tolerate them.

In the novel Muthassi by Cherukad, there explains how a Vayanasala became part of the political movement in a local village much away from the cities and towns. The Vayanasala was burned down by the anti social elements.

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43 Mattannur Gramapanchayath, Vikasana Rekha, p. 7
44 Kannapuram Gramapanchayath, Vikasana Rekha, p. 12
saying that they would not tolerate any Congressman running a dangerous institution in the village. They also were against the Indian National Congress.

The establishment of a reading room and a library was not an easy task. Many selfless men should spend days on end to build a good library and a reading room. The books were to be collected from the people since it was difficult to find money for books and newspapers. Reading newspapers and books, and the discussions in these libraries contributed many leading political figures in Malabar. The library movement got momentum in Malabar only in the 1950s.

Apart from Newspapers, there were a number of books in the libraries that were favourable for the growth of Nationalism in Malabar. The programmes of the Nationalist ideology had determined the growth of Malayalam literature. The literature was converted into a powerful instrument of social change.\textsuperscript{45}

The most important literary activists who propagated the spirit of nationalism through their works were:


\textit{Vallathol} Narayana Menon, with his amazing poems exalted the masses. His celebrated poems were Salutation to the Mother (1918)

\textsuperscript{45} K.K.N. Kurup, Nationalism and Social Change: The Role of Malayalam Literature, p. 51
Peasants Song (1919), My Master (1922) and Higher and Higher (1923) Vallathol Narayananmenon had been the progressive poet of the National freedom and social equality.\textsuperscript{46}

The period between 1919 and 1929 was well reflected by Vallathol at the same time no poet could reflect the period after 1930-32.\textsuperscript{47}

Kumaran Asan mainly preached the folly of caste inequalities. Caste discrimination and the miseries of the common people were his favourite themes. \textit{Duravastha, Chandala Bhikshuki} and \textit{Karuna} are his remarkable works. All these speak about the problems of the down trodden and their suffering in leading the life of a civilized man.

K.P.G.Nambudiriri was considered to be a poet with strong communist ideology.

His most celebrated song was:

\begin{quote}
"There is a land called the Soviet,
I am blessed if I could go there."
\end{quote}

He provided the Communists with slogans that could touch the heart of the common man.

K.P.G.Nambudiriri was one of the disciples of G.Sankara Kurup. He too had supported the national mood. While Sankarakurup was along with the common national mood and the Gandhian style of functioning, K.P.G.Nambudiriri came out of these influences and became a strong

\textsuperscript{46} E.M.S.Nambudiripad, \textit{Marxisavum Malayala Sahithyavum}, Chinha, Trivandrum, 1974, p. 38

\textsuperscript{47} Ibid, p. 188
supporter of the Left movement. His poems like Sankethathil, Thurunkilninu, and Jawaharlal Nehru were remarkable.48

Though Changampuzha Krishna Pillai had been writing poems that were rather romantic, his celebrated poem Vazhakkula has extreme importance. It pictures how the Janmi exploited the poor Pulaya by taking away the bunch of bananas reared by him. His children were anxiously waiting for the ripening of the banana.

Kuttamath was the teacher of the Raja’s High School at Nileswaram. Sreechakraganam was his most celebrated work. Santhanagopalam drama was another major work. His plays were performed in all over Malabar and were appreciated as important ingredient to impart political awareness among the common people.

Amsi Narayana Pillai was a clerk in the Travancore Police Department. He resigned from the post. He wrote the celebrated marching song Varika Varika Sahajare ..........In 1930, he conducted a march. All the three Governments banned him because they feared that his march would instigate popular ire on the Government. He was imprisoned in the Viyyur Jail for six months.49

P. Kunhiraman Nair is one of the renowned poets of Kerala. He wrote many patriotic songs. Thookkumarathil was one written in respect of Bhagat Singh. He was much pained when an attempt was made on the life of Gandhiji in 1934 and he wrote Mangala pathram.

48 Ibid, p.336
49 M.Achuthan, Swathanthrya Samaravum Malayala Sahithyavum, p.261
N.V.Krishna Varier had preached the *Swathanthra Bharatham* while he was in exile.

He was a nationalist and a Congressman. Kelappan and V.T.Bhattathirippad were his colleagues. His important works to boost the political consciousness were *Vantippinammaye* and *Karma Sopanan*.

**The Role of the Theatre.**

The theatre was a powerful means to educate the masses. During the summer and after the harvests the paddy fields became centres of so many meetings of the *Karshaka Sangham* and the Trade Unions.

The anniversary celebrations of many libraries too were marked with the plays. To inspire the people K. Damodharan wrote *Pattabakki* (The Rent Arrears) and *Raktha Paanam* (Drinking of Blood)—both played on many stages. Wherever there was a meeting of the *Karshaka Sangham*, there performed any of these plays.\(^{50}\) *Pattabakki* was first performed in 1937 at Ponnani. The exploitation by then *Janmis* was the theme, which was the message of Communist Manifesto.\(^{51}\) With the performance of the *Pattabakki* and the *Raktha Paanam* embarked on a new era of performance art in which the life struggle of the common people and the workers began to be the subject of writers.\(^{52}\)

*Pattabakki* (The Rent Arrears) described the painful life of the poor peasants. The *Janmis* and the Government exploited their life, work and rights. The ignorant people were thus given political education. These two plays mainly

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\(^{50}\) K.K.N.Kurup, *Nationalism and Social Change: The Role of Malayalam Literature*, p.106

\(^{51}\) Ibid

\(^{52}\) E.M.S.Nambudiripad, *Marxismum Malayala Sahityavum*, p.150
deal with the class relations. The peasant folks were politically educated on
the basis of class-consciousness. The situations thus described were part of
their day today life. They had been unable to pay the rent fixed by the
Janmis.

They were driven out of the land, which they occupied for not paying the
rent arrears. They could not pay the rent because of poor harvests. The
Government and the Janmis tortured them without mercy. The message of
the theatre highlighted a Government by the working class. This enthused
them very much. These plays acted an important role in spreading the
Communist ideology in Malabar.

The Sanskrit school at Vellikkoth performed plays, which contained the
message of Nationalism. Pakkanar Charitam and Kabirdas Charitam. They were
against the caste proscriptions.53 Bharatha Ratham was a play written by
K.P.Kunhirama Poduval in 1944. When the play was performed in the
Calicut town hall, the actors were arrested by the police saying that it
contained the message of the Indian National Congress.54 P.Kelu Nair wrote
Bhishma Prathijna, the play that was against casteism. He wrote another play
namely Syamanthakam. He was one among the organizers of the Payyannur
Conference of the Indian National Congress.

Even though the school education provided a strong base for the people to
read and express their feelings through writing, it had not provided them a
space beyond the textbooks. In this context, the role of the newspapers,
reading rooms, libraries, booklets, leaflets public speeches etc. was
extremely significant. The schools provided the children with mere literacy,

53 K.K.N.Kurup, Nationalism and Social Change: The Role of Malayalam Literature, p.102
54 Ibid, p.105
which was necessary for reading what the media had to say. At the same time the political spirit of the people was awakened by these factors. The schools acted as factories to produce literate people. But they were incapable of providing any remarkable contribution to the political atmosphere.

The social evils were discussed in the classrooms and there were messages against them. But they deliberately ignored political issues. The situation being this, the society demanded radical ideas that were not at all available at schools. So there appeared many factors that took up the role of making the people politically conscious. Political consciousness would not have been possible in Malabar, if these factors had not worked.