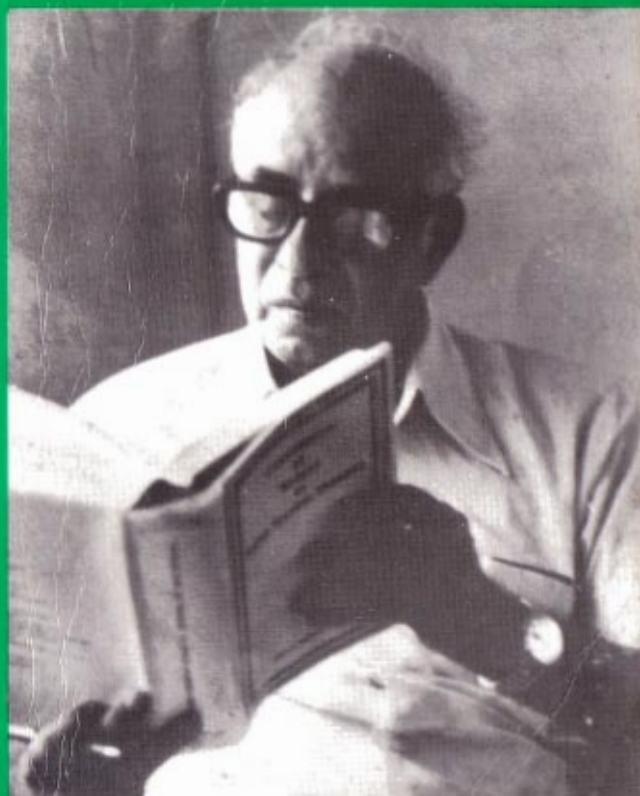




N.V. Krishna Warrior

K.V. Ramakrishnan

*Makers of
Indian
Literature*



Makers of Indian Literature

N.V. KRISHNA WARRIOR

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The sculpture reproduced on the endpaper depicts a scene where three soothsayers are interpreting to King Suddhodana the dream of Queen Maya, mother of Lord Buddha. Below them is seated a scribe recording the interpretation. This is perhaps the earliest available pictorial record of the art of writing in India.

From: Nagarjunakonda, 2nd century A.D.
Courtesy: National Museum, New Delhi.



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Chapter I

From the Melting Pot

It will be just a general statement to say that Dr. N.V. Krishna Warrior was a writer who was the progeny of his times, for no writer can be otherwise. But no two writers of the same age will have the same face. Difference in the mould of each writer, cast by his personal backgrounds and personal experiences will naturally cause difference in the make-up of each writer. And Dr. N.V. Krishna Warrior also had his own personal background and personal experiences, deeply coloured with the socio-political upsurges of the years, which moulded his personality. Poetry is the expression of personality and to appreciate the real spirit of the works of a poet, to assess the significance of a writer, a proper understanding of his mould is inevitable.

Krishna Warrior is, as can be deduced from a close study of his works and also as is seen reflected in his personal life, the torch-bearer of his times. He served the society, foreseeing the demands of the days to come, disregarding his personal discomforts, sufferings and

sorrows. In India, nineteen thirties and forties were the melting pot of the national spirit, of suffering and renunciation. Freedom struggle was passing through crucial years, with the Mahatma as the lodestar on the central stage. For the youngsters in particular, Gandhiji's character set the ideal to follow. NV wrote:

When I learned the alphabets,
I became impatient to imbibe
The anecdotes of Gandhi's life
That enlighten the blind inner-eyes.
That self-confidence, humble & great,
That steadfast faith,
That devotion in service of people,
That honesty, truth and noble deed
The image the imagination painted
On the clean canvas of young minds,
Can still be seen bright,
Undimmed by the fumes of Time.

(A leaf in the August wind)

The greatest blessing of that period was that the country had an unblemished ideal of greatness to present before the moulding minds. On 18-1-34, Krishna Warrior a youth of 17, wrote in his diary, "this is the most memorable auspicious day in my life. I visited Gandhiji for the 1st time. I feel gratified". It was when Gandhiji visited the erstwhile Cochin State. NV had by then read much on Gandhiji and much of Gandhiji also. Gandhi's simplicity, truthfulness, steadfastness and unflinching adherence to principles clubbed with moral courage had influenced NV to the core, which served to be the corner-stone of his character. When Gandhiji electrified the minds of the Indians with his Dandi Yatra and salt-movement, NV was a boy of fourteen, in his class-room. Later he wrote on those days:

The Victory-cry of the people
who reach the sea-shore
For preparing salt,
The battering sounds of
the crushing batons
On flesh and bone,
The Valour, unflinching
Even in the roaring rain
Of leaden fire.

When my country was
Writing her history anew
With the blood of her heart,
Without hesitation,
sitting on a back-bench
I yarned on a Thakli
The resolve that I will bear
The torch of my generation.

(A leaf in the August wind)

And with this resolve he offered his blossoming youth at the doors of freedom. ("My blossoming youth, I offered before the temple of Freedom").

Unsatiated thirst for knowledge was the fundamental strand in his character which was there from the very early childhood to his last breath. He has repeatedly recorded in his diary of early days that his primary concern was his studies. But equally important to him was his duties and responsibilities to his country. In those early days his mind was actually oscillating between these two: whether to continue his studies shutting his ears to the call of his country or to abandon his studies and get himself immersed in politics, in service to his nation. Though he had contemplated on this through those days, the upper-hand always went to the persistent

unquenched thirst for knowledge. "It is a shame and a wonder to me why I am not in the struggle for freedom. One idea deters me from taking such a step: that my study is not complete"¹. His ultimate aim of those days was to pass BOL - "BOL, the highest examination in my reach."²

Nevertheless, he was deeply involved in local political activities of those days - activities like the student movement, labour organisations, writing, editing and publishing political literature etc. It was with untold hardships, even risking his own life often, that he edited, published and distributed "Swathanthrabharatam" ("Free India") from underground. These sour experiences in the field of India's Freedom-struggle gradually developed in his character the strong strand of universality with deep roots in Gandhian principles.

Those were the years when all countries, particularly countries under foreign yoke, struggling for freedom, looked at the Soviet Union as a heaven of freedom.

Work for hands, food for bellies,
Knowledge pure for minds,
Cheerfulness in the present,
Expectations in the future,
And pride in the past,
Rays of health and agility
Stretching upto stars!
It is in the idea of equality
That the creation of Man
By Nature is fructified
(*"Da Swidaniya"*)

¹ Diary dated 9-2-1941

² Diary dated 10-6-1941

This glory of freedom, equality, fraternity and prosperity was achieved by Soviet Russia under Lenin. Indian Youth in general, particularly those who had the natural urge for freedom, started imbibing the spirit of communism. NV also read everything available, written by Marx and Lenin, as a result of which his mind developed the faith that,

Crushing the boundaries,
Foaming and agitated,
Serene, as if no more flowing,
The great river of
The history of humanity
Moves inevitably
Into the ocean of equality.
(*"Da Swidaniya"*)

He wrote in his diary, after making close observations on world politics: "However, my sympathy was towards Russia..... the main reason of this may be apathy towards the English."³ This study of Marxian ideology helped to develop in him a strong base of historical perspective and this also contributed a lot to the casting of his mould.

Added to this is the profound spirit of Indian philosophy he imbibed from the indepth study of Indian classics, in the field of both thought and literature, which naturally led to his breadth of vision, sense of tolerance and asceticism. To add marrow to all these was his early personal family-background which caused him to suffer unimaginable agony. Throughout his childhood he lived through days of acute hardships while he watched some members of his own family - those were the days of joint-family system - were living in affluence. This, added with

³ Diary dated 20-4-1940.

the grievous financial problems he faced during the days of his education and even later, carved deep marks on his metal. All these different traits in his make-up have to be elucidated separately to have a proper understanding of Krishna Warrior, the man and of his contributions to Malayalam literature and culture in general.

Quite unmistakably, Mahakavi G. Sankara Kurup has felt the pulse of the character of N.V. Krishna Warrior when he wrote: "It seems, the uncontrolled inquisitiveness is the foundation stone of the structure of life of this genius".

Chapter II

Life Means Struggle

N.V. Krishna Warrior was born on 13-5-1916 at Nerukkavil Variam, in Neruvissery, Trichur District (Kerala) in the erstwhile Cochin State as the son of Pidikkaparambil Achutha Varier and Madhavi Varassiar. 'Varier' is the name of a particular community in Kerala, placed in between Brahmins and Kshatriyas. Chakyar, Nambiar, Pisharody and such other communities, who live depending upon temples, belong to this particular group. They are called Samanthas or Antharalas and follow matriarchal system.

"Variam" is a word of Dravidian origin which originally meant, "Board" or "elected body". In olden days in South India the administration of temples, village tanks etc., was manned by elected bodies, called "Variam". Even today, the word "Variam", in Tamil means "board". "Minsara Variam" in Tamil, is Electricity Board. But it is unknown how, in Kerala, the word started to have the meaning "the residence of a particular community". Nor is it clear how the word "Varier" became the name of a particular

community. But Variers in general lived on temple-duties ear-marked for them. To Krishna Warrior's father also, there was "Kazhakam" (Temple duties), in a local temple and that branch of the family lived mainly depending on this meagre means and occasional temple feasts. One of his early bitter experiences, to which the roots of the fervent fighter against injustice in NV, can be traced, is related to this temple duties. He was in his teens then. Petty thefts in village temples were not uncommon in those days. And such a petty theft took place in their temple also. The culprit could not be traced. The 'Ooralan' (the owner of the temple) ordered, as was the custom in those days, that the employees should make good the loss, lest they lose their livelihood. Innocent though, they were, there was none to listen to them and NV's father, along with others, with great difficulties, had to replace all the lost things. The thief was later caught and the properties recovered. He was properly punished also. But the poor innocent had already been punished, not only in money but in mind also. The up-right rebel in N.V. could not stand this injustice. He wrote a strongly worded letter against this and sent to the Mathrubhumi, the popular daily. It was published in the paper and N.V. writes: "It was my first literary piece to be published".¹

But things did not end there. His writing let loose a great revolt and the Ooralan took it to be a personal insult on his authority. Situations developed to such an extent that N.V.'s father was about to lose his job; and losing job then meant utter starvation of the whole family. Just to save the temple-duty of the family, NV had to apologise in writing. He wrote down the apology, signed, and gave it and went to the temple along with his father with the

slight consolation that he did not have to withdraw his words in the apology. He writes later on this: "In nothing else in my life I have experienced the bitterness that I tasted in the Sugar Payasam that day".²

Born in a family which followed matriarchal, joint family system, N.V. had to suffer untold miseries practically incomprehensible for those who live in a different social set up. In a matriarchal family with different branches, having varying economic status, living under the same roof, often there used to be obvious differences in arrangements for even food and clothing. The atmosphere would often be troubled with petty conflicts and rubs. NV has remarked about those days that his was a family of "people belonging to different strata of poverty living together".³ He belonged to a branch which suffered much to make both ends meet. At the same time there were certain other branches in the family, with comparatively better background. He remembers clearly one of his cousin brothers, belonging to the latter, going to the school with a good umbrella and well-dressed, when he had neither. There was nobody in the house who encouraged him in his studies. But his mother used to read regularly the Puranas like Ramayana, Bhagavatha etc., and also Krishna Gatha which he used to hear with deep interest. He notes that perhaps this may be the instances which kindled the elementary inclination in him towards literature. His father could not afford to support him in his studies. He went to the local school at Cherpu and studied there upto the 4th standard because there was no fees there. But to continue the studies from the 5th standard onwards regular payment of fees was necessary and so NV had to stop going to the school. He

¹ N.V. Krishna Warrior - Essay - "Kuttikkalathe Marakkanavatha Sambhavam" (An Unforgettable event in my Childhood)

² Ibid

³ N.V. Krishna Warrior - in an interview - audio record.

has in his famous poem "Naxalbari", drawn the vivid picture of an Asthmatic lad running to school, running to avoid caning, drinking some rice-water boiling on the stove. This picture compels a conscientious reader to think of the poet himself in his early school-days in Cherpu Primary School. In those days, if his mother could not give anything to her hungry son coming back from the school in the evening, the son would say, "all right. Then give me a book to read". This hunger took NV to the Sanskrit College at Trippunithura where he continued to study Sanskrit. He could study there because the Royal family of Cochin used to give scholarships to those students who opted for Sanskrit. Had he not been selected for this scholarship, NV would have ended his life as a village Ayurveda Vaidya or astrologer.⁴

Here he got the opportunity for the extensive, systematic, traditional way of studying the language which formed the sound foundation for his profound erudition in Sanskrit. He acquired deep scholarship in all Sanskrit Kavyas, Natakas and Rhetorics. He was a matchless scholar in aesthetics and Grammar. He had mastered Vedic Sanskrit and Panineeya Vyakarana. The popular Sanskrit works like Sidhanthakaumudi, Mahabhashyam etc. and also the rarely known masterly works like Prakriyasarvaswam, Roopavatharam, Prakriyakaumudi etc., have been so meticulously studied by him that any Sutra in these texts with all its commentary Vrithy and practical explanations was always ready on the tip of his tongue. This is evident by the commendable introduction he has written to the Vyakarana Kavya, "Sugalarthamala" by Panditarajan

⁴ N.V. Krishna Warrior - "With Thanks and Regards" - Recorded speech on 24-8-87 on being honoured with Doctorate Degree by Calicut University. ("Vichinthanangal Visadeekaranangal" - pp - 217-223)

Narayanan Namboodiri. His introduction to "Padasamskarachandrika" of Kaikulangara Rama Varier is a profound evaluation of the entire realm of Sanskrit Grammar from the Vedic period to modern times, enriched with a detailed scheme for the study of Sanskrit Grammar in Kerala. For all these, our cultural world is indebted to that meagre amount of scholarship he got in the college. Even with this, he was struggling hard to pull on. He has recorded instances of not having proper clothing, food or even the little kerosene required for lighting the lamp to read.

But this bitter experience had its healthy bearing also upon his character. His mental make-up proved to be so strong that no suffering of any sort was able to tantalise him. Sprouted in the flames he was never to swoon in the sun. Looking back upon the life of six years at Trippunithura, he wrote: "There is nothing to gain running about like a boat without an oar-man or like a fallen leaf in the wind. Something can be achieved only if all the efforts and all the powers are directed towards an aim properly identified. Short-lived physical pleasures are not at all the aim of human life. Mere good life is not often unselfish and hence not the absolute aim. I read today that the aim of life is Truth that can be realised only by good life. Earn a livelihood and then give our little share to the universal effort in attaining human welfare. Gradually immerse and disappear in Time, enjoying happiness, without causing injury to others, loving all and consoling atleast a few. Our life becomes fruitful if some feel pleased remembering us. Try for that. Engage in literary activities, because it is the panacea of man. These are insights of Truth I have gained."⁵

⁵ Diary dated 9-7-1938.

NV studied in the Sanskrit College at Trippunithura from 1931-'37 and while a student there, he was inspired with ardent national spirit. Studying Hindi, spreading Hindi, spinning etc., were considered to be inevitable part of nationalism and along with his studies, he devoted his time for these activities also. He studied Hindi privately and took the degree "Rashtrabhashavisarad", the examination for which was conducted by Dakshin Bharath Hindi Prachar Sabha. Interestingly, he used to write his diaries during these days in Hindi thinking, perhaps, that it would help him to acquire mastery over the language. And with this aim, he used to read Hindi novels and short stories. He also translated into Malayalam some novels and stories of Saratchandra Chatterji and others, which too helped to master the language to such an extent that he could very effectively deliver public speeches in Hindi in later years, apart from translating speeches from Hindi to Malayalam and vice versa. Once, along with the renowned Bengali Novelist Bimal Mitra and Tamil Novelist Akhilan, he held a cultural tour in Bihar. Bimal Mitra used to speak in Hindi. Akhilan's speeches were translated into Hindi. But, it has been recorded that NV's speeches in Hindi were the most remarkable and appreciated by scholars as profound and rich with insight.⁶ The profundity of his scholarship in Hindi was later testified by his editorship of the Hindi periodical "Yugaprabhath" for long 15 years.

He knew fully well that life in modern days would be impossible without English, though with confidence he knew his root was in Sanskrit. During his school - college days, he had no chance to study English. So, like Hindi, he studied English also privately, while he was working as

a Sanskrit teacher in the Ramakrishna Asramam High School at Kalady. After acquiring enough mastery over English, he requested the authorities to permit him to take the SSLC Examination as a private candidate. But it was refused on the ground that there was no provision for that. So, the desire to take the basic academic qualification of SSLC, remained a dream unfulfilled throughout his life, though he had taken research degree from Madras University, and was honoured with Doctorate by the Calicut University, later. During these days, he wrote his diary in English, as in the case of Hindi earlier and on certain days he wrote pages together, recording every minute detail of incidents in his life, including his vexations over financial problems, his anxiety over the socio-political developments around, observations and critical comments on the books he read, his yearning for more knowledge, sharp remarks on his unsatisfactory achievements and his earnest desire for better days. In this regard, one of his particular habits is note-worthy. On the last day of every year, he writes long pages in the diary, ringing out the dying year, looking back and taking stock of all the major incidents in that whole year, evaluating and also drawing a definite working plan for the year, ringing it in. Occasionally, he makes such entries on his birth-days also. Though NV was a deep lover of his mother-tongue and though, in later years, he has worked enthusiastically for years together, for making the language an effective vehicle for handling all the modern knowledge, during these early years, he recorded his mind in English because, it was for him a conscientious exercise to acquire mastery over the language. This later gave him undaunted confidence in this ability which prompted him to translate extempore, the speech of Dr. S. Radhakrishnan, the great philosopher

⁶ Dr. N.E. Viswanatha Iyer - "Vijnana Kairali" - Vol. XXI - October 1990

- President of India. This command over English which he mastered with the sweat of his brow enabled him to get access to all the expanding horizons of modern thoughts and sciences.

On taking degree (oriental title "Bhooshanam") from the Sanskrit College, NV started his career as a Sanskrit teacher on an insignificantly meagre salary, which was quite insufficient for him to live, though his needs were quite moderate and limited. All the while he continued his earnest efforts for further studies. But dissatisfied with his surroundings he often wrote: "Now and again I feel like leaving here, resigning this job. But I don't have the required financial position or health for that".⁷ (He had taken the Siromani degree during this period). Nevertheless, next moment he would reflect as if to balance and write: "sometimes I feel I am envious of those in our country who draw more salary than me. But I know I am far superior to them in mental culture and hence this "12 rupee life" of mine is tolerable (even desirable). It is criminal in this poor country of ours to receive more salary than is required for essential day to day expenditure. I don't know what other job than this teaching I should do. Hence I should have felt proud of this job with little salary as it is legitimate".⁸ But, the persistent urge in him was for something better, not only in job but in learning also.

NV left for Madras and joined Madras University as a research scholar in October, 1944. The period till then was very critical in his life, full of troubles and turmoils. During these years he worked in different schools changing from one to another facing financial problems.

⁷ Diary dated 6-5-1938

⁸ Diary dated 7-8-1938

preparing for examinations, always anxious for a better footing, trying to solve the problems in the family caused by partition and so on. Besides, these years were dangerously crucial because it was during this period that he had plunged head long into active politics. NV had started to imbibe the spirit of nationalism from his early school-days. Reading Gandhiji and other nationalistic literature was a hunger for him. While working at the Kalady Sanskrit School, at the age of 23, he was nominated to speak in a meeting organised in the school to celebrate the birthday of the Maharaja. He bluntly refused this though his colleagues had given word for him. "What should I speak on? Loyalty to the King?"⁹ This clearly reveals the later Freedom-Fighter in him. Even in those early days, he used to be involved in works connected with Khadi, uplift of the backward people, giving informal basic education to the villagers, spreading Hindi, which step by step, developed into activities among students, organising labourers and gradual stepping into the freedom-movement.

His sound foundation, was the mature outlook on life, taken shape in him as a result of the bitter personal experiences, that man should not be lured by worldly advantages. "I have found out that man can achieve some satisfaction by working steadfast on something selected according to his taste. So, for the time being, continue to work with this aim and along with it, try to improve knowledge. Put an end to the fascinations of worldly advantages. Cut off completely, the desire to be respected. Understand that the first step to civilization is not to be envious of others. All comparisons are absurd. Everybody has his own value and importance which no other man

⁹ Diary dated 21-10-1938

possesses".¹⁰ These ideas, recorded while he was just 25, have been the guiding light in all his activities throughout his life. And on 24-8-'87 receiving the Doctorate Degree from Calicut University, NV wrote: "The contemporary society has extended to me too much of love and more respect than I deserve, for which I am indebted to them. I have a general understanding about the mighty journey of humanity through the Eternal Time. My place in this procession is quite insignificant; but if I am not there, my place will remain vacant. In the din of this procession, it is difficult to hear my sound distinct. But this din will have its real echo only when my sound also is mingled with it".¹¹ NV was 71 now. The true spirit of the words he wrote four and a half decades ago, enlivens these words, fully matured.

By this time NV started developing a practice of evaluating Indian situations in the backdrop of international incidents. This habit enabled him to observe things in a wider perspective. International political situation was very tense and the fire of the second world war had broken out. "Japan has declared war and has struck right and left".¹² Tension electrified the Indian atmosphere also. "A plane was observed in Assam and now that region is regarded as war zone. Thus the world conflagration has become complete. How will this affect India? The congress leaders are released; yet there seems to be no change of heart on the part of the imperialists of Britain. From a statement of Jawahar it seems probable that Congress may not assume power now".¹³ This clearly reflects the working of this mind. Though he had the

¹⁰ Diary dated 12-9-1940

¹¹ "With Thanks and Regards" - (Vichinthanangal Visadeekaranangal - PP. 217-223)

¹² Diary dated 9-12-1941

¹³ Diary dated 9-12-1941

constant worry about his personal problems, his mind was, above everything, anxious about and agitated by the fate of India, in the whole-world set up. When Marshal Chiang Kai Shak visited India, he became excited, thinking that it would help towards India's freedom. "I thought that if there is something called public opinion, the British Government will have to bow its head before it and Chiang can act as a mediator in solving Indian problem. Yesterday I saw in the papers that Nehru saw Chiang. Singapore having almost gone, will the British Government do justice to India at such a belated hour?"¹⁴

During 1942 he was working as Headmaster in the Asramam School at Kalady. Though he wanted to observe Gandhi Jayanthi in the School, the Manager of the School did not give permission and he had to cancel the idea. But he addressed a public meeting organised in this connection. "The next day the Police came to enquire.... What effect this Police report will have upon my career I don't know. Nor do I care. To respect Gandhiji is to respect one's self".¹⁵

After attending the Anti-Fascist Rally and All Kerala Soviet Fraternity Conference, presided over by the National Poet Vallathol Narayana Menon, he wrote: "Communism is rapidly spreading in our country. This is for good, I believe. But once the masses are incited into rebellion, I don't know where it will end".¹⁶ NV believed that if the sleeping dragon was awakened and roused into action, without preparing the ground of tolerance and non-violence, everything would end in calamity. Though he had imbibed the spirit of communism to the core, the change of policy of the communist party during the

¹⁴ Diary dated 15-2-1942

¹⁵ Diary dated 6-9-1941

¹⁶ Diary dated 9-4-1942

second world war was, according to him, rather opportunistic. He has recorded his mind thus: "The Communist party has changed its attitude of uncompromising resistance of Britain to unconditional co-operation".¹⁷ He believed that this change of policy and supporting Britain which, even Britain took as a nuisance, would create unhealthy situations in Indian Politics. He watched with much mental disturbance that the Communist Party was taking into alliance opportunistic reactionaries, who, but for their hate of Congress, would never have dreamt of saying what they went on saying. He believed that Indian Communist Party was going the wrong way in deciding to support Britain in the world war and also that the decision of the Congress to start a mass movement was apt and timely. The war, as far as India was concerned, was not a people's war. With conviction, he writes, "Japan will not attack India while the latter is struggling to free herself, for Japan has already in hand much more than she could manage and there is no sin in signing a non-aggression pact with Japan to gain time for preparing for the war".¹⁸

The spirit of Politics he imbibed was the result of his study of political literature. Inwardly he was a lover of communist ideology. But under the rigid frame-work of the communist party, he thought, he would not be able to enjoy the freedom to think his own thoughts. Read voraciously, imbibe new ideas, think freely was the very life-blood of his being and when he feared that this would be affected, he started thinking of keeping himself away from party politics, though his mind was burning with the thought of free India. The days in school at Kalady were not smooth. Relationship between him and the authorities

¹⁷ Diary dated 4-4-1942

¹⁸ Diary dated 17-4-1942

had begun to break. The attitude of the Swamiji of the Asram (the Manager of the School) towards the school and the teachers was not quite friendly. Ideological differences also helped to widen the gap between him and Swamiji. The inaugural function of the literary association of the school was just one of the many occasions illustrating this discord. Swamiji had invited the Peshkar, who was the representative of the ruling power, to inaugurate the meeting and he wanted to do everything possible to please the Peshkar. To suit the convenience of the Peshkar, the function was postponed more than once. "This meeting was to crowcatch the Peshkar".¹⁹ And at last when the meeting was held, the arrangements were not upto the expectations of Swamiji so that he thought the Headmaster and the teachers had insulted the Peshkar. NV became disgusted. "I felt that it was impossible to carry on in this manner".²⁰ Things gradually snow-balled to the extent of NV tendering his resignation, though he had nowhere else to go. But later Swamiji cooled down, the differences were patched up and NV was requested to withdraw his resignation, and a rise in his salary was offered. And NV yielded.

When his personal surroundings were so disturbed, in the national level, situations were developing from bad to worse. Freedom movement was at a turning point. Twenty leaders including Gandhiji, Jawaharlal, Abdul Kalam Azad were arrested. The development seemed to be so sudden and unexpected that he was quite astonished. His first impulse, he records thus: "So the call has come" and continues. "I must avail of this opportunity to serve my country. I must resign my job and must plunge myself into the stormy waters. No consideration should stand in

¹⁹ Diary dated 22-4-1942

²⁰ Diary dated 22-4-1942

my way. My studies, my employments, the situation of my family..... all should yield to this impulse. I must follow the lead of the Congress. It is the right hour. If I fail, I shall fail forever. I should not be a fool and coward".²¹

But days rolled on through the thick fog of confusion and indecision throughout India. For NV, these were days of 'to be or not to be' and his bend of mind was towards a headlong deep plunge into politics, with the 'Doubting Hamlet' pulling him back in vain. The congress had started gathering volunteers and offering Satyagraha as a direct action against the Government. The communists could not join this lest they should lose their identity. So their plan was to bring pressure on the Govt. by united action within the limits of law, "and they believe that the Govt. will have to surrender before such pressure".²² NV thought it meaningless. "I think that without fight Britain will not yield power".²³ According to him, simply courting arrest and remaining in jail would serve no purpose at all.

Evidently, his line of thought and action was taking shape, clearly distinct from those of both the Congress Party and the Communist Party. According to him the latter was following a policy of inaction. And on the former he writes, "I differ from the policy so far they have persued. They are sending the few people they have to the jail. They ought to have recovered the congress organisation in the state, established connection with the outside-committees, organised students and made arrangements to distribute literature".²⁴

From here onwards, for more than one year NV's life was almost in darkness. In his diary he had clearly

²¹ Diary dated 12-5-1942

²² Diary dated 15-5-1942

²³ Diary dated 15-5-1942

²⁴ Diary dated 27-5-1942

recorded vivid accounts of all the "troubled" events. But those pages of the diary from September 1942 to November 1943 were torn off and burnt to ashes by him. He "thought it wise to destroy those pages which might land me and many others into trouble if they were seized by the Police. The immediate provocation was some police raids in places which, on these days, I frequented".²⁵

He resigned his job at Kalady, after applying his mind to it deeply for days together. He was resolved to devote his heart and soul entirely, to the service of his country, to sacrifice his life on the altar of India's freedom. "I realised that never would I be able to hold my head high as a man if I did not participate atleast in the last phase of the mighty movement of India for her freedom. But my dream of freedom was not one that consisted in political freedom alone. I imbibed from Gandhiji the message that India should cast off her cultural serfdom also along with her political serfdom. I believed that our traditional society can rise from this social decay only through cultural renovation".²⁶ It was with this bright hope that he resigned the job to join the "Quit India" movement. The Swamiji of the Kalady Ashram was much relieved when this troublesome fellow left the Ashram on his own accord. NV straightaway went to the Congress office at Trichur. Next day, along with V.R. Krishnan Ezhuthassan, another veteran freedom fighter, he went and lived in a house near Vilangan temple from where the former was arrested. With the aim of keeping up the morale of the movement, NV prepared some pamphlets on Vallab Bhai Patel, Rajendra Prasad etc. and got them printed. He went from place to place working among students, leading their processions, organising meetings, inciting them to come

²⁵ A brief note on those days, prepared later, on 1-5-1966.

²⁶ Diary dated 25-9-1942

away from the class-rooms. During these days Puthur Achutha Menon was the local leader and when he was arrested the movement fizzled out for the time being.

By this time another veteran freedom fighter and socialist leader Dr. K.B. Menon had come from Bombay with some friends. The atmosphere had become electric. Some explosive direct action against the Govt. was in the offing. The air echoed with the smell of dynamiting bridges. One day, NV was asked to dynamite the railway bridge at Manali. But he could not approve of such destructive activities. Within days, the friend who took this idea to him was arrested.

The first issue of "Swathanthra Bharatham" ("Free India") was brought out by then and NV was entrusted with the duty of taking the paper from Trichur and distributing it among the people. This was a paper published from underground by Dr. K.B. Menon and shortly NV was selected to be in charge of "Swathanthra Bharatham". Another devoted freedom fighter V.A. Kesavan Nair was also with him in this venture. Both of them went to Calicut where they lived with one Mr. Rao. NV prepared a pamphlet and got it stencilled, which was caught by Police before it could be hidden. Mr. Rao was arrested and sentenced to imprisonment. NV with Kesavan Nair went to Tellicherry. "Swathanthra Bharatham" was being composed from there and was got printed at Mercara. Before NV reached Mercara, the press was raided by Police and the workers were arrested. Now, both the friends went to the thick forest in Iritty with the idea of setting the press there. NV got apprenticed in composing at Ernakulam for this purpose. And then he moved to Pattambi carrying bagfuls of types and other materials connected with the small hand-press. NV and Kesavan Nair rented a small house and lived there, with

the aim of setting the press there, under the pretext of preparing for the BOL examination. But before things could take shape Kesavan Nair was arrested in connection with the Kizharyoor bomb case. NV immediately shifted to Calicut where he was joined by one Kunhiraman Kidav who was coming after dynamiting the Feroke Railway bridge.

Changing place of activity constantly was NV's habit in those days which helped him to escape arrest. He had a look of child-like innocence on his face and was a bit short of average height. This too might have created an impression in the minds of the police, even if he was before them, that the troublesome fellow they were after was somebody else. Now he shifted to Trichur where, with his friends there, he organised several clandestine meetings. During all these restless travels and other activities like preparing materials for the "Swathanthra Bharatham", composing, printing and distributing from obscure centres, sometimes from thick forests, sometimes from some dilapidated village-huts and so on, he continued his voracious reading and preparation for the examination. It was during these days, while the police was in search of him, that he wrote the BOL examination at St. Thomas High School, Trichur and took his degree.

In October 1943, "the movement came to a grinding halt and I went back to Kalady and became 1st Asst. in the Ashram school".²⁷ But within days, he was asked by one of his friends who was still in hiding, to go to Calicut and take up the Sanskrit Teacher's post in the St. Joseph's High School there so that he could help in the defence of the Kizharyoor Bomb case.

So in November 1943, he went to Calicut and joined

²⁷ Diary dated 10-10-1943

the St. Joseph's. As the Sanskrit teacher he had very little work. Hence, "the rest of my time, I devote for some work or other - mostly political".²⁸ At school, he did not get job satisfaction. Outside he did not have much serious things to do. In the political field things were taking shape in a way which he could not approve of. His intellectual and literary activities were practically dull if not nil. With deep pang, he wrote: "Today, returning from my school I visited the communist book-shop just opened in the Court Road. How many books and pamphlets they have produced and are in the process of producing? Here is our party, crushed, torn to pieces by internal dissensions, unable to do anything, even to publish a pamphlet".²⁹

Totally dissatisfied with the surroundings, a gradual change was at its beginning in his mind - a change from active politics to some sort of social, cultural renaissance work. Giving education to the illiterate mass of the villages and such other activities were, even in early days, part of his dreams. Now he started taking active interest in the programmes of Gramasevasangham (Village-service-society). During the first week of December, '43, he spent four days in the Gramasevasangham workers' camp at Angadippuram. On the 4th day, the camp was raided by the police and his class-notes and other papers were seized. Later the police started searching for him. Nevertheless he made use of every opportunity to address cultural functions organised by students at different far-off village schools, ignoring all his personal problems. The Head Master of his school was not prepared to grant him leave for such purposes; and his comment was: "I think I cannot remain in this school for long. I cannot mortgage my freedom for a few rupees".³⁰

²⁸ Diary dated 1-11-1943

²⁹ Diary dated 20-11-1943

³⁰ Diary dated 2-12-1943

NV was gradually maturing to the realisation that a small lamp, though incapable of dispelling the darkness from the whole universe, could light a limited area and it must be contented with that. Trying at too many things at a time would lead only to despair. "I must do something, to my satisfaction and should not have despair if my work does not fructify or is not recognised".³¹ And in his later years he became fully ripe and philosophic, like a stoic, without any deep attachment to mundane things. He was not much bothered if money or fame came or went. His credo was:

"Nindantu Neethinipuna yadi va sthuvanthu
Lakshmi Samavisathu Gacchathu va Yatheshtam"

He was the last man to live a luxurious life. From the very early days he had imbibed the spirit of Gandhian simplicity. He was contented with what he had. Ambitious, of course, he was - ambitious in acquiring ever-widening horizons of knowledge. Having experienced a life of financial stringency from early childhood days onwards and having had to lead a life on hard-earned meagre money, he did not bother about spending whatever he had in his pocket for others. This was known to his friends and some of them often used to take advantage of it. They used to take whatever small amount his purse contained as if the purse were theirs, which often put him in troubles.

While he himself lived through difficult days, his parents, brothers and sister often used to write to him asking for financial help and such letters only added oil to the fire. Once his brother asked for Rs. 100/-. His salary then was only Rs. 30/- p.m. Inability to help the brother

³¹ Diary dated 16-1-1944

tortured his mind for months. It was then that he managed to get Rs. 100/- from his publisher, being the royalty of a book he had given earlier. Immediately he decided to send this money to his brother. One Mr. Balakrishnan, his neighbour and friend, was going home and so NV entrusted this amount with him to give to the brother. Balakrishnan asked NV whether he could take this amount on loan just for a few days and NV advised him to ask his brother while giving the amount. Feeling "sure that he will not dare to cheat me in the face of all the obligations that I have placed him under", NV gave him the amount. Later Mr. Balakrishnan told NV that he lost his purse on his way home. "I do not know for certain whether he lost the purse or whether he had spent the amount". His real worry was about his brother "for whose needs the amount was intended. Now, when they know about the loss, what would be their reaction? Anyhow, I think, I will have to explain everything to my brother".³² Later he writes on this, "I would deem myself fortunate if I received it back". But when a vacancy arose in his school, NV brought this friend there to fill it and when wrote: "If he has really lost the purse - well, I have nothing to say against him". This incident happened while he was just 28. This affords a deep insight into his mental moulding.

Getting completely dissatisfied with the work in the school, he had started nursing in his mind a deep desire for a job in the Mathrubhoomi, a Newspaper started with all the vigour of national feeling when the freedom-movement was mounting to its climax. Often he doubted whether he was fit for journalism.

It was during these days that one of his friends, Mr. Krishna Iyer, suggested to NV that he could get a

³² Diary dated 15-2-1944

research studentship at Madras University with the help of Dr. C. Achutha Menon and the idea got deep into him. He decided he would never miss the chance.

Though he did not know where to go or what to live upon, he resigned his job at St. Joseph's High School, Calicut on 30-5-1944. The salary he was getting there was not enough for him to sustain and hence he demanded an increase. When they could not give it, he resigned and left. His friends in the Congress Party had begun to keep him away on the plea that he was organising a group, the congress-socialist party. So, he thought for a moment to go to Ezhuthassan, on reaching Trichur, to do some work for the party. But one Mr. Velayudha Menon was opening a new High School at Kodakara, near Trichur, who was eager to get NV in his school as Sanskrit and Hindi Pandit. His friends also advised him to accept the offer. After some hesitation he joined the School in June '44. Meanwhile he sent an application for research studentship in Madras University.

Prof. Sankaran Nambiar, Director of Public Instruction, wanted NV to take up the Sanskrit Lecturer's post at Thevara College, Ernakulam. So, with a letter of introduction from Prof. Nambiar, NV went and met the Prior of the College who told him that they were prepared to take him on a salary of Rs. 60/- as suggested by the Director of Public Instruction. But they would, for the time being, appoint him in their High School as a Sanskrit Pandit with the additional responsibility of working as a part-time Asst. Lecturer in Sanskrit in the college. NV refused this offer and returned.

The poet in NV was rebelling against the work-a-day adjustment of political career. He became almost disgusted with the developments in the political field and started thinking of withdrawing from active politics.

Remaining a sympathiser, he thought, he would direct his energies to the realm of letters and to further studies also. He wrote something worthy of note these days - a few articles, the poem "Manya" etc. Yet, his mind was yearning for things greater. "I must take up some really great work. This is simply waste of time".³³ However, he was recognised even then.

In October, 1944, the Sanskara Karyalaya of Ayodhya conferred upon NV the title "Kaviratna".³⁴

On 16-10-44 he got intimation from Madras University, "of my being allowed to take up research work in the Malayalam Dept. of the University". He decided to go to Madras. The manager was willing to give him leave and though it was only four months since he joined the School, all the students and teachers were very much enthusiastic about his going for higher studies. They gave him a warm send-off, in which, "the Head Master spoke in highly laudatory terms about me. Some students and the Manager also spoke. Two silver cups were presented to me. I donated them to the School. I felt that I have no right to accept such a gift".³⁵ The public of Kodakara also organised a send-off meeting in his honour.

With all these, he had no money at that time, even for his travel ticket. A local publisher decided to publish his poem "Manya" which had appeared in Mathrubhoomi weekly, in book-form and gave him Rs. 25/-. "Deenabandhu", a periodical to which he used to contribute poems and articles regularly, gave him Rs. 10/-. "Then I took some money from my friends - thus I had an aggregate of sixty rupees. With this amount I am leaving

³³ Diary dated 27-9-1944

³⁴ Diary dated 16-10-1944

³⁵ Diary dated 19-10-1944

for Madras. Gangadhara Menon and P.G. gave me pants, shirts and coat. Sreedharan gave a towel. Thus my dressing material also was complete".³⁶

At Madras University, he met Dr. Achyutha Menon. There was one more, selected to do research in the Malayalam Dept. Dr. Menon told NV "after probation, the studentship will be awarded to the better man". But, he added that such selection being impossible within a period of three months, he would recommend NV, the first came, for the award. He got registered as a research scholar paying the fees for the first term and "went to the library and took one book and, so to say, commenced my work". Next day Dr. Menon told him that he could register for M. Litt. Degree next January. Then he would have to do research for one year and submit the thesis. He managed to arrange for his boarding and lodging with a friend and to solve the financial problems secured some Hindi tuition.

When S.K. Nair, the other candidate came, "he too had suggested the same subject as I had," which made NV a bit uneasy. "I did not hate him; but certainly I felt rather awkward in his presence". Then S.K. Nair suggested that it would be better if NV changed his department from Malayalam to Sanskrit. This made him worry about the stipend without which his stay at Madras would become practically impossible.

By this time he started contributing political poems regularly to "Deenabandhu", which brought him some financial support. He managed to get some occasional Radio programmes also. The Kerala Samajam, a cultural organisation of Malayalees at Madras, gave him opportunity for some literary and cultural activity.

³⁶ Diary dated 19-10-1944

Even during these days of research work in the University, he used to get himself involved in some occasional political activities, like attending trade union congress sessions etc. But his main stress, was on his study. This book-worm nature and day-dreaming made him almost an introvert. Commenting on himself, particularly on his failure to be a successful man in company, he says, "I wanted to be open and strong, vivacious and pleasing, talkative and witty; but like the Greek teacher in Chekhov's story 'Husk', I seem to have grown a shell over me into which I retire always, as if afraid of real, moving, lively people. Of what avail are my thoughts and fancies, my poems and articles, if I do not feel at home with men, if I do not take any interest in men?"³⁷ Such thoughts vexed him when once he was in his sick-bed, reading volumes, without having anybody about to nurse him. And this was not an isolate incident. He had often thought of such things and often taken vows to change. But this was not like a shirt that he could take off when felt like. This was in his blood, deep hidden.

He got the stipend and to receive the money, he had to execute a bond. He borrowed the amount required for the purchase of the stamp-paper, prepared the bond and signed it, which made him obliged "to work here at least for a year to the satisfaction of my professor". But even while he was so tight in money, his friends used to use his purse as theirs, whether the contents be borrowed or not. About one such gentleman he writes, "he owes me Rs. 50/- at a rough estimate; and this I need not hope to get back in the near future".³⁸

"Before I leave Madras, I must prepare my thesis and in addition to that, read at least some books on

³⁷ Diary dated 2-3-1945

³⁸ Diary dated 23-6-1945

philosophy, art, criticism, politics, economics, science and history". Apart from these he read novels also and though novels like "A Leaf in the Storm" by Lin Yutang enchanted him, he wrote in detail the critical evaluations of such books in his diary.

During the vacation at home that year, he was spending days reading the back issues of Harijan, and also doing some social work in the locality. Then he was asked to go to Coimbatore immediately for some organisational work there, among the textile labourers. There were so many Malayalees among them and when he came to know of this his first plan was to organise an association for them; with a library and a recreation club. While working among these labourers who were generally poor, he realised the real character of the working class - sincere, honest, hard-working, straight-forward, loving and throbbing with national feeling, when incited. "To be one of the labourers, to work with them for freedom, I thought, was desirable indeed".³⁹

Returning to Madras, he continued his University work and along with that started studying German. Now he got an offer from Thevara College, Ernakulam, to work there as Sanskrit Lecturer, which he refused, because he wanted to complete his research. But the work of a research scholar was not enough to satisfy him. "This work of a research scholar does not satisfy me. I want to do something real, something concrete". It was reading books like "Modern Man in Search of a Soul;" by Jung, "The Senna of the Earth" by Arthur Koestler etc. that kept him inspired. He did not feel completely at home with his research guide, Dr. Achutha Menon either. "A.M. has

³⁹ Diary dated 10-9-1945

hardly any time to give me. I must strike out a path of my own".⁴⁰

During January 1946, Gandhiji came to Madras and remained there for some days. It was a thrilling experience for him to see Gandhiji. "It was so exciting; so swift. When I saw him, instinctively I folded my hands".⁴¹ And he started attending Gandhiji's prayer-meetings daily at Hindi Prachar Sabha. His opinion on such prayer meetings was that they would bring about discipline among the people through love. But he was greatly distressed mentally, when after some days, the audience of the prayer meetings started to behave rudely.

The All India Educational Conference was held that year at Pachayyappa's College, Madras and it was presided over by Sir. C.P. Ramaswamy Iyer. Dr. Amarnath Jha, Mr. Narayana Sastrigal, Dr. Savour, Dr. Kunjan Raja were some of the speakers and NV also, attended the conference as a delegate of the Oriental Title-holders' Association, presented a paper on the remoulding of Pathasalas, pleading for a synthesis of the modern and the old for raising the standard of Sanskrit, for upgrading the status of the Sanskrit schools to that of High schools and the status of Sanskrit colleges to that of 1st grade colleges. These suggestions were seriously discussed in the conference.

That year the Hindi Prachar Sabha had its convocation address delivered and the certificates distributed by Gandhiji. NV also received his certificate from Gandhiji. He was overwhelmed to hear his name uttered by Gandhiji.

⁴⁰ Diary dated 12-9-1945

⁴¹ Diary dated 22-1-1946

Freedom movement was at its apex and the Madras city, along with all other parts of the country, was ablaze with revolutionary activities. There was a conference addressed by Acharya Kripalini, Asok Mehta etc. A resolution was passed to strike work and the strike ended in total riot. There was an actual street fight between the police and the crowd throughout the city. NV could not "remain idle seeing the boys hazarding their lives". He went out and had a taste of lathi-charge. "It was the first experience of this kind in my life".⁴² And during the following months of confusion and tumult, he was disturbed very much mentally. Still one thing was clear to him: "Of course for the next few months I have my course clear - to finish my research and try to get a degree". But what next? "Shall I again enter politics? or shall I go to the seclusion of a school-room?"

In 1946, he was asked to be the Secretary of the Prajamandal Party. But he did not want to get involved in politics like that particularly because his first preference was his studies. Nevertheless this offer gave him self-confidence. It was during these days that the scheme of the Cabinet Mission was published, according to which India was free to sever her connections with Britain and to form a union, with arrangements for an interim Central Govt. The dream of a free India, though far away, really thrilled him.

He read Nehru's "Discovery of India", during these days. Describing the book as one which he would like to go back to again and again, he comments, "It is a study of the national genius of India by one, the most generous and Catholic of the living Indians. It is also intensely personal. It begins with a dip into the mood of the author.

⁴² Diary dated 26-2-1946

and the reader cannot but be fascinated by the panorama that bares itself before him, as well as by the great-heartedness of the guide who points out the notable features of it to him".⁴³

Now, he passed German Certificate Examination, with distinction. On completion of the research work in the University, he was appointed Malayalam tutor in the Madras Christian College. Joining there, he realised gradually that he was a successful college teacher. Meanwhile he completed his thesis and facing many odd idiosyncrasies of his professor, Dr. Achutha Menon, submitted it and took his degree in due course.

A 'Unification of Kerala' convention was organised on 15th and 16th of March 1947 by The Bombay Keraleeya Samajam. NV took part in it as an elected representative of Madras Kerala Youth Congress. Being the first visit to Bombay, he utilised this opportunity to see the University Library, Museum, and some painting exhibitions, on which he comments, "painting by Savardakar was not worth the five annas which we had to pay as entrance fee". The Kerala Unification Conference was inaugurated by Achyuth Patvardhan, with Sreekantan presiding. Jayaprakash Narayan was the main Speaker on whom NV comments, "he did not impress me as a speaker". Before returning to Madras on 19th he met some people interested in Malayalam literature to whom he spoke about the literary scene in general, invoking them to produce big books, big in size, for "there is something, venerable in mere size". On reaching his native place, he decided, after discussing with his close friends, "not to become a full-time political worker". He was entrusted with the management of "Jai Hind", the weekly of the

⁴³ Diary dated 25-6-1946

party. But he was not sure whether he could get along with the management of it successfully, because the journal was already in debt and the party was "not functioning efficiently". The job was not sustaining and he was actually living through anxiety and penury. He was eagerly waiting for the chance of accepting some paying job, but he could not decide whether to choose this road or that.

Meanwhile the Viceroy had published his scheme for transferring power to India and leaders like Nehru, Baldevsingh etc. accepted that. But Jinnah reserved his approbation. It was this scheme that left India cut into different pieces.

NV accepted a job in the Kodakara High School. His friends in the party consented to it provided he managed "Jai Hind" also. He filed a declaration before the Magistrate, as Editor, Printer and Publisher of "Jai Hind", because the ownership had to be changed; and waited for the formalities. Mathai Manjooran, RM Manakkalath etc., were his associates in this attempt. During the interim period, he tried to start another paper from Ernakulam but did not succeed. He was confident that he could infuse something of socialism to his students. "But in the absence of a party and a paper that won't cut much ice".

During January, 1947, some legal action was being initiated by the Dist. Magistrate, against the Press for something objectionable to Government published in the paper when the former Editor, Printer and Publisher, Sri Manakkalath was away in Jail. Though he was not actually in charge of the paper then, he could not escape the legal responsibility, now that he was the Printer and Publisher. And when he consulted the advocate, the advice he got was that "the maximum they can give for this technical offence is three months in Jail, and I must

prepare for the worst".⁴⁴ As usual, the legal procedure continued for months, and he was mentally worried about a possible prosecution, though he was innocent, till at last after 13 months' protracted court procedures, he was acquitted.

Having had occasions to hear repeatedly about the ignoble activities of his political friends, he felt completely disgusted. "It seemed to me that it is impossible to work with my present political companions. I feel great aversion for politics, and I would do better to quit it altogether".

Owing to infighting between the leaders, the Kerala Socialist Party was gradually disintegrating and it was "sinking deeper and deeper into mud every day". The Cochin Socialist Party severed its connections with the Kerala Socialist Party and again he remarks, "I must withdraw from party politics."

Prof. Sankaran Nambiar, who was going to take up the post of Principal in Sree Kerala Varma College which was to be opened anew at Thrissur, asked him to apply for the post of Sanskrit Lecturer in the college and this made him completely excited. But the college committee hesitated to take him in, because of his politics. Now he got news that Madras University had preferred S.K. Nair to him, as Dr. Achutha Menon, supported by D.P. Unni stated that NV was a communist. As an evidence thereto, some of his literary works were quoted. He got a clear report of what had happened in the Selection Committee meeting on a short visit to Madras during the third week of August, 1947, just a few days after India became independent. India's independence was a dream he had nourished in his mind for long and for which he had contributed his little share of sweat and blood. And in this independent

⁴⁴ Diary dated 26-6-1947

India he was denied what he deserved. "This state of affairs depressed me. The whole town (Madras) seemed to celebrate Independence. I who had done a bit - however small - of sacrifice to see the dawn of this same day was denied a living twice within a week for the simple reason that I had politics. And the fruits were gathered by people whose only virtue was that they had no politics and that they had not done any sacrifice and had sat tight in their chairs as comfortably as they could while the nation was suffering its birth - pangs, while I was leading a life of perpetual fear and adventure, while I was starving and living like a vagabond. Fine justice! Fine Independence!"⁴⁵

All these things added together made him utterly desperate. He felt the society did not understand him, and he was not getting his due. He writes, "this lean, short, ugly creature with a few broken teeth, what have I got to parade, what have I to my credit? And yet, don't I complain secretly as it might be, that I am not getting a fair deal from the world?..... it is only sorrow and helplessness; tinged with righteous indignation. I had a right, I think, for this job, which is overlooked..... well, let me forget the imagined right".⁴⁶ Days passed through black dejection and despair and at last he decided to conclude an armistice with his fate, whatever it be. "I will do this. Fate cannot bend me, for I do not expect her to come to my aid. She can no longer cheat me. Unvanquished I will stand, may be amidst the ruins of my life, I shall still smile. This is nothing. Even greater misfortunes I can bear. Then, to the mill of daily life, the mill of Gods which turns slow but sure. Yes. I will turn it, and in the process be slowly crushed. But no defeat".⁴⁷

⁴⁵ Diary dated 20-8-1947

⁴⁶ Diary dated 5-8-1947

⁴⁷ Diary dated 12-8-1947

He was invited to join "Jayakeralam", a literary weekly, published from Madras. Life in Madras city, with all the rich libraries and friends there, was actually desirable to him. But the thought of Madras University and what he tasted there tormented him very much. After pondering for days, he informed "Jayakeralam" that he was willing to join on two conditions - one, he wanted full freedom in his sphere of work; and two, he would be given Rs. 120/- to start with. "Jayakeralam" promised Rs. 100/- and NV refused the offer.

Now he got information that "Mathrubhoomi" was willing to take him into their weekly. Though he did not know the conditions, he consented. Meanwhile he was appointed Secretary of the Text Book Committee, newly formed by the Govt. of Cochin and he joined the service on 28-10-47, taking leave from the School. But this job was short-lived since the Government abolished the "Text Book Compilation Committee" itself. To add oil to the fire, his house was now auctioned. "Mother has already left the place and is staying now at Padinhare varyiam. No house. No where to go". But now he had grown mentally so mellowed that he gathered courage to look at calamity straight into its eyes. "I will fight it out, at least on my mental plane. I won't be defeated. I can't afford to".⁴⁸ He decided to purchase a small house for his parents. "It will cost Rs. 1200/- and will barely be sufficient for us. Anyway my parents have to have a home, let them have it. Most probably I may be able to pay off this amount in the coming year".

The assassination of Gandhi was a shocking news. "It was a personal tragedy. The world seemed to be chaotic..... His recent fast for the protection of Moslems was

⁴⁸ Diary dated 15-12-1947

the last word in nobility. Now he is shot dead by a Hindu. Ingratitude, moral turpitude, intellectual bankruptcy, cannot go further. I have many disappointments and disillusionments, but this is the saddest of all. It seemed I could no longer believe in man".⁴⁹

On 19-2-48 it was announced that NV was awarded the degree of M. Litt. He felt relieved of the prolonged anxiety.

The loss of his job in the Text Book Committee made him feel that the Govt. of Cochin had forced him to suffer by winding up the Committee and so he should take legal action against the Govt. He contacted Panampilly Govinda Menon, with whose help, he sent a notice to Govt. demanding compensation, declining the offer of a Govt. Job in the LSD Grade in response to an application he had sent earlier.

During the first week of March 1948, the police behaved with utmost cruelty against the Satyagrahis at Brahnamangalam. Several Namboodiri women who offered Satyagraha were caned heavily. NV felt quite indignant at it. He prepared a statement condemning the Govt. action, got it signed by almost all of his colleagues in the school and sent it to the Press. Publication of this statement provoked Govt. ire and the School authorities wanted all the signatories to apologise. When the whole thing came to possible disciplinary action by the Govt., some of the colleagues tendered their apology. NV approached Joseph Mundasseri who was the president of the Teachers' Association. They met the Minister and it appeared that the latter was bent upon taking action against the teachers. The punishment that could be given to a teacher in those days was to cancel the certificate,

⁴⁹ Diary dated 31-1-1948

the result of which would be that the teacher would forfeit his right to teach within the state. But NV was sent out, his services in the school terminated under some other pretext. Now Kerala Varma College was ready to take him in, provided he was not punished by the Govt. His father wanted him to apologise and join the college, which he refused to. The Principal advised him to get a recommendation letter from Pareekshith Thampuran of Cochin under whom NV had read Sanskrit, so that he could be appointed in the College. "I am known to Nambiar; if he feels like, he can get me the job. Otherwise, I will get some other job. No necessity to demean myself in this way"⁵⁰ was his reaction.

On 2-5-'48 NV was elected as the Secretary of the Non-Sirkar Teachers' Association, organised to fight for the political rights of teachers in particular. The working Committee of the Teachers' Association elected him as the Managing Editor of their quarterly also.

Though the Managing Committee members of the Kerala Varma College were against the appointment of NV in the college, the Principal Mr. Nambiar was keen on having him on the staff. He gave assurance to the Committee that NV would not take part in active politics once he became a member of their faculty. On 15-6-48, he joined Kerala Varma College, giving word that he would shun active politics.

Meanwhile the Govt. asked the "Express", a newspaper published from Trichur, to furnish a security of Rs. 2,000/- for publishing an article criticising the Govt. and NV signed an appeal for funds in aid of the paper. He associated himself with the fund-collection work also. Later he realised that this was nothing short of violation

⁵⁰ Diary dated 3-5-1948

of the word he had given to the Principal and thought he could rectify it only by resigning from the College. "Yesterday morning I went to the College, determined to resign. The Principal came to my room and asked me either to rectify what I had done or to resign. I wrote a letter of resignation. But again I thought. True, I had given my word to the Principal that I would eschew politics and I have broken it. I must apologise. I wrote an apology and in the evening handed it over to him. I also told him that if this was not enough I would give him my resignation. He asked me whether I could eschew politics and I said I wanted to do so".⁵¹ A man with a conscientious mind, conscious of the society, conscious of the nation, and of the world-affairs will never be able to shut the doors of his mind against politics. NV also could not eschew politics completely, throughout his life. This is reflected in, "I wanted to do so" and in his later literary career also. But he severed connections with active politics, when he experienced it to be immoral, unprincipled and impregnated with utter selfish motives.

During these days, NV's father fell seriously ill. He was "suffering from a complete breakdown of nervous system". He explains in his diary how his aged father was suffering and about the arrangements he made for his treatment.

When he came to know of the vacancy at the Govt. College at Tellicherry, he applied for it with an earnest desire to get it. Going to Madras he met the authorities and also Mr. Madhava Menon, the Minister. Then he came to know that the post was marked out for somebody else on the recommendation of Dr. C. Achyutha Menon. At Madras, he chanced to meet K.P. Kesava Menon who asked him whether he would be willing to join

⁵¹ Diary dated 15-7-1948

"Mathrubhoomi" if they offered a job and, "I said, yes".⁵² Before returning from Madras he made arrangements for registering for Ph.D. He chose for his subject "Early beginning of Malayalam" in consultation with Dr. Achyutha Menon.

Coming back from Madras he continued in the Kerala Varma College, anxiously waiting to hear from K.P. Kesava Menon.

On 22-7-51, Mathrubhoomi asked NV to join them to edit their weekly, with immediate effect. His joining them on 13-8-51, after resigning from the Sree Kerala Varma College, marked the beginning of a period of blooming and fruition both in the Mathrubhoomi weekly and in Malayalam literature in general, as well as in his personal life.

During October, '51 NV got an offer of Education Supervisor's post with a higher salary, from the All India Radio; but he declined it and decided to continue in Mathrubhoomi, though he had realised gradually that the editorial work in a literary publication of some reputation was an easy road to acquiring more enemies than friends.

In August '56, a Hindi periodical was started by the Mathrubhoomi and NV became the editor of it. "Yugaprabhath", continued to be published successfully for 15 years. During April '57 he toured through North India, the result of which was his famous travelogue "Unarunna Utharendia" (The Awakening North India.)

He tendered his resignation from Mathrubhoomi on 21-11-57 when he felt his work was being interfered with, and later at the request of K.P. Kesava Menon he withdrew it. "I do not feel I will be able to continue in

⁵² Diary dated 30-8-1948

Mathrubhoomi for long if Kesava Menon leaves the Chief Editor-ship".⁵³

NV was elected Chairman of the Journalists Union in 1958. He was also elected to the Kerala University Senate in the same year. He was made a member in the Text Book Committee too. Govt. nominated him as a member of the Kerala Grandhasala Sangh during this year. Some of his friends compelled him to get elected to the University Syndicate and he consented. But the activities of the campaign were quite disgusting to him. "This group-fight for getting control over the greatest cultural institution of ours is quite surprising and also painful, a bit amusing too".⁵⁴

On an invitation from the British Govt., he left India on 14-10-58 and toured in Europe for two months.

He was awarded "Sahityanipuna" medal by the 'Sastra Sadas' of the Sanskrit College, Tripunithura on 30-12-58. This college was his Alma Mater and the award of the medal made him feel much honoured.

In '59, he was made a member in the Faculty of Fine Arts of Kerala University. He was a member on the Advisory Board of Kerala Kalamandalam and also on the Editorial Board of the Malayalam Lexicon.

During May-June '59, he toured through United States of America on a Govt. grant. "Americayiloote" (Through America), the travelogue he wrote on return, gives a clear and comprehensive picture of the USA, in historical, political, economic and cultural perspectives. This was first serialised in "Mathrubhoomi" weekly and then compiled in book-form in 1960.

⁵³ Diary dated 21-11-1957

⁵⁴ Diary dated 30-4-1958

He planned, in August '60, to write a big novel on Sree Sankara. The details of the different chapters too were prepared. But this plan never materialised.

When, in 1964, the first 'Jnana Peeth' award committee was constituted, NV was asked to be the convenor of its Malayalam Advisory Committee. This Advisory Committee unanimously suggested 'Otakkuzhal' (Flute) of G. Sankara Kurup for the award. This raised a volley of controversy. The then chairman of the Kerala Sahitya Akademi even wrote to Jnanpeeth authorities that in Malayalam there was no book worthy to be considered for such an award. But when the final judging committee of the Jnanpeeth met on 25-12-65 at New Delhi, the first award was decided to be given to 'Otakkuzhal'. "I am writing this with the satisfaction that a good job is carried out fruitfully. Sankara Kurup gets the Jnanpeeth. I had a brief talk, with the permission of the chairman, on the influence of Sankara Kurup on the younger generation, his use of modern scientific thoughts in his poems and the incapability of translation..... After some time, Lakshmi Chandra Jain came and told that the Award was for 'Otakkuzhal' and also that the decision was unanimous..... I felt it a personal success. Seetharamayya, Gopala Reddy and others congratulated me".⁵⁶ That the first Jnanpeeth Award was given to a Malayalam work, a collection of poems, was really a matter of pride to the whole of Malayalam language and literature. It was taken as an occasion of Malayalam poetry getting national recognition and NV was instrumental to it.

NV went to Madras, with G. Sankara Kurup to attend a meeting there in felicitation of the latter. By the time NV came back something untoward was taking shape in Mathrubhoomi. NV, before he left for Madras, had

⁵⁶ Diary dated 29-12-1965

selected, edited and given for publication certain articles, by CA Balan. On seeing the first of this series being published, Madhava Menon, one of the Directors, who was the Law Minister in the erstwhile Madras State, got wildly angry and thereupon, Kesava Menon asked the publication of the articles to be stopped, though he personally felt nothing objectionable in the articles. This made NV completely distressed and he decided to "take leave for three or four months and then quit".⁵⁶ He discussed the matter with the Managing Director and finally the publication of the articles was resumed. "Thus, that unhappy problem was somehow solved".

In July 1967 NV was invited by the Soviet Government to visit Russia. He got an invitation to visit East Germany also during this year.

For NV, life in Mathrubhoomi was personally unhappy. Some of the influential members of the Director Board were against him particularly on grounds of difference in their political ideology. Some Congress members on the Board took him to be a communist and humiliated him in all possible ways. Even after his long service, he was not given any preferment. "V.M. Nair told me on Monday that in Mathrubhoomi I would not get any promotion. Neither would I get here any responsible position. He says the Directors are against me".⁵⁷

Thus, on 20-1-'68, NV met the then Chief Minister of Kerala, EMS Namboodiripad and told him that he was interested in a suitable position in the Language Institute, the formation of which was under consideration of the Govt. It took a few months to materialise the idea of the State Institute of Languages and NV was finally chosen to

⁵⁶ Diary dated 2-12-1966

⁵⁷ Diary dated 17-11-1967

be the founder Director of the Institute. He joined as Director of the Institute on 30-8-68, leaving Mathrubhoomi. The Mathrubhoomi authorities ill-behaved to the maximum, on his leaving. They did not give any consideration for his having worked there for more than seventeen years. He was asked to leave resigning, without any kind of retirement benefit. "On seeing these proceedings, I feel that Madhava Menon is preparing records to make it sure that I do not get any benefit even after his tenure of office in Mathrubhoomi".⁵⁸ This vindictive attitude of the authorities of Mathrubhoomi pained him much.

NV was honoured with the award of Sahityaratna medal by the Govt. Sanskrit College, Pattambi, on 16-12-68. It was awarded at a special function organised for the purpose in the college.

Life in the State Institute of Language too was full of strain and stress. For NV, the Institute was to be instrumental to enrich the language with books on all branches of modern knowledge and also to make Malayalam an effective vehicle for handling any subject in the realm of modern science and thought. But for many, particularly for some with political influence, the Institute was just another establishment for promoting their selfish interests and for favouring their own minions. Naturally NV had to fight with such elements vigorously. The infight between some of the officials, and the unprincipled activities of some of the Institute also worried him constantly. And such things often made him think, "the post of the Malayalam Professor in the Calicut University has been advertised. I am seriously thinking of applying. But it would be better if I could continue in the present job, and build a foundation for scientific literature in

⁵⁸ Diary dated 30-8-1968

Malayalam; still, the inner-conflicts and longing for some rest prompt me to seek some other job."⁵⁹ Standing many pressures both from within and without, NV continued as Director of the Institute for seven years and left it on 31-3-75. "This particular chapter in my life comes to a close here. My performance in the Institute gives me full satisfaction. Though there were many problems, I could get on with things without much difficulties. 364 books have been published. Now, higher education in Malayalam is a possibility. Governance is possible in Malayalam. My performance as administrator also was not very bad. I could build up an institution".⁶⁰

On leaving the State Institute of Languages, he joined the Madurai University as Senior Research Fellow and completed his research work on 'Malayalam Metres'. Towards the end of 1975, NV was approached by the authorities of "Kunkumam", a publishing concern at Kollam, which published "Kunkumam", a literary weekly, "Kerala Sabdam" a political news weekly, "Nana" a Cinema weekly and some other periodicals. NV agreed and joined them as their Chief Editor in February '76.

Almost comfortably, NV continued in Kunkumam for three years. On 23-12-78, he got official intimation from Calicut University appointing him as a visiting professor. But the appointment was to take effect from 13-2-79. Before that, he got information from Mathrubhoomi that "the Director Board has decided to appoint me as the Editor of Mathrubhoomi weekly and also asks me to reach Calicut tomorrow..... I don't want to be there changing M.T. Vasudevan Nair, from his present position."⁶¹ "When I told Krishna Mohan (Managing Director of

⁵⁹ Diary dated 29-10-1970

⁶⁰ Diary dated 31-3-1975

⁶¹ Diary dated 26-12-1978

Mathrubhoomi) that I am not interested in taking up the post there ousting M.T., he told me that M.T. had expressed his readiness to work in the weekly, under me".⁶² On 5-2-79, NV joined Mathrubhoomi, as the Editor-in-chief of all the periodicals and the books. He joined Mathrubhoomi for a second time with the hope that he could take initiative for starting some new periodicals and also that he could concentrate on publishing some valuable books. But before he completed his first tenure of three years, his decisions in the working of the weekly began to be interfered with. A novel by a young writer he selected for serialisation in the weekly was not allowed to be published by the Managing Editor and NV resigned with immediate effect. "The meeting of the Director Board held yesterday decided to send me out immediately giving me two months' advance pay. In a way it is good".⁶³ He was not sorry on leaving Mathrubhoomi; but felt deeply humiliated.

Coming to know of this, NV was invited by "Kunkumam", again to join them. But he could join only on 31-8-81. Till then, he was engaged in editing the Malayalam translation of the Bible, the 'world literature' series and the "World We Live In" series, published by some private publishers at Kottayam. He continued in Kunkumam as Chief Editor till he joined Mathrubhoomi for a third time, under great pressure, on 15-1-1988.

Many titles and honours were bestowed upon NV during these few years. He was appointed member on the Malayalam Advisory Board of the Sahitya Akademi, New Delhi, in 1982. He had received the National Award for his work on Vallathol. In May in the same year, he was asked whether he would be willing if he was appointed as

⁶² Diary dated 28-12-1978

⁶³ Diary dated 15-3-1981

Director of a certain Hindu Religious Institute at Ahmedabad. In October, he was nominated to the Language Faculty of the Cochin University. In December, he was made a member of the Academic Council of the Madurai University. In January '83, he was invited for a tour in Laccadives. In October that year he was invited to be a member in the National Book Council. In November '83 the Vice Chancellor of the Calicut University asked him whether he was willing to take up the Professorship in the University, if offered. In March '84, he got the Emeritus Fellowship of the Govt. of India. His collection of essays, 'Velluvilikal Prathikaranangal' (Challenges and Responses) was selected for an award by the Sahitya Akademi. In February '85, he was honoured with the title "Sahityakalanidhi", by Hindi Prachar Sabha. Considering his contributions to language and linguistics, the Sahridaya Samity of Trichur selected him for "CL Antony Award". In December '85, the Sahitya Akademi decided to award him the "Akademi Fellowship". The General Council of the Sahitya Akademi will, from time to time, select, from among the writers in India, eight eminent writers, to be members in the Akademi and in 1987, NV was selected as one of the eight eminent writers. His membership was to continue for five years from January 1988. The Hindi Sansthan of the U.P. Govt. honoured him with a Friendship Award for his valuable services to Hindi language and literature. The Calicut University awarded him Doctorate Degree this year.

NV had a plan to write his autobiography. "Tomorrow is my 71st birthday. I must start writing an autobiography. If delayed, it may not fructify".⁶⁴ But fate willed it that he shouldn't write it. The tumultuous story of his life now lies scattered in his poems and other writings,

⁶⁴ Diary dated 8-5-1987

in his multifarious activities in various literary, cultural, political and other fields. And we have his diaries, recording all the different tunes of his mind.

During the last two months of '87, the Mathrubhoomi authorities approached NV continuously and pleaded to go back to them for a third time. "I am happy and contented here. I will not leave here unless these people allow me to go. Nevertheless, I told then I shall think of it".⁶⁵ He made it clear that he was not interested in taking up the responsibility of the periodicals and books. "I was asked whether I would be able to join Mathrubhoomi, if I am appointed as Chief Editor, the position occupied by K.P. Kesava Menon. I replied I shall consider, if such a proposal came".⁶⁶ When this proposal was almost materialising, NV consulted the "Kunkumam" authorities. Though they were quite reluctant to leave NV, they did not want to stand against his wishes. "Even if I go, my chair here will be kept vacant and nobody else will be appointed in my post. I can come back whenever I want", they have said so.

Taking Mathrubhoomi to be his own home, in spite of all the past bitter experiences, NV joined the paper as Chief Editor on 15-1-88 and continued there till his last breath on 12-10-89.

NV was a traveller with keen observation. He had toured in America, Europe, UK and twice in the Soviet Union.

NV married P.V. Lakshmikutty on 8-9-49, the daughter of Parukutty Varassiar of Puthan Variam, Kattukulam in Palakkad District and they have three daughters -

Dr. Parvathy, Dr. Usha and Dr. Vani. Dr. Parvathy, married to Dr. N.V.U. Varier who passed away in 1997, is working as Associate Professor in Calicut Medical College and is residing at Calicut with her mother and daughter Manya. Dr. Usha, married to Dr. Prem Devidas, is settled in Illinois, U.S.A. with her children Lakshmi and Krishnan. Dr. Vani, married to Radhakrishnan, is working in Koval Medical Centre, Coimbatore and is settled there with her children, Hari Krishnan and Athira.

⁶⁵ Diary dated 30-11-1987

⁶⁶ Diary dated 1-12-1987

Chapter III

A Poet with a Burden

Shaped in the burning socio-political mould of his times N.V. Krishna Warrior, the poet, was the harbinger of a new era in Malayalam literature. His distinctive voice was a living presence in the entire atmosphere of the language and literature for about half a century. As a "Sathavadhani", his interests and activities were of wide range and all these multi-farious experiences, he effectively used in making his poems richer and healthier.

Rajasekhara, in his "Kavyameemamsa", has divided genius into two: "Karayitri" and "Bhavayitri", which can in general be taken to be the creative and critical faculties respectively. Those who are blessed alike with both these faculties together, like Mathew Arnold or T.S. Eliot, are rare in any literature. In Malayalam NV was an eminent poet among critics and a scholarly critic with deep insight and exceptional aesthetic sense, among poets. He earnestly believed that a poem becomes worth that name only when it is effectively evaluated by the poet's critical faculty. Anything written becomes an artistic piece only when it is moulded with due aesthetic care, at the same

time it is endowed with commitment to the time, commitment to the society and commitment to the world at large. And this commitment was never concealed. He has openly declared, "the ultimate aim of my generation was more social than personal. And to us, poetry also was, just like all other gifts, a practical weapon for achieving this social aim. We were deeply aware of the social sufferings. And so, personal calamities were, to us, either a weakness to be hidden or something to be kept most secret".¹ Adherence to this principle naturally leads him to his own poetic style of handling things in a most detached, impersonal way. Consequently, this takes him away from romanticism also.

In Malayalam poetry, Romanticism reached its exuberant apex with Changampuzha. Every poetaster, enchanted by this great poet, started imitating him, thus taking Romanticism to its decadent nadir. Poetry became sentimental, silly, soapy and pointless. NV was destined to fight against this decadence and not only through his poems but through other related activities also, he worked hard for the revival of the verve and vigor in Malayalam poetry. At a meeting in Tripunithura a resolution was passed to the effect that Changampuzha should not write flimsy poems which set moving a volley of loud protest throughout. NV was present at the meeting. His aim was just to give a shock-treatment to the lethargic society and having achieved this, he kept himself aloof from the hubbub with an innocent smile. At the same time, his creative genius was striving to bring into being something new in Malayalam poetry - both in form and content. When his "Neenda Kavithakal" (Long Poems) came out, it was recognised as a literary revolution. The life treated was new, the technique of treatment was new, the

¹ N.V. Krishna Warrior - Introduction to "Pavam Manavahrdhayam" - (Sugathakumari)

philosophy was new, the language was new. And the true lovers of poetry welcomed this. "It declares that a new poetic movement in Malayalam has come of age".² The first and the most significant poem in this volume is "Oru Pazhaya Pattu" ("An Old Song"). Like a flower within a flower, "An Old Song" is a poem within a poem. The poet along with his friends goes up the river Periyar rowing a canoe. Reaching the forest, at noon, they halt and take rest. Then the rower starts singing a song, which "Flows everywhere, spreading some delusive influence". It is a folk-song.

There, above the seven hills
Lives the Goddess Bhadrakali
Seven wild elephants, in waiting,
And seven lions, in waiting.
The Banyan tree with unshaking leaves,
Snakes hang down thereon,
Banyan tree is Kali's umbrella
With snakes winding all thereon
And there lives the Goddess Bhadrakali
Bears, to her, in waiting.

Midnight. The tribal king, accompanied by his followers and his only daughter in her middle teens comes to the temple, and prays to the Goddess to accept one among them as their sacrifice so that SHE will protect the forest properly. It is followed by a violent frightful dance in which the whole nature participates, at the end of which the Goddess selects the daughter of the king as HER offering. With untold mental agony, the king draws his sword to sacrifice his daughter. Suddenly the young son of the head of the King's ten priests jumps up.

² C.J. Thomas - Introduction. ("Neenda Kavithakal" - N.V. Krishna Warrior)

"Holding up his right hand
Long lean and sturdy,
And drawing with his left hand
His sword hanging at his waist,
Roared the hunter-youth,
Like a lion, seeing the cloud."

He would not spare any one who touched the girl, be it for the Goddess or any. The next moment he turns and kicks off the Goddess. The girl, exhausted by the dance, swoons down to his breast. Then.

Roared the bears and the lions.
Roared the hunters and the king.
Roared the cloud, the mountain too,
Roared the sky and the earth therewith.

It is followed by a total collapse. The banyan tree broke to pieces; the mountain broke in twain and out of it boiling water flowed high like a sea. Next morning, the peacock and the deer saw there a revulet; the mountain, erased completely and the Goddess gone, may be, to Hades.

Coming back from the dream-world of the song, the poet concludes the poem saying "often in our hearts, the story of that hunter-girl is written in rainbow".

At the outset the poem may appear to be traditional and tinged with romantic touch. The young girl is sacrificed. The valient youth who rebelled against the superstition of the old generation is severely punished and along with him the whole tribe is also made to suffer. But leaving it there will be quite superficial. It was just a natural calamity of land-slide of which there were clear hints, even earlier. It is not due to the anger of the Goddess and cannot directly be connected with the incident of the revolutionary youth attacking Her. The

calamity would have happened even if he kept quite, leading to the sacrifice of the girl, which was to be done to propitiate the Goddess so that She would protect the forest and the whole tribe. There is a still deeper layer of meaning which makes the poem quite significant. A conscientious reader can not but observe how dexterously the poet hints at the whole idea of Indian national movement and ultimate freedom of India also. India will achieve freedom, though we will have to sacrifice some dear souls on the alter of the struggle. The movement may lead to some inevitable revolution; but atlast everything will end in freedom, equality, socialism and new life. The rivulet is the calm new life that will spring and flow in free India. All the mountains will be demolished and there will be equality and socialism. Such a dawn will emerge only through courageous acts and even sacrifices of the young. In such a free India, there will be no place for Goddesses who demand human blood in return for protecting the land and life, the forest and the tribe. This poem was written before India attained freedom.

The spineless sentimentality of the decadent Romanticism has disappeared here; poetry becomes a powerful and effective weapon to be used with masterly dexterity for achieving a social aim, noble and valuable. But it doesn't go down to the level of mere slogans. The sentimental and fanciful freakishness in Malayalam poetry is here giving way to the emergence of a new manly vigour and tone. The transition has happened at last.

But NV discarded only the "spineless sentimentalism" of the Romantics. The genuine aesthetic aspects of that tradition were always precious to him and were preserved with all his characteristic touches and personal stamps, throughout his poetic career. He could bring about this change without allowing it to degrade into formalism. This

is vividly substantiated by his other long poems, particularly the poems collected in the two volumes, "Long poems" and "More Long Poems". "Theevandiylle Pattu" (Song in the Train), 'Engineer', 'Alexis Punyavalan' (Saint Alexis), 'Madirasiyil Oru Ratri' (One Night at Madras), 'Madirasiyil Oru Sayanham' (One Evening at Madras), 'Missionary', etc. are some of the classical examples which contributed to the widening of new horizons in poetry.

His early poems are more political in colour many of which were written for the "Swathanthra Bharatham" (Free India) the underground magazine he edited and published. Some like "Unaruka" (Awake) were marching songs which were widely sung in meetings, processions etc. during the freedom struggle. When Gandhiji was imprisoned in Agakhan Palace, he wrote,

To follow your foot-steps,

Oh! Commander!

Let our nerves be of steel!

(Mahatma Gandhi)

In the early months of 1944, the papers carried the news that Mr. Leopald S. Emery, the India Secretary, had decided to leave India. In March '44, NV wrote the poem "Emeriyute Chevatikalil" (At the Feet of Emery). The poem is a pungent satire on the colonial rule:

Oh! Great Leopald!

Who made deceitfulness and arrogance

The art of governance

Salutations to thee,

Please don't go!

Poems like 'Murivaidyan' (Quack), 'Thokkukal Thiriyunnu' (The Guns Turn) etc. too belong to this group. They were brought out in a volume named "Chattavar" (Whip). It was, no wonder, banned by the state.

Throughout his poetic career we can trace out a sort of split - personality, which may perhaps be part of his very poetic being. He believed that the alien power could be routed out from India only through a revolution. Publication of "Swathanthra Bharatham" from underground; involvement in the Kizhariyoor bomb case, even his early open rebellion against the ruling powers of Cochin State, are clear evidences of this. But the deep influence of Gandhiji and his principles of non-violence kept a check on this revolutionary in him which naturally resulted in an internal tug-of-war. This can be seen reflected in his poems. The Goddess of poetry within him had two faces - a Kali and a Durga, the two sides of a single coin. A real coin holds its worth only when it has its two sides. The poems "Unaruka", "Swathanthryathin Savithavel" (O! The Sun of Freedom), "Swathanthryajanmanal" (Birthday of Freedom), "Mahatma Gandhi", etc. can be taken as the chantings of Durga. Lines like,

"Victory to thee
O! The Sun of Freedom!
In your glory,
Let the flower of life blossom!
Let, equality of opportunity,
Happiness to all,
Sweet Humanity in full bloom
Grow always,
Let world peace
Flourish more and more
(O! The Sun of Freedom)

or

Welcome, O! the birth-day
of Freedom, coming again,
Welcome!

What all memories,
Sad and happy,
You bring to us!
(*'Birthday of Freedom'*)

are produced by the strings of Her Lyre. The undertone of these poems is very pious, very devout and soft.

There are other poems sprung from the same pen, but filled with molten lava, rather prompted by the blood - thirsty Kali. "Ente Satru" (My Enemy), "Manya", "Malinthsin", "Madirasiyil Oru Ratri" (One night at Madras), "Patayalikal" (Warriors), "Engineer" etc. are poems bursting with burning rage and hatred. "What, other than spilling the hot heart-blood of the crooked enemy, for one's motherland, is hilarious?", the poet asks in "Manya", and goes on to declare that the mighty youth will bow only before those who are adorned with the enemy's blood. The period in which this poem was written is quite significant. He writes this poem in September 1944. Gandhiji's non-violence was the basic core of his faith. But at the same time, for the attainment of India's independence, he would risk even a bloody revolution. Gandhiji had said, "leave India to God or to anarchy. This orderly disciplined anarchy should go, and if as a result there is complete lawlessness I would risk it." In 'Manya', he was selecting the story of the vallant Russian girl to give expressions to his inner urge for a new dawn after the total darkness of bloodshed. The poem "Ente Satru" (My Enemy) was also a powerful product of this period. It was written during April '44 and published in the journal "Sahodaran" in May '44. Here, to express his inner fire, the poet does not choose any cover of an image or a story. He speaks directly and dangerously in the first person. The Enemy, "Ente Satru" is "he who conquered my

country with deceit, and rules over it still, with deceit". So he eagerly desires,

Could I, one day, set his house,
With him, ablaze
And lie in that ash!
Could I, one day poison his food
And watch him eat it!
Could I thrust my knife, unawares,
Through him, when he lies!
Could I see his eyes protruding,
In his last lingering pain!

In poems like "Malinthisin", "Engineer", "Madirasiyil Oru Ratri" etc., also, the face of this "Enemy" can be clearly identified.

A study of some of his post-independence poems like "Jeevithavum Maranavum" (Life and Death), "Mohandas Gandhi and Nathuram Godse" "Rashtreeyappension" (Political Pension), etc., in comparison with the above poems, will make them more meaningful, more significant and more piercing. When a poet like NV, who enthusiastically sacrificed his prime youth before the altar of the Freedom Movement, writes,

Let not the poet forget,
That he is unable
To correct the politics that wrongs.
'Kaviyum Kalavum' (Poet & Time)

we cannot but feel the depth of dissatisfaction and dejection he has fallen into, seeing the degeneration of democratic India. He observes the Society around and realises that we have lost Truth, Rationality, Individuality, Integrity and then he asks, is there anything left? ("Is there anything left"). In "Agast kattil Orila" ('A leaf in

August Wind') he places before the shrine of Freedom, his youth as an offering. When India celebrated independence, "my soul mingled with the super-soul of my country; and then, my generation felt crowned in consummation". But when years rolled on, "the masses, the have-nots throughout India, became cheated" and now,

"To speak of freedom, is
A kind of cruel joke."
(Agast kattil Orila)

Nevertheless, in those early days, he had not completely lost faith in goodness of man. He tried to console himself, "don't weep; this night is about to end". And he prays.

"Let humanity awake, like Christ
From the Sepulchre."

This faith in humanity and hope for the future of India remained in him when he wrote "To Jawaharlal Nehru" also, in which he penned:

"In the brilliant tri-colour on this chariot
The whole of Asia finds, a new dawn".

But this optimism fades into dark despair gradually in the Post-Nehru period, seeing the unbridled injustice riding across the socio-political life of the country. Justice, Truth, Integrity, Honesty, Values were all becoming meaningless tinsel words. In this setting of light and rising of darkness, the poet felt the death of God and birth of Satan. The outpouring of this agony came in a series of sonnets under a common title of "Gandhi and Godse".

"Gandhi waits in the crowded queue
for purchasing rice;

And Godse moves along
in his huge luxury car"

(Mohandas Gandhi and Nadhuram Godse)

These poems were written with liquid fire. A parallel to this can be seen only in Justice Chagla's words: "the most dishonest, the most disreputable, the most corrupt politicians of India, capitalise on his name, and we are assassinating him every day, not in the body but in the spirit".³ The poet sees Gandhi dying unattended and uncared for on the concrete road in front of the park and Godse nearby, in white cap and in white jubba, with a tin in his stretched hand, collecting contributions for a decent cremation to the dead Hindu. He sees Godse arriving at the project house, stepping out of the car; and there arrive all VIPs, Company Executives, Commission Agents, Contractors, Party leaders, the District Collector and the late-comer Lady, a sweet social worker. When the Minister (Godse) accompanies her to the gate to see her off, he happens to hear, the poor gatekeeper (Gandhi) uttering "Ha! Ram!" And he snubs the old man:

"You want this job"
then, keep mum!"
And Gandhi trembles,
May be by the morning cold!

In the first three sections, the poet is the narrator. But in the fourth, Godse is the speaker:

I killed you, and the anniversary
thereof comes again with
the auspicious song "Raghupathy",
Then I reach Rajghat

³ M.C. Chagla, *Gandhi Today* ("Mahatma Gandhi - 100 years" - Ed. Dr. S. Radhakrishnan)

With all royal pomp and pride
And the band of followers.

Supported by the peon he places the wreath and from everywhere there echoes, "Ha! Ram!". Disturbed, he takes out his rifle and feels relieved, counting the loaded bullets. Quite dramatically, Gandhi at his last prayer meeting, appears in the final section of the poem. Gandhi sees Godse before him and observes:

"All that I had achieved
You appropriated, by deceit,
And you revel in cruel intoxication thereof".

Though in his soul he had overcome rage, now the Eternal Rage in him bursts out "Ha! Ram!". This is a unique poem, in which any true Indian with a conscientious mind, will find reflected, the barren and ill-stricken times which he lives in. During the middle sixties, when this poem first appeared it set strong reactions in society, among the political circles in especial. It was shocking to those who thought it sinful even to utter the names of Gandhiji and Godse together. We who worship Gandhiji in our words and assassinate him in our deeds, usually avoid reading such poems to keep us free from mental disturbance. NV in his own characteristic way, has stung us out of complacency.

Even before India celebrated her Silver Jubilee of Independence, our intellectuals had started complaining of the collapse of our ideals and dreams. The elite of India was going the western way and the suffering of the common mass was growing more and more acute. The gap between the haves and the havenots was ever-increasing and Equality, Socialism etc., were turning into mere shadows. In NV's dream, freedom was the sun, whose brilliant light would wipe off the slimy darkness in the

country. In this free India, there would be no unemployment and starvation ("O, the Sun of Freedom!"). But when the whole atmosphere got tense with suffocating dissoluteness, NV was deep disturbed and he wrote the poem "Jeevithavum Maranavum" ("Life and Death"). This is a poem to be studied with ("Madirasiyil Oru Ratri") ("A night at Madras") in which he had presented a dark street of the city with a typical cross-section of the wretched Indian Society under British rule; all of whom were mere vagabonds. He had desired to mingle with them, to be one with them; but could not, because, he was a respected man. The poet points out a multi-storeyed building, illuminated fully and through its open windows he shows to us the revelling white men and women. Then he hears a song sung by one of the beggars, which says, "I too am a Man in this country where Manliness is sold"; and continues:

"This is my only prayer;
That bread you bite,
Please don't eat in full, my Lord!
This is my only prayer:
When you eat the flesh;
Leave a bit, my Lord!

'Madirasiyil Oru Ratri' (One night at Madras)

Here the Indian motley, the spineless mass was begging before the white colony-masters for a crumb of bread or something. The only consolation was that they sang - ie., they had a voice; they could speak of their agony, though in painful strain. But when we come to the post-Independence poem, "Jeevithavum Maranavum", the whole situation is reversed. Here also there are the vagrants waiting in the street, crowded, for the crumbs that will never come. The moral turpitude into which "I", the speaker in the poem, has fallen now is delineated with

blistering satire. Formerly, "I" had the backbone of revenge and foaming contempt, arising out of helplessness. "I" had darted knives of contempt at the white devilish faces, when they were enjoying, up in the illumined rooms because, "I" was then one among the beggars in the street. Now,

"I realise the truth:
That is life".

Jeevithavum Maranavum (Life and Death)

On the terrace of the huge hotel, the revel-rout is going on and the whole atmosphere is replete with disgusting smell, rhythm, sound and movements. The beggars in the street have increased in numbers. "I" ask impatiently,

Where are FLs? Where are the loops?
Even when he sees the pathetic condition of the streets,
Vengeance, in nerves, doesn't fume now,
And on lips, contempt doesn't curl,
Fire doesn't burn in the heart,
Making dirty the place where fire was
There is now a handful of ashes,
A handful of ashes, wet and black!
What a curse is this?
Or, blessing of a kind!

Jeevithavum Maranavum (Life and Death)

NV's language in such contexts acquires a peculiar pungency and suggestivity beyond translation. For "contempt" the poet selects the word "PUCHCHAM", which means "tail" also. When it is associated with the verb "curl" the immediate result is the picture of a dog, with curled tail. By nature, a dog will always be vigilant; its duty being to watch and protect. A real patriot is a watchdog of the morale of his motherland. But here, the tail doesn't curl. When a dog keeps his tail in between his

hind-legs, it is not curled. Such a dog is called a mongrel. And mongrels always lie in ashes! Here, the ashes are there, making the place dirty, and this dirt cannot be removed easily as the ashes are black and wet. The damnation is complete. The former watch-dog of Indian freedom has now been reduced to a mere mongrel which can't distinguish between curse and blessing. So I hurry up to the terrace of the huge hotel and enjoy, in a mad fury, the hot drinks and hot flesh. Now,

I am a free citizen of this free land!
In this freedom, I have taken my share.
And its dividend, I claim with due care.
When 'tis insufficient, I get enraged.
My place is on the terrace now, not in the street,
I am one among them. They are me; I am they,
But I know:
This is Death!
For great sin, Death is the wages!

Jeevithavum Maranavum (Life and Death)

A close reading of this poem will serve as a clean mirror raised against our faces, and we feel a shudder.

One of the strong points of NV is his social awareness, which always makes him feel for them, often sing for them, also sing of them. Seeing the starving masses in the streets, he wished to be with them, sharing their sufferings. Later when he feels his dreams shattered, he writes, "my place is on the terrace now, not in the street". His words are "the whetted arrows, dipped in rage", darted against us, who, forgetting our duties to our mother-land, revel in selfish pleasures. Perhaps his words fall on deaf ears. Genuine poetry, is seldom understood, in any age, in its full impact. Disgusted, the poet may even ask,

"You don't understand this. Are you rats or men?"
(*"Rats"*)

He asked this, looking straight into the eyes of the heedless society in 1943, in his famous poem "Rats". In later years also, he had often very subtly expressed his pangs that his words, with all their subtlety and sharpness, were not being understood by the society. This undercurrent can be felt in some of his later poems, like "Kalidasante Simhasanam" (The throne of Kalidasa), "Katalakkakaye Aar Ariyunnu?" (who knows the Seagull?) etc. Here, NV is with the epic poet, Saint Vyasa who, raising both his hands towards the sky, cried aloud: "Na tu kaschit Srnothi me" (Nobody listens to me).

"Elikal" (Rats) is a "whetted and oiled sword" in words. It was written on the Bengal famine. The famine was caused by the inhuman policies of the colonial Govt. and by the anti-social elements hoarding food grains. It was followed naturally by contagious diseases and people died in hundreds of thousands. The abysmal nature of this calamity is revealed in the poem. A mother-rat, with her young ones comes down from the attic and following the decaying smell of human flesh enters the bed-room of a prostitute, where she is breathing her last.

"Move on slowly,
we go there, for dinner, tonight.
Don't bite, on reaching.
Is't dead? moving?
What? Sour? Your tongue-tip wet?
Blood oozing?
Lay dead all this time, and yet
Not dead the desire of life?

The scenes the poet reveals before us through the eyes of the rats, are horrid and disgusting. And the language

used is sharp and piercing. Along with heaps of dead bodies all around, seen through the eyes of the rat, the poet shows us the hoarded food-grains also. Quite dramatically, the mother-rat praises Almighty for providing them in darkness with this endless wealth of food:

He who created darkness,
Be praised the ocean of kindness!
Need not keep for tomorrow.
For, there are many yet to die!
Or, till date, has a rat
Died of starvation?
- No empire, no slavery,
Nor competition, among rats -
You don't understand this,
Are you rats, or men?

The basic class-consciousness in his being makes NV's heart bleed out in rhythm for the suffering, be they in Kerala, Bengal, Africa or any where on earth.

A telling example of this universal sympathy is the famous poem "Africa", written during the period of resurgence in Africa. In the past the people there were,

"..... mere skeletons due to starvation.
Suffering acute pain and sorrow,
Eating belly-full in dreams".

But now, they are rising. The foot-prints of Najib are clear on the sand-beds of Nile. QuameN Kruma is creating history. Jomo Keniyatha, even from within the four walls of Jail, is leading the country. Wishing freedom and prosperity to Africans, the poet sings;

Where human hands are in chains,
There my hands ache;

Where there is torture,
There the blow falls on my back.
Where men struggle to rise,
There verily I live,
Today this Africa is my country:
I weep with her grief.

This thought makes him collected, tranquil and inwardly strong. And elated also. So, the poet concludes:

When one man stands up
to fight against injustice,
Then I am undefeated,
My birth is fruitful, I am He.

NV presents the other side of this, through scenes of stagnation, taken from post-Independence India.

In the poem, "Rashtreya Pension" (Political Pension), he deals with a shameless society, whose life is nothing but a mimicry. This picture gradually unfolds through the eyes of a decrepit old man who was a freedom-fighter. He, from his far off village, goes to the city where the district treasury is situated, in order to receive the freedom-fighter's pension, which, to him, is "the respect given by the country". Exhausted and tired, he reaches the treasury, but-

They say, they are on strike,
They work to rule. There is none
There to say either yes or no.

Having waited thus anxiously till evening, he returns, dejected, when the clerks of the treasury leave the office shouting slogans. Unable even to walk, he lies for a while beneath a banyan tree. The ground is so familiar to him. It was from here, surrounded by the Sevalal volunteers, Gandhiji gave the call of Satyagraha. Thereafter, for

many a day, this place was the war-field, where human bones in encounter shattered the lathies. It was from here, that he too had atlast jumped head-long into the struggle, was beaten with lathy, arrested and taken to jail. After the term, he came out a full-fledged freedom-fighter, went round the country, working among the masses. And atlast freedom dawned. The country was partitioned. And Gandhiji sacrificed his life. In India, eventually,

Service became a profession; and,
going up its steps needed something else,
Times changed; words and deeds
became contradictory; all those that
were ablaze once, became fuming,
burnt-out logs!

A generation that doesn't know
The bitterness of slavery,
The pungency of freedom, or
The sweetness of expectation
On the tip of their tongue, has come up.

Now this young generation has started fighting with each other. One section strikes to shut down all schools; the other, to open them. Net result: Total destruction of the entire nation. When education is disrupted, the very foundation of the future of the nation is shattered. The freedom, gained through the suffering of many, through the sacrifice of the great national leaders, is being torn to pieces in the street by these callous youngsters. Now, the poet is too mellowed to burn even in words. The "Freedom-fighter" is deprived of his 'political pension', just because of the 'work to rule' agitation by the Govt. employees, demanding more. With a cold smile, the 'freedom-fighter' consoles himself:

There are enough schools now

For the people to shut and open
As they wish; and that is
The greatest gain of the nation.

The pungent satire of this becomes doubly piquant when we take into account that NV was one who had sacrificed his youth on the altar of the freedom struggle. On 20th August 1947, he wrote in his diary: "The whole town (Madras) seemed to celebrate independence, and I who had done a bit - however small - of sacrifice to see the dawn of this same day was denied a living twice within a week for the simple reason that I had politics. And the fruits were gathered by people whose virtue was that they had no politics and that they had not done any sacrifice and had sat tight in their chairs, as comfortably as they could while the nation was suffering its birth-pangs, while I was leading a life of perpetual fear and adventure, while I was starving and living like a vagabond. Fine justice! Fine independence!"

In 1962 when India was attacked by China, the patriot in him could not keep quiet. Nevertheless, the maturity of vision he had attained by then, did not allow him to raise a common war-cry. He details the glory of Himalayas, the eternal abode of peace and the pilgrim-centre of humanity; and warns the Demon not to beat his battle-drum there:

The tired human soul is
badly sick, already;
Do you bomb the final hospital?
("The Final Hospital")

Though an Indian to the core, here he is speaking for humanity as a whole, and this universality doesn't exclude even China the aggressor. Himalaya is the final hospital for the ailing humanity which is not to be

destroyed by the greed of a nation. This love of humanity, universal brotherhood and agony over the downfall of man has been a burning passion with him from the very beginning. The classical evidence for this is his poem "Mazhavillum Chooravattiyum" (The Rainbow and the Cane). God had given word to Noah, on the day of the Great Flood, to protect the earth, with the entire living things and as an evidence thereof, placed his holy arch on the cloud. But one day while strolling in the evening, with his walking-stick, he looks around and doubts: why should I keep my word?

"Is there anybody left
who belongs to the men of those days?
These worried weaklings,
Do they descend from Noah, the Great?"

Now, unhesitatingly, He picks up the rainbow and walks away, placing his walking-stick in its place. The exhilarated man takes the cane from the roadside. He does not stop to think of the loss of the rainbow. And, now men, throughout the world, do not bother about the rainbow; for, they have the cane to fight with. Here again we overhear NV's subtle question:

You don't understand this;
Are you rats or men?

The greatest contribution of NV as poet is that he proved through his varied writings that no branch of human knowledge, whether it be atomic science, history, anthropology, astronomy, archaeology, bioculture or whatnot, is alien to poetry. The general contention till then was that none of these and similar branches of modern knowledge could be treated for the making of a poem. "If all the poetic themes of NV are taken together, it

becomes an epitome of human history".⁴ Love, by general consent, was the area set aside for poetry. Even for the great poets of old, the general theme of poetry was either love or war. Through his poems, NV introduced a sea-change in this tradition. An earnest search after knowledge was his religion and there was no branch of human knowledge that he was not interested in. The erudition he acquired, was effectively made use of for renewing poetry to the core, in content, in structure and in language. The mastery he gained over language in general, and particularly on poetic language, was unique. Poems like "Maranatheppatti Orupanyasam" (An Essay on Death), "Kavithayodu" (To Poetry), "Bangladesh", "Swanapradasanam - 1974" (Dog-show - 1974), "Varnanritham" (The dance of colours), "Jeevasamskarangal" (The bio-cultures of the universe), "Thiruvananthapurathu Nalu Prabhatthangal" (Four mornings at Trivandrum), "Horology", "Katalpalam" (Sea-bridge), "Sooryante Maranam" (Death of the Sun), "Thripathaga", "Bakkivallathumundo" (Is there anything left?), "Kalladaivangal" (Fake Gods), just a few to name, will well illustrate this distinctive character of his poetry. "I don't believe it is possible to find out a better disciple than NV from among our poets, to the history of humanity. All the themes he has chosen for his narrative poems, are variedly spread out in time and space".⁵

To observe supreme detachment and to present even the greatest inner turmoil with a tinge of cold satire was the special gift of this master-poet. He knew that the common mass would seldom understand the subtle tone of his choice words. And often he would keep himself off and ask, "you don't understand this; Are you rats or

⁴ C.J. Thomas - Introduction, ("Neerda Kavithakal" - N.V. Krishna Warrior)

⁵ Vishnu Narayanan Namboodiri - Introduction ("NVyute Kavithakal")

men?" This he could do because he had self-confidence of the highest order. Sometimes a bit anguished, he may wonder, "who knows the sea-gull?"

This town is on the sea shore;
Still, none here knows the solid harshness
of the snow-white whirl-winds
Roaring in the pulse of the sea-gull;
The cold Thandava of the waves
Beaten up in frenzy....

("Who know the Sea-gull?")

The town is on the seashore and we know the sea very much; nay, we make use of the sea very much. It is our store of all kinds of fishes; it brings us dates; the gold-biscuits; the Arab, for a vacation-marriage; the taste of the feast he offers; the NOC he gives to the brother-in-law and the draft the brother-in-law sends through Bank. But nobody bothers about the sea-gull; its beauty or the curve of its long wings. So materialistic we have become that we care only for our personal selfish gains; we have no time to care for poetry; we do not care for the poet either. Even if we care, we don't understand; are we rats or men?

NV compares his life to the river Vaiga, of Madurai ("Vaiga"). Often there is no running water in it. There are only shrubs and flocks of donkeys, easing, some washer-women and stray rogues.

Still, satisfied is this river;
The ecstasy of memory vibrates in her.
("Vaiga")

It is the memory of a glorious past. And here we can identify "Vaiga" with India also. The poet prophesies the day when the river shall be full, and the moon will rise over it.

The touch of NV's burden "you don't understand this;

are you rats or men?" can be felt vibrating in the poem "Kalidasante Simhasanam" (The Throne of Kalidasa) also. Kalidasa was honoured by the noble King Vikramaditya by giving him half of his own throne. But the young King Pravarasena of Malava, the grandson of Vikramaditya, fails even to recognise the poet. He

"Lived in pomp and gaiety
Ignoring the welfare of the country,
Hunting animals in the forest
And wedding brides in the Villages."

Kalidasa was sent to him by the grand-father, in order to advise and correct him. But Pravarasena in his drunken revels could not recognise the master. He ordered the poet, with his eye-brows, to sit on the ground taking him to be a mere messenger. And unhesitatingly, Kalidasa sat there in the dust, cross-legged.

Where Mahameru, the king of mountains
sits always unreluctantly,
where the seven seas take rest
keeping off their heavy load,
If not here, on this earth,
where else are we to sit?

The poet knows for certain that the Element of earth is nothing other than the human-mind which has the height of Mahameru and the depth of the seven seas. And what, other than this human-mind, is the proper throne for a poet?

NV has fully imbibed the spirit of the Sanskrit classics and he knows that "endless is Time, and this earth, extensive" (*Kalohyayam niravadhivipula cha prithvi*). He knows well that pure poetry is not for the common mass and that every human mind hasn't got this 'height of

Mahameru and depth of the seven seas'. But there will be one among thousands, who is endowed with such grandeur, who can recognise him and he is content with that. The world moves on to the rhythm of the galactic music and in that symphony his voice may not be heard distinct. But the heavenly music becomes perfect and complete only when his voice also, though feeble it may be, mingles with it. So he will go on singing, like-

A little bird in protest

Despising the silence of the Universe.

("A Letter to B")

The tiny bird cannot but raise its protest though it is against the silence of the mighty universe. NV is this tiny bird, protesting against the cosmic silence, the innocent little boy who shouts aloud that the king in triumph is naked. "The whole poetic contribution of NV is the stutter of protest of the birdie obliged to sing. The bird is too tiny; and the protest is against the silence of the big cosmos. So what? The impetus of that song is the stormy detestation for anything unholy"⁶ This attitude, he could maintain throughout, thanks to his Saintly detachment. As poet and intellectual, NV was the archetype of nonattached social involvement. "To this unique genius, who endowed poetry with the impress of truth, of pointed tone, of language pregnant with wit though wet with tears; who enriched the literary philosophy with magnitude and vigour by his universal sympathy, Art is a mighty weapon to transform the mental-life of humanity".⁷

⁶ Vishnu Narayanan Namboodiri - Ibid.

⁷ G. Sankara Kurup

Chapter IV

A rare combination

N.V. Krishna Warrior belongs to that rare species of genius which is a combination of creative faculty and critical faculty. "He was a great genius that appears once in a century"¹. He firmly believed that a real piece of literary art is worth that name only if it is primarily endowed with aesthetic beauty. But everything aesthetically beautiful will not make real art also. For that it should have the life-blood of a genuine and undaunted sense of commitment to society, and to time. Only if a proper balance is struck between these two aspects, the work will be really worthy.

For his erudite scholarship in Sanskrit literature he has acknowledged his indebtedness to the scholars like Sankaranarayana Sastri and Rama Pisharodi from whom he mastered Sanskrit Grammar and Sanskrit Poetics.² Along with this NV had imbibed all the healthy trends in "the explosion of knowledge" in the western world.

¹ C. Achutha Menon - "Vijnanakairali" - XX - 10. Oct. '90.

² N.V. Krishna Warrior - "Vichinthanangal Visadeckaranangal" - P. 218

Naturally, his studies in literature happen to be multidisciplinary.

Among the Sastras Sanskrit grammar was the branch most favoured by NV. He had studied deeply and intimately Sidhantha Kaumudi, Ashtadhyayi, Mahabhasyam and such other widely known works, and books like Prakriyasarvaswam, Roopavatharam, and Prakriyakaumudi which are rarely known. In this field, the introduction he has written to "Sugalarthamala" by Panditharajan Narayanan Namboodiri is very significant. He has written a pretty long introduction to the famous work "Padasamskarachandrika" of Kaikkulangara Rama Varier. It contains the history of Sanskrit Grammar from the times of the Rigveda to modern days and also the history and the programme of the study of grammar in Kerala. He points out that the work is an enlarged translation, not a mere translation of Sidhanthakaumudi and that earlier classics like "Sabdendusekharam" are relied upon for the portions not found in the original. The impartiality and truthfulness required of a great critic and researcher are seen reflected in his comment on this book³.

"Melputhurinte Vyakaranaprathibha" ("The Grammatic Genius of Melputhur") is an indepth study of the rare work "Prakriyasarvaswam" by the great scholar-poet Melputhur. Though Melputhur is widely known as the author of "Narayaneeyam", the famous poetic work of devotion, according to NV, the greatest contribution of Melputhur is "Prakriyasarvaswam". This, he has established giving full credit to "Narayaneeyam", bringing out the modern approach of Melputhur as grammarian.

Though endowed with this profundity of scholarship in

³ Dr. Venkitasubrahmanya Iyer - "NVyum Malayalasahityavum" - P. 185-186.

Sanskrit and that too in Grammar in particular, he was not at all averse to Western thoughts and Western aesthetics. He welcomed them whole-heartedly and studied them enthusiastically. For a proper study and meaningful evaluation of modern Malayalam poetry, written by poets who have enriched their poetic faculty with western thoughts and imagination, the ancient tools, NV believed, were insufficient. So he embraced every new wave brought by the western wind, standing deep-rooted on his own ground. In this respect also he was following the foot-steps of Gandhiji who advised Indians to keep all the windows open for the different winds coming from all directions and at the same time to stand firm on Indian soil so that the foreign winds will neither topple them down nor carry them off.

In an essay, "Criticism Today - An Introduction"⁴, NV presents an elaborate discussion on literary criticism. There are two different basic approaches in criticism - impressionistic and textual. In the former, the critic is giving expression to his personal experiences of reading a work. Here the criticism becomes a real piece of creative art because the author is revealing his own personality in his writing. Contrary to this, the textual criticism does not consider the personal experiences of the critic. It gives stress to the text under study and evaluates it objectively. It is intellectual, not emotional. According to NV, the distinctive quality of art is that it particularises the general. The grandeur of a poem depends on the special qualities of the poet's individuality and also on the emotional and intellectual aspects contained in the personal experiences of the poet which caused the poem to be. Even if these aspects may not be fully acceptable, the poem written based on them can be relished. This is

⁴ N.V. Krishna Warrior - "NVyute Sahityavimarsanangal" - P. 20

due to the mode of presentation and its aesthetic grandeur. And criticism has to be based on this distinctive feature. Discussing the relevance of classical criticism, NV points out that only the concerned departments of the universities can afford to bring out profound critical editions of the great classics. Besides, this will enrich the language as a whole. Yet another genre is evaluating a work placing it in the adequate social context. Among this school of sociological criticism, there are two separate trends. One takes literature as an endproduct while the other takes it as an effective means for social transformation. The critical method of socialist realism can be purposefully made use of as a powerful means, and NV remarks that he is not against using literature as a weapon for achieving social changes. He has also pointed out that the authorities in India have not so far been fully aware of the potential, the effectiveness of this weapon in transforming society.

For a proper understanding of a literary work, a full awareness of the distinctive personal characteristics of the author, and the social set up which moulded them have to be taken into account. A study of the available biographical details of an author may sometimes help us to dive deep into the core of his works. NV has pointed out that this type of biographical criticism also can create remarkable impact upon our language and literature. Every individual has an open social life, visible to everybody, and a strictly private inner life also. To a great extent, this inner personality can be studied by psycho-analysis. Art is the product of the inner personality of its author. Hence, an understanding of this inner personality of the Artist through psycho-analysis will help a deeper study of the art itself. This type of psycho-analytical criticism will also contribute much to the development of

language and literature, for which the basic texts of psycho analysis have to be studied thoroughly by the new generation of critics.

Evaluating literature using the tools whetted with general principles was the traditional method of criticism. Modern stylistical criticism is a healthy off-shoot of this. Stylistics is the contribution of linguistics to literary criticism. The significant progress made by stylistical criticism is that it gives emphasis to understanding art instead of evaluating it. Words and their meaning are the basic building blocks of literature. In criticism hitherto, whether it be impressionistic, sociological, biographical or psycho-analytical, the words used were almost neglected, often, over-emphasis was given to meaning. Stylistic criticism is a reaction to this. Critics in this area, consider literature as a battle with language. Dexterous use of language with all its possibilities is the main region of their study by which literature is better understood. NV studied all the possibilities of stylistic criticism to the core realising not only the significance of this new criticism but also the fact that such an awareness was essential for an understanding of the critical jargons used by the new critics. To NV criticism too is a creative exercise, in which performance is most important, the method followed being casual. He kept the windows of his mind open for all the lights from abroad, studied minutely all the modern developments and wrote in transparent and lucid language about those developments. He had proved how exhaustively he had mastered the modern approach in literary criticism. In March 1977 he delivered the Vallathol Memorial Lecture organised by the Malayalam Department of the Kerala University, which was later published in book form⁵, and won for him the Sahitya

⁵ N.V. Krishna Warrior - "Vallatholinte Kavyasilpam" (1977 - Kerala University, Trivandrum)

Akadami Award in 1979. Here he has clearly pointed out that the Indian poetics and the Western stylistics go together in many respects. "We will get a most effective equipment for a minute study of the literary works which have not completely severed connections with the tradition of India, if we formulate a new Indian stylistics by combining properly the western stylistics and the ancient Indian poetics".⁶

As critic, NV was clear about his approach to a poem. "Does the poem attract your heart? To put it in the language of criticism, does the meaningful form, delineated by the poet in words, blossom as an aesthetic experience in your mind?... Does it have the power to lead humanity into an ecstatic experience, attracting the attention by raising before it, bold and varied questions?..... Let us, for example, take the whole poetic production of a particular period and study it. Then we can see that there is some general relationship between the social set up of the time and the important trends in poetry. Beyond that, the attempt to connect each piece of poem with the social set up is scientifically incorrect".⁷ The ultimate touch-stone for a comparative study of the works of two different poets, or of the different works of the same poet, is nothing but the mind of the reader. He also believed that a poem must be, first of all, a piece of art. A piece of art, endowed with aesthetic quality, without deviating from its ultimate social aim, prepares the ground for socio-political changes. This purpose in Art is important, because, only the voices of those who have talked to their own generation, will transcend the limits of time.⁸

⁶ Ibid. Page VIII.

⁷ N.V. Krishna Warrior - "NVyute Sahityavimarsanangal" P. 82-83

⁸ Ibid - Pp. 85-86.

An understanding of the sorrows and sufferings of his own time enables a poet to feel for it and to speak to it. If he has assimilated the spirit of the present, his poems will eventually grow to powerful cultural influence to formulate the spirit of the future also. A genuine poem can transform the mental life of the society. When science transforms the thought-process of man, poetry changes the emotional realm. The intensity of aesthetic experience instils in the reader a sublime emotional pattern, and then a kind of inner metamorphosis takes place in him and he identifies himself with that. No political propaganda can achieve this. Commenting on the profound and far-reaching cultural influence of the great work "Kutiyozhikkal" by Vylloppillil Sreedhara Menon, NV has remarked that art is not propaganda though it has its own social responsibility.⁹ The content of a poem is important; no one can deny it. But the form in which it is presented is equally important. NV points out that there is a particular point where the difference between theme and form is completely obliterated, and there a sublime poem is born.¹⁰

When time rolls on, old principles of literary criticism will change and new ones will emerge, because principles are constantly reviewed, and each review leads to corrections. This will result some-times in the revival of old works which had been obliterated, or in emergence of a new readings to old texts, in the light of the changed norms of criticism. There is only one thing ultimate, in literary criticism, and this is the text that is being subjected to criticism. The poem once written will never undergo any change though it may have different

⁹ N.V. Krishna Warrior - Introduction (Kutiyozhikkal - Vylloppillil Sreedhara Menon)

¹⁰ N.V. Krishna Warrior - NVyute Sahityavimarsanangal - Page 94.

readings. The poem never changes, it is criticism, or rather opinion, that is subject to change. Any criticism remains worthy of the name only as long as it encourages the readers to go back again and again to the work. So also, the proximity of the poet in time will make criticism either blurred or too colourful. Only distance in time will help criticism to have a proper and unbiased view of a poem. A genuine poem will present truth as something that can happen from time to time.

NV has written hundreds of essays on different topics, in lucid, direct and transparent language. Research papers, commentaries, research-oriented works, Memorial speeches, articles, essays, technical & scientific articles, essays on all sorts of imaginable contemporary topics, travelogues, editorials, translations, childrens' literature, introductions to different genres of literary works - countless indeed are his articles, reflecting the horizons of his scholarship, his unsatiated thirst for reading and multi-faced interest. The research thesis for his M.Litt. Degree is on Dravidian metres. "Vallatholinte Kavyasilpam", "Melputhoorinte Vyakaranam Prathibha", "History of Bhasha Vrthasasthram" and "Samskrithavyakaranathinu Keralapaniniyute Sambhavana" are his monographs with all the high seriousness of research thesis. His different articles on literary, historical and cultural topics are compiled in "Kalolsavam", "Pariprekshyam", "Samakalanam", "NVyute Sahitya Vimarsanam", and "NVyute Gaveshana Prabanthangal". Many articles still lie scattered and uncompiled in different Malayalam periodicals. "Bhoomiyute Rasathantram" is a collection of essays of scientific nature. "Adaranjalikal" contains homages paid to eminent personalities. "NVyute Sahitya Vimarsanam" is a compilation of scholarly articles on criticism, some

prominent introductions and in-depth studies of certain literary works. "NVyute Gaveshana Prabanthangal", as the title indicates, carries research articles. The eight collections, "Velluvilikal, Prathikaranangal", "Prasnangal, Pathanangal", "Samasyakal, Samadhanangal", "Anveshanangal, Kandethalukal", "Mananangal, Nigamanangal", "Vichinthanangal, Visadeekaranangal", "Veekshanangal, Vimarsanangal", "Olangal, Azhangal" contain 835 essays in total on multifarious topics of contemporary relevance. The range of topics dealt with in these essays is astonishingly wide. It varies from "Atom Explosion" to "Ball-point", from "study of International Earth - Bio wealth" to "Umbrella", from "Can we Save University Education?" to "Cat". Here is a series of books of encyclopaedic comprehensiveness, precision, clarity, correctness and authority. One can refer to them for ready information on almost everything under the sun. And, NV was verily a walking Encyclopaedia, a Sataavadhaani, whom one could approach with doubts for clarification, on any subject from 'dog-care' to 'soft-ware', and from whom one would never have to return gloomy.

"Unarunna Utharendia" (Awakening North India) "Americayilode" (Through America), and "Puthiya Chintha Soviet Unionil" (New Thought in the Soviet Union) are three travelogues by NV. When he travels abroad, he goes with an inquisitive open mind, eager to learn the political - social - economic - cultural climate of the country concerned, with a historical perspective. A reading of his travelogues will afford a comprehensive understanding of the country, which could not have been gathered even if one had travelled with him.

"Ezhu German Kadhakal" (Seven German Stories), "Sumathy", "Devadasan", "Kasinadhan", "Gandhijiye Vidyarthi Jeevitham" (Student life of Gandhiji) and

"Manthraavidya" are translations by NV. During his early days, he had translated the German stories after learning German. So also, it was after mastering Hindi that he translated the works from that language. His primary attraction in translating was his study of the languages. And his interest in languages was not a passing fashion. On NV's multi-linguistics scholarship, Vishnu Narayanan Namboodiri writes: "It is heard that the great scholar Seshadri Iyer knew dozens of languages. Now it seems, it can be said of NV alone. In connection with NV's 60th birthday, a collection of all his poems was published. When I prepared a biographical note for it, I wrote that he knew eighteen languages. On seeing the book, NV told me: "Vishnu, that is not correct".

"Then, what is the correct number?"

"Sanskrit, English, Hindi, German, Tamil - all taken together, only sixteen".

"It is you who used to elucidate to us certain enigmatic usages in the Prakrit and Pali".

"I did not get time to study them that thorough. It may be eighteen, if you add them too".

"It is difficult to correct my figure now. It is already printed. And for you it is quite easy to learn two more languages. Can't you make my figure correct in two months?"

One more incident: While NV was editing and printing the "Swathanthra Bharatham" from underground, at Mahe a friend met him on the road and asked: "going where?"

"To study French".

After one month this friend, on meeting, again asked as usual: "Where?"

"To a nearby house - to give tuition in French".¹¹

But something else also might have prompted NV to engage in translation work, in his early days. This brought him a little money. And for NV during those days, this 'little money' was very precious.

During the 'NV era', in Modern Malayalam literature, there were not many writers worthy of that name, who did not desire his or her work, to be introduced by NV. These writers belonged to all ranks, right from just beginners to the top-ranking. Research work has yet to be done to find out the exact number of introductions NV has written, their variety, and their real significance in our literary criticism. Not only for the living authors but for the late veterans also, when their works were brought out anew, NV has written detailed introductions, which are thought - provoking studies of the works concerned. "Rgvedam Bhasha Bhashyam" (2nd Volume) was published with NV's introduction.¹² When a corrected new edition of Bhagavatham was published, it was introduced by NV. When collected works of the great poets Poonthanam, Vallathol, Pandalam Kerala Varma, Vayalar, Kakkad, Edasseri and Ulloor (Umakeralam) were brought out, NV wrote detailed introductions to them. Not only to poems but even to Dictionaries, Grammar books, philological works, History, Translations, Novels, Short Stories, Dramas, Essays, Studies and Scientific works he has written scholarly introductions. Most of these introductions are detailed studies with serious insight into the fundamental principles of literature, of the

¹¹ Vishnu Narayanan Namboodiri - "NV The Wonder of Knowledge" - P. 87.

¹² Devi Prasad Bhasha Bhashyam - Rigvedam - Vol II (1979) OMC Narayanan Namboodiripad - Pub: Vadakkernadham Brahmaswam, Trichur.

sciences and Humanities. All of them present the essential points expected of a proper introduction; they carry the signature of NV, the erudite scholar and profound writer. With rare insight, he enters into the core of the work being introduced and gives expression to it with utmost lucidity and precision. Obviously he is magnanimous, when young writers are introduced. But when dealing with the major writers, he points out the flaws also in their works. In literature, NV had a definite stand-point and he was not prepared to compromise on it.

Chapter V

Road to Enemies

NV tore away the pages of his diary from September 1942 to November 1943 and burnt them to save him from the police. It would have been highly dangerous if those pages, containing information regarding the underground freedom-movement, happened to reach the hands of the police. Not only his own life, but that of some others involved also would be in danger. Later, in a four-page note, he jotted down from memory the important events that took place during those dark underground days.

It was during those days that he donned the mantle of an editor for the first time. But as far as the publication "Swathanthra Bharatham" (Free India) was concerned, he was the reporter, the compositor, the editor and the distributor too! His first connection with this banned paper was as its distributor. When the 1st issue of it was ready, Dr. K.B. Menon, the veteran socialist leader, entrusted to him the duty of distributing the paper. Later, he had to prepare the matter required for the paper, edit it, compose it, get it printed without being caught by the police and distribute it also. For this, he studied

composing. The whole attempt was adventurous though it was short-lived. In the first place, "Swathanthra Bharatham" was a banned paper. "All the works connected with it - preparing the matter, composing, printing, distributing and even reading - were to be carried out with utmost secrecy. There are people who were convicted for five years' imprisonment for simply having been seen with this paper. Anybody who was suspected to have any connection with the activities of it could be tortured by the police at any time"¹. This underground paper has gone down in history, as it had helped the independence movement in central Kerala to a great extent.

In April '47, NV took charge of the weekly "Jai Hind", run by the Socialist Party. He knew for certain that he was not proficient enough in handling the financial matters. "I am in the party and I am absolutely incapable for the job. I can look after the managing and editing of the paper, but where financial matters are concerned I don't think I can rise to the occasion"². In June '47 he registered it before the Dist. Magistrate as the printer and publisher of the weekly and consequently, he had to appear before the court in connection with a case against the printer and Publisher. Though he was not personally involved in it, he had to face the charge as he was now officially the Printer and Publisher. The case was registered by the authorities against some technical offence committed by his predecessor; but now it gave him constant worry. At last he was acquitted in July '48 and during the whole year this case had tortured him mentally almost every day, either by a court hearing, or by police calling on him, or again, by an arrest warrant.

¹ NV Krishna Warrior - "Iritty Kattil Oru Ratri" - Mananangal Nigamanangal - P. 225.

² NV Krishna Warrior - Dairy dated 14-7-1947.

Then he got the offer of a post in the weekly "Jayakeralam" published from Madras. After hesitating for two days he wrote to them that he was willing to take up the job on two conditions: "I will have freedom in my sphere of work and that I will get Rs. 120/- to start with". But Jayakeralam replied that they could give him only Rs. 100/-; and he refused the offer: "Now I have another vague offer. Kesavan Nair has written to me that the Mathrubhoomi people are willing to take me into their weekly. I have informed him of my agreement. I don't know the condition of the job".³ This was the first step of a long and productive life of editorship in Mathrubhoomi, later.

During May '48, he was selected by the Teachers' Association, as the Managing Editor of their journal. Though it was not a paying profession, it gave him some sort of experience in editorial work.

Mathrubhoomi was planning for some expansion and top-level discussions were going on regarding NV's appointment there in charge of the weekly. But nothing was yet definite. Meanwhile, along with his college-teaching, he was also editing the "Janayugom", a periodical published from Trichur. It was not a successful one; and was somehow pulling on. Now, the Socialist party had renewed the publication of "Swathanthra Bharatham" and NV had to work for that also. During February 1949, Jayakeralam, the periodical from Madras asked him again to join them, offering him Rs. 150/- per month. But now he was not interested in that. That he was working as editor of some political journals was looked upon seriously by the Govt. and the Govt. was pressurising the Principal of his college to take action

³ N.V. Krishna Warrior - Diary dated 15-9-1947.

against him. "I feel, before this year ends, I will be fired. What next?"⁴

It was in the same month that he was asked to take up the editorship of *Mangalodayam*, a literary magazine of high standard, published from Trichur. Sri P.C. Kuttikrishnan was the editor then and NV refused to accept it because, "they want to fire off Kuttikrishnan and I won't be a tool in that game".⁵

During the early months of 1951, the Socialist party started publishing a weekly called "Janatha" and NV had to edit it. This editorship again started creating troubles for him in the college. On 21-6-51, he was asked by the Printer and Publisher of the *Mathrubhoomi*, Sri Kuroor Neelakandhan Namboodiripad, whether he was willing to take up the editorship of their weekly and he consented. In July, the Managing Director of *Mathrubhoomi*, Sri V.M. Nair, asked him to join the paper with immediate effect offering him Rs. 175/- per mensem. NV demanded Rs. 200/- and it was agreed upon. Still he was doubting whether it would be good for him to accept journalism for his career, leaving pedagogy. He had been wasting three years in the Kerala Varma College, he thought, because, "had I worked on my project in these 3 years, I could have written my thesis." But now he was leaving the institution for good and he thought he would never be able to complete his thesis. He tried to console himself: "Your place on this planet will be based on your work, not your degree".⁶ And on 3rd September '51, he tendered his resignation in the college. Principal Nambiar advised him to "make himself indispensable", wherever he went. He answered "I shall try, my dear sir! I don't know; often

⁴ N.V. Krishna Warrior - Diary dated 14-6-1949.

⁵ N.V. Krishna Warrior - Diary dated 15-6-1949.

⁶ N.V. Krishna Warrior - Diary dated 22-7-1951.

enough I make myself very much dispensable, but this time I shall try to be just the opposite".⁷ Prof. Mundasseri was severely against his decision to join the *Mathrubhoomi*, in the beginning. But later he changed and told him that he would co-operative with his work as the editor of the weekly. NV joined *Mathrubhoomi* on 13-8-1951.

It did not take much time for him to realise that the chair of the editor of a literary periodical of some repute, was cushioned with thorns. On 18-9-'51 he got a letter from a certain writer threatening him with dire consequences because an article sent by him for publication was rejected. It was NV's first experience and it upset him very much. It even prompted him to think of leaving the field. He felt his colleagues in the institution were agreeable to him and the work also was to his liking. "Yet..... yet..... there is something, something, very far off - very vague - calling me, beckoning me.... No, even this is not my vocation".⁸ During these days he earnestly desired to get the senior lecturer's post in the Malayalam Dept., in the University of Madras. He had applied for the post of the Editor in Malayalam Lexican, Trivandrum also. He did not get either of these and that he did not get the University post grieved him much, as he was still cherishing his dream of Research. But Malayalam literature in general and *Mathrubhoomi* weekly in particular must be thankful to those forces which worked against him because, had he been taken away from *Mathrubhoomi* weekly in those early years, Malayalam literature and that prestigious literary publication would have been poorer today. He continued in *Mathrubhoomi*,

⁷ N.V. Krishna Warrior - Diary dated 5-8-1951.

⁸ N.V. Krishna Warrior - Diary dated 7-10-1951.

editing the weekly for more than seventeen years, till he left it for organising the State Institute of Languages as its first Director in August 1968. Thereafter, on two different occasions also he worked with Mathrubhoomi, first from 5-2-1979 to 14-3-1981 and again for a third time from 15-1-1988 till his demise on 12-10-1989 as its Chief Editor. It was during his first tenure that Mathrubhoomi weekly bloomed up as the foremost literary weekly in Malayalam. Appearing in the pages of this weekly was considered to be the most covetable recognition in Malayalam literature. "It can undoubtedly be said that it was Krishna Warrior who raised that weekly to be the most renowned literary - cultural journal of Malayalam"⁹. The majority of the major writers of to-day in Malayalam were encouraged and moulded by him, through Mathrubhoomi weekly. Many of them were his find.

Editing the weekly was laborious and tiresome and often he wanted to escape from it, particularly during the early years. Repeatedly he used to request Sri K.P. Kesava Menon, the Chief Editor to give him a change atleast to the daily section. As years rolled on, he realised that this profession had helped him to earn more enemies than friends! His only solace in long monotonous work was that he could occasionally come across some new and rarely original voice in literature. Whenever he happened to pick up a new genuine piece of writing from among the heap of poems, short-stories, essays etc. piling up on his table every day, he says, he used to enjoy the exhilaration of an astronomer who keeps on for days together observing the sky through his telescope and all of a sudden, watches a new star moving into the realm of his vision.

Out of experience he had evolved a clear demarkation between news paper journalism and literary journalism and in this he had strong convictions on which there was no room for any compromise. "Literary journalism is a service demanding devotion, to be carried out with full sense of seriousness, a service as serious as teaching. I would like to underline the word service. Literary journalism is, and must be a mission rather than profession"¹⁰. News paper journalism or political journalism aims at giving information to the readers and also activating them, properly enlightened. But literary journalism aims at improving the abilities of the readers with aesthetic sense, sublimating their tastes properly refined, educating them, opening for them new horizons of thoughts, and stimulating their culture and sense of values. Along with this, literary journalism has yet another responsibility which can be termed as linguistic engineering. Language, of course, is the invaluable common property of society. The editor engaged in literary journalism has the responsibility of improving the specificity, power of communication and the overall beauty of language.

NV had been in the field of literary journalism for about fortyfive years in total and he had been editing weeklies, fortnightlies, magazines etc. The practice of literary journalism, in general, is that the editor selects the better pieces from among the heap of things piled upon his table every day, makes them presentable by giving some face-lift and publishes them. But an editor with a vision, with some sense of moral responsibility and with some ideal should not rest content doing this. He should plan the future issues of his journal in the light of his ideals,

⁹ C. Achutha Menon - (N.V. Krishna Warrior - Vijnanakairali - Vol. XXI - 10 - Oct. 1990)

¹⁰ N.V. Krishna Warrior - (KA Damodara Menon Memorial Speech - Vichinthanangal Visadeekaranangal - P. 237)

identify writers who can contribute articles etc. to suit to his total plans, obtain the materials in time, edit them properly and publish. A real writer will only feel pleased when he finds his work published by the editor, carefully edited and improved. "I believe, serious editing is something fundamental in literary journalism. An editor fulfils his responsibilities to the writers as well as to the readers by careful editing. Certain writers used to become irritated when they found their works edited. By expressing this irritation, they declare that they are lacking self-confidence. But mature and renowned writers will approve with thanks dexterous editing".¹¹ NV believed that nobody could edit a good-for-nothing piece of writing and make it worth publishing. But a good editor can, by skilful editing, make any good work he gets, a better one. Editor is not omniscient; he should not consider himself omniscient either. He must be always prepared to learn from any humble writer. At the same time, he should not forget that he is the representative of the readers and that he is responsible to maintain the standard of knowledge and educate the taste of the readers. If he tries to lessen the standard of the publication just for popular appeal and wider circulation, then his aim is business, not service to literature. A successful business man he may be, but he is, undoubtedly a failure as a journalist. "Can an editor maintain the idea that the reader too will not understand anything which he himself doesn't understand? I am not reluctant to say openly that I have maintained this idea always throughout my long career as a journalist"¹².

NV proved himself to be Master-Editor, possessing all these high ideals and he was never prepared to

compromise on his principles. This adherence to principles often caused him troubles in his career. An incident which occurred in February '59 affords vivid insight into NV's character, as a conscientious editor. "Samskaralochanam", a collection of scientific essays by Dr. K. Bhaskaran Nair, a well-known writer in the field, was reviewed in the weekly by the veteran critic, Kuttipuzha Krishna Pillai. This review happened to be so provocative that, it prompted Sri Kunhappa Nair, a man of key position in the Mathrubhoomi itself, to write an article, attacking Kuttipuzha Krishna Pillai. NV refused to publish this article in the weekly. Thereupon, Kunhappa Nair approached Kesava Menon, the Chief Editor, who compelled NV to publish it. His answer was: "Publishing it may be the sole responsibility of the chief editor; yet, am I simply to witness it? If it is published, how can I thereafter approach a writer for an article? So, as long as I continue to hold charge of the weekly, the right to accept or reject an article also should be mine. Otherwise, it will be better to relieve me of this responsibility"¹³. Kesava Menon continued to compel NV, may be under pressure from others and at last NV sent the article to Kuttipuzha Krishna Pillai, got his comments thereon and published the article along with the reply. Publishing something, indicting individuals in vituperative language may create sensation among the readers and may lead to an increase in circulation. But that was out of NV's moral sense of an editor's responsibility.

Such instances were many and the publication of a series of articles by EMS Namboodiripad on his Russian tour was yet another one.

When he felt that a work by a certain writer did not conform to his principles, he refused to publish it, which

¹¹ Ibid - Page 235

¹² Ibid - Page 235

¹³ N.V. Krishna Warrior - Diary dated 1-2-1959

naturally turned those writers to be his enemies. Some people had been attacking him from the very beginning. Some attacked him using vituperative language; some complained to the Management of the Mathrubhoomi that he was a communist and some argued that he did not publish their writings fearing that it would affect his image in the literary field. During his early days, he was much distressed mentally over such unfounded allegations. But when years rolled on, he became so mellowed that such things did not affect him at all and he proved himself to be above such little matters.

It was under NV's leadership that the Mathrubhoomi started the Hindi fortnightly "Yugaprabhath" and it continued to be published for fifteen years under his editorship. "In the field of Hindi periodicals in South India, Yugaprabhath marked a bright new era. And it achieved wide recognition at the all-India level also."¹⁴ Many top-ranking poets and short-story writers of Hindi throughout India, desired earnestly their works to be published in "Yugaprabhath". The main aim of this periodical was to translate into Hindi and publish the major works in other Indian languages. It also aimed to publish the Hindi-writings from non Hindi areas. In the Hindi areas in India, particularly among the literary men, NV was better known as the Editor of "Yugaprabhath". It was in recognition of this commendable service rendered by NV in this field that he was honoured at the third International Hindi Conference held at New Delhi. The Govt. of Uttar Pradesh honoured NV with a 'Friendship Award', considering this. Kerala Hindi Prachar Sabha also has honoured NV with the title "Sahityakalanidhi" on the

same score. The contribution of "Yugaprabhath" for fifteen years under the editorship of NV, towards the development of Indian literature demands careful study and research, which will add glory to the history of Hindi journalism and Hindi literature.

NV resigned from the Mathrubhoomi in August '68 to be the founder Director of the State Institute of Languages, Trivandrum. From there, he edited and published the scientific monthly "Vijnanakairali" and continued as its editor till he left the Institute in '75. The aim of the monthly was to develop Malayalam language making it resourceful, powerful and rich enough to be an effective medium for spreading modern knowledge. Under his efficient editorship, "Vijnanakairali" created a sound and well-planned foundation for his successors to carry on with the work according to the ideals of its founder. From the Language Institute he also published hundreds of basic university level text books in all branches of science and Humanities.

Leaving the language Institute in 1975 NV continued his research work in the University of Madurai for one year and brought out his thesis on Metres. Then he became Chief Editor of "Kunkumam" weekly, published from Kollam, in February 1976. While working at Kollam as Editor of Kunkumam he was requested by the management of Mathrubhoomi to join them as the Editor-in-chief of their publications. He maintained that Mathrubhoomi was his "Tharavadu" (root-family) and unhesitatingly he joined Mathrubhoomi, leaving Kunkumam. But gradually, the atmosphere in Mathrubhoomi turned out to be unpleasant. The ideal Editor in him never wanted anybody to interfere with his

¹⁴ Dr. N.E. Viswanatha Iyer - Vijnanakairali - XXI - 10 - Oct. 1990, P. 742]

works. And the moment he felt that his decisions were questioned, he tendered his resignation. Kunkumam authorities did not waste time to take him back to them, providing all facilities he wanted. During these days, several readers used to subscribe for that weekly, just for the editorials he used to write every week.

Eventually some top-level changes had occurred in the Mathrubhoomi, and the authorities of the paper again approached him in 1987 and pleaded to join them as their Chief Editor. Against the earnest advice of many of his friends and well-wishers, he decided to go back to Mathrubhoomi feeling that it was his duty to do whatever he could to save Mathrubhoomi when it was in a crisis. Thus he joined again the paper for a third time on 15-1-1988 and continued as its Chief Editor till he passed away on 12-10-'89. During these months, the Paper was under threat of a full take-over and he was fighting against this, almost single-handed. The strain and stress of these days, it is believed, had their role in hastening his death.

In addition to these editorial works in the realm of journalism NV has edited a number of memorable books also. He was the General Editor of the 364 books brought out by the State Institute of Languages during his Directorship there. NV was the Director and General Editor of the "Vallathol Vidyapeedham" and under his General Editorship, this institution has brought out many valuable books. The English-English-Malayalam Dictionary of Ramalingam Pillai was scrutinized, improved and up-dated by him. He was the Malayalam Editor of the Hosana edition of Malayalam Bible. He was the General Editor of the series of books entitled "Contribution of

writers to Indian Freedom Movement", published by Indian Writers' Union. He was the editor of the two series of books "The world we live in" and "Different Nations in the World" (Lokarashtrangal). And he was the Chief Editor of the Malayalam Encyclopaedia, also. It was NV who introduced to the Keralan readers, in his own masterly way, Kautalya's Arthasastra and Mooshaka Vamsa, a chronicle in verse.

His active and colourful life as editor spread over four and a half decades proves that he was a "Sathavadhani", nonpareil, though he at any time of his career had no dearth of enemies.

Chapter VI

A Penance for the Language

In 1966, Dr. Thiriguna Sen, the then Education Minister, Govt. of India had chalked out a plan to allot rupees one crore to each language in India for preparing college-level text books. EMS Namboodiripad, the then Chief Minister of Kerala, appointed a sub-committee to look into the possibility of establishing an Institute for the purpose. The committee did not have a clear-cut vision of the whole thing and hence it could not place before the Govt. any definite proposal. But NV and P.T. Bhaskara Panikkar, who was then the Secretary of Sastra Sahitya Parishat, had already discussed the matter in detail and they jointly presented before the Govt. a comprehensive plan of such an Institute. They had detailed discussions with the State Education Minister also. And consequently the Govt. appointed a Governing Body for the Language Institute, with Mundasseri, NV, CK Moosad and Vakkam Abdul Khader as members, the Chief Minister as Chairman and Education Minister as Vice-Chairman. In 1968, this Body met and decided to appoint NV as the

Director of the State Institute of Languages and Secretary to the Governing Body.

"Improving fast the capacity and wealth of Malayalam, developing it into an effective medium for propagating modern knowledge; promoting purposeful inter-action between different Indian Languages, helping to develop the regional language to make it a means for social and emotional integration"¹ were the aims with which the Language Institute was established. The formation of the Language Institute, its Directorship and the first seven years' restless activities there, provided an occasion to NV, for the fulfilment of the plans he had in mind when he was the Secretary of the Text Book Committee of Cochin in October 1947. He had cherished the same dreams while working as the editor of Mathrubhoomi weekly. As a freedom-fighter, he had felt that the yoke of slavery was heavy upon not only the people of India but also on the Indian literature and the Indian languages. "That my language has no entrance into the upper strata of civilization and administration of my country distressed me very much. And it still pains me"². He believed that it was his duty as a writer to modernise his language and make it an effective vehicle for all branches of modern knowledge. While at Mathrubhoomi, he had initiated the efforts through the weekly to modernise and simplify the Malayalam alphabet to suit it better to modern requirements. The modernised alphabet designed by him was finally accepted by the Govt. and he felt his efforts were of some use at last. In Language Institute, he continued this and modernised the Key-board of Malayalam Type Writer and the Malayalam Short-hand.

¹ N.V. Krishna Warrior - Vijnanakairali - Vol. I - Issue 1.

² N.V. Krishna Warrior - "With thanks, Regards" - Vichinthanangal Visadeekaranangal - P. 221)

Efforts to standardise scientific and technical terms in Malayalam on a par with those in English were started by him even while he was the editor of the *Mathrubhoomi Weekly*. Later at the Language Institute he could select a team of experts in various fields, organise different channels of works and concentrate them so that the expected results could be achieved in less time and more comprehensively. Malayalam to day has become rich enough for anybody with mastery over the subject, to write on scientific and technical matters. He earnestly desired to see that Malayalam is made the language of administration, and also the University-level medium of education in Kerala. NV got acquainted with the attempts made by other Indian states for making their regional languages, the medium of administration. The long colonial rule had caused much damage to all Indian regional languages. In no state in India, the regional language was used either at the administrative level, or in courts, or in the field of education. Regional languages remained as mere literary languages. And no Indian language had the capacity, the vocabulary to imbibe the spirit of the advancement in modern science and knowledge. This led to the inevitability of the re-organisation of the states in India on the basis of regional languages and the consequent urge to rejuvenate the languages in general. NV studied the different attempts made, and plans prepared by other states in India; he outlined a detailed project for the modernisation of Malayalam and presented it to the Government. It was based on this project report that a new 'Official Languages Department' was formed in the Kerala Secretariat. And he continued his efforts in this regard while he was in the Language Institute also. Though he could not achieve the ultimate aim, he was not dejected. "I have no doubt that

our efforts in these fields will be completely fruitful when we start devoting more attention to the inner content and not to the outer cover of our democracy"³.

The Language Institute was founded on NV's organisational capacity and clear vision. He believed that Malayalam has to be made a precise, un-ambiguous and adequate medium for handling the entire realm of knowledge, expanding everyday. So he invited a team of experts in different branches of science and humanities to work with him in the Language Institute. He encouraged new writers to write books on different branches of modern knowledge and imparted practical training to them in translating and writing. He prepared a time-bound plan for the publication of about a thousand books in sciences and humanities, starting with technical dictionaries in different branches of knowledge. Preparation of an adequate vocabulary required for writing university-level text books as well as for handling university-level classes was a remarkable land-mark in the linguistic revolution that took place smoothly and silently in Kerala. It was under his guidance that the Language Institute evolved the basic scientific principles for the creation of technical terms in all branches of modern knowledge. Standardisation of the principles to be followed in printing scientific and technical books also was successfully evolved by him, in the Language Institute. By the time he left the Institute in 1975, he was able to publish 364 books, of which some have found several reprints.

It was as a supportive measure in the fulfilment of the ultimate aims of the Language Institute that NV decided to publish "*Vijnanakairali*", a scientific monthly journal

³ Ibid - Page 222

from the Institute. "Take science to the common man and attract the common man to science - it is this double - faced activity that this (journal) has to carry out. Science will not but be delicious to common men if maximum simplicity is adopted in language and treatment"⁴. This shows the rare combination of a genuine enthusiast in science and an experienced editor in NV. "Vijnanakairali succeeds in blossoming the heart of Malayalam, expanding its vision and also in making the light of the entire modern worlds"⁵ easily approachable.

NV served the Institute as its Director for seven years. "These seven years I have spent in the Institute was a penance (tapas) for attaining a superior aim. As far as I am concerned, I don't feel sad that this penance became futile"⁶.

Chapter VII

One Step Forward

NV was a pleasing combination of tradition and modernity. Traditional Sanskrit education which was almost thrust upon him by Fate and the erudition he earned in ancient literature, Grammar and Poetics served as a sound basement on which he constructed the edifice of his modern knowledge. He started his career as a teacher and he had taught from primary level to University level, though for short periods at each. But throughout his life he verily remained a teacher, a "Sandeepani", imparting knowledge to those around him, which naturally left him with no choice but to be a student always. There was no branch of knowledge which he was not interested in. During moments of mental tension, it has gone on record, that he used to repeat the Ashtadhyayi of Panini for some relief.¹ With the same zeal he would discuss Software Engineering with its experts, sometimes even astonishing them. "One day Dr. MST

⁴ N.V. Krishna Warrior - Vijnanakairali I - 1

⁵ G. Sankara Kurup - Private letter dated 9-7-1970

⁶ N.V. Krishna Warrior - Mananangal Nigamanangal - Page 253

¹ N.V. Krishna Warrior - "Iritty Kattil Oru Ratri" - Mananangal, Nigamanangal - Page 256.

Namboodiri, a Mathematician, who teaches Computer Science in USA visited Language Institute. NV started a discussion with him on duodecimal mathematics and the Hamilton method. On parting the Doctor said: I have not seen this much of inquisitiveness and interest in these subjects even in my colleagues at my Research Centre".²

Nineteen Fifties were the years of rapid changes in the cultural field of India. Free India was endeavouring to mould a new social set up. A new generation with modern education was coming up. The fresh wind of modern science and knowledge was blowing into our traditional society. It was during these days that NV took up the editorship of Mathrubhoomi weekly. Changes in the mode of thinking, expression, vocabulary, Grammar were the need of the time and NV served society as its leading-light. He improved the weekly to the trend-setter in literature. The general purpose of the periodicals then was to publish some essays, short-stories, poems, book-reviews and so on. Literature is important, but equally important are the Sciences, humanities and other new branches of knowledge also. The idea of popular science, unknown to society till then, was introduced in Malayalam by NV through the weekly. He found out young and enthusiastic writers, encouraged them to translate from English books on popular science and serialised them in the weekly. For spreading new ideas, new developments and new thoughts in different fields like Cinema, Sports, Science, Technology, Health, Law, Economic and other humanities, he introduced new columns in the weekly and gradually the society started thinking abreast of the time. Along with this, he found that enriching the language, particularly with technical terms to make it a suitable and

² Vishnu Narayanan Namboodiri - NVyum Vijnanasahityavum - Page 72.

effective vehicle for taking new thoughts and ideas to the people, also was inevitable. Here, in NV, we find the great teacher, a Guru with a vision who has taken it as his duty to educate and prepare the Society for the years to come. NV was a Guru in his house as well, which looked a Gurukulam. During the years he was in Mathrubhoomi, till he left the Paper as the Director of the Language Institute, NV was living in a small portion of the godown of the Mathrubhoomi in Calicut converted into a quarters. It was really an apology for a house! Though it did not have enough space even for his own family to move about, he used to bring there his nephews, neices, children of his brother, cousin brothers and cousin-sisters of his wife and educate them, sending them to different colleges in the city. Often, half-humorously he used to say, that his house was a girls' hostel. Imbibing the real spirit of NV, his wife called herself the "Warden". And his 'Girls Hostel', almost on all evenings, used to be the centre of serious literary and cultural discussions when eminent writers of the city and those who visited the city used to assemble there. Many an important literary - cultural movement of those years in Kerala, originated from NV's "Godown".

To carry out his life's mission effectively and wholly, he found that he should expand his sphere of activities beyond the pages of the weekly. The outcome of such discussions he had with some of his friends was the formation of the Kerala Sastra Sahitya Parishat, which through the past few decades has established itself as the most effective organisation taking the message of science to the common man. The Parishat has created an atmosphere of scientific awareness in Kerala. When in 1996, the Kerala Sastra Sahitya Parishad was accorded international recognition by the "Right Livelihood Award", it was NV's farsightedness that was being honoured.

Poems, short-stories, Novels etc. are read by individuals and generally, individual reading cannot move the masses. But drama, in this regard, is different. The audio-visual impact of drama can influence the masses directly and deeply. Well designed, well-written and well-presented dramas can be used as powerful weapons, to bring about social revolution. That the revolutionary changes which swept Kerala during the fifties were influenced and quickened by the dramatic movement is a fact beyond denial. During this period, NV was the General Secretary of the Malabar Kendra Kala Samithy. Under this banner, in each and every village of the erstwhile Malabar, Kala Samithies (Art Societies) were organised and dramas were presented. Drama festivals were very successfully organised at Kozhikode. NV himself has written seven short dramas. Almost all of them were written to be broadcast over the Radio, and were mostly based on events from South Indian history. In writing dramas, "my aim is to delineate an age, not to portray the personality of Characters". He selected historical themes for his dramas not to dote on the glories of the past. Any writer who wants to lead the present to the future should understand the past, discard the obsolete, and, accept everything relevant with which the present should be given shape to, so as to evolve a fruitful future. This is particularly so when the country passes through days of rapid change. Seen in this perspective the dramas of NV become meaningful. The Kendra Kala Samithi could attract to its fold many talented youngsters and the movement has served well its purpose of socio-cultural revolution.

Along with this was the library movement. There was an organised movement under Kerala Grandhasala Sangh which aimed at providing facilities for reading books in

very nook and corner of Kerala. NV was a member of the first Control Board of the Sangh. His opinion was that libraries were centres of continuing-education. He was conscious of the educative functions that a library can carry out in a village and also of the necessity of giving proper training in library science to the library workers. All the libraries should possess standard books and the available books must be used in a fruitful manner. Essential reference books also must be there in each library. The library movement in Kerala still functions smoothly and effectively without deviating from these basic principles, as NV had envisaged them.

On an experimental basis, the Kerala Grandhasala Sangh organised functional literacy activities. The Education Ministers' Conference held from 8th to 16th September 1965, at Tehran, decided that functional education programmes should be organised in the developing countries. NV obtained the UNESCO papers on this decision, based on which the Sangh organised related activities in Kerala and NV was actively involved in them. "NV Krishna Warrior was the true Editor of 'Sakshara Keralam', the weekly published by Grandha Sala Sangh"³.

NV writes: "Creative writing is the effort of a writer in his solitude. But no writer can remain alone in that atmosphere without roots in a limited society of the like-minded, like-cultured people. I have tried through many organisations like Kendra Kala Samithi, Kerala Sahitya Samithi, Sastra Sahitya Parishad etc. to create such associations of like-cultured men"⁴. It was for bringing all the writers in Malayalam together that he organised

³ P.T. Bhaskara Parthaker - "NV Krishna Warrior" - NVyum Vijnansahityavum - Page 4.

⁴ N.V. Krishna Warrior - "With Thanks, Regards" - Vichinthanangal Visadeekaranangal - Page 222.

'Kerala Sahitya Samithi' in 1961. The Samithi organised serious discussions on relevant topics, conducted literary seminars and arranged workshops and camps for young writers for the first time in Kerala. No creative writer can be produced at a writers' workshop. At the same time, through them genuine young talents can be identified, proper guidance can be given to them, and an atmosphere of mutual understanding can be created, which often will serve to realise one's own achievements and shortcomings also. Opportunities to exchange ideas will make one's own thoughts sharper and clearer. Literary camps will serve for young and talented writers, as clean mirrors held against their faces. Above all, they will help bridge up the so called generation-gap among writers. The camps organised by Sahitya Samithi particularly during the nineteen sixties have served all these purposes fruitfully. Many major writers of later years have acknowledged their indebtedness to NV, the "Sandeepani" (as they affectionately call him) and to the literary camps organised by him.

It was in 1977 that Kerala Association for Non Formal Education and Development (KANFED) was formed and NV had a prominent role in the formation of it. The working programme of it during the first few years was mainly formulated by NV. When the Kerala State Resource Centre was formed, NV was one of the Directors of it. He had a significant part in its activities like workers-training programme, preparation of class-room materials, Literature for the newly educated etc. He also wrote a lot for them.

For some years, he was a Senate Member of the Kerala University. In the Senate meetings he argued that everybody should be given a chance to continue university education, without joining a regular college. For this

purpose he introduced a resolution in the Senate and it was accepting this resolution that the University started Correspondence Courses. NV wanted Malayalam to be made the medium of instruction in colleges and for this he used to raise his voice in every meeting of the Senate, vehemently. NV believed that the political freedom of India would be complete and meaningful only with her cultural freedom, towards which the first step was the restoration of her regional languages to every walk of public life.

A rare and peculiar trait of NV's character was his love and regard for the blind in society. Once he brought to his house a blind boy from his wife's village, admitted him to a school for the blind and helped him throughout his education. After that NV secured a job for him and thus gave him a life of his own. This was not done out of sympathy for the handicapped, because, he believed that by extending sympathy to them we would be destroying their self-respect and moral-uprightness. Instead we should love them, regard them and help them to feel that they are responsible citizens who are being loved and respected. A known social worker, PT Bhaskara Panikar, has recorded his astonishment when he accompanied NV to a certain school for the blind in a remote village in Kerala for the annual function there, to see that almost all the inmates of the school knew NV personally. NV was asking them about their welfare, addressing each one of them individually by their names.⁵

And NV's love for nature was the natural culmination of all these diverse characteristics in his personality tuned to the welfare of humanity. It surfaced in the early months of 1980. The protest against the proposed 'Silent Valley Project' in Kerala was gradually snow-balling. NV had no

⁵ P.T. Bhaskara Panicker - "NV Krishna Warrior" - NVyum Vijnanasahithyavum - Page 7.

doubt to jump into the whirlpool. "Nowhere in the world, have the writers joined together to form an organisation to protect the environment. Let us be the first"⁶. A few writers who approached NV, joined together and formed an association, with NV as its president. "The aim of this should not be simply to save the Silent Valley. Silent Valley is just a symbol, the symbol of the mountain being destroyed, of the rivers being dried up and of the earth that is dying. Let the name of our association be "Prakrithi Samrakshana Samithy" (Association for Protection of Nature)"⁷. Sugathakumari, ONV Kurup, Vishnunarayan Namboodiri, Ayyappa Panickar and Dr. Velayudhan Nair were the "few writers" who approached NV and formed the "Samithi", with Sugathakumari as its Secretary and others as its founder-members. This was just a nucleus which gradually grew into a great movement, involving all the major writers, especially poets of Kerala. Their poems, essays and speeches have created an awareness of ecology in society. "The honourable members from other Indian languages in the Sahitya Akademi, New Delhi, were telling that in no other Indian language was there such a movement for the welfare of nature. NV's eco-perspective was so unbounded as to embrace the entire universe, the earth, the sky, the oceans and the whole of the living things, taken together"⁸. As a result of this movement, the Govt. of India interfered and the Silent Valley Project was cancelled, saving the remaining tropical forest there. As NV had predicted, Silent Valley was just a symbol. The Samithi has been working effectively using all possible measures including legal actions to protect the earth with all its

⁶ Sugathakumari - NVyum Vijnanasahityavum - Page 27

⁷ Ibid - Page 28

⁸ Ibid - Page 29-30

environmental blessings, so that it will be left a better place to live in for generation to come.

A man who loved India deeply, a man who dreamt of a free India differently, a poet who endeavoured throughout to make Malayalam language and literature virile, a teacher who strove all his life to enlighten the masses, a multi-faced socio-cultural revolutionary who spent his whole life to take the society one step forward, NV Krishnan Warrior is a bright, beaming star, who even after setting in the mortal eyes, continues to brighten the horizon, shedding light into future.

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Antharalan	Antarālan
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Bhadrakali	Bhadrakālī
Bhagavatham	Bhāgavatam
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Mahameru	Mahāmēru
Malabar Kendra Kala Samithi	Malabār Kēndra Kalā Samiti
Mananangal Nigamanangal	Mananangal Nigamanangal
Mangalodayam	Mangaḷodayam
Manthravidya	Mantravidya
Maranatheppatti Orupannyasam	Marāṇatteppatti Orupannyāsam
Marichavan	Mariccavan
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Murivaidyan	Murivaidyan
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Padhasala	Pāṭhaśāla
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 Mantravidya

N.V. Krishna Warrior was the harbinger of a new era in Malayalam literature. A "Sathaavadhaani", NV was an eminent poet among critics and a scholarly critic among poets. A man who dreamt of a free India differently, a poet who endeavoured throughout to make Malayalam language and literature virile, a master-editor who steered the trend of Malayalam literature for decades, a multi-faced socio-cultural revolutionary who spent his whole life to take the society one step forward, N.V. Krishna Warrior is a bright, beaming star, who even after setting in the mortal eyes, continues to brighten the horizon, shedding light to future.

A senior poet in Malayalam, with two Kerala Sahitya Akademi Awards among other recognitions, *K.V. Ramakrishnan* is well-known in Malayalam literature, for his poetic grandeur, critical insight and mastery over language. He has to his credit 26 books published which include collections of poems, literary essays, children's literature, translations etc. While working as Professor of English in Sreekrishna College, Guruvayoor, he took voluntary retirement to join the Mathrubhoomi as Assistant Editor of their weekly. Leaving the Mathrubhoomi after eight years, he is at present working as Officer on Special Duty in the Arya Vaidya Sala, Kottakkal.