

# **RELIGIOUS PHILOSOPHY OF SREE NARAYANA GURU**

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for the Degree of  
**DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY**

By

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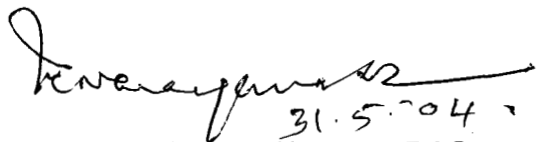
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## CERTIFICATE

*This is to certify that the thesis entitled, **RELIGIOUS PHILOSOPHY OF SREE NARAYANA GURU**, being submitted by **Smt. V. M. BABY SUJATHA** for the award of the Ph.D. in *Philosophy* is the record of the bonafied research work carried out by the candidate under my supervision. No part of the thesis has been submitted for a degree in any other University.*

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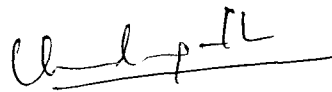
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## DECLARATION

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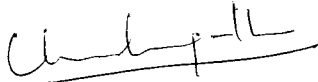
  
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## Chapter - I

# INTRODUCTION

Man appears to be a religious being by his very nature. For from the lowest stage of civilization we find him to possess as much religious instinct as the social instinct. But while the social instinct can be seen among many animals and insects, religion is an exclusive human instinct.

The word 'religion' comes from the Latin word '*religio*' which means to unite or to bind. Literally speaking, religion is a principle of unification or harmonisation. It is an institution as well as a belief which binds us all together in a wholesome way. The word religion usually denotes a relationship between human individual and the super human being or God. In this sense 'religion' can be defined as man's attitude towards life and the world in the light of his belief in the supernatural. It is a whole hearted relationship binding man on the one hand with his fellow-men, and on the other hand with the ultimate Reality which constitutes the supreme unseen value factor. Because of being religious a man behaves differently from all other living beings. He may conform to group patterns of behaviour or live apart in isolated contemplation.

Philosophy and religion are intimately related to each other. Religion at its deepest level concerns itself mainly with the problems of union or communion with the Divine and with the realisation of the

supreme value of human life called *Mokṣa*, *Nirvāṇa* or Salvation. Religion has to reveal a right understanding of the nature of the Absolute or the Divine and the nature and structure of man and the world. It appears that Philosophy and religion have their origin in some deeper urges and aspirations of man. In this sense one may define religion “as the way to the Divine, the infinite or the unconditioned.”<sup>1</sup> Man is a rational being endowed with a sense of freedom and responsibility. It is religion that makes man conscious of the ambiguities inherent in his own existence with its creative activities. The religious man seeks to solve the ambiguities of life by transcending his existential situation in a state of harmony and unity with the Unconditioned. Philosophy is primarily a rational reflection on the nature of existence. Thus, religious philosophizing consists in rational reflections on the individual’s predicament and his irresistible urge towards perfection through a union with the Highest Reality.

## 1.1 DEFINITIONS OF RELIGION

Scholars have tried to define religion in various ways on the basis of their studies in comparative religion. Some of them regard it as a sort of speculation upon all that evade science and discursive thought in general. According to Herbert Spencer (1820-1903) “Religions are diametrically opposed to their own dogmas (scientific thinking) and are

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<sup>1</sup> Mishra R.S., *Studies in Philosophy and Religion*. (Varanasi: Bharatiya Vidya Prakasam, 1971) p. 213

perfectly at one in the tacit conviction of the existence of the world with all its contents and with all which surrounds it, as a mystery calling for an explanation”<sup>2</sup>. He, therefore, says that religion is the belief in the omnipresence of something which is inscrutable.

William James defined religion as “The feeling, acts and experiences of individual men in their solitude so far as they apprehend themselves to stand in relation to whatever they may consider the divine”<sup>3</sup>. E.B. Taylor defines it briefly as “a belief in spiritual beings”. To Haffoding, religion is “the conservation of values”<sup>4</sup>. According to Alexander, religion is “faith in deity”. To Patric, religion is “ the consciousness of our practical relation to an invisible spiritual order”<sup>5</sup>. Whitehead defines religion as “the vision of something which stands beyond, behind, and within the passing flux of immediate things”<sup>6</sup>. W.T. Stace defines religion as the hunger of the soul for the impossible, the unattainable, the inconceivable. According to Kant religion is “a matter of the will, it being understood and identified with practical reason, that is to say, certain acts ought to be done or that certain attitudes ought to be adopted”<sup>7</sup>. According to Max Muller “Religion is a faculty of the mind which enables a man to grasp the infinite independently of sense and

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<sup>2</sup> S. N. Das Gupta, *Religion and Rational Outlook*. (Delhi: Motilal Banarsi Das, 1954) p. 55

<sup>3</sup> Mohapatra A.R., *Philosophy of Religion*. (New Delhi: Sterling Publishers, 1985) p. 3

<sup>4</sup> *ibid.*,

<sup>5</sup> *ibid.*,

<sup>6</sup> *ibid.*,

<sup>7</sup> Charles Worth M. J., *Philosophy of Religion*. (New York: Greenwood Press Publishers, 1975) p. 106

reason”<sup>8</sup>. One of the significant definitions of religion is given by J.G. Frazer. “By religion I understand a propitiation or conciliation of powers superior to man which are believed to direct and control the course of nature and of human life.”<sup>9</sup> Durant Drake defines religion as “This disposition of the heart and will, through which man comes to care for the highest things and to live in gentleness and inward calm above the surface aspects and accidents of life, we call, in its inner nature, spirituality; when it is embodied in outward forms and institutions, and spreads among the whole communities, we call it a religion”<sup>10</sup>.

In *The Religion of man*, Tagore defines religion as that “which consists in the endeavour of men to cultivate and express those qualities which are inherent in the nature of man the eternal and to have faith in him”<sup>11</sup>. To Swami Vivekananda, religion is not doctrines, dogmas nor intellectual argumentation; it is being and becoming, it is realization. According to Radhakrishnan religion is “the discipline which touches the conscience and helps us to struggle with evil and sordidness, saves us from greed, lust and hatred, releases moral power and imparts courage in the enterprise of saving the world ...”<sup>12</sup> Nehru says that “religion seemed to be closely associated with superstitious practices and dogmatic beliefs, and behind it lay a method of approach to life’s

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<sup>8</sup> Canney M. A., *An Encyclopedia of Religion*. (New Delhi: NAG Publishers, 1985) p. 305

<sup>9</sup> *ibid.*,

<sup>10</sup> Drake Durant, *Problem of Religion*. (New York: Greenwood Press Publishers, 1968) p. 305

<sup>11</sup> Canney M. A., *Op. Cit.*,

<sup>12</sup> Canney M. A., *Op. Cit.*,

problem which was certainly not that of science. There was an element of magic about it, an uncritical credulousness, a reliance on the supernatural."<sup>13</sup>

## 1.II ANTHROPOLOGICAL FINDINGS ON NATURE AND ORIGIN OF PRIMITIVE RELIGIONS

The anthropological studies on the development of religions from the primitive social groups to the advanced religions tend to show that most of what is found in the advanced stages are also found in the lower stages, though in a different form.

Various schools of anthropological studies have tried to enquire into the nature and origin of the primitive religions. J.G. Frazer in one of his works studies totemism both as a religion and as a legal institution in a detailed manner. MacLennan expressed that most religions sprang originally from certain totemistic practices found in abundance in Australia. Robertson Smith in his *Religion of the Semites* tried to show that the practice of communion meal was derived from totemism.

According to some theorists religion originated in wonder. The vedic people wondered at the natural phenomena of storm, thunder, shower of rain, music of birds, the firmament with its infinite number of stars, the sun and the moon passing from the East to the West when the

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<sup>13</sup> Jawaharlal Nehru, *The Discovery of India*. (Calcutta: Signet Press, 1946) p. 26

firmament remained firm and unshaken. To their primitive minds motion only appeared to belong to life and they attributed the changing phenomena of nature to living deities presiding over the diverse forces. They presumed these natural phenomena to be deities and regarded them as being mightier than man. They attributed divine characteristics to these and worshipped them.

E.B. Taylor believed that religion arose on the basis of animistic view of the world. Animism means worship of stones, trees and animals in the belief that these are abodes of spirits, good or evil. To Taylor "animism is not a religion, but a basis of religion, a kind of philosophy of religion."<sup>14</sup>

Durkheim criticises the possibility of the origin of religion from animism and he expressed his own view that "When a certain number of sacred things sustain relations of co-ordination or sub-ordination with each other in such a way as to form a system having a certain unity but which is not comprised within any other system of the same sort, the totality of these beliefs and their corresponding rites constitutes a religion."<sup>15</sup>

Max Muller's naturalism supposes that religion must begin with the senses or rather the sensuous things, as all other forms of knowledge do. But Durkheim argues that if religion begins with

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<sup>14</sup> Mohapatra A.R., Op. Cit., p. 11

<sup>15</sup> S.N. Das Gupta, *Religion and Rational Outlook*. (New Delhi: Motilal Banarasi Das, 1954) p. 58

sensuous things such as visible fire, then it is impossible to explain how the various Vedic Ceremonies could be conceived as producing certain fruits merely by virtue of rituals and rites. Durkheim rejects the theories of animism and naturalism on the ground that they do not provide scope for the exclusive classification of the sacred and profane which to him appear as the fundamental characteristic of religion. In tracing the origin of religion he accepts the idea of totemism which is based upon the kinship between man and animals or vegetables. This idea of totemism was brought to light as early as in 1792, and it was based upon the study of primitive people of America. The totemic view consists in the conception of a force which is supposed to be present in a material form.

The complex idea of totemism, however, cannot be considered as the basis of all religions. The religious ideas of totemism may have partial similarities with some of the religious ideas but they are neither so germinal nor ubiquitous as to form the basis of evolution and development of several other religions.

It appears that the principles of biological evolution cannot be followed strictly in the comparative study of religions. Even in the modern age certain customs may arise which might be easily regarded as a revival of certain old custom or superstition. Those customs may be the outcome of natural spontaneity similar to that which was originally responsible for the rise of the customs in earlier times. Thus we find the evolution of the Islamic religious literature from the middle of the 6<sup>th</sup>

century A.D. But we can also discover the development of some of the Hindu sacred literature during the same period. This might lead one to think that the two developments to be dependent on one another, though in fact, they are quite independent.

### **1.III RELIGION AS A SPIRITUAL FACT**

Religion manifests itself through our psychic states—conscious and unconscious, through our tendencies, temperament, emotions and will. Almost all religious people would admit religion to be a spiritual fact. It is spiritual in the sense that it has no material basis. The great religions have emerged out of a religious consciousness which is universal and distinct from what is known as social sense. Religion differs from science in that it is not interested in the universals or laws of nature. Its point of emphasis is upon man as an individual with his own deepest and highest aspirations. The Old Testament, the New Testament, the Quran and the Upanisads emphasise this element.

In the earliest forms of religion, such as in Judaism we find man as an anxious being with his personal grieves and wants, which he refers to God for fulfillment and redressal. Similarly the ordinary people looked upon God as the most beneficent and all powerful being, the sovereign of the earth who removes the sorrows of the people. Thus in popular religion sacrifices are offered to the Deity for the attainment of success and good luck. But this kind of a personification of God and gross form

of worship for the fulfillment of material needs would not correspond to the higher concept of religion. However the urge for the higher ideal is not of purely spiritual nature. The urge for morality does not depend upon its inner norm, but upon the prospects of fear and hope. It sprang from a belief that there is a Master behind the great show of this universe, and that our pleasure and pains, our enjoyments and sufferings are not arbitrary happenings, but regulated either by certain divine laws (such as the law of Karma) or by the will and dispensation of God. This ethical and moral values are inalienably connected with the practice of religion.

#### **1.IV DIFFERENT STAGES OF RELIGIONS IN INDIA**

In India religion is a way of life based upon certain definite conception of reality. For the sake of convenience, a study of the development of the religio-philosophic culture of India may be divided into six stages.

##### **1.IV.1 Pre-Aryan-Mohenjo-Daro Period (B.C. 3000 - 2000 B.C.)**

The extant religious literature and philosophy in India is mainly that of Aryans who entered India about 2000 B.C. But the elements of Indian religion can be traced back to the Pre-Aryan Mahajo-Daro civilization in the Indus Valley around 3000 B.C. or even earlier. It had a script that has not yet been fully deciphered. The earliest known stage

of Indian religion is that of Mohenjo-Daro civilization about which we know very little. "Of their religious culture some traces are left in their icons which include the Mother goddess, the Phallus and a male god seated in Yogic posture who has been regarded as Siva."<sup>16</sup> Our knowledge of this religion remains vague because of the absence of any written documents. But there are enough indication that the worship of Siva in the form of Phallus was prevalent during that period.

#### **1.IV.2 The Early Aryan Period or the Vedic Period (2000-600 B.C.)**

The second stage is that of early Aryans who reflected upon the values of reality like the early Greeks. The Philosophic thought and religious practices during this period are known to us from Vedas. They worshipped the natural forces and beings and theirs was a religion of sacrifices and hymns to various spirits of forces as found in the Rig vedic hymns. Such a religion is called a 'nature' religion and it involves the beliefs called 'animatism' as it deals with forces considered to be alive or animated. When man discovered a general order in Nature, he felt that the natural forces were governed by certain laws. They began to distinguish within themselves between body and spirit and they believed that there must be a Supreme Governor that controlled all the others. The Supreme Governor must be Supreme Deity or Supreme Spirit akin to human spirit, with regard to intelligence and personalities and that all

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<sup>16</sup> Haridas Bhattacharya, *The Cultural Heritage of India*. Ed. Vol. IV (Calcutta: Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture Gol Park, 1993) p. 32

other deities were only His own different forms or manifestations. Thus, 'nature religion' which is a pluralistic animatism, leads to a stage of religious reflection called monotheism and finally to monism in which the Supreme Spirit is described as an inward Being. The outward world becomes a manifestation of the inward Being. Consequently it was understood that the essential truth of reality of the world could be realised only through meditation-turning the consciousness inward. Therefore the meditative religion gained in priority over the religion of sacrifices. The Philosophy of religion took shape around the ninth century B.C. when the first Upaniṣad -Brhadāranyaka was also composed.

### **1.IV.3. The Age of Revolt (B.C.600-300 A.D.)**

The age that followed the early Upanisads saw new developments in religio-philosophic thought. In this age we find the Philosophy in India began with a quest after the highest truth – the highest bliss, freedom and wisdom. Therefore it demanded a philosophical discipline of reasoning, the discipline of our conduct and the control of our emotions and passions. The object of Philosophy came to be conceived as attainment of wisdom so as to transform ourselves into perfectly wise beings and the enjoyment of absolute freedom and bliss. Thus out of a religion of sacrifices and other ritualistic observances, there evolved a religion of inwardness. In the

sixth century B.C. Jainism and Buddhism rose in protest against the religion of sacrifices and much that it implied. These two religions were considered as unorthodox since they rejected the authority of the traditionally accepted sacred scriptures – the Vedas. The Revolutionary changes were brought about by the Bhagawatha religion also. It substituted a personal God Hari in place of the abstract idea of a universal soul. The rise of the revolutionary religious sects reacted on the Orthodox system and led to the formulation of its doctrines in a more co-ordinated and logical form. The Chief developments took place in the religio-philosophic culture during the period 400-200 BC are:-

- a) The formulation of the six systems of Philosophy, viz, Nyaya, Vaisesika, Samkhya, Yoga, Purva Mimamsa and Vedanta.
- b) Development of Saivism into a complete theistic system.
- c) Popularisation of religious Philosophy by means of epics like Ramayana and Mahabharatha.<sup>17</sup>

#### **1.IV.4. The Puranic Age ( A. D. 300 - 1200)**

The beginning of this age may be regarded as a turning point in the religious history of India. By the twelfth century A.D., the downfall of Buddhism and decline of Jainism took place and new religions were introduced. Jainism and Buddhism were attacked by the Orthodox religions by incorporating much that the two religions contained and reasserted themselves by pointing out that the essential truths these two

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<sup>17</sup> Haridas Bhattacharya, *The Cultural Heritage of India*. Vol. iv. Op. Cit., pp. 39, 40

religions taught were already included in their own teaching. This revolt was staged by Kumarila – following the religion of sacrifices and by Sankara-Following that of meditation.

#### **1.IV.5 The Muslim Period (A.D. 1200 - 1757)**

The first Muslim invasions in the eighth century had very little effect compared to the invasions in the eleventh century. The establishment of a powerful Muslim community on a permanent footing all over India was the most outstanding feature of the religious development during this period. In the seventeenth century Christianity was spread along with the advent of the British in India who took advantage of the defects of the caste system, the position of women in the Hindu and Muslim Societies and the practice of untouchability and unapproachability. During this period new phases of the *Bhakti* cults like *Śaiva*, *Sāṅkta* and *Vaiṣṇava* were also developed.

#### **1.IV.6 The Modern Age (A.D.1757-1947)**

The Impact of Western thought led to the religious reforms of the nineteenth century. During this period a number of reform and revivalist movements such as Brahmo Samaj, Arya Samaj – and the Theosophical Society were started to prevent the people from embracing Christianity.

These three movements tried to bring an all-round reformation in the Orthodox Hindu religion and society. By the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century,

the religious philosophies of Sri. Ramakrishna Paramahansa, Sri. Vivekananda and Sri Narayana Guru rose in protest against casteism and untouchability. They established the Vedantic Doctrine of the identity of man with God and the fundamental equality of man. They also announced the world that all religions, if truly followed, are but different ways to salvation, and that there is no inherent conflict between one religion and another.

Thus we can see a synthesis of the varied cultures of India. The Philosophy of the Upanisads and Sankara is combined with the theistic beliefs. The highest knowledge of abstract principles is accompanied by meditation and devotion. Without any distinction of caste and creed equal honours are given to Buddha, Christ, Mohammed and other founders of great religions systems of the world.

## **1.V RELIGION IN GURU-PHILOSOPHY**

Religion is the prominent and basic factor in the Philosophy of the Guru. So his philosophy is nothing but a religious philosophy. His quintessential message, 'One Caste, One Religion, One God for man', has brought drastic changes in the religious and social outlook. This brilliant motto is the basic principle of his Philosophy and this suffices to show that it is nothing but a religious system.

The Guru Defined religion as a whole hearted relationship binding man with his fellowmen and with some unseen value factor. The Guru

says that man's religion does not become complete if it does not unite together the spiritual doctrines of Hindu *Yogis* (Ascetics), non-violence of Sri. Buddha, Love of Jesus and brotherhood of Mohammed the prophet.<sup>18</sup> His religious doctrines include Yogic Culture, Non-violence, love and universal brotherhood. According to him religion is not meant only for the welfare of the inner world of man. Its aim is an integral development of all the physical, intellectual and spiritual capacities of man in the context of society. Thus we can see that the cardinal principles of Buddhism, Christianity and Islam are implied in this religion. This points towards the fundamentals of 'One World Religion.'

According to the Guru Religion must as far as possible correspond to the reality as such and not get lost in absurd dualities ... Religion has to get rid of its distortions and reflect reality. This was the secret of the type of spiritual life held by the Guru as a model. The real and the existent met in neutral truth in all his deeds and words, revealing a common human value which was earthly and heavenly at once. All goods or values of life, from the most ordinary, such as a fruit that abated hunger to the highest, to emancipation, in his view, thus fell into a certain natural orders.<sup>19</sup>

The Guru states that religion is an opinion. Whatever be the differences in religion, men can live together. Caste differentiation ought

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<sup>18</sup> Souvenir, Cannanore. 1967 p. 43

<sup>19</sup> Nataraja Guru, *Life and Teachings of Narayana Guru*. (Fernhill (India): East West University Publication, 1990) p. 265

not to exist. Such a state of affairs can be established. The Guru has no antipathy towards any religion. He desires human beings to live as one integrated group, whatever be the variations in the religion, dress or language. One must have the liberty to believe in the religion of one's choice. There should be freedom of faith for all. His religion was so simple and devoid of all sophistry.

According to the Guru religion is not a mere formula or a set of rites and ceremonies, but a way of life. "Religion itself has to be contemplatively understood as seeking to better man's relations with his fellows, endeavouring to raise him to a truly higher status as man. Religion therefore, cannot afford to be exclusive, neither should it tend to be orthodox or even heterodox. And this is where contemplative science has its virtue, for this superlative science is productive of that regulative principle or solvent of values without which religious or ideological rivalries can only spell disaster. It was in this sense that the Guru Used to say: whatever be the religion, if suffices, if it makes a better man."<sup>20</sup>

The Guru's spiritual faith is the result of a synthesis of many a humanistic ideal from the world religions. The guru was above all kinds of religious prejudices and so he believed in the oneness of all religions. He was influenced by Christianity and Islam. We must be tolerant as well as considerate towards all religions in moulding a spiritual belief appropriate to our times.

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<sup>20</sup> *ibid.*, p. 72

The Guru states that religion helps man to become self – enlightened and we must see that our actions would bring happiness to all. A mode of life which gives happiness to both oneself and others is the gist of real religion. He held that all religions agree on this point. *Ātmōpadeśa Śatakam* Verse 24 explains the above view point.

“What here we view as this man or that  
 Reflection reveals to be the self’s prime form;  
 That conduct adopted for one’s self – happiness  
 Another’s happiness must also secure at once.”<sup>21</sup>

Religion in most of its forms constitutes a system of beliefs, surcharged with emotions and transforming into actions, in the interest of our temporary and permanent welfare understood as happiness both here and hereafter. A study of the existing religions as also the religions among the primitive people, or the religions that already disappeared, point to the fact that all of them are constituted of beliefs which were mingled with man’s ignorance of scientific knowledge. These religions consist of fixed intellectual beliefs which mark off one religion from another, though in Hinduism no such limits are seen. Dr. S. Radhakrishnan says, “Religion is not the acceptance of academic abstractions or the celebration of ceremonies, but a kind of life or experience. It is insight into the nature of reality (*darsāna*) or experience of reality (*anubhava*). . . . Religion is a specific attitude of the self, itself

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<sup>21</sup> *ibid.*, p. 549

and no other, though it is mixed up generally with intellectual views, aesthetic forms and moral valuations."<sup>22</sup>

Religion fundamentally aims at the good of the self or the soul both in this life and in its post-mortem existence whatever may be its nature. Religious enlightenment is primarily the solitary communication with, and self dedication to the Divine, though the idea of divinity and individual's relation with it may be understood in different ways. But this should not amount to a disregard for the significance of religion. In many religions the highest good is conceived as eternal bliss in heaven, while in some religions it appears to be eternal bliss in itself. The ultimate idea of salvation of all Indian systems of religion is either the complete destruction of sorrow or the attainment of perfect blessedness. Therefore the main concern of religion is for the soul or the principle of individual personality.

As far as our country is concerned, religion has been the basis of her thought and life, and the guiding principle of her civilization through the ages. The freedom of the soul has been the *summum bonum* of life for the Indians. Her eternal messages are the divinity of man and unity of existence.

Wherever we look we are surprised to see how the seers and great humanitarians at all times had realized the unbounded soothing capacity of religion in making it their main channel to help the suffering

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<sup>22</sup> S. Radhakrishnan, *The Hindu view of Life*. (Calcutta: Blackie and Son Ltd., 1979) p. 13

humanity. The present work is aimed at an attempt to show how this mighty truth was realized by the great revolutionary religious philosopher of India, Sree Narayana Guru of Kerala whose appeal to religion was never a mere question of belief. His approach to religion was such that even the socially degraded too were turned deeply religious in spite of their hopeless living conditions. His mission was to let the people be convinced of things in their own ways and this explains his appeal to religion even when dealing with the grave social problems.

A complete exposition of the religious philosophy of Sree Narayana Guru requires a careful consideration of the following questions:

1. What is the ultimate source of Guru's philosophy?
2. What is the essential meaning of Guru's religious Philosophy?  
More exactly what is the ontological status of Being, God and the individuals?
3. What is the implication of Guru's religious Philosophy?
4. What is the hidden meaning in the various temple installations initiated by the Guru?
5. What is Guru's concept of God and what are the methods to realize him?
6. What are the methodological strategies worked out by the Guru in order to establish his thesis viz 'One God – One Religion'?

Sree Narayana Guru inspired the masses from the dormant life to the active life of divine purity. Guru's quintessential message, One caste, One religion, One God for man (*Oru Jāthi, Oru Matham, Oru Daivam Manushyanu*) is the principle which determine a pious life of man. The Guru exhorted the people to act as a man, to discard prejudices based on Caste, Class and Race, to one God and to apprehend that all are moving to one God and to realize that one divinity manifests in all beings. The Guru says in *Daiva Daśakam* the plurality of waves in the ocean are nothing but the body of water. Thus all the individuals and things we experience are different manifestations of the One Divinity.

The present study is divided into six chapters including introduction and conclusion. The first chapter analyses the meaning of religion in the light of different definitions given by various scholars. Nature and origin of primitive religion based on anthropological studies, different stages in the development of religions in India and a basic analysis of religious philosophy of the Guru are included in this chapter. The Guru's definition of religion as a wholehearted relationship binding man with his fellowmen and with the unseen value factor convinces us that his philosophy is really a religious philosophy. His religious doctrines include yogic culture, non-violence love and universal brotherhood. The messages and teachings of his religious philosophy is also implied in his very famous message, "One Caste, One Religion, One God for Man".

The second chapter entitled “Narayana Guru : Life and Mission” is devoted to extract the inner meanings of the religious philosophy of the Guru in the light of his activities, written works, sources of his philosophy, methodology and teachings. The Guru was against confrontation and so frontal attack was avoided. He saved the people of Kerala from the tangles of pernicious habits.

The third chapter entitled as Religious Philosophy of Guru – spiritual aspect, analyses spiritual facets of philosophy. The Guru states that the Absolute Brahman is the Real and “that Thou Art”. This is the finalized doctrine of Vedānta as taught by the Guru. The individual soul is none other than the Pure Consciousness – Brahman. The obvious message contained in the various temple installations initiated by the Guru is that we examine ourselves, forsake sins, develop virtues and thus become a person worthy to offer worship. He expected us to become conscious of the fact that God is not within the idols and religious rites, but is right within us.

The fourth chapter, Religious Philosophy of Guru – social aspect, deals with the means and methods adopted by the Guru for the upliftment of the downtrodden classes of the society. This aspect requires a careful examination for it is common to interpret the Guru as a social reformer rather than a religious thinker. This chapter exposes the fact that the social ideas of the Guru are really rooted in his conviction of One God.

The fifth chapter entitled as Universal Religion – attempts to extract the universal applicability of the Guru's religious ideas. In this chapter Guru's quintessential message One Caste, One Religion, One God for man and its implications are described. All religious conference at Alwaye and Guru's view on proselytism are also dealt with.

In conclusion, attempt is centered round to summarise the central principles of the religious philosophy in the preceding chapters.

In this work the historical method is used in the biographical narration. Analytic and Synthetic methods are also used wherever it seemed to be relevant.

## Chapter II

### SREE NARAYANA GURU: LIFE AND MISSION

Sree Narayana Guru is regarded as one of the greatest renaissance leaders in Kerala whose sway was unique during the last century of the second Millennium. He is one among the few who stood as a light house in the context of the moral ethos of the age. He was a saint, poet, philosopher and mystic who lived during the second half of the nineteenth century and first half of the twentieth century. According to some scholars the Guru Narayana is a social reformer, who caused a social revolution unparalleled in the history of Kerala. Some are inclined to regard him as saint in the Advaita tradition of the modern period. Some others extracted the poetic gems in the works of Guru. He was all these and much more.

Sree Narayana Guru is reverently adored as 'the Guru'. Sukumar Azhikkode has quite rightly said, "Sree Narayana was Guru in the real conventional sense of the term. The Guru simply is. He does by what he is. He speaks or thinks by what he is. All the powers and faculties in him are in perfect harmony in evolving a totally integrated personality. Nothing in him is alien to his deepest essence."<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Sukumar Azhikkode, "Sree Narayana and his Mission in Kerala", *Maha Samadhi Mandir of Narayana Guru Prathima Pratishtha Celebration Souvenir – 1967*. (Varkala : Gurukulam, 1967) p. 11

Swami Dharmatheerth sums up his own calculated view in his *Menace of Hindu Imperialism*, " India has produced no better teacher, no bolder reformer, no holier saint, and above all, no greater nation builder than Sree Narayana Gurudev of Kerala. His life, work and teachings have a refreshing uniqueness combined with naturalness, and a sublime simplicity tinged with mystery which render them particularly interesting and profoundly instructive to students of Hindu Nationalism, to whom they offer ideals and methods of realising them which none else has so clearly and successfully demonstrated in recent centuries."<sup>2</sup>

"The Guru is a beacon light to the prospects of peace, brotherhood, harmony and duty. This 'jñānin of action' hailing from downtrodden and dispossessed segment of society, taught about the unitive nature of Being and Becoming. The Guru's teachings are in essence a reinterpretation, nay, a dynamic extension of the wisdom and heritage of our ancient land."<sup>3</sup> Narayana Guru was a great spiritual leader and he used his spiritual attainment for the creation of a new man and a new social and religious order. He was a great savant and seer, a truly *Jeevan Mukta* or *Karma Yogi*, totally detached from desires and ambitions and yet ever active in the task he had set before him.

Narayana Guru was born during India's darkest days of British reign and when Indian culture was at its most decadent condition. The

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<sup>2</sup> K. Sreenivasan, *Sree Narayana Guru*. (Trivandrum: Jayasree Publications, 1989) p. 2

<sup>3</sup> *ibid.*, p. 2

majority of the Keralites followed the Dravidian practices of worship. The Aryan culture was introduced into Kerala by immigrant Brahmins from the North and Brahminism reached its zenith by this time. The Brahmins consecrated temples of Aryan Gods throughout Kerala and kept the society completely under their control. The temples had become the live centres of Brahminic activity, and bases for enslavement of the natives and perpetuation of Brahminic domination. All the people except the rulers were strictly kept away from temples. The so called divine law of '*Varṇa*' was misused to achieve this objective and the Brahmins came to be regarded as super-human beings even by the rulers. Thus the caste system, which was based upon '*avarṇas*' and '*savarṇas*'-established a social inferiority and superiority;-new customs and practices like untouchability and unapproachability were introduced, and society began to disintegrate fast. Thus the society of Kerala degenerated into a 'lunatic asylum' as stated by Swamy Vivekananda. It was at this time of misery that the Guru was born as the one destined to bring hope and consolation, a harbinger of freedom and self respect. He was a kindly friend of mankind who saved many from the tangles of pernicious habits and choking diehard prejudices.

## **2.1 LIFE HISTORY**

### **2.1.1 Childhood and Education**

Narayana Guru was born on 20<sup>th</sup> August 1854 at Vayalvaram House in Chempazhanthy, a village ten miles north of Trivandrum. His

name was Narayanan and he was called by his parents as Nanu. His father Madan Asan was a farmer belonging to the Ezava community. He was also an Asan or village school master. Nanu's mother Kutty Amma was a pious woman of gentle disposition. Nanu had two sisters. His uncle Krishnan Vaidyar was an Ayurvedic physician of considerable repute. The small mud-walled hut where he was born is now protected as a historic monument.

Religion as well as devotion came naturally to him even from his early childhood as he followed the footsteps of his elders who worshipped regularly at the Bhagavathy temple of Manackal adjacent to Nanu's ancestral home .He was brought up in a hard, independent, realistic and work-oriented environment.

Nanu had his early education in Malayalam and Sanskrit under the guidance of Chempalanti Pillai and completed this in 1872. Then he was sent to Varanapally for further study under a distinguished Sanskrit scholar Kummampilli Raman Pillai Asan who helped him to become an eminent scholar in Malayalam and Sanskrit. He mastered the great Indian Epics, the Ramayana and Mahabharatha. Because his quick grasp of meaning, extreme ease in memorising and tenacious memory induced his teacher to accelerate the pace of teaching and elevate him as the monitor or *chattampi* of the school. There he got enough solitude and also opportunities for meditation unhindered by the cares and worries of the seething world out side. Meandering among verdurous

fields Nanu used to pluck the leaves of trees and plants, taste them, chew them and even swallow the juice. These experiments in diet provided him with expert knowledge about the edibility or otherwise of forest plants. Later on this knowledge stood him in good stead when chose to live as a mendicant in jungle. This short period was an important interlude before the hard trials ahead. It was during this period that he girded up his loins for the slow struggle for self- discovery and unitive understanding, which he attained during the crucial years which followed. His higher studies in Sanskrit was over in 1879.

### 2.1.2 Sadhaka Life

Like his father, Nanu took to teaching at Kadakkavoor and Anchuthengu and thus became Nanu Asan. During this period he lead the life of recluse and spent most of his time in the precincts of the temple, expounding philosophy and explaining to people moral and spiritual values. It was a period of deep meditation and musing; and he wrote devotional poems and hymns. Śiva was his *Ista Devatha*

“Oh! God I am not eager to attain that beauty

Where thou and I merge into one.

All paths, even those other than that of Śiva

Are all in the ultimate sense paths to Śiva.”<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Moorkoth Kunhappa, *Sree Narayana Guru*. (New Delhi: National Book Trust, 1982) p. 10

In this stage of his life “we see him taking refuge in Śiva as the saviour from the trammels of the flesh.”<sup>5</sup>

“Śiva, Siva, there is none equal to thee

Knowing all this,

Still am I straying

Among puzzling thoughts that

lead me, to what?”<sup>6</sup>

In 1882, Nanu Asan' s parents decided to marry him to one of his cousins and his sister married her and brought home as that was a familiar practice in those days. But Nanu Asan told the bride that “All are born with some purpose in their lives. I have mine and you have yours. Let me go to fulfil my role.”<sup>7</sup> And he went out in to the world at large as did all saints who were eager to understand the secrets of life, cutting himself away from the bonds of worldly pleasure. Then he spent his time in a Tamil book shop reading books like *Thirukkural*, *Tirumantiram*, *Tiruppukal*, *Tiruppaval*, *Vedānta Jñānavatil Kattilai*, *Ozhivil Otukkam*, *Śivapuraṇam* etc. There he visited the scholarly home of Perunally Krishnan Vaidyar, a scholar - poet from where he browsed over a rare collection of philosophical texts in Sanskrit and Tamil. During this period of spiritual regimentation and quest, Nanu Swamy came across Kunjan Pillai (Shanmugha Das) known as Chattampi Swamikal and Velutheri

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<sup>5</sup> ibid., p. 10

<sup>6</sup> ibid., p. 11

<sup>7</sup> Nitya Chaitanya Yati, *Sree Narayana Guru*. (Sreenivasapuram: East West University of Brahmavidya, 1994) p. 6

Kesavan Vaidyar. Both were conversant with Tamil Classics and Saivite Philosophy. Chattampi Swamikal condemned the strange hold of the Brahmin priests on the people and attacked the caste system as their devilish design. His book *Vedādhikara Nirūpanam* (Critique of the Vedic Interpretation) is an attack on Brahminical maneuvering and sacerdotal arrogance. He also attacked Christianity and warned against the increasing pace of conversion to that alien faith. Chattampi Swamikal introduced Nanu Swamy to Thaikkatt Ayyaavu, a Tamilian- a great adept in Hata Yoga. Yoga lessons increased his thirst for realization and this ultimately led him to Pillathadam on the crest of the mountains known as Maruthva malai in Kanyakumari- a district of Tamil Nadu- to do intense penance for six years. During this period he prayed to God, conceiving the Supreme to be Siva and he believed that the God-heads like Devi, Subrahmanya and Vinayaka were only different appellations for the same unitive Godhood.

### **2.1.3 Knower Life**

During these days of rigorous penance done in total seclusion, absolutely cut off from the outside world, the Guru achieved liberation or self knowledge. Just as Siddhartha was awakened under the Bodhi tree of Gaya and became Gautama Buddha, Nanu Asan was also got enlightened in the cave Marutva and became Sree Narayana Guru. In *Ātmōpadeśa Śatakam* Guru speaks of his realization in poignant words:

“If an arid desert most expansive should become over flooded  
 By river water all at once, such would be the rising symphony  
 Falling into the ears, to open then the eye; do therefore  
 Daily become the best of sages endowed with self control.”<sup>8</sup>

*Bhagavadgītā* also explains how is one to attain to this state:

“Let the Yogin try constantly to concentrate his mind (on the supreme self) remaining in solitude and alone, self controlled, free from desires and (longing for) possessions.”<sup>9</sup> “Serene and fearless, firm in the vow of celibacy, subdued in mind, let him sit, harmonized, his mind turned to Me and intent on Me alone.”<sup>10</sup>

After his realization he became a recluse in a thick forest on the banks of the river Neyyar in Aruvippuram. One young boy called Parameswaran Pillai happened to see Narayana Guru in the forest and through him the world outside came to know of the presence of a yogi at Aruvippuram. The Guru prescribed, to the afflicted, simple Ayurvedic remedies and incurable illness vanished. Many such effective treatments were part of his family heritage. He had a wide knowledge of medicinal herbs abounding in those days in the country side. The trial brought many people to the Guru.

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<sup>8</sup> Nataraja Guru, *Life and Teachings of Narayana Guru*. (Sreenivasapuram, India: East-West University Publication, 1990) p. 519

<sup>9</sup> S. Radhakrishnan, *Bhagavadgītā*. (Bombay: Blackie and Son (India) Ltd., 1970) p. 192

<sup>10</sup> *ibid.*, p. 197

#### 2.i.4 Revolutionary Saint

Caste system was the greatest blot on Hinduism at that time. There was not only untouchability and unapproachability but even unseeability also. 'Even the public roads freely used by cattle and dogs were prohibited to the so-called depressed caste people'. Thus a large section of the population suffered misery and slavery. And in utter servitude and slavish mentality, they sent their offerings to the temples where they were not allowed to enter and where they were denied the right to worship God.

Caste was the deciding factor in every aspect of social life. Society at that time was segmented and stratified on the basis of caste. Brahmins were the dominant sect and enjoyed every privilege and respect. Only a Brahmin was entitled to perform the installation of an idol. The Guru challenged the orthodoxy and vindicated the right of every man to worship God in his own right. He performed the sacred act of the installation of idol at Aruvipuram in 1888. And he continued his act of revolution through-out his life. As he wanted to bring blessings of peace and harmony to the suffering million and to give a practical orientation to the truth that he had learned, he decided to become an itinerant sanyasin. He began to converse with the people gathered around him and became one of the pathmakers who blaze the trail that other men follow, as explained by the *Gītā*,

“Whatsoever a great man does, the same is done by others as well. Whatever standard he sets the world follows.”<sup>11</sup>

The Guru never opposed or denied anything openly. At the time of the installation of the idol at Aruvipuram the Guru wrote a verse which said:

‘This is a model abode where all men shall  
live as brothers without caste distinctions  
or religious rivalries’.

After that act of great landmark, a social and religious transformation took place in Kerala.

## **2.II LIFE MISSION**

Narayana Guru considered the aim of his life as the upliftment of the downtrodden classes of Kerala. He believed that only through religion and education they could get correct perspective about good life. He used to visit each and every hut within his reach and explained the necessity of cleanliness, education and co-operation among the people. Like Socrates, he explained to them his views in simple language. He used inductive arguments for clarifying concepts and ideas. The Guru wanted all sections of the society to get at least elementary education. He tried to abolish untouchability through the diffusion of knowledge and insisting upon the necessity of cleanliness. He rightly believed that

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<sup>11</sup> S. Radhakrishnan, *Op. Cit.*, p. 140

education has the all important role in the progress of the society itself. One of the inspiring exhortions of the Guru was 'Educate to be free, Organize to be strong and Thrive through industry'. Needless to say that this slogan had great appeal in the then existing social situation in Kerala though this showed a rational perspective, which agree with all time. According to the Guru the ultimate aim of education should be the spiritual self- realization. To this end he had also said 'Education will be meaningless if it does not make one respect the noble feet of a holy man who has attained real knowledge'.

For creating enlightenment, he knew that the immediate thrust was to be on religion and he reformed its practice by reorganizing and reconstructing temples as centres of intellectual life. They were to be arenas of genuine understanding, brotherliness and harmony. The way in which he accomplished this goal threw light on the quality of his vision. The kinds and forms of *prathishta* he undertook, reveal it. They showed the quality of his world view and the validity of his stance as a religious philosopher.

Narayana Guru never stood for any community. The central aim of Guru's philosophy was just the abolition of the error that makes for caste thinking by means of religion. The Guru's teaching was the deliverance of man from ignorance at the spiritual level. He has composed a number of devotional verses which are a mixture of high metaphysical conceptions with humble prayers addressed to God.

*Daivadaśakam* is such a typical prayer composed by the Guru for the use of the children who used to gather in Sivagiri everyday for devotions.

### 2.III SOURCES OF GURU'S PHILOSOPHY.

Philosophy of Sree Narayana Guru derives its main inspiration from the Upanishads and Vedas. Guru's works give importance to spiritual illumination. They reveal to us a world more of rich and varied spiritual experience than of abstract philosophical categories. Their truths are verified not only by logical reasons but by personal experience. Guru's aim is practical rather than speculative. Knowledge is a means to freedom and Brahma-Vidya is the pursuit of wisdom by a way of life.

According to Nataraja Guru, the great disciple of the Guru, the Guru was a direct successor of Sankara. "The best authority we have in thinking so is the Guru's own words- 'What we have to say is what Sankara said'<sup>12</sup> or as Nataraja Guru puts it with reference to the particular needs of the age of reason, "Narayana Guru has been able to state the gist of ancient Indian Wisdom tradition in a manner lending itself to be integratively understood in a unified fashion."<sup>13</sup>

Guru Narayana represents the Advaita tradition in a fully revalued and restated form. Nataraja Guru stated that "In the Guru Narayana, the

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<sup>12</sup> Nataraja Guru, *Life and Teachings of Narayana Guru*. (Sreenivasapuram: East West University of Brahmavidya, 1990) p. 61

<sup>13</sup> Nitya Chaitanya Yati, *The Psychology of Darśanamāla*. (Varkala: Gurukula Publishing House, 1987) p. 3

same Advaita Vedānta is treated with a freshness often startlingly unique and simple, taking into its scope and purview, more consciously and wakefully, not merely subjective idealistic varieties, but also all those secondary implications that Vedānta has, or can have, bearing on such human topics as equality and justice.”<sup>14</sup> Among the three Vedāntic revelators, (ancient Sree Vyasa, Sree Sankara and Narayana Guru) Narayana Guru should be considered the most important to the present era.

In Ātmōpadeśa Śatakam the Guru uses the classical vedāntic example- Waves on the sea are homogeneous with the ocean- to refer to the differences between the cause and the effect in the phenomenal world:

“These phenomenal aspects five such as the sky  
Which as emergent from outside is here seen to be,  
By contemplation one should bring to non-difference  
As the sea is to the waves that rise in rows thereon.”<sup>15</sup>

The Guru forged and amplified his vision to make it serve the needs of life, to be felt and apprehended in its baffling complexity by the common man. Thus he made his philosophy serve the needs of social and religious changes.

Narayana Guru bases his teachings also on *Bhagavadgītā* and South Indian *Śaivism* which goes under many names such as *Śaiva*

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<sup>14</sup> Nataraja Guru, Op. Cit., p. 61

<sup>15</sup> *ibid.*, p. 451

*Siddhanta, Tantra, Āgma, Veerasaiva, Śākta* etc. In *Bhagavadgītā*, it is explained that “man of disciplined mind, who moves among the objects of sense, with the senses under control and free from attachment and aversion, he attains purity of spirit.”<sup>16</sup> We can see that the very same idea is explained with pungent words by the Guru in *Ātmopadeśa Śatakam*- verse 8.

“Eating of the five fruits such as light and so on  
Perched on a short- gun foul-smelling, ever in wily changeful  
sport,  
Such, the birds of five, in shreds, what can bring down,  
Wielding such a lucid form, let the inner self brilliant become.”<sup>17</sup>

Influence of *Śaivasiddhanta* on the Guru can be seen in *Advaita Deepika*. In Śaivism, after liberation the *Jīvanmukta* may act as if he were in bondage for some more time. It takes some period to realize what is ‘real’ and ‘not real’. In Advaita the moment after liberation the *Jīvanmukta* is free from all these bondages.

“Though, in a state of positive understanding,  
the world should be dissolved and lost,  
It would still continue as given to the senses  
and perceived as before,  
To one who regained his space-bearing- once  
confused or lost

<sup>16</sup> S. Radhakrishnan, Op. Cit., p. 126

<sup>17</sup> Nataraja Guru, Op. Cit., p. 477

The wrong directions would persist for a long  
time to seem the same,  
The world is not over there as a vinty,  
everything, however,  
In a wisdom-cancelled state, looms as before,  
Even when one is conceived, without any doubt,  
That there is no water in a mirage, it is  
still seen as before.”<sup>18</sup>

In *Darshanamala* the Guru makes a classification of those who attained *Nirvaṇa* as four: *Brahmavid*, *Brahmavidvaran*, *Brahmavidvariyan* and *Brahmavidvariṣṭan*. This classification may be based on the above said Saivasiddhanta principles. Tiruvalluvar and Tirumular are two of the Guru's other important sources according to Swamy John Spiers - one of the well-known disciples of the Guru.

According to Nataraja Guru, another important source of his inspiration is what he derived from his own *tapas* (mystical discipline). Guru's one of the important philosophical works, *Darśanamālā*, which is also a product of both inner experience and confirmation from outer textual sources is the best example that strengthens the above view of Nataraja Guru.

Thus we can say that the echoes of concepts found in the Vedās, The Upanishads and the *Gītā* are found in the poems of the Guru. But

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<sup>18</sup> Nataraja Guru, Op. Cit., p. 151

the Guru came across this truth in his own characteristic way. Buddhism and other Nāstika Darśanas, Aryan Scriptures and ancient dravidian Culture, Christianity and Islam influenced him very much. "Along with all these he also imbibed the rationalism of his age of science. Thus the Guru and his thoughts were moulded by the rich legacy of spiritual and secular speculations the species has so far evolved."<sup>19</sup>

## 2.IV METHODOLOGY

According to Fred Hass the general rule or the principle of Guruhood is "All absolutist Gurus tread the Middle path."<sup>20</sup> Narayana Guru was no exception to this general rule. One of the most difficult things for an absolutist guru to do is to relate himself and his teaching to the relativistic society around him- Narayana Guru had succeeded in this.

The Guru was a teacher by the wisdom of the Absolute. Like all the Gurus of mankind he used poetry as a means to sing the wonders of the Absolute. The Guru was always relitent in speech. He was a philosopher who could assert himself in the assembly of the best scholars; one who brought original and striking ideas to interpret the subtle conceptions of the Hindu philosophy. He had his characteristic method of driving home to the hearer in the simplest and quickest

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<sup>19</sup> K. Sreenivasan, Op. Cit., p. 125

<sup>20</sup> Fred Hass, *The Importance of the Guru*. (Bangalore: Gurukula Publishing House, 1965) p. 690

possible manner, the high ideals of the ancients. He liked private philosophical discussions with select scholars who were earnest in their search for truth. But philosophy always remained in the substrata of his life and work.

“Instead of approaching the problems of human misery and happiness at the outside, his method was to come to grips with it from within, through the mind to the self. According to him only central self-knowledge and self- certainty can really solve the innumerable outer problems, and always on a common or scientific global basis universally true.”<sup>21</sup>

Except during his years of penance in Marutvamala the Guru was peripatetic. The Guru seldom remained in the same place for long and wherever he went, he met the common people; and conversed with them and taught them by examples. He conversed with all and sundry to know and to share with a keen and subtle sense of humour. Like Aristotle the Guru was a charming conversationalist.

But most of the time he taught through silence and the Guru-role becomes most effective. His aim was to feel the problems of the people and thereby note the vital solutions to those problems. The Guru put simple straight forward questions and elicited intelligent answers so as to make the questioner think that it is possible for him to get his own

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<sup>21</sup> John Spiers, *The Guru*. (Karnataka: Visranti Munishthanam ) p. 10

answers. The Guru's words, with sympathy and love, produced in the listener the feeling of meeting truth face to face.

"The Guru philosophy is not argumentative or polemical in its approach to its problems. It has a simplified way suited to its higher critical as well as intuitive speculation on contemplative values. It is full of precise definitions or definite intuitive personal experiences of the mystic contemplative."<sup>22</sup>

"Guru-philosophy is critically convincing by the mere bringing together of the visible and the intelligible aspects. This is the secret of the methodology of the Guru."<sup>23</sup> It necessarily presupposes an absolutist epistemology of its own which is inseparable from it. Thus there are axiomatic and demonstrable aspects; and to these, the final regulative requirement that any truth to be true must also have that of being of value significance in human life, is added. These three factors required for scientific certitude of any vision of truth is sufficiently guaranteed in the works of Guru. His way is to take the disciple by the hand and lead him upward step by step. The idea that the guess-work is primarily meant to be an aid to the contemplative aspirant in self-knowledge rather than a regular text book on subject, is rich in Guru-philosophy proper.

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<sup>22</sup> Nataraja Guru, *The Philosophy of a Guru - Values*. (Bangalore: Gurukula Publishing House, 1965) p. 693

<sup>23</sup> *ibid.*, p. 694

The Guru sustained contemplation and yoga. The Guru was of the opinion that people need yogic education in order to abolish the troubles caused by spiritual ignorance. A life based on inner spiritual truth or unitive principles could alone ensure universal welfare, justice and happiness.

The Guru came across his truth in his own characteristic way and he insisted on a wise philosophical attitude to life, which he said was essential for success in any field. According to him " to be in the world and work for the world, it is necessary to have the spirit of dedication, courage and discrimination of the real from the unreal." Through philosophy one can obtain the wisdom so essential for acquiring these capacities. The philosophical works of the Guru- *Ātmōpadeśa Śatakam* and *Darsānamālā* give us a brief exposition of the Advaita philosophy based on the essential identity of life.

The method used in *Ātmōpadeśa Śatakam* is that the two counter parts involved in the wisdom teaching situation are brought more unitive together instead of being in the form of a dialogue between a teacher and a pupil. The Guru linked up the essence of the Hindu philosophy, the laws of spiritual life as manifested in Christ, and the principles of brotherhood as the basis of social order which we find in Islam; and utilised for the emancipation of a large population and to reconstruct the social and religious system. The Guru connects all these principles into an intelligent plan which should serve as the ideal of the

future civilisation and employs the principles so conceived for the solution of world problems as they presented themselves to him. Nataraja Guru says “the strict academic treatment is not repeated by the Guru in *Atmōpadeśa Śatakam*. In the very first verse he is content to present his contemplative mystical experiences with either definition or critical analysis of topics, in a manner of thinking aloud rather than in the style required for convincing any opponent.”<sup>24</sup>

Several items of methodological and epistemological importance in Guru philosophy are common to Vedānta in general. Nataraja Guru was of the opinion that in common with Vedantic methodology, Guru philosophy bypasses the usual piece-meal instruments of reasoning in favour of overall ones of a truly philosophical order. And some of the peculiarities of such a methodology which presupposes its own epistemology can be studied under the heads of:-

- “ i. Non-being as negative something (*abhāva*)
- ii. Primacy of effect over cause ( *sat-kāraṇa* )
- iii. Primacy of material cause over incidental or efficient cause (*upādāna*)
- iv. The dialectical relation (*ubhayālinga*)
- v. Admitting the principle of indeterminism (*anirvachanīya*)
- vi. Treating immanent and transcendent as belonging to a homogeneous epistemologically neutral context. (*samānādhikāraṇatva*)

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<sup>24</sup> *ibid.*, p. 694

vii. Viewing reality without subject, object and meaning disjunctly (ie. without accepting *tripuṭi*) and

Viii. Including value as a final regulative reference for fact or truth as the third with the *asti* ( existing ) and *bahati* as looming in consciousness. This is the same as viewing the complete, the Absolute as having existence, subsistence and value (as *Sat, Chit, Ānanda.*)<sup>25</sup>

The modes operandi of the Guru's mission and ministry started at Aruvippuram in 1888, was to attack the social taboos and superstitions by making use of the conventional rituals and rites. He had poignant tactics in solving problems. He was against confrontation and so frontal attack was avoided. The point to be noted is that he never raised his voice against the awful atrocities committed by the higher castes on the lower castes because he realised that the abominable caste system is due to superstition and not because of any caste or individual. "What he chose to do was to side-track this issue with a view to exposing its gross inequality. With his sense of humour he turned his tables on his adversaries, without giving room for anger and bitterness. His, however, was not a kind of Gandhian non-violence. He did not approve of *sathyagraha*, as he thought it involved exploitation of sentiment and use of moral coercion. His was a tactful exposure of a misuse or misconception. By focussing on the 'irrationality of the issue, he helped

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<sup>25</sup> *ibid.*, p. 696

eason to prevail. This was the method he adopted even in the case of religious reforms."<sup>26</sup>

## 2.V GURU'S TEACHINGS

The Guru's philosophy is the foundation of all his activities and messages throughout his life. Like Sankaracharya, the Guru has given us a careful re-expression of Vedic thought with special reference to the sayings in The *Gītā*. The Upanishads stress the path of *jñāna*, the *Gītā* lays emphasis on all the four paths- *Karma Yoga*, *Bhakthi Yoga*, *Rāja Yoga* and *Jñāna Yoga*. According to Sankara, Advaita (non-dualism) is the acme of vedic philosophy. "Sree Narayana Guru repeats this assertion and in the very process of that repetition extends it and almost repeats it. For that matter, this technique of creative repetition has been the chief characteristic of Hinduism from the Vedas down to the present day."<sup>27</sup>

The Guru shows us the vedantic way of understanding. It is the great philosophical poem, *Ātmōpadeśa Śatakam*, repeatedly tells us that mere knowledge is not enough. We have to experience and practice what we are told. Through this work the Guru intended to make one realise again and again that the comprehender of Vedānta does not mean a man who grasps the verbal meaning of the lines, but one who

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<sup>26</sup> K. Sreenivasan, Op. Cit., p. 46-47

<sup>27</sup> Moorkoth Kunhappa, Op. cit., p. 69

After his enlightenment and self-realisation the Guru gave major stress on life-ennobling action. He reduced his vision to simple aphorisms statements and sayings in order to enthuse, strengthen and uphold the common people in their moments of crisis and in their struggle for survival. This was a unique attitude and approach of the Guru. Nataraja Guru stated that "He emphasised only two platforms of thought. One was that of every day world of facts and the other that which belonged to the Reality beyond. He carefully avoided preaching or lending his assent to special philosophies or standpoints to serve temporary or temporal purposes, lest such creations should continue to haunt the mind of the ignorant after the creed had ceased to serve an immediate cause, and they add to the heavy load of superstitions with which the poor people confused their honest brains."<sup>28</sup>

On his 64<sup>th</sup> birthday the Guru had emphatically declared: "liquor is poison, brew not, nor vend it. The taper's body stinks, cloths stink, his home stinks and whatever he touches stinks." So the liquor business should be wound up.

These were harmful not only to the morals but also to the community's progress as a whole, besides bringing dishonour to it. This declaration was a sweeping indictment, which was considered as a brave and bold act.

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<sup>28</sup> Nataraja Guru, *The Word of the Guru*. (Ernakulam: Paico Publishing, 1968) p. 40

According to Sree Narayana Guru we have to confront life in all its aspects. "All mankind has to be responsive to true spiritual realisation by living in amity, good fellowship and love, free from all antagonism of race, nationality, creed or caste. This has to be done in the name of the one Supreme Being who is *Śāntam* (calm, tranquil), *Śivam* (auspicious), *Advaitam* (one). That is the understanding, which produces the same result as in the case of an excited visionary who realises cosmic truths. The two processes are one. Practice it and you will actually experience, even when you cannot understand it through reasoning, how spirituality penetrates all activity."<sup>29</sup> Here the Guru emphasised the view that there are both a theory and a corresponding way of life that cannot be divided.

Guru's teachings are not to be sought primarily in the words, spoken or written, but in his life and methods of work. "The underlying principles of his life and methods of work are the moral and the spiritual identity of the individuals as well as the communities life and growth based on the oneness of all life, the identity of the laws which govern it, and the Supreme Unity of purpose. He puts these principles in the simple motto: One caste, One religion, One God."<sup>30</sup>

The Guru led a holy life of *Vedāntin* who gives importance to the principle of unity, solidarity in practical life and to supreme synthesis, which is the goal of philosophical idealism. His advaitic vision was being

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<sup>29</sup> Moorkoth Kunhappa, Op. Cit., p. 70

<sup>30</sup> Swami Dharma Theerthan, *A Prophet of Piece or Sree Narayana Guru of Malabar*. (Trivandrum: City Press, 1933) p. 111

translated every minute of his life into the fields that were beneficial to his fellowmen. He combined serenity of inner life with a rare capacity to turn out a large amount of useful work for the people with whom he came into contact. The guru's advaitism was not confined to the perceptual world alone. While he seemed to agree with Sankara in his arguments in favour of the supreme intellectual monism, his divergence with his teacher became more marked when it came to applied Vedanta. The advaitism of the Guru did not stop with Religion. It came down to more concrete levels of human life and relations. His teachings echoed through the years after his *samādhi*.

The teachings of Sree Narayana Guru is important because of its dynamism, its mobility, leading inevitably to harmony and heightened consciousness. His life was a continuous quest, he refused to stagnate not only in action but also in thought. His life was a saga of persistent exploration and a related cycle of action. He was a *Jñāna Yogi*, Karma Yogi and *Bakti Yogi* rolled in to one.

As one aptly said, "If we follow the simple and peaceful teachings of Sree Narayana Guru we can avert many of our problems. Complete faith in Sree Narayana Guru will help us to bring unity amongst us, amongst the numerous communities in India as well as amongst the different people of the world. Guru's life and teachings will be a beacon

to generations yet unborn. They are worthy of study and emulation by those who aspire to serve the cause of human happiness.”<sup>31</sup>

## 2.VI GURU'S WRITINGS

‘In placing the science of the Absolute at the disposal of humanity Narayana Guru stands completely alone in the field of wisdom and philosophy, in our time. It is for this reason that he is worthy of honour and veneration’.<sup>32</sup>

Sree Narayana Guru was a poet of extraordinary skill and his poetry, which spanned a whole time, falls into three distinct groups: Devotional, Ethical and Spiritual.

### 2.VI.1 DEVOTIONAL POEM

As a devotee living as a searcher for truth, he wrote many devotional songs, which were in the form of prayers and hymns. They were written in connection with the installation of particular deities. The Guru used a ‘mythological language’ of his own, as it was inevitable as part of the socio-religious necessity of the world in which he lived. In some poems the Guru is adoring the *Ishta Devata* to obtain strength of mind and steadfastness to console the desolate spirit “*Vināyakashtakam*”, “*Guhāshtakam*”(Both in Sanskrit) and “*Shanmughadasakam*” (in Malayalam) are some of the poems written

<sup>31</sup> K. Sreenivasan, Op. Cit., p. 198

<sup>32</sup> Nataraja Guru, *The Philosophy of a Guru*. Values. Op. Cit., p. 713

during this period. He had composed many devotional hymns in Tamil, Malayalam and Sanskrit. Among his works in Tamil only a portion of a hymn has been recovered.

Devotional poems can be categorised as hymns on Vinayaka or Ganapathi, Vishnu, Siva, Devi – the mother goddess and Subrahmanya. “*Sri Vasudeva Ashtakam*”(in Sanskrit-eight verses), “*Vishnu Ashtakam*” (in Sanskrit-eight verses), “*Sri Krishnashtakam*” (in Malayalam – eight verses) and “*Sri Krishnadarsanam*” are some of the devotional hymns on Vishnu.

“*Ardhanareeswarasthavam.*” (in Malayalam), “*Cidambara-shtakam*”(in Sanskrit), “*Śivasatakam*”(in Malayalam – one hundred verses), “*Śiva Prasada Panchakam*”(in Malayalam – five verses) are some of the devotional hymns on Siva.

Some of the hymns on Devi are “*Bhadrakāli Ashtakam*” (in Sanskrit – eight verses), “*Devi Pranama Ashtakam*”(in Sanskrit – eight verses), “*Devisthavam*” (in Malayalam).

“*Bahuleyashtakam*” (in Sanskrit – eight verses), “*Guhashtakam*” (in Sanskrit- eight verses), “*Shaṅmukha Dasakam*” (in Malayalam), “*Subrahmanya Stuti* (in Malayalam – Sixty verses) are some of the poems on Subrahmanya.

## 2.VI.2 ETHICAL POEMS

During the period 1887 to 1914 the Guru had composed many ethical poems against the prevailing social taboos – untouchability,

During the period 1887 to 1914 the Guru had composed many ethical poems against the prevailing social taboos – untouchability, unapproachability and unseeability. Some of them are “*Jāti-Lakshana*” (in Malayalam), “*Jāti Nirmayam*” (Critique of caste – five verses) and “*Jīva kārunya Panchakam*” (in Malayalam – five verses on kindness to life).

In his five verses “*Jīva Karunya Panchakam*” the Guru states that:

‘The non-killing vow is great indeed

And greater still, non-eating to observe

And in all, should we not say, O men of righteousness

Even to this amounts the essence of all religion?’<sup>33</sup>

All religions stress the importance of universal brotherhood and advocates kindness to all living being. The commandment ‘Thou shall not kill’, which Christianity and Islam inherited, confirms this view. The very same idea is explained in *Bhagavadgītā*–VI 32

Even as he desired good to himself, he desired good to all. He embraces all things in God, leads men to divine life and acts in the world with the power of spirit and in that luminous consciousness. “He harms no creature ... As he sees God in the world, he fears nothing but embraces all in the equality of the vision of the self”<sup>34</sup>

All religious life pre-supposes kindness as the Guru explicitly states his “*Jīva Kārunya Panchakam*” (Kindness of life)

<sup>33</sup> Nataraja Guru, *Life and Teachings of Narayana Guru*. Op. Cit., p. 314

<sup>34</sup> S. Radhakrishnan, *Bhagavadgītā*. Op. Cit., p. 205

In such a light how can we take life,  
And devoid of least pity go on to eat'?<sup>35</sup>

In this work the Guru poignantly explains that kindness is the basis of religion, piety and kindness together constitute an important article of faith. By doing so he is applying the axiom of the Advaitic non-dual reality of the self.

"The self is universal and unitive and therefore cannot countenance conflict between life and life. This is the first corollary arising out of the pure contemplation of a priori truth. When it is accepted that killing is wrong, the same holds good a fortiori with the question of eating. Kindness emerges naturally as the argument of the second degree which partakes of the logic of emotions to at least an equal measure as it is itself based on pure reason. To the Advaitins one is as valid as the other since the principle involved is the same."<sup>36</sup>

### 2.VI.3 SPIRITUAL POEMS

As a *tapaswin* who attains the ultimate stage of a Yogin, the Guru wrote two of his seminal pieces – *Ātmopadeśa Satakam*- in Malayalam and *Darśanamālā* in Sanskrit. The subject of the work entitled *Ātmōpadeśāśatakam* is contemplative self-realisation or knowing oneself, which is the dynamic style of the Upanisads. The teachings contained therein centre around the absolute value called Self or the

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<sup>35</sup> Nataraja Guru, *Life and Teachings of Narayana Guru*. Op. Cit., p. 314

<sup>36</sup> *ibid.*, p. 316

Ātman and not any deity. It is simple, direct and in aphoristic form but symbolic and profound like the Upanishads. In *Darśanamālā* the Guru gives us an overall epistemology and a unifying scheme of correlation by which all schools of thought can be assigned their legitimate place in the general scheme of human understanding. The two works may be considered as the magnum opus of the Guru.

As a grand religious intellectual who had a keen sense of the people and of their social needs, the Guru wrote some best short poems like *Janani Navaratna Manjari* (A Bouquet of nine Gems to Mother), *Brahmavidya Panchakam* (Five Verses on the science of the Absolute), *Asramam* and *Homa-Mantras*. The two poems, which stand by themselves are *Kundalini Pattu* (song of *kundalini* snake) and *Daivadasakam* (Ten verses to God).

In *Kundalini Pattu* the Guru explains that under suitable attitudes and spiritual disciplines known to Yoga, the coiled up 'snake' at the base of the vertebral column is capable of uncoiling itself and roused up. This serpent power then reaches higher and higher levels touching somewhere at the base of the brain. This is the centre of the thousand petalled Lotus (*Sahasrasa Padma*) of the full radiance of positive wisdom. Guru says that this is like the burrow of a snake and when the snake reaches this home it is lost inside it and all 'becoming' is absorbed finally in 'being'. Here the snake symbolizes the soul or self in its progress and we can see how poignantly the Guru dovetailed the lines

of the poem into a context of self-knowledge. This theme of '*Kundalini*' can be seen in the poem of Mahatma Kabir Das who made mystic poems about Raja Yoga and Hata Yoga.

*Daiva Daśakam* is the 'Prayer to God' in ten simple musical verses in which all the grand concepts of Indian Philosophy are epitomised. This prayer in Malayalam was composed at the request of some disciple who wanted a prayer suitable for all -young or old, simple or learned irrespective of their religion. Narayana Guru therefore treated the concept of God in its universal numinous context as the absolute factor.

Through his writings the Guru presented the *Advaita* Philosophy for practical application in modern life as a remedy for the many ills that modern man is heir to.

## Chapter III

# RELIGIOUS PHILOSOPHY OF SREE NARAYANA

## GURU: SPIRITUAL ASPECT

“Religion and Philosophy, when integrated, constitute a call for realisation of the sole reality of God who is timelessly present in the depths of human personality.”<sup>1</sup>

Amongst the illustrious Acharyas of Hindu religion like Adi Sankara and Sree Ramakrishna Paramahansa, Sree Narayana Guru occupies a no less important place. He can be regarded without doubt as an illustrious religious philosopher, courageous social reformer, preceptor devoted to peace and a great saint whose teachings have a universal appeal and a perennial value. His life and teachings gave a new impetus to the religious and cultural evolutions of large masses of people in Kerala and his actions and messages have vital significance and universal value. Romain Rolland, the renowned French writer and philosopher in his *'The life of Ramakrishna'* explains Sree Narayana Guru's beneficent spiritual activity of universal value after having read some of the essays by Nataraja Guru in the Sufi Quarterly-Geneva published during 1928. “India has never lacked messengers of God, founders of sects of religions and they were continually appearing

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<sup>1</sup> Swami Vivekananda, *Complete Works*. Vol. II. (Calcutta: Advaita Asrama, 1968) pp. 145, 147

through out the period. Glassenapp says nothing of the appearance of new religions in Southern India, but they were no less numerous. Such was the religion of the great Guru, Sree Narayana, whose beneficent spiritual activity was exercised for more than forty years in the State of Travancore over some million faithful souls. His doctrine was impregnated with the monist metaphysics of Sankara, but tended to practical action showing very marked differences from Bengal mysticism, whose *Bhakti* effusions filled him with mistrust. He preached, if one may say so, a *jñānin* of action, a great religious intellectual, having a very lively sense of the people and their soul needs. He has contributed greatly to the elevation of the oppressed classes in South India, and his work has been associated at certain times with that of Gandhi." <sup>2</sup>

The philosophy and religion of Buddha and Sree Sankara gave inspiration to the philosophy and religion of the Guru. This inspiration paved the way of the Guru to harmonize all religions in the world based on One God without any iota of caste system.

All our prophets have started their work by reforming religions and they ended up by founding new religions, which is inevitable. When the fervour of reformation dies down, they realise that it is easier to found a new religion than to reform an old one. But Narayana Guru took this difficult task and reformed the religion, and found out solutions for the problems facing the society in Kerala. He tried to cure it not from outside

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<sup>2</sup> Romain Rolland, *The Life of Ramakrishna*. (Almora: Advaita Asrama, 1930) p. 147

but from inside. He used his quintessential message 'One Caste, One Religion, One God for man' as a means to achieve this end. Narayana Guru understood the fact that by applying the essential principle of religious teaching to their daily lives, people could come out of their poverty and social degradation, and attain a new outlook and a better standard of living. He, therefore, initiated measures of religious and social reform by establishing common temples of worship with different deities and by building schools and educating people. Sree Narayana Guru endeavoured to reconstruct religious and social life on the basis of man's inherent dignity and worth. Religion, according to him, was a prerequisite of good life but it mattered not to what religion and individual belonged so long as he strived for goodness and truth. It was in this theme that Narayana Guru used to say 'whatever the religion it suffices if it makes a better man'

Religion, he found, was the base of everything and the Guru started his work on religion. Swami Vivekananda was of the opinion that "If you want to speak of politics in India, you must speak through the language of religion."<sup>3</sup> Sree Narayana Guru was using religion to organize the under privileged communities.

The Guru laid the foundation of all progress in the reformation of religious practices, social customs and the daily habits of the people. Religion itself has to be contemplatively understood as seeking to better

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<sup>3</sup> Swami Vivekananda, *Complete Works*. Vol. VIII. Op.Cit., p. 37

man's relations with his fellows endeavouring to raise him to a truly higher status as Man. Guru's religious philosophy can be categorised into spiritual aspect and social aspect. Spiritually, we should discover the divine in us and let it penetrate the human. Socially, society must be subdued to the image of the Divine. The individual should recognize the dignity of every man. Now we can examine these two sides-spiritual and social aspects of religion in the philosophy of Sree Narayana Guru.

### **SPIRITUAL ASPECT:**

Narayana Guru was an illustrious religious teacher who gave an illuminating piece of advice and we are grateful to him for the idealistic perspective of life he has bequeathed to humanity in general and to Keralites in particular. The best example of religious philosophy of Sree Narayana Guru is the wisdom text entitled *Ātmōpadeśa Śatakam*, which contains one hundred philosophical verses. By the careful study of that work we can understand that the Guru had fulfilled his intention to compose a work, which treat philosophy and religion unitively. In this work he gives importance to self-realization rather than the adoration of any deity. This work is a wisdom discourse addressed to or about one's own self.

The principles of *Advaita Vedānta* are implied in his quintessential message 'One Caste, One Religion, One God for man.' Vedānta generally deals with four topics- *Brahman*, *Ātman*, creation of world and

*Moksha*. So now we can examine Guru Narayana's views on these concepts.

### 3.1 BRAHMAN:

"The word '*Brahman*' is derived from the root 'Brh' which means great and it is the greatness of Brahman that it is Omniscient and endowed with all powers and its nature is internal purity, intelligence and freedom."<sup>4</sup> "Sankara defines *Brahman* saying that Omniscient and Omnipotent cause from which proceed the origin, subsistence and dissolution of this world which is differentiated by names and forms, contains many agents and enjoyers, is the abode of the fruits of actions which have their definite places, time and causes and the nature of whose (world's) arrangement cannot be conceived by the mind, that cause is *Brahman*."<sup>5</sup>

In Sree Narayana Guru's philosophy *Brahman* is a ubiquitous, eternal and grand concept of the self- consciousness. "It will become evident that the ultimate principle when viewed philosophically is the knowledge, psychologically is the self, metaphysically is the eternal divinity and ethico-religiously it is the brotherhood and compassion."<sup>6</sup> It will be easily seen that the very same principle acts in various forms and

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<sup>4</sup> Rama Murthi Sharma, *Some Aspects of Advaita Philosophy*. (Delhi: Eastern Book Linkers) p. 2

<sup>5</sup> *ibid.*,

<sup>6</sup> E. I. Warrior, *Swathantriathilekku Nayicha Acharyanmar*. (Trivandrum: Kerala Bhasha Institute, 1998) p. 338

expressions. That which has no origin or end is *Brahman*. The ever luminous, non-originating, non-terminating principle is nothing other than *Brahman*. *Brahman* is the nature of Existence - Consciousness-Bliss (*Sat-Chit-Ānanda*). The *Brahman* due to *Māyā* appears as God, individual soul and phenomenal world. The difference between God (*Íswara*) and individual soul (*Jīva*) is due to the differing or limiting adjuncts. The former is due to *Māyā*. The latter is caused by *avidya*. Ultimately there is no difference between God and individual self. The Guru illustrated this truth through his life and explained it through conversations and written works. The principles 'truth knowledge bliss is *Brahman*' and 'knowledge is *Brahman*' are in unison (harmony) with the reality, intelligence, and bliss principle of the Self.

The Guru says, the pure *Brahman* is not 'perceptible'. *Saguna Brahman* or conditioned *Brahman* alone is 'perceptible' and thus it is unreal. In *Darśanamālā* the Guru says that One alone is real without a second. The unreal seems to be real.

" The One is real, not a second;  
the unreal indeed appears to be real ;  
the *Śivalingam* is stone alone;  
not a second made by the sculptor." <sup>7</sup>

*Brahman* is pure consciousness and any thing other than Pure Consciousness or *Brahman* is false.

<sup>7</sup> Nitya Chaitanya Yati, *The Psychology of Darśanamālā*. (Varkala: Gurukula Publishing House, 1987) p. 191

*Brahman* has been described as the creation, the Creator, the created and created substance.

" Are you not creation, the Creator too,  
As also the magic variety of Created things?  
Is it not You again, O God, who is the very stuff  
Of which all creation is made?"<sup>8</sup>

" The search of the contemplative begins to realize unity and sameness. The duality between Creation and Creator, between spirit and matter, is abolished. It is all one undivided wholeness or Absolute."<sup>9</sup>

That which has no origin or dissolution is none other than the Supreme Absolute. And there appears to have origin and dissolution in the Self through *Māyā*.

Brahman is *Māyā*, the Wielder and enjoyer of *Māyā* and the grand non- *Māyā* element is also Brahman.

" Are you not *Māyā*, the author of it,  
As also the enjoying agent thereof  
Are you not even One who can cancel *Māyā*  
To grant us that state of union Supreme?"<sup>10</sup>

" It is a central secret in Vedanta that *Māyā*, the principle of error, making mistakes, appearance is none other than the Absolute. Error is

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<sup>8</sup> Sree Narayana Guru, *Daivadaśakam*. Trans. Nataraja Guru, verse 5  
p. 2

<sup>9</sup> Nataraja Guru, *Values*. (Bangalore: Gurukula Publishing House, 1967)  
p. 670

<sup>10</sup> Sree Narayana Guru, *Op. Cit.*, p. 670

necessary in order to reveal the truth, appearance has to be there so that reality can be known. Food cannot be enjoyed without a real hunger. To understand the unity behind both these aspects is the next stage in this contemplative prayer."<sup>11</sup>

*Brahman* is Reality, Intelligence and Bliss. The Guru adds that,  
 "You are Existence, Subsistence and Value,  
 You are the present verily, and the past and future,  
 Are no other than you. Even the spoken word considered,  
 Is nothing else than You at all."<sup>12</sup>

"These values here are all of a numinous content, beyond empiricism. Being intelligence and happiness, time and the meaning we give to words are all a priori in content, the one implying all the others constituting the wonder and mystery of reality which is none other than a definition of the Absolute or "God" as intended in verse 7 given above."<sup>13</sup>

*Brahman* to the Guru is also the past, present and future. The meaning is that *Brahman* is the eternity, which refutes all negations.

Pure *Brahman* is self-luminous Reality. *Sruthi* says "that which is by itself directly cognized is *Brahman*. *Brahman* is the basis of the whole phenomenon and it is self-revealed. And it is pure consciousness, which is real and directly cognisable. The self-luminous consciousness is beyond the three-fold view (the subject, object and knowledge- tribasic

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<sup>11</sup> Nataraja Guru, *Values*. Op. Cit., p. 671

<sup>12</sup> Sree Narayana Guru, Op. Cit., Verse 7

<sup>13</sup> Nataraja Guru, *Values*. Op. Cit., p. 672

conditioning or *tripuṭi*) that ever brighter burns up surging and brimful beyond the bounds of the triple worlds (heaven, inferno and the human world)."

"The light, rid of three-fold view, that ever brighter burns  
Up surging and brimful beyond the bounds of the triple worlds,  
Remember, that it will never come within the reach  
Of a hermit untrue, as Upanishadic secret lore declares."<sup>14</sup>

The Guru says 'consciousness alone shines everywhere, and nothing else. Hence there is nothing apart from pure Consciousness.'

"Consciousness alone, not another, shines;  
Therefore, there is nothing other than consciousness;  
What does not shine-that is unreal;  
And what is unreal- that does not shine."<sup>15</sup>

Pure Consciousness is Absolute, and the consciousness that 'I am Brahman' is acclaimed as the consciousness of the Absolute. This is the considered view of the great Advaita teachers. The vision of Advaita (*Bhāna*-consciousness) is an important view of Sree Narayana Guru.

All ideas of non-Brahman are but ignorance like the ideas of snake superimposed on a rope. *Brahman* alone is the Supreme Truth. The Guru indicates the unity of non-dual *Brahman-Ātman* in all the *Jīvas*, One only without a second. The individual soul is none other than the Pure Consciousness- *Brahman*.

<sup>14</sup> Nataraja Guru, *Life and Teaching of Narayana Guru*. Op.Cit., p. 511

<sup>15</sup> Nitya Chaitanya Yati, *The Psychology of Darsanamala*. Op. Cit., p. 145

The Guru states that “ the Absolute *Brahman* is the real and ‘That Thou Art’. This is the finalised doctrine of the Vedanta as taught by the guru.”<sup>16</sup>

“Thou verily art *Brahman*, not senses, not mind,  
Neither intellect, consciousness, nor body  
Even life and ego have no reality, being but conditioned  
By nescience, superimposed on the prime self...”<sup>17</sup>

### 3.II SAGUNA BRAHMAN- CONDITIONED BRAHMAN OR GOD.

Narayana Guru had a deep faith in God. The Guru considered God as the embodiment of Existence, Consciousness and Bliss. To him truth, virtue, mercy and love are synonymous with God. The obvious message contained in various temple installations initiated by the Guru is that we examine ourselves, forsake sins, develop virtues and thus become a person worthy to offer worship. He expected us to become conscious of the fact that God is not within the idols and religious rites, but is right within us.

God, according to the Guru, is an ever- attainable shelter and inspiration for a life of goodness. He is eternal truth and infinite wisdom. In the ten *slokas* about God (*Daiva Dasakam*) the Guru lucidly gives his own concept of God. It is written for daily prayer and is very popular. In his work the Guru compares God as a captain in the sea of Existence (*Bhavābdi*). He is not different from inner self (*dr̥ṣṭa*) of the seeker .

<sup>16</sup> Nataraja Guru, *Life and Teaching of Narayana Guru*. op. Cit., p. 379

<sup>17</sup> K. Sreenivasan , *Sree Narayana Guru*. Op. Cit., p. 144

"O God, from over there beyond do keep watch on us here,  
 Never letting go Your hand: You are the Captain  
 Of the mighty steamer for crossing the ocean of change  
 Which sole refuge is no other than your foot."<sup>18</sup>

"Whether the people think of him or not, the Captain is there at the control of the great ship which is the world itself hurling through space and time, here in the body looking after the circulation of the blood, digestion, breathing and so on, as well as directing the principles governing the distant nebulae and the planets. The image here is modern and is an instance of the Guru's immediacy of thought."<sup>19</sup>

The Guru further illustrates the nature of God and His relation with individual selves by comparing God with deep ocean and the individuals with its waves. God is also identified with the creation, Creator, objects of creation and materials of creation. Following the doctrine of cause of any effect; explained in Vedānta,

we can say that the Guru considered God as both the occasional cause of creation and also the *upādāna kāraṇa*.<sup>20</sup> In the 4th verse *Daiva-  
 Daśakam*" the Guru equates the depth aspect of the ocean with the Absolute, God or Reality while the surface aspect of the ocean is meant to be analogous to the collective and overt aspect of the consciousness of humanity conceived as a unit.

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<sup>18</sup> Sree Narayana Guru, Daivadasakam. Trans. Nataraja Guru, Verse 1

<sup>19</sup> Nataraja Guru, *values*. Op. Cit., p. 191

<sup>20</sup> In Aristotelian Logic, the four main causes of any effect are the material cause, efficient cause, instrumental cause and final cause. In Vedanta, the basic principles of the efficient, instrumental and final cause are all contained in one cause called as occasional cause of creation and material cause as called *Upādāna kāraṇa*. The concept of *upādāna* contains within itself, the material cause and also the inherent possibilities of every thing that might be fashioned from it.

"Like the sea and the wave, the wind and the depth,  
 Let us within us see  
 Ourselves, Māyā, Thy Power and Thee Thyself  
 respectively ."<sup>21</sup>

### 3.III ĀTMAN:

In the literature of Narayana Guru (*Ātmōpadeśa Śatakam*, *Brahmavidya Panchakam* and *Darśanamālā*) Ātman is conceived and explained more frequently than *Brahman*. He regards knowledge of Atman as the source and the substratum of all other knowledge. In order to make individual surrenders before the self-consciousness; he tried to obviate the duality between God and man. The sense of egoism is negative and detrimental in the pursuit of man's quest for self-realisation (*Ātmasakshatkāra*). The Advaita (non-dualism) of Narayana Guru gives equal importance to the divine and human values.

In this world there is nothing to be rejected or accepted; as for the Atman, it is the self-luminous i.e. consciousness. The Guru says, "there is no difference between the will and the mind. What is called nescience or darkness is nothing but the mind which is wonderful as *indrajala* – the magic of Indra".

"There is no difference between will  
 and mind: that mind, which is called

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<sup>21</sup> Sree Narayana Guru, *Daivadaśakam*. Trans. Nataraja Guru, Verse 4

ignorance and darkness, is a wonder,  
like Indra's magic"<sup>22</sup>

Sree Narayana Guru clearly substantiates the views of Advaita that the *Ātman* is the non-dual Reality and the duality is only *māyā* or illusion. Narayana Guru realised *Brahman* as *Ātman*. Even though the *Ātman* is self-luminous and unattached it does action, assuming different shapes through *māyā*.

"Prior to action the Self alone is; nothing else is known; therefore, actions are done by itself with its own *māyā*".<sup>23</sup>

The Guru states that "what appears is mere superimposition and hence the ego of 'I' is also superimposed like the shell-silver. The one *Ātman* only remains above all things, and for all time."

"Because 'I' is seen as an object of awareness, I-conscious is also a superimposition, like the silver in the mother of pearl; above everything else, today and tomorrow the one alone exists."<sup>24</sup>

That which has no origin and dissolution is none other than the Self. And the Self is the *Brahman*- the Supreme Absolute.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Nitya Chaitanya Yati, *The Psychology of Darśanamālā*. Op. Cit., p. 177

<sup>23</sup> *ibid.*, p. 299

<sup>24</sup> *ibid.*, p. 322

<sup>25</sup> *ibid.*, p.122

*Ātman* has two forms- *Arya* (good or honorable) and *Anārya* (evil or dishonorable). *Ārya* and *Anārya* can be conceived as 'sacred' and 'profane', which refer to twin ambivalent aspects of personal spiritual life. One feels holy or sinful according to his ego consciousness. It is conditioned by one or the other of these poles. This is because it is connected to *Brahman* on one side and to the body on the other side. With the 68<sup>th</sup> verse of *Ātmopadeśa Śatakam* the Guru enters in to a series of verses dealing with the inner structure of contemplative consciousness viewed both chronologically and psychologically. In this verse the Guru makes use of the classic *vedantic* example of the case of the superimposition in consciousness of the illusion of the snake on the reality of the pure thing-in-itself represented by the rope. This example has been worked upon by Vedantists over and over in their literature and it has become such a favourite that Vedanta can no more do without it. The reason for this is to be sought in the fact that this particular example has much protolinguistic value attached to it.<sup>26</sup>

The 68<sup>th</sup> verse of *Ātmopadeśa Śatakam* is:

"As the ego sense enters into the double snake-rope-like  
scheme

Now as knowledge and now as the limited body agent,

It becomes sacred at one time or profane again,

Thus should be understand the intuitive man."<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Nataraja Guru, *Life and Teaching of Narayana Guru* . Op. Cit., p. 643  
<sup>27</sup> *ibid.*, p. 642

In the Upanishads (*Katha Upanishad*; *Śvetasvatara Upanishad*; *Maitri Upanishad*) the Self is compared with the charioteer and the senses with the horses. The very same comparison is made by the Guru in *Ātmōpadeśa Śatakam*- verse 69, in a more complete and coherent form to serve as the basis of an integrated notion of the Self in a fully contemplative and absolutist context with a scientific status given to it.

" With hearing and such as horses linked, carrying within  
 The self-image and ruled over by the master of thinking powers  
 Such in the libido chariot mounted whereon the "I" sense  
 Unceasing deals outward with each form of beauty as it  
 proceeds"<sup>28</sup>

The cause of 'no-self' doctrine, according to the Guru, is due to the non- discrimination between those that are eternal (*sat*) and the non-eternal (*asat*). The subject of the layman's concept of 'I' is the soul or *atma*. *Ātman* is the one eternal and true light that is shining all the time. *Ātmōpadeśa Śatakam* verse 10 explains so:

"Who sits there in the dark? Declare! Says one,  
 Where upon another, himself intend to find, in turn,  
 Asks, hearing the first: "who may you can be?"  
 For both the word of response is but one  
 The repeated "I, I" contemplated from within  
 Is not many but remains One; divergent egoity

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<sup>28</sup> *ibid.*, p.645

Being multiple, with the totality of such

The Self-substance too continuity assumes."<sup>29</sup>

The unitive and all embracing nature of the self is explained poignantly by the Guru in these verses. Two men sitting in the dark questioning each other in the name of knowledge about the self in each, the word of response is 'One'. In these two verses there is the notion of unity in terms of self-consciousness. A truly wise man sees all as one in the context of non-dual or unitive understanding of the Absolute.

The Guru also says that prior to the knowledge of Self, one is in darkness, but its presence once felt, dispels the same darkness. Self is the eternal light itself and so long with its illumination, it illuminates the things embedded along with it.

The Guru indicates that the unity of non-dual *Brahman-Ātman* in all the *Jīvas*, is one only without a second. What is empirically known as the individual soul is none other than the transcendental reality. *Jīvas* or empirical egos are many. But the spirit of consciousness is one. The true nature of *Jīva* is the sole ultimate reality, i.e. *Ātman*. According to the Guru creativeness, finitude, ignorance and misery are only adventitious attributes of *Jīva* and are not the constituents of its permanent nature. In the vision of *Vedānta*, the assertion of the identity of the individual soul, *jīva* with the *Brahman*, is also expressed as *Sachidānanda* in four memorable majestic utterances called *Mahāvākhyās* of Vedās.

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<sup>29</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 488, 493

*Tattvamasi* (that thou art ) of the *Sāma-Veda- Chandukyo - Upanishad- VI. Viii-7;*

*Prajñānam Brahma* (consciousness is *Brahman*) of the *R̥g Veda- Aitarya- Upanishad. III. 3 ;*

*Aham Brahmasmi* (I am *Brahman*) of the *Yajjur Veda- Bṛhadaranyaka Upanishad. I. IV- 10. and*

*Ayamātma Brahma* (the self is *Brahman*) of the *Adharva Veda – Mandukya Upanisad.*

Thus we can understand that *Brahman-Atman*, the pure consciousness denotes one and the same truth. The Guru also leads us to the reality of the One Absolute Self from an analysis of the human self.

The Guru states that *Brahman* is intelligence, and that 'thou art'. That *Brahman* is the self, according to the Guru as explained in the *Science of the Absolute (Brahma Vidya Panchakam).*

"Intelligence Supreme, even That I am ! That verily Thou art!

That *Brahman* is the self here! Singing thus full well,

And so established in peace of mind;

And reborn to pure ways in life by the dawn of *Brahman-*  
wisdom"<sup>30</sup>

Atman is not the body, mind, ego etc. for they are only superimposed on Atman by nescience (*avidya*). The Guru says that in this world what exists is subject to six forms of becoming or six phases.

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<sup>30</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 374, 375

These six phases mentioned by the Guru are existence, birth, growth, change, decay and extruction. These phases are true of consciousness as well as physical organisms. Ātman, according to the Guru is always detached. But one performs action as if he is attached, owing to Māyā or ignorance.

“The Self is always detached alone;

by ignorance action is done as if attached;

“I am not acting”- thus

the seer remains detached in action”<sup>31</sup>

The supreme aim of the vision of the Guru is to dispel the mistaken notion that *Atman* is finite and particular, and disclose the truth of the non-dual Reality.

### 3.IV SELF-REALISATION

In *Darśanamālā*, Narayana Guru explains a positive discipline called *ātmavidya*, which means knowledge (science) of the Atma or Self. *Ātmavidya* or Self -realization is a discipline of understanding evolved by seers over a period of thousands of years. *Ātmavidya* release individuals from ignorance. Man can be freed from sorrowful conditions, which are bound to arise during the span of his life on earth, only through the acquisition of self-realization or *ātmavidya*. *Ātmavidya* accepts

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<sup>31</sup> Nitya Chaitanya Yati, *The Psychology of Darśanamālā*. Op. Cit., p. 308

materialism as well as spirituality. Sree Narayana Guru strove his best to implement *ātmavidya* in his life.

Self-knowledge is the foundation for all other knowledge and through this self-realization the duality of man and God is abolished. The one who knows the *Brahman* attains the status of *Brahman* itself. Thus according to the Guru knowledge is *Brahman*; the Absolute *Brahman* is the real and 'That thou art'. The Guru says that self - knowledge is the knowledge of destination. The ultimate essence of all existence is the same self-knowledge.

"Apart from awareness I have no being;  
As distinct from me awareness cannot remain  
As mere light; both knowledge and knower, contemplation  
Reveals beyond doubt as of one substance alone."<sup>32</sup>

The Guru thinks of the self-knowledge which is the ultimate essence as knowledge. That is knowledge of self is the only worthy knowledge. This is some times equated as witness-consciousness (*sakṣi çaitanya*) and this is the same and eternal in every being.

"People here on earth, they sleep, wake and think  
Various thoughts; watching over all of these with intent eye  
There dawns a priceless light, which never shall dim again;  
Led onward by this, one should forward wend."<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Nataraja Guru, *Life and Teaching of Narayana Guru*. Op. Cit., p. 623  
<sup>33</sup> *ibid.*, p. 462

A man of knowledge (*jñāni*) is one who meditates on the *Saksi Caitanya*. According to the Guru those who are in the pursuit of self-consciousness may be conceived of the fact that the self is nothing other than the witness -consciousness.

"There is not one thing here that we have not already once  
known;  
Veiled by form, knowledge fails: wakefully to know all  
There is none here boundless as it is;  
O' who can know at all this wonder dear!"<sup>34</sup>

According to the Guru a whole-hearted interest with intellectual curiosity is needed for the task of self -realisation. The Guru brings wisdom and action, as in Gita, together in his treatment of the subject of self-realisation and yogic disciplines. The first verse of *Ātmopadeśa-Śatakam* is contemplative hymn, which concerns the self to be located neither inside nor outside the contemplator.

"Rising even above knowledge, what within the form  
Of the one who knows, as equally without, radiant shines  
To that core, with the eyes five restrained within,  
Again and again prostrating in adoration, one should chant."<sup>35</sup>

Self-knowledge is to be sought in terms of consciousness, which is both subjective and objective. An attitude of ceaseless adoration is needed so as to attain self-realisation. Here the Guru refers to a central

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<sup>34</sup>     ibid., p. 636

<sup>35</sup>     ibid., p. 439

reality, which transcends the two aspects of the visible and the intelligible. The Guru in *Ātmopadeśa Śatakam* 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> verses, which were stated earlier, brings the self or the soul, or the *paramātmā* together with the *jīvatma* of vedic lore under close and related scrutiny.

Vedānta is *Brahmavidya* (Science of the Absolute) and at the same it is *Ātmavidya* (Science of the self) also. According to it the Self and Consciousness or Knowledge are not different. Thus *Ātmavidya* naturally turn out to be the Science of knowledge. A special emphasis is given to this aspect in the philosophy of Sree Narayana Guru. He was aware of the necessity for presenting Vedanta philosophy with an epistemological point of view and he fulfilled it in the work '*Arivu*'. This is a great contribution of Sree Narayana Guru to the world of philosophy. Nataraja Guru extols this poetic work as a "masterpiece of contemplative workmanship unrivalled in literature any where in the world."<sup>36</sup> In the first verse of '*Arivu*' Sree Narayana Guru assigns to knowledge or gnosis the dignity and status of the Absolute, the One without a second.

The Guru defines the Self as " the knowledge which sits in the dark and knows. The Guru says that primary knowledge which is the only knowledge behind all forms of knowledge and which reveals to us all the several items of perception and conception is in reality we ourselves."<sup>37</sup> The knowledge that animates the mind is only a

<sup>36</sup> T. Bhaskaran, *Naryana Guvinte Sampoorana Krithikal*. (Kozhikkode: Mathrubhoomi Printing and Publishing Co., 1985) p. 518

<sup>37</sup> Nitya Chaitanya Yati, *Epistemology of Gnosis*. (Varkala: Narayana Gurukula Publishing House, 1987) p. 21

modulated knowledge and what is primary to modulated knowledge is pure knowledge or primary knowledge. This pure or primary knowledge is the self according to the Guru.

“ What is known here, when carefully considered  
Is not anything other than knowledge?  
As knowledge in this (as the knower and the known is one)  
There is not anything anywhere apart from knowledge.”<sup>38</sup>

The Guru's philosophy is essentially man-oriented and not the usual God-centred approach. He projects the Self as its vital core. This is best illustrated in the 12<sup>th</sup> verse of his short poem, *Arivu*.

“What is knowledge - you are that  
It is by investing your own knowledge that it becomes the known  
What is known here is of two classes  
One is conscious of knowing and the other is not conscious of the  
same.”<sup>39</sup>

In his works, the Guru Narayana gives importance to the word *Arivu* than to the word Brahman. His philosophical treatise *Ātmopadeśa Satakam* contains a lucid exposition of the self-based vision. Sree Narayana Guru was a *Jñānin* of a unique kind and he dedicated his *Arivu* or knowledge to the needs of religious reforms and human advancement.

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<sup>38</sup>      ibid., p.1

<sup>39</sup>      ibid., p.22

According to the Guru, *Arivu* is the knowledge of the self, which are the substratum and the ultimate essence of all living beings. Knowledge as meant by the Guru is not one of the empirical realm, instead it is of a Trans-empirical plane. It is attainable only through integral experience and not through logical reasoning or inference. Knowledge in this sense has infinite potential.

True knowledge according to the Guru is '*Triputileless*' knowledge.<sup>40</sup> Thus the knowledge of the Absolute is beyond the experiences, the experiencing and the experienced. Only a seer (*Yati*) who has realized the truth of his own self can realize this knowledge.

The Guru says:

"That light, rid of three fold view, that ever brighter burns  
 Upsurging and brimful beyond the bounds of the triple worlds  
 Remember, that it will never come with in the reach of a hermit-  
 Untrue  
 As Upanishadic secret love declares."<sup>41</sup>

According to the Guru there are two states of knowledge. They are the ordinary perceptual knowledge and the knowledge beyond perception. Former is the empirical knowledge and the latter is the

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<sup>40</sup> Triputi: This is a technical term in Vedanta philosophy referring to three elements of cognition viz. the subjective aspect, the objective aspect and the process of perception. The Guru was of the opinion that one has to counteract this tribasic prejudice to which the human mind is naturally disposed, and gain the great knowledge of the Absolute. The primal glory of one should be to merge and become that alone.

<sup>41</sup> Nataraja Guru, *Life and Teachings of Narayana Guru*. Op. Cit.,p. 623

knowledge of reality as it is. The knowledge of the Absolute, says the Guru,

“That which is beyond count on the one hand  
 And what is ordinary and of the work -a day world  
 Other than these two, there is no other form at all  
 Either in memory, in sleep or in the city on high.”<sup>42</sup>

He tells us that the two states of knowledge- the one, which does not come under the scope of empirical knowledge, is *parāvidya* and the other, which is empirical knowledge, is *aparāvidya*. These states of knowledge are also known as *tajasa* and *tamasa* respectively. The Guru's concept of religion originates from these states or power of wisdom. Over and above these two, no another form of knowledge exists, neither in the conscious level nor in the subconscious level (dreams), not even in the unconscious level (sleep), not in any other levels of experience (*thuriya*). The one who has attained *parāvidya* would conquer all worldly sufferings. True knowledge makes one perfect and happy. One should merge into this true knowledge and become that itself.

“Knowledge it's meaning known and the personal knowledge  
 Subjective together makes but one primal glory  
 Within the unrarified radiance of this great knowledge  
 One should merge and become that alone”<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>42</sup>      *ibid.*, p. 641

<sup>43</sup>      *ibid.*, p. 456

Sree Narayana Guru says that the wisdom is the Primal Sun, which removes the darkness of *Māyā*. The dawn of wisdom is like ten thousand suns together rising. Such is the light that wisdom brings to our mind. It is in the light of this primal Sun that one realises the true reality. This wisdom has numerous and various powers. All these power can be brought within two concepts- *Sama* and other *Anya*. We are told,

" The powers of wisdom are many, all of them under two divisions  
The 'Sāmā' and the 'other' could conclusively be brought  
Merging into that form which makes for 'other sameness'  
To clarify of wisdom one should awake."<sup>44</sup>

*Sama* is *vidyā* and *Anya* is *avidyā*. The former is inducing 'sameness' or '*samatwa*' whereas the latter is creating feeling of otherness. We have to promote '*sama*' in our minds and that will lead us towards peace, clarity of vision and real awakening for social harmony. The Guru tells us that the overcoming of the influence of *Anya* is a difficult task. The only remedy to subdue this force is the application of our intellect and discriminative power in our thoughts and deeds. This will lead us to transcend the world of five senses.

" To subdue even somewhat the obduracy of the 'other'  
Is hard indeed without wisdom's limitless power  
By such do gain mastery over it and unto Her who is wisdom  
The anti-sensuous one, close access attain."<sup>45</sup>

This is the way of attaining wisdom according to the Guru.

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<sup>44</sup> *ibid.*, p. 572

<sup>45</sup> *ibid.*, p. 575

### 3.V THE WORLD (JAGAT )

The *Upādāna Kāraṇa* of any thing is that with which it is created. It in turn is due to the five gross elements whose source can be traced to our own consciousness. This consciousness is the cause of *Being* which seems to be the cause of the world. Non-existent world seems to exist due to ignorance ( *avidyā* ) .

" One thousand names, one thousand forms,

With whom, abiding therein, there are one thousand interests

Such this world, uncritically viewed;

It is real only until the dream is past;

On waking, the awakened one is all that remains."<sup>46</sup>

The non-existence of the world becomes evident when knowledge is born out of *Brahmajñāna* (knowledge of Brahman).

The *Advaitins* argued that the visible world is a composite of self and non-self (*ātman* and *anātman*)<sup>1</sup>. That which has the involvements in the subjects of knowledge, comprehension of them, assimilation of them and eternal existence, is the one that is the self (*ātman*). Those that do not have these essences are non-self (*anātman*). *Arivu* (final knowledge) has no such conjuncting nature. *Arivu* manifests in three faculties, that is the know/edge, the known and the knowers (*prama*, *pramēya* and *pramāta*). Narayana Guru has substantiated that this world is an amalgamation (combination) of these three, in his works *Janani*

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<sup>46</sup> K. Sreenivasan, *Sree Narayana Guru*. Op. Cit.,p. 149

*Navaratna Manjeri and Ātmopadeśa Śatakam.* This amalgamation of the three is explained as *triputi* or tribasic conditioning.

"Say, when, O Mother, shall my inner being regain that path of  
 hope  
 To be merged within the domain of pure word import bereft of all  
 tri-basic prejudice,  
 And, within the core of the radiance outspread Of reason pure,  
 Reabsorbed in communion cool, ever remain."<sup>47</sup>

He agrees with the *Vedāntins* and further says that this world is a summation of self and non-self too. The non-eternal and transient objects too are one and non-dual when observed philosophically. The composite of the multifaceted and dualistic objects constitutes the world, the cause of which is Brahman. Brahman is the *upādāna kāraṇa* of the world. The Guru stated that the world is of subtle and gross form. They are in fact and in operation experienced by the same consciousness and are generated by modifications of the awareness of the consciousness. Hence the Guru says, this world of gross and subtle form comes from consciousness.

" This world which is of gross,--  
 And subtle form , comes from consciousness;  
 If it is affirmed, everything is existence through and through,  
 If it is denied, it is consciousness through and through."<sup>48</sup>  
 According to the Guru cause and effect are not two entities; they

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<sup>47</sup> ibid.,p. 154

<sup>48</sup> Nitya Chaitanya Yati, *The Psychology of Darśanamālā*. Op. Cit., p. 109

are the two poles of complementary events or situations. We experience the phenomena of plurality only at the horizontal level of the empirical world. When our awareness is verticalized towards the Absolute there exists only the experience of a unitive state and in that state the distinction of the knower and what is known does not exist. The Guru says in his *Daiva Daśakam* that all the things we experience as the external world or as the world of dreams are the unceasing manifestations of our own primary consciousness in the same way as the plurality of wave forms is caused by the unending modifications of a body of water.

" As ocean, wave, wind and depth,  
Let us grasp inwardly the scheme  
Of ourselves, of *Māyā*, Your glory,  
And of even You Yourself."<sup>49</sup>

The world of empirical experience is structured in our minds and the constituent factors of that structuring include sense-data drawn from memories, psychological urges arising from incipient memories, and names and nomenclature, all of which are arbitrarily assigned in the formation of concepts.

"This which is unreal, being an effect,  
Has a cause; it is not the world,  
But the absolute alone that is real,

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<sup>49</sup> Sree Narayana Guru, *Daiva Daśakam*. Trans. (Varkala: Gurukula Publishing House, 1987) p. 191

Which a dull mind wrongly imagines to be unreal."<sup>50</sup>

All is indeed *satçitānanda* (Existence, Consciousness and Bliss).  
There is not even a trace of many and he who sees this as many goes  
from death to death.

"All is indeed existence, Consciousness and pure happiness;  
In this there is not even a trace of the many;  
He who sees this as many,  
Goes from death to death."<sup>51</sup>

The Guru stated that the world is none other than Brahman  
through *Avastatraya vadam, Satasat Prakriya and Māyāvada*

### 3.V.1 AvastatraYa Vadam (Trifold States Of Mind)

The waking (*Jāgrat*), the dream (*Swapna*) and dreamless sleep (*Suṣupthi*) states are represented to as the trifold states of mind. Besides these stages, there is a final stage of consciousness called the fourth state of mind (The *Turiya* State). The state of consciousness to free itself from specific transactional events and the fantasizing ideation of dreams, to remain poised in a state of unconditioned awareness without falling into the state of deep sleep. This is called the fourth state of consciousness- a state of pure transcendence.

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<sup>50</sup> Nitya Chaitanya Yati, *The Psychology of Darsanamala*. Op. Cit., p. 131  
<sup>51</sup> *ibid.*, p. 149

The waking state is one that is controlled by the activities of sense-organs and their effect is in the internal organ (*anthakkarana*). The world in this state is the visible world or *Jagrat jagat*.

In the Dream State, the sense- organs are at rest and their direct effects are not felt. The world known in this state is the dreams world or *Swapna jagat*.

In the deep sleep state or *sushupti* all the bodily activities and the functions of the sense-organs are at rest. No knowledge is now possible in this state.

Even though the Dream State gives the feelings of pleasures and pains likes and dislikes, its non-existence is known to every body. Dream state is not real, as it is only pulsation of the desiring mind, which has the analytic and synthetic ways of examining things.

The wakening state is also the pulsation of the mind, but aided by the activities of the sense organs. Since wakening state is only the mind-pulsatory, it too is unreal.

"A long drawn out dream is this, and like sleep each day,

It gets extinguished; dream too likewise!

We can never see extinctions thus to this; as it is

Hitched on to the pure aloneness, it goes round for ever." <sup>52</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> Nataraja Guru, *Life and Teachings of Narayana Guru*. Op. Cit., p. 616

The world is an illusion because it is perceptible. It is non-conscious and it is limited. The Guru says 'the wise man in his wakeful state, sees his world as unreal like a dream world.'

" The visible is imagined by the will;  
The visible is seen only where there is will,  
And not where there is any will-  
Like the snake in the rope."<sup>53</sup>

The perceptible is non-conscious and it is unreal. The consciousness is the substratum of the phenomenal world. The perceptibility, non-consciousness and limitedness of the phenomenal world are the reasons for its falsity.

### 3. V.2 The Real, Unreal Nature. (*Satasat Prakriya*)

The combined epithet, *Satasat* is a technique to establish the non-existence of the world. The world, as pointed out, is a conglomerate of real and unreal- *Sat* and *Asat*. That which never undergo modification or that which is eternally existing is termed as *Sat* or eternal existence. *Asat* means that which never exist at all. From this viewpoint self (*Ātman*) is *Sat* and *Anātmān* or non-self is *Asat*. The world is a composite of multifaceted objects, which undergo modifications. So it is *Asat* and unreal. *Ātman*, which never undergoes modification, is the only real entity.

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<sup>53</sup> Nitya Chaitanya Yati, *The Psychology of Darsanamala*. Op. Cit., p. 173

" The waking state, it obtains not in sleep  
 And sleep again does not attain consciousness  
 When awake: day by day these twain are born  
 Of *Māyā*'s womb and keep alternating on."<sup>54</sup>

In this verse the Guru states that *Ātman* is the only real, which never undergo changes in the three states of consciousness and the world is unreal. The Guru says, "the perceptible world has no reality apart from the *seer-atman*."<sup>55</sup> The world is the effect which has no independent status. The world is not the ultimate real; the dull minded person mistakes the unreal (*asat*) for the real (*sat*).<sup>56</sup> The world in *Advaita* is termed as *Satasat Vilakshana* (other than the real and the unreal). The world is not eternally existing nor is it totally non-existent. The world is neither *Sat* nor *Asat*. Because of this nature it becomes *anirvachaniya* or indescribable.

### 3.V.3 The Doctrine of *Māyā* (*Māyāvāda*)

The Guru established the fact that the world is unreal through *Avastatraya Vada* and *satasat Prakriya*. The doctrine of *Māyā* is meant to illustrate the fact that the world is *Brahman* itself. As per his doctrine of *Māyā*, the fundamental reality manifests in the form of the world. It is no other reality. Just as a wave and water are one and the same, so are

<sup>54</sup> Nataraja Guru, *Life and Teachings of Narayana Guru*. Op. Cit., p. 613

<sup>55</sup> Nitya Chaitanya Yati, *The Psychology of Darsanamala*. Op. Cit., p. 414

<sup>56</sup> *ibid.*, p. 131

the reality of *Brahman* and the world. That which creates illusion or misunderstanding is *Māyā*. *Māyā* literally means "what is not, that is (*Māyā*). What is not known that is *Māyā*."<sup>57</sup> The feeling that creates the unreal world as real is *Māyā* and the world is the consequences of *Māyā*. *Māyā* is the principle of nescience or ignorance, which is not an entity. In *Māyā Darsāna (Darsānamālā)*, the Guru defines *Māyā* as 'that which makes only an appearance and has no substantial existence.'<sup>58</sup> "According to the Guru *Māyā* is not a reality but merely an expression to signify the category of all possible errors in philosophy before it can arrive correctly and methodically at the notion of the Neutral Normative Absolute."<sup>59</sup>

"The Guru uses the notion of *Māyā* as the name given to the all-possibilities of philosophical errors to which the human mind is prone."<sup>60</sup>

The eight aspects of our personal and empirical consciousness are: the principles of negation (*Māyā*), knowledge (*Vidyā*), ignorance (*Avidyā*), transcendence (*Paracytic*), immanence (*Aparā*), darkness (*Tamas*), primal potency (*pradhama*) and nature (*prakṛiti*). The Guru explains the last seven principles as different forms of *Māyā*.

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<sup>57</sup> *ibid.*, p. 225

<sup>58</sup> *ibid.*, p. 198

<sup>59</sup> Nataraja Guru, *Life and Teachings of Narayana Guru*, Op.Cit., p. 690

<sup>60</sup> *ibid.*,

## Negation (Māyā)

From the Indian point of view negation is as much a category as substance, quality etc. So negation is included in Indian logic as a category. According to the Guru *Māyā* is:

‘What is not known, that is *Māyā*;

It alone shines as many forms:

*vidya, avidya, parā, aparā,*

*Tamas, Pradhana and Prakṛti*’<sup>61</sup>

**Different forms of *Māyā* are:**

### Knowledge (*Vidya*)

*Māyā* is *Vidya*. The Guru states that the means by which such knowledge- the non-Self is unreal, the Self is real – comes, that is *Vidya*, like the recognition of truth about rope and snake.<sup>62</sup>

### Avidya

*Māyā* is *avidya*. The means by which such knowledge the self is unreal and the non-Self is real - comes, that alone is *Avidya*, like the erroneous cognition about rope and snake.<sup>63</sup>

### Transcendence (*Parā*)

That by which the senses, mind, intelligence and five vital tendencies are created as the subtle limbs of the reasoning Self is *para* alone.<sup>64</sup> By its own *Māyā*, the reasoning Self becomes deluded as if it s

<sup>61</sup> Nitya Chaitanya Yati, *The Psychology of Darśanamālā*, Op.Cit., p. 197

<sup>62</sup> *ibid.*, p. 203

<sup>63</sup> *ibid.*, p. 208

<sup>64</sup> *ibid.*, p. 210

happy or unhappy. But in truth there is nothing at all. What is called Para or transcendent is subtle.

### **Aparā (Immanence)**

*Māyā* is *aparā*. That by which this world, which is the object of the senses is created, is *apara*. What is called *apara* or *immanent* is gross.<sup>65</sup>

### **Tamas (Darkness)**

*Māyā* is *tamas*. The ignorance due to which the world is imagined in the *Self* is known as *Tamas*. The example given is the silver seen in the mother of pearl. When light is brought to shine on the mother of pearl the silver in it vanishes.<sup>66</sup> Here the Guru reminds us that we should realise the efficacy of truth as the most dynamic principle to dispel darkness. When we turn to God, we are seeking light to dispel the innate darkness of *Māyā* described as *Tamas*.

When the self is properly understood we come to know that it alone is real and the world only a presentiment in the Self and is unreal. Just as darkness is the case of error in perceiving silver in the mother of pearl, so the cause of the supposition of the world in the self is that aspect of *Māyā* Called *tamas*.<sup>67</sup>

### **Pradhānam (Primal potency)**

*Māyā* is *pradhānam*. *Pradhānam* is the principle of irrefutable dynamism both to make and unmake. It is considered to be the most

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<sup>65</sup>     ibid., p. 214

<sup>66</sup>     ibid., p. 217

<sup>67</sup>     Nataraja Guru , *An Integrated Science of the Absolute*. Vol. II. (Varkala: East – West University of Brahma Vidya , 1967) p. 47

brilliant and dynamic aspect of *Māyā*. Just as a tree is latent in the seed, all are implied in the primeval cause of manifestations. By its importance or therefore the Guru calls it *Pradhānam*.<sup>68</sup>

### **Prakriti (Nature)**

*Māyā* is *prakṛiti*. That which diversifies the modalities and which is of three fold modality (*satva*, *rajas* and *tamas*) is known as *prakṛiti*.<sup>69</sup>

In *Māyā Darśanam (Darśanamālā)* the same *Māyā* has been described under seven items which are *vidya* (science), *avidya* (nescience), *parā* (the transcendent), *aparā* (the immanent), *tamas* (darkness), *pradhāna* (prime potent power) and *prakṛiti* (nature). 'This is not the Ultimate Reality but instead it is called *Māyā*; because it is the basis of the discrimination of the Self from the non-Self it is called *Vidya*; because it is the basis of contrary knowledge it is called *Avidya*; because it remains in the form of potentiality and creates the subtle limbs of the vital principle such as the *indriyas* it is called *Para*; because it remains in a gross form and creates the sense data called the world, it is called *Aparā*; because it remains in the form of darkness forming the basis of wrong supposition it is called *Tamas*; because it bears within itself the whole universe in a surprising manner it is called *Pradhāna*; and because it remains in the form of the three nature modalities and by its own nature it is able to separate them, it is called *Prakṛiti*.<sup>70</sup>

<sup>68</sup> Nitya Chaitanya Yati, *The Psychology of Darsanamala*, Op.Cit., p. 219

<sup>69</sup> *ibid.*, p. 225

<sup>70</sup> Nataraja Guru, *An Integrated Science of the Absolute*. Op. Cit., p. 48

The Guru states that the world is seen as real by nescience (*avidya*) which is not different from the mind-stuff. This nescience perishes through the knowledge of *Ātman*. Then the world would seem to be a mere picture. This world arises from ignorance just as a ghost seems to the coward as emerging from darkness. The mind is the cause of the perceptible world. In other words the perceptible world is seen as a presentiment of the will.

The whole world originated from the power of *Māyā* of the Lord like the sprout from the seed.<sup>71</sup> The whole universe became manifest from the lord. He is Brahma. The whole world is non-existent, for there is no existence of the effect apart from the cause. The cause alone is real. It is the nature of bliss itself. Everything is in the nature of Existence Consciousness and Bliss. Then the Guru concluded that the whole world is nothing but pure Consciousness devoid of *Māyā*.

" When all parts are separated  
One by one, then one sees  
Everything as Consciousness alone-  
For from *Māyā* and not any other."<sup>72</sup>

When knowledge (*Brahma jñāna*) arises the *avidya* (*nescience*) perishes and the world will seem to be a mere appearance.

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<sup>71</sup> Nitya Chaitanya Yati, *The Psychology of Darsanamala*. Op. Cit., p. 55  
<sup>72</sup> *ibid.*, p. 140

### 3.VI NIRVĀṆA (EMANCIPATION)

'Nirvāṇa' literally means 'burning out or extinction'. Nirvāṇa is the cessation of one's activity or one's return to the source. 'It is the release of the imprisoned splendour of the Self from the bondage of pre-determined role-playing. 'Nirvāṇa' is sometimes compared to a roasted seed, which no longer has the potential to sprout ... Lord Buddha compares it to the merging of a dewdrop in to the infinitude of the ocean. Jesus Christ compares it to the return of a prodigal son to acknowledge the profound love and compassion of an all-knowing father'.<sup>73</sup>

The Guru says, Nirvāṇa means 'the burning out of the phenomenal mark of individuation' and he clarifies them into three groups. First group is of such people who have turned to the path of the spirit with the intention of glorifying their power perch in society on the ground of having attained psychic capabilities. They are the seekers after magical powers (*Siddhi kāmī*). The second group is of such people who are motivated by the pure intention of releasing themselves from the snares of psychological attractions and who have set emancipation as the only goal of life. They are seekers after liberation (*Mumukshu*). The final group is of people who have succeeded in obtaining their liberation with varying grades of success. They are knowers of Brahman. Nirvana is equated with *amṛta*- immortality because death is not relevant where eternity prevails. This state of perception is glorified as *purnam*.

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<sup>73</sup>      *ibid.*, p. 430

There can be traces of previous conditioning even in this state of perfection. 'If any such vestige lingers on unresolved, the release should be looked upon as impure. On the other hand, when the attainment is without blemish – it is to be understood as pure; there are grades of purity.'

Sree Narayana Guru explains the different grades of *Nirvāṇa* in the first four verses of *Nirvāṇa Darśanam* of *Darśanamālā* on the basis of purity and perfection. In the first stage the Guru divides it into two varieties: pure (*suddha*) and impure (*asuddha*). The pure is devoid of incipient memories (*vasana*) and the impure is conjoined with incipient memories.

Nirvāṇa is of two kinds:

The pure and the impure,

That which is the pure is devoid of *vasana*;

Similarly, that is impure is conjoined with *vasana*.<sup>74</sup>

The pure (*suddha*) Nirvana is divided in to two – the most pure and the pure pure (*suddha suddha*). The pure pure (*suddha suddha*) is the knower of the Absolute (*Brahmavit*). The most pure is again categorised into three: Superior, more superior and the most superior. The superior is *Brahmavidvara* who is superior in the knowledge of the Absolute. The more superior is *Brahmavidvariyan* who is the more Superior in the knowledge of the Absolute and lastly the most superior

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<sup>74</sup> *ibid.*, p. 429

is *Brahmavidvaristan* who is the most superior in the knowledge of the Absolute.

The most pure is again of three kinds;

One in the Superior, one in the more superior,

One is the most superior; and thus;

The pure is established in the *Brahma*-knower.<sup>75</sup>

#### **Four stages of knower of *Brahman* (*Jīvan mukta*)**

1. ***Brahmavit***: *Brahmavit* is the *suddha nirvāṇa* or pure extinction. This pure emancipation exists in the Absolute i.e., the knower of *Brahman* exists in *Brahman*. After destroying everything with the fire of knowledge, he does action according to the injunction (What is right) for the well being of all the creatures. *Brahmavit* is the truly liberated person.
2. ***Brahmavidvaran***: *Brahmavidvaran* is the *atisuddha-nirvāṇa* or more pure extinction. This is superior in the knowledge of the Absolute. The more pure extinction is in the superior knower of *Brahman*. He who renouncing all actions, always abiding in the Absolute and continues journeying the world only for keeping up of the body, is superior or excellent knower of the Absolute.
3. ***Brahmavidvariyan***: *Brahmavidvariyan* is the even more pure extinction (*atisuddhatara nirvāṇa*). This state of *nirvāṇa* is seen in the still more superior knower of the Absolute. He is able to know the world

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<sup>75</sup>      *ibid.*, p. 433

only when informed by others, but does not know it himself. He always enjoys the Absolute emancipation.

**4. *Brahmavidvaristan:*** *Brahmavidvaristan* is the one who realises perfect identity with *Brahman*. He is in the state of the most pure extinction (*atisuddhatma nirvāṇa*). He is the most superior in the knowledge of the Absolute; ie, the most pure extinction is in the most superior knower of the Absolute. He is absolutely absorbed in *Brahman*. He knows nothing by himself or even when made to know. He is devoid of activities and is of the nature of *Brahman* himself.

The impure state of *nirvāṇa* is divided into impure pure (*asuddha suddha*) and impure impure (*asuddha asuddha*).

"Most pure, pure –thus

The pure is of two kinds and similarly

The impure is also is said to be

Impure-pure and impure-impure."<sup>76</sup>

The impure-pure is devoid of *rajas* and *tamas* and belongs to the seeker after liberation (*mumukshu*). The impure-impure is with *rajas* and *tamas* and belongs to the seeker after miraculous power (*siddhi kāmī*).

"The impure-pure is devoid of *rajas* and *tamas*

And the other is with *rajas* and *tamas*

The former is known to be in the seeker of liberation

The latter in those who desire psychic attainment."<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> *ibid.*, p. 432

<sup>77</sup> *ibid.*, p. 435

In his *Nirvāṇa Darśana*, the Guru describes a knower of the Absolute, a man emancipated while still alive, as follows:

“Having burned everything with the fire of wisdom,  
Aiming the good of the world,  
Doing action according to injunction,  
The knower of Brahman remains firm in Brahman”<sup>78</sup>

Those who attains these states are emancipated men. They have gained inward release. A short poem of Guru, *Nirvṛti Panchakam* (Five verses on Inward Release) in Sanskrit qualifies the state of *Nirvṛti* as one in which a person is free of all kinds of questions.

“Known and unknown same, difference none in mine and  
Another’s, even indifferent to difference,  
From questions such when one is free  
One gains release”<sup>79</sup>

The basic achievement of *jeevan mukta* is his capacity to reconcile the duality implied in good and evil. He can reconcile the pull of the opposites. The last verse of the *Municarya Panchakam* (The way of the Release) describes a *Jeevanmukta*. This description can also be applied to the Guru himself.

“Let him live in his own home or in the forest  
Or at the water’s edge –no matter  
With mind ev’r in the Absolute fixed,

<sup>78</sup> ibid., p.438

<sup>79</sup> Sree Narayana Guru, *Nirvṛthy Panchakam*. Verse 5.

The Yogi dwells seeing always in terms of selfhood all here,  
 Enjoys the bliss, that silent one,  
 Like mirage in desert land,  
 Contemplating that Supreme Absolute beyond compare."<sup>80</sup>

Of this universe, there is nothing to be rejected or accepted. Everything in this world is the verdict (decisions) of human intelligence in the light of a self-luminous principle, which functions through the envisioning of spatio-temporal configuration. Having meditated thus, one should liberate from duality by withdrawing himself from all functioning. Thereafter he does not return to it. The Guru concluded *Nirvāṇa Darsāna* and *Darsānamālā* by establishing the non – dual reality of Brahman – the One Absolute Reality.

"The One Brahma alone is without a second;  
 Nothing else is; there is no doubt.  
 Thus the knower should liberate from duality  
 Therefore he does not return."<sup>81</sup>

### 3.VII REVELATION, REASON AND EXPERIENCE IN GURU-PHILOSOPHY

The *pramāṇās* applied to the validity of truth in *Vedānta* are six:

*Pratyaksa* (perceptual)

*Anumāna* (inferential)

<sup>80</sup>

Sree Narayana Guru, *Munikarya Panchakam*. Verse 5

<sup>81</sup>

Nitya Chaitanya Yati, *The Psychology of Darsānamālā*. Op. Cit., p. 450

*Arthāpathi* (hypothetical postulation )

*Anapalabdhi* (impossibility of a conclusion )

*Upamānā* (analogy) and

*Sabda* or *Āgama* (scriptural assent).

The Guru mentions only three *pramānās* for the purpose of his methodology. These are-

*Pratyakṣa* (perceptual),

*Anumānā* (inferential) and

*Upamānā* (analogy).

The hypothetical inductive approach is omitted by the Guru as ambiguous. All *Pramānās*, which are ratiocinative in status, are discredited as being of no use for the final means of knowledge of the Absolute principle. He states this categorically in *Ātmōpadeśa Satakam*

"As a mixture of what is the world and what is the real

That which presents itself before us is a great inequity indeed !

This is what is indeterminate, beyond grasp of word or mind,

How could the course of right reason move within it's domain?"<sup>82</sup>

So reason cannot absolutely and completely comprehend Reality.

Spiritual Realization is a matter of experience. It is self-certifying and beyond reason. Experience is the ultimate authority. All others are valuable in the measure in which they lead to it. No demonstrative knowledge of reality is possible.

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<sup>82</sup> Nitya Chaitanya Yati, *The Life and Teachings of Narayana Guru*.  
Op. Cit., p. 701

Guru-philosophy accepts the broad outline of *Vedāntic* epistemology in as much as it does not rely wholly on the *Pramāna sastrās* (the science of valid measures of reason). The man of *uhaapoha* (dialectical intuition) is the proper authority to unravel the secrets of *Ātma-vidya* or the science of the self. Sankara categorically stated this in his *Vivekachudamani* (Crest Jewel of discrimination) in verse 16:

'A superior man of wisdom, well versed and fully specialized in dialectical intuitive understanding (*uha apoha*) where analogy and its subject are involved, is one qualified for self-knowledge.'

The fundamental problem of religious philosophy is to reconcile revelation, reason and experience. The four levels of experience are conscious state, sub-conscious state, deep Sleep State and finally the highest state (*Turiya* State). Rational expressions (verbalization, gestural articulation etc.) are the expositions in the waking or conscious state and as such it is an expression of experience. But the experience in the conscious state is not authentic, as it is not *paramārtha*. It is only *vyavahāra* and has only empirical validity.

Revelation is the means of communication to us only in spiritual matters, matters beyond the reach of common experience. The revelations that are set forth in the scriptures are *jñāpaka* (reminders) for us and not *kāraṅkas* (makers) of our experience. They are based on direct experience. It is not based on a second-hand report or on an inherited authority. From the *advaīdic* stand point *paramārtha* alone is

real and the expression at this stage though is dumb silence (*mauna vākya*), occasionally seers resort to revelatory expressions. Revelation at this stage is the expression of the *paramārtha* and is the expression of the summational experience. Hence revelation is deeply based on experience.

There are limitations for the working of reasons. The revealed truth cannot be comprehended by reason. Reason by itself is incapable to accomplish what revelation can achieve. They are at two different realms. But Guru succeeded to comprehend and reconcile reason and revelation. He achieved this by simply referring both with human experience. Unlike Sankara, the Guru was reluctant to interpret the revealed text purely on rational grounds. The revelation is nothing but the recorded statements of religious experience by the great seers. Therefore it is a matter of human experience. Everyone, irrespective of caste, creed and religion are capable of realizing this truth.

Revelation sets its working hypothesis, which is finally accepted after spiritual experiences. Reason interprets, clarifies and works out the implications of the working hypothesis. The spiritual experience of the sages is the premise for reason to work on. The Guru used reasoning to bring out logical implications of non-duality of the absolute realm. This realization reflects in all of his social actions.

## Chapter IV

# RELIGIOUS PHILOSOPHY OF SREE NARAYANA

## GURU: SOCIAL ASPECT

### 4.1 SOCIAL STRATIFICATION IN KERALA IN NINETEENTH CENTURY

In the early Indian society there was a four tier hierarchial caste stratification. They were *Brahmins* or priests, the *Kshatriyas* or warriors, the *Vaisyas* or merchants and the *Sudras* or workers. These four castes were together known as '*Chāturvarṇa*' – '*Chatur*' meaning four and '*varṇa*' meaning 'colour' or caste. In addition to these four castes of caste Hindu, there were the out castes who were untouchables.

In the ninetieth century Kerala was a hot bed of castes. The rigidity of castes and its impact on the social life of the keralites were so terrible that Vivekananda is known to have called it a 'mad-house of caste'. It is believed that caste is the contribution of Aryans to the whole of India.<sup>1</sup> The spirit of Dravidian culture was castelessness according to Elamkulam Kunjan Pillai. The arrangement of castes was made according to the degree of pollution by touch or approach. The approach of the out castes or polluting castes from Ezhava to down-trodden classes polluted the higher castes. They were not allowed to enter in to

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<sup>1</sup> E.M.S. Nabutiripad, *Keralam Malayalikalute*. (Kozhikode: Mathrubumi) p. 57

the temples controlled by the upper castes. They had to stand at some distance away from the temples and caste Hindus. There were untouchability, unapproachability and even unseeability. Some people believed that the low caste people were not to be seen by the Brahmins when they had to be specially pure. This horrid caste system brings in to light how the upper castes enjoyed life in its fullest manner. Society was moulded for the convenience of the upper castes and majority of men and women were deprived of normal life activities. It was at this time of misery that Guru was born and saved the out caste Keralites from tangles of pernicious habits and choking diehard prejudices.

The Guru laid the foundation of all progress in the reformation of religious practices, social customs and the daily habits of the people soon after the solitary life in the cave *Pillathadam* in *Maruthwa* Mountains. He wandered about for several days on helping the poor in their daily chores. He began the first step of the longest journey and lighted the way for his followers along the entire path, by messages, reform of social customs, provision of different types of houses of worship and above all by metaphysical writings.

The wandering *sanyasin* became Sree Narayana Guru and went to Aruvipuram, twenty-five kilometres south of Trivandrum from where he inaugurated his programme of action. The imperative need of the people for a centre of worship was fulfilled by him by the installation of *Śivalinga* on 10<sup>th</sup> February 1888 – the *Śivarāthri* day of the year. This

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action became a milestone in the history of India's spiritual emanipation, and this news of silent revolution echoed to the far-flung frontiers of India. A group among the highest branch of Brahmins alone had the divine right to install an idol and consecrate it. And yet an *Ezhava* was performing this most sacred of sacred ceremonies and knocking out the very bottom of the caste system. When a Brahmin asked the Guru what right he had as an *Ezhava* to consecrate an idol of Lord *Siva*, the Guru replied humorously that the idol that he consecrated was not a *Brahmin Siva*. This reply of fanciful wit silenced the orthodox objector. We see him defending in this manner throughout his life. " The whole of Kerala nay the world at large, this holy man conceived as a model abode where human values prevailed, love and brotherhood flourished. And his life long effort was to egg his fellow mortals on to undertake this noble task of building every where oases of peace, prosperity and progress."<sup>2</sup> With this act of consecration a new era dawned in Kerala. The *Prathiṣṭa* (Consecration of the idol) was a silent but stern challenge to the age-long taboos. This daring act was a great success. His move was not against anything but for something. It is this constructive approach which brought in the best result with moderate effort and with least ill will. The Guru was aware of the universalism and sense of equality of the true Hindu faith. Therefore he attempted to reform its popular form from within with a view to raising it again to its purity and grandeur.

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<sup>2</sup> K. Sreenivasan, *Sree Narayana Guru*. (Trivandrum: Jayasree Publications, 1989) pp. 43,44

Swami Dharmatheerth projected the objective image of the great teacher in his *Menace of Hindu Imperialism*. "Sree Narayana Guru occupied a distinct place in the history of Hindu Culture and the successive attempt made by great teachers to consolidate the people of India into a united nation ... The Buddha made us one in Righteousness; Sree Sankara made us one in Spirit and Truth; Sree Narayana Guru seeks to make us one in the living brotherhood of a free nation."<sup>3</sup>

The *Aruvipuram Prathishta* was really the reconsecration of the Eternal *Dharma* of this ancient land. It had a great effect especially on Hindus as a whole. The Guru highlighted the ideals of tolerance, reconciliation and national integration through his message at the time of the installation. The centenary of *Aruvipuram Prathishta* was celebrated in February 1988.

#### 4.II THE REFORMATION OF WORSHIP

The reformation of worship began with the historic consecration of the *Śivalinga* at Aruvipuram. One after the other, many places of worship sprang up. The Temple *Sabha* started at Aruvipuram became a broad-based forum to agitate against social and political discrimination. There were deities, which originated from ancestor worship and anthropomorphism. Lord *Śiva* and *Śakti* had many disgusting forms. *Bhadrakāli*, *Mārutha* and *Māriamma* were rather ferocious aspects of

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<sup>3</sup> *ibid.*, p.187

*Śakti*. *Mādan* and *Muthappan* were earlier forms of Lord *Śiva*. Animal sacrifice was still existing. It continued till the right leader led them out of the 'Slough of Despond'. In Sree Narayana Guru, people found a true savior and path finder. He took over their leadership. In many places he unseated the gods whose names had association with the killing of birds and consumption of liquor. He replaced them by idols of *Śiva*, *Subrahmanya* and *Gaṇesh*, and instituted *poojas* of the type performed in temples dedicated to them.

The Guru had to make everyone realize the absurdity of caste and he wanted to free religion from centuries old superstitions and taboos which hindered genuine Self-Realization or *Ātma-Jñāna*.

For creating enlightenment he had two programmes in his mind. Firstly he knew that the immediate thrust was to be on religion and he performed its practice by reorganising and reconstructing temples as centres of intellectual life. They are to be arenas of genuine understanding, brotherliness and harmony. Secondly according to the Guru, people should learn to nurture their links with their environment. The way in which he accomplished this goal threw light on the quality of his vision. The kinds and forms of *prathishta* he undertook reveal it. They showed the quality of his worldview and the validity of his philosophical stance as a religious philosopher.

The Guru worked for wiping out the degradation of worship that had taken place in the rites performed by the *Avarṇas* (the so called low-

castes). He did not criticise the gods they worshiped or legends that formed the foundation of that worship, but only the mode of the worship. He wanted to substitute the old images, which had an association with animal sacrifices and drunkenness, and replace them by Gods whose temples did not have such associations. He observed the way to progress and led the people to the right destination. One of the rare qualities of the Guru was that, he could by no means be a reactionary or conservative like the typical God-men. With a catholicity of outlook, he imbibed new ideas. He thus consecrated several temples for the *Avarṇas*.

Sree Narayana Guru was against building temples in the old manner, spending a lot of money. Money should not be lavished on festivals, fire-works and such other items. He wanted houses of God to be clean, airy, well-ventilated places where people met and mingle freely and without inhibition. People could assemble there with ease and listen with comfort to dissertations on religion and other topics. The temples should be abodes of Truth and Love. Rituals in temples should be cut down, they have to be simple and solemn. He also preferred the worship of deities who represented humane and benevolent aspects of godhead as well as man. In most of the temples, he had consecrated Hindu Gods in the old orthodox Hindu style. Every temple should have gardens around it. There should be schools and Technical schools too as ancillaries to these temples. The money received, as offerings should be

spent for the benefit of the people. Bathing cubicles with overhead pipes were preferable and he was against digging tanks as adjuncts to temples because temple tanks are very rarely kept clean. The Guru did not abolish idol worship altogether. After *Aruvippuram prathishta* he began consecrating temples after temple. He made provisions for schools and reading rooms in these holy precincts. The teaching of sanskrit language and the vedic texts denied to non-Brahmins were provided for. He also encouraged the learning of English.

#### **4.III IMPORTANCE OF IMAGE-WORSHIP**

Some people criticized the Hindu view of idolatry or image worship. Sree Narayana Guru was of the opinion that image worship is found helpful in the religious life of some and it is also a hindrance than a help to yet others. In Hinduism there is room for both these classes of men. Image worship is only a means to an end. Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa was a standing refutation of all the eloquent diatribes against image worship. "It was through his intense devotion in the early stages to the image of the Divine Mother in the temple at *Dakshineswar* that he attained his realisation. In the words of his disciple, Swami Vivekananda, to say that image worship is sinful is like saying that childhood is sinful. And if men like Sankara, Chaitanya and Ramakrishna

Paramahansa found image worship helpful in their religious lives, there may be millions of their countrymen who will find them equally helpful.”<sup>4</sup>

A yogi has no need for idol as an aid for concentration, but illiterate people require them as steps to rise towards spirituality. And so the Guru provided them with what they yearned for. As the *Gītā* puts it : Let no enlightened men unsettle the minds of ignorant men who are attached to their work. Himself doing all works with good faith, he should make others do as well.

In *Sanādhana Dharma* of Hindu religion four types of adoration are explained.

“ The highest is oneness with God

The next, silent meditation and understanding

The third step is worship of idol

The fourth, pilgrimage and performance of *Homas* (Sacrifices)”<sup>5</sup>

Idol worship is one of the lower steps in Hindu religion. The Guru built temples with different idols, emphasizing in granite structures that idols were only symbols, used as aids to concentration. The Guru realized that the time had come to show the people these higher steps of adoration.

According to the Guru, the officiating priests in the temple must be members of the lower caste each one having successfully undergone

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<sup>4</sup> D.S. Sharma, *Hinduism Through the Ages*. (Bombay: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 1973) p. 142

<sup>5</sup> Moorkoth Kunhappa, *Sree Narayana Guru*. (New Delhi: National Book Trust, 1982) p. 31

nine long years of training in *Mantras* (spell), *Tantra* (musical formula for attaining supernatural powers), *Śāstras* (scriptures), *Vedas*, *Upanishads* and *Ādhyātmic* (spiritual) philosophy. This educational system is aimed at making each priest a well-oriented personality deeply well versed in religious doctrines.

Within a period of less than a decade he had established more than one hundred places of worship on the west coast of India alone which are day by day growing into centres of educational, philanthropic and economic activity. By the spell of his name young and old, rich and poor high and low are seen to join hands in a common understanding. It can be asserted that he has set in motion a force that is bound to spread into a new mission for the regeneration of India and the world. By the time the Guru started his mission of effecting revolutionary changes in faith, several factors had the ground for him in Kerala. The people of Kerala were ready for a change and they welcomed the Guru. He provided them with 'Aryan Gods' (Shiva, Vishṇu etc.) as the first step and took them up the stairs by a series of temples where the symbols rose in internal significance until at last the *Advaita Ashram* at Alwaye gave all believers in God, to whatever creeds they belonged, a place to meet together, talk together, live together, pray together. Thus we can say that step by step this 'Jñānin of action' became a practical *Advaitin* in real sense.

#### 4.IV CONSECRATION OF TEMPLES

The Guru generally chose divinely beautiful spots for Sree Narayana temples. Temples are the seats of religious and social authority in Kerala. There the elders meet to discuss and decide. The Guru was able to establish over hundred temples most of which have served as the means of emancipation for many thousands of people who were still then denied the elementary rights of human beings. He is perhaps the first great teacher to rend us under the veil of mystery and sanctity, which hung round the Hindu temple. This is the great rebellion and proclamation of independence. And according to the Guru, education, wealth and organisation are the three things, which are essential for worldly advancement. Guru had recognised temples as one of the means of arousing the community to realize their social and religious duties.

Like the *Rishis*, the Guru was a great lover of nature and always founded his temples where he saw the Lord's handiwork immaculate and irresistible. The significant change in the nature and quality of the deities installed, point to the fact that the Guru was a religious teacher who understood the spirit of the age and acknowledged the inevitability of change and the necessity of progress. Hence the ethos of the Guru was essentially modern and realistic.

According to the Guru 'a good garden should be there along with the temples and good trees should be grown with platforms around

them. People can sit on these platforms and enjoy the breeze. Every temple should have a library where religious books should be available. Let the sanctum sanctorum be also there somewhere in the premises. Temples are necessary for personal cleanliness and meditation and it spread light in the minds of the people. Special care is required to see that the temples are built for the benefit of the common man. Temples must be a means of social uplift both to those who have faith in idol worship and those who do not have. Temples need spacious rooms where people can congregate and where discourses should be held. The money received, as offering from devotees should be utilised for the benefit of the poor. The Guru might have considered the temple he consecrated as great instruments for the spiritual, social and economic uplift of a backward community and as institutions which fostered friendliness and comradeship.

During his travels the Guru established many temples and performed many installation ceremonies. *Śiva* and *Subrahmaṇya* were the principal deities. These temples can be found from Manglore to Kanyakumary. The Guru advised the people to reduce the temple ceremonies to the minimum. Temples should be models of cleanliness and seats of devotion. Every temple should be a spiritual centre inspiring men's varied activities for raising the low, for helping the poor, for comforting the sick, for refining the life of the high and the low, for encouraging art and literature. Let religion and religious institution en-

noble and enrich life in all beneficial ways and unite their followers in common joys, work and ideals. It does not matter what a man's religion is, provided the grows in virtue, was a familiar saying of the Guru.

About Guru's temple building acitivity Dr. Palpu said, "Temples and Mutts have been of great help for the progress of this (Thiyya) community. Such institutions have not only catered to the religious needs of the people, but they also have enthused them in many kinds of good deeds. Through their help, people differing in social position and character have become united with a sense of equality. Thus feelings of brotherhood and mutual love have been engendered in them. Temples have been helpful in making ordinary people act with rectitude and a sense of morality. These are verily institutions, which propagate religion as well as moral conduct. They are also intended to give craft based and specialized kind of education and training. The community's resources are conserved by them to be utilized for it's well being as well as progress. These institutions owned by them have become the means to assert the self-respect of this community, which has been thoroughly ruined by long years of social persecution. These temples are intended to be accessible to members of all castes, lower as well as higher. As a result of that those persons who really need this kind of opportunity will be much more benefited. That is why it has been so decided."<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> K. Sreenivasan, *Sree Narayana Guru*. Op. Cit., pp. 65,66

The temples he established are throughout the length and breadth of Kerala and in a few places in Tamil Nadu as well as Sri Lanka. His influence and impact continues to be felt through these temples, memorials and statues of the Guru and they still survive and become his message to the people. Temples are necessary for the purification of mind and body. "When you visit temples, do think of God not of idol." This was the answer given by the Guru to the people who opposed idol worship as it encouraged superstition. Then the Guru reached a stage when he sought to dissuade idol worship like in Islam, Judaism and Protestant Christianity where there is no idol worship. Amongst the temples he established four temples stand out by the uniqueness of their *prathishtas*. They are *Kalavamgodam* Temple (Mirror *prathishta* with the sacred symbol of AUM), *Sree Chithambara* Temple at Karamukku (Lighted Lamp), *Murukkumpuzha* Temple (Slab with the word – *Satyam, Dharmam, Daya, Sneham*) and *Vecchur Ullala* Temple (Mirror). In these temples the conventional idol was dispensed with.

#### **Guru's field of action and Temples consecrated**

1. Śiva Temple at Aruvippuram
2. Gokarnanath Temple at Mangalore.
3. Sree Sundareswara Temple at Kannur.
4. Jagannath Temple at Tellicherry.
5. Sreekanteswara temple at Kozhikode.

6. Yakkara Visweswara Temple at Palghat.
7. Maheswara Temple at Kurkanjeri.
8. Somasekhara Temple at Peringottumkara.
9. Sree Narayanamagalam Temple at Moothakunnam.
10. Gowreeswara Temple at Cherayi.
11. Sree Bhuvaneswara Maha Temple at Palluruthy.
12. Sreekanteswara Temple at Panavally.
13. Ardhanareeswara Temple at Illikkal Kumbalangi.
14. Sree Kumaramangalam Subrahmanya Temple at Kumarakam.
15. Balasubrahmanya Temple at Parlikkad.
16. Ananda Bhutheswara Temple at Mezhuveli.
17. Ananda Shanmugha Temple at Edappally.
18. Subrahmanya Temple at Poonjar.
19. Sree Kumaramangalam Temple at Prakkulam.
20. Velayudha Mangala Temple at Anjalummood.
21. Sree Vallabheswara Temple at Poothotta.
22. Kapaleswara Temple at Kayikkara.
23. Velikkatt Karthikeya Temple at Prakkulam.
24. Subrahmanya Temple at Chemmanathumkara.
25. Sidheswara Temple at Chengannur.
26. Kunninezath Bhagavathy Temple at Karunagappally.
27. Siva Temple at Ayiramthengu.
28. Puthan Nada Deveswara Temple at Vakkom.

29. Vakkom Velayudhan Nada at Chirayankizhu.
30. Anandavalleswara Temple at Puthiyakavu.
31. Sree Jñāneswara temple at Anjuthengu.
32. Arthanareeswara Temple at Kadakkavur.
33. Anandavalleswari Temple at Mannanthala.
34. Kolathumkara Śiva Temple at Kulathoor.
35. Arath Subrahmaṇya Temple at Kayikkara.
36. Sree Nayinar Deva Temple at Arumannur.
37. Subhrahmaṇya Temple at Muttakkatt.
38. Gaṇapathy Temple at Kollar.
39. Bhavāneeswara Temple at Bhavani, Tamil Nadu.
40. Sree Chitambara Temple at Karamukku.
41. Kalakandeswara Temple at Murukkumpuzha.
42. Temple at Kalavangodam.
43. Ullala Aumkareswara Temple at Vechoor.
44. Śārada Madom at Sivagiri.
45. Advaita Asramam at Alwaye.

#### 4.IV.1 Śiva Temple at Aruvipuram

Aruvipuram is beautiful place on the banks of the river Neyyār near Neyyattinkara town 25 kms. south to Trivandrum. Śiva Temple at Aruvipuram is the first temple consecrated by the Guru. The Guru installed a *Śivalinga* (phallus) on the pedestal on the eastern bank of the

river Neyyar at 3'O clock in the morning on February 10<sup>th</sup> Śivarathri day in 1888. He consecrated it and performed abhisheka (holy bathing of the idol) in the presence of hundreds. The crowd gathered there rent the midnight air with *panchakshara mantra* and traditional temple music. The first consecration made by the Guru was an epoch making event in the history of Kerala where colossal disparities and grave injustice were perpetuated in the name of caste. Later on a temple was built where the idol was installed and the Guru's famous message was engraved in granite in the temple premises.

'Devoid of dividing walls

Of caste or race

Or hatred of rival faith

We all live here

In brotherhood

Such know this place to be !

This model foundation.<sup>7</sup>

Prof. M.N. Vijayan Commended that these are the most beautiful slogan in the world.<sup>8</sup>

Adjacent to the temple was also built a Mutt where the sanyasis and the Guru's close disciples lived, and a school for teaching poor children. In preparation for taking priesthood the *brahmachāris* admitted

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<sup>7</sup> Nataraja Guru, *Life and Teachings of Narayana Guru*.  
(Sreenivasapuram, India: East-West University Publication, 1990)  
p. 24

<sup>8</sup> Desabhimani Varanthapathippu – 19.11.2000, p. 1

in to the Mutt were taught *tantric* practices and philosophy. In course of time a regular sanctum and a hall were built at Aruvipuram through local effort. A committee known as '*temle sabha*' was also formed to manage the regular income of the temple. A society with eleven share holders was registered in 1899 to manage the affairs of the temple. The society later expanded as an organisation known as *Sree Narayana Dharma Paripalana Yogam* (S.N.D.P. Yogam). This organisation was founded for the propagation of the religion of Sree Narayana Guru.

The devotional hymn '*Śiva Śatakam*' in Malayalam was written by the Guru in connection with the installation of Śivalinga at Aruvipuram.

#### **4.IV.2 Gokarmanath Temple at Mangalore**

This temple is also known as Thrippatheeswara Temple. Gokarmanath temple was set up at the request of the Billavas or Thulu Thiyyar of Mangalore area. The Guru laid the foundation stone for the temple in January 1908. A collection box was installed at the site and within four years the construction of the temple was completed. It is a replica of Thrippatheeswaran to avoid the pilgrimage to far away Thiruppathi and wasting their resources. The aim of the Guru was to stop ostentatious and expensive ceremonies and rituals in temples, and advises them to save money and invest it in socially useful work like running schools, libraries and the like. He assured the people that they would get all the spiritual benefits if they worshiped at the local shrine.

The Guru enthroned the idol *Śivalinga* in the temple on 21<sup>st</sup> February 1912. It was said that the *Śivalinga* was brought from Kashi. Besides *Śivalinga*, the idols of deities *Krishṇa*, *Gaṇeśha*, *Shaṇmugha* and *Annapūrnēswary* were installed in separate *Kovils*. This is the only temple consecrated by the Guru in Karnataka state.

In 1921 an association (*Samajam*) was organised by the Billavas. A committee of elected members from the *Samajam* governs the administration of the temple. Now the president of the committee is H.C. Somasundaram. The renovation of the temple was done under the aegis of the former cabinet minister Janardhan Poojari in 1988. The reinstallation was carried out by Geethanantha Swamikal. Kanchi Sankarananda Swamikal was the chief guest.

#### **4.IV.3 Sree Sundareswara Temple at Kannur**

The temple is at Talap, a small village in Kannur. In 1907 (on 28<sup>th</sup> *Makaram* 1088 M.E.) a committee named *Sree Bhakti Samvardhini Samithi* was organised under the leadership of Cheruvari Karunakaran. He was also the president of the committee in connection with the consecration of the temple. The Guru laid the foundation stone on 11<sup>th</sup> January 1908 and the construction of the temple building was done under the guidance of Sri. Chaitanya Swamikal. The Guru installed the idol *Śivalinga* on 11<sup>th</sup> April 1916 (*Meenam* 1091 M.E.). The Guru suggested the name Sundareswara Temple. As its very name implies

the site where the temple is situated and the engravings on the walls of the temple are very beautiful. In this temple the daily *poojas* are performed five times a day and an annual festival of eight days starts on *Pooyyam* star in the month of *Meenam*. *Sree Narayana Guru Jayanthi*, *Mahasamadhi*, *Navarathri*, *Mandala Pooja*, *Chaithanya Swamy Samadhi*, *Mahaśivarathri*, *Ilaneerattam*, *Śivagiri Theerthadanam*, *Amavāsi Tharppanam*, *Karthika Vilakku* and *Deepavali* are being celebrated in this temple. The idol of the goddess *Pārvathi*, god *Gaṇapathi*, *Sri Subrahmanya*, *Sri Śastha* and *Navagrahangal* are installed in small buildings in the temple premises. This temple is under the control of Sri Bhakthi Samvardhini Samithi. Sree Narayana Vidya Mandir senior secondary school, Sree Narayana I.T.C., Sree Narayana working women's Hostel and Sree Narayana Ladies Hostel are functioning under the Samithi. Sri Chaithanya Swamikal, one of the most beloved disciples of the Guru, laid into samadhi in this temple. His samadhi mandiram is built adjacent to the temple.

#### **4.IV.4 Jagannath Temple at Thalassery**

Thalassery is a small town in Kannur district. This temple is about 4 kms. south of Thalassery town. Kumaranasan, the famous poet, the direct disciple of the Guru and general secretary of S.N.D.P. Yogam, visited Thalassery in 1905. He met many Thiyya leaders of that locality and explained to them that the Guru had recognised temples as

one of the means of rejuvenating the community and founding a temple at Thalasserry would be quite relevant. The leaders decided to have a *Śiva* Temple at this place and a committee named *Jñānodayam Yogam* was organised. Kottiyath Ramunni laid the foundation stone for the temple in *Aśan's* presence in 1906. A collection box was installed at the site and within a year the collection was announced to Rs.7568/-. The consecration of the temple building was done under the supervision of Chaitanya Swamikal. The Thiyya of North Malabar under the leadership of Kottiyath Ramunni and Moorkoth Kumaran had completed the construction of the temple by the beginning of 1908. The installation of the idol *Śiva* was performed by the Guru on 13<sup>th</sup> February 1908 and christened the temple as Jagannath temple. The famous Jagannath Temple at Puri in Orissa is unique in the sense that it has always been open to all castes. By giving that name the Guru impressed upon his disciples the absurdity and irrationality of caste. In front of the huge gathering the Guru announced his decision that "Pulayas can be admitted inside the temple." The Guru threw the temple open to all depressed classes.

The temple building is decorated with beautiful carvings. A statue of the Guru made of *panchloha* was installed by Bodhananda Swamikal, one of the disciples of the Guru, in the northern side of the temple premises on 13<sup>th</sup> March 1927 under the aegis of Moorkoth Kumaran.

This is the first statue of the Guru. It was made in Italy by Professor. C. Thavarli, an Italian.

In this temple daily *poojas* are performed in five times a day. An annual festival for eight days starts on *punartham* star in the month of *Kumbham*. *Bhagavathy* seva worship on Fridays, New moon day worship, *Śivarathri*, *Skanthaṣṭami*, *Thaippuyyam*, *Ilaneerabhishekam*, *Ashtamirohini*, *Vinayaka Chathurthi*, *Sree Narayana Jayanthi*, *Mahasamadhi*, *Mahanavami Pooja*, *Mandala Pooja* and *Karthika Thirunal* are also being celebrated here.

Dharmadam Cornation Basic School, South Vayalam U.P. School, Sree Jagannatha Industrial Training Centre, Sri Jñānodaya Yogam Working Women's Hostel, English Medium School at temple gate and Kuthuparamba, Sree Narayana Printing and Publishing Company and Sri Janodaya Vanitha Sangham are functioning under the Jñānodaya Yogam of this temple. The president of this Jñānodaya Yogam is Sri. K.P. Ratnakaran. Sri. Balagopala Mattom, *Śiva Viṣṇu Vairi Khathaka* temple at Chavassery, Sree Narayana Mattom at Kadamboor, *Gaṇapathy Kovil* at temple gate, *Veeravan Cheri Annapoorneswari* temple at Thikkoti and three acre plot are there under the Jñānodaya Yogam.

#### 4.IV.5 Sreekanteswara Temple at Kozhikode

Sreekanteswara temple is situated in the heart of the Kozhikode city. The foundation stone for the temple was laid by the Guru on 26<sup>th</sup> December 1908. The construction of the temple building was completed in 1910 and the Guru installed the idol *Śivalinga* at 5.30 A.M. on 11<sup>th</sup> Monday 1910 (1085 M.E.). He established the temple at Kozhikode with the all-out support of Rarichan Mooppan, a very rich Thiyya of that city and with the co-operation of influential public men. On the occasion of the reception given to the Guru by the Theosophical Society of Kozhikode, there presented a welcome address acknowledged that the Guru was a great soul who was born with qualities befitting a great leader, one with true Brahmin soul sent by God as the successor of great *Siddhas* who had lived in our motherland.

#### 4.IV.6 Yakkara Visweswara Temple at Palakkad

This temple is in Kannampariyaram paramb in Yakkara village of Palakkad. The Guru laid foundation stone for the temple on 9<sup>th</sup> December 1908. After two or three years, the Guru enthroned the idol of the deity. The deity of this temple is Visweswara. In 1946 the reinstatement of the idol of the deity was done by Sankarananda Swamikal.

The annual festival for seven days is being celebrated in the month of *Meenam*. Festival ends on full moon day. A committee of forty

members elected from different regions of Palakkad district governs the administration of the temple. An executive body of nine members elected from the committee, deals with the day-to-day activities.

#### **4.IV.7 Maheswara Temple at Koorkanchery**

Koorkanchery is a small town in Trichur district. This temple was consecrated in 1916. The temple is under the control of Sree Narayana Bhakta Paripalana Yogam and this *Sabha* was founded under the leadership of the disciple of the Guru, Bodhananda Swamikal. The deity of this temple is *Maheswara* (*Śiva*) and the idol of this deity was installed on 9<sup>th</sup> September 1916 (24<sup>th</sup> *Chingam*, 1092 M.E.). Annual festival is being conducted in the month of *Makaram*. Festival lasts for seven days.

#### **4.IV.8 Somasekhara Temple at Peringottumkara**

Peringottumkara is situated on the banks of the river Ponnani and southwest to Trichur taluk. Majority of the people is *Ezhavas*. This is the oldest temple consecrated by the Guru in old Kochi State. The deity of the temple is *Śiva* and the Guru installed the idol of the deity on Thursday, 9<sup>th</sup> *Kumbham* 1094 M.E. Somasekhara temple is under the control of 'Sree Narayana Swamy Smaraka Samajam'. Sri Vidyananda Swamikal governed the temple for thirteen years. The festival of the temple starts on *Chothi* star in the month of *Kumbham*. This is one of the

famous festivals in Trichur district. A primary school and a Sanskrit school are working under the Samājam.

#### **4.IV.9 Sree Narayanamangalam Temple at Moothakunnam**

This temple is also known as *Sankara Narayana temple*. The deity of this temple is *Śankaranarayaṇa (Śiva)* and the idol was consecrated in 1903 (20<sup>th</sup> *Makaram* 1078 M.E.). This temple is under control of Hindu Moothakunnam Dharma Paripalana Sabha (H.M.D.P. Sabha). Annual festival is being celebrated from *Karthika* star in the month of *Makaram*, for seven days. Sree Narayana Moothakunnam college, Maliyankara, Sree Narayana Moothakunnam B.Ed. college, a High School, Plus II teachers Training Institute, Industrial Training Institute, L.P. School etc are functioning under the control of the *Sabha*.

#### **4.IV.10 Gowreeswara Temple at Cherayi, Ernakulam**

Cherayi is in Pallipuram village in old Kochi. The installation of the idol of this temple was on 9<sup>th</sup> *Avittam* day *Makaram* 1087 M.E. (1912). An inter dining was conducted by Sahodaran Ayyappan a disciple of the Guru, in this temple. This temple which is also known as 'Malayalapazhani' is a great cultural centre. The festival of this temple is very famous. The deity of this temple is *Devi*. The temple is under the control of the *Vijñānavardhini Sabha*. It was organised on 1<sup>st</sup> *Meenam* 1063 M.E. After the installation ceremony the Guru exhorted the people

gathered there that an educational aid fund must be started to endow the poor for their higher education. He added that the rich people must start and promote industries in the state and if one could not spend the whole money two or more could start industries in co-operative basis or companies.

#### **4.IV.11 Sree Bhavāneeswara Maha Temple at Palluruthy**

Palluruthy is a small town in Ernakulam district. Now this temple is under the control of Palluruthy Sree Narayana Dharma Paripalana Yogam. There are many institutions including two High School and one Higher Secondary School under the control of S.N.D.P. Yogam at Palluruthy.

As per the instructions of the Guru, the Ezhavas of Palluruthy and nearby places formed an organisation called Sree Dharma Paripalana Yogam in 1081 M.E. The Maharaja of Cochin gave permission to build a temple for Ezhavas in Palluruthy on 21<sup>st</sup> March 1907. Thus a temple was consecrated and an idol of *Śivalinga* was installed by the Guru on the 24<sup>th</sup> *Kumbham* 1091 M.E. (1916). On that day the Guru laid a foundation stone for a school adjacent to the temple. This is the S.N.D.P. School in which now there are almost 6000 students. Annual festival for ten days starts on *Bharani* day and ends on *Uthram* day. The Guru conducted intercaste marriages and interdining in this temple. Mahatma Gandhi visited this temple on 6<sup>th</sup> *Makaram* 1109 M.E.

Today there are almost 4000 members in Palluruhy Sree Dharma Paripalana Yogam. Each member has to perform *Nitya Pooja* once in a year.

#### **4.IV.12 Sreekanteswara Temple at Panavally**

Panavally is a village about eight miles north to Cherthala town. A tributary of the lake Vembanat runs through the eastern side of this village. The lake Olavaypu runs through the western side of the village. In 1071 M.E. an organisation called Ezhava Samajam was formed under the guidance of Panavally Krishnan Vaidyar – a Physician who treated Sree Narayana Guru in his last days. In 1092 M.E. this organisation was registered as Sree Narayana Dharma Samrakshana Yogam. A temple was consecrated in this place and the installation of the idol *Śivalinga* was done by the Guru on 18<sup>th</sup> *Edavam* 1097 M.E. (1917). All people irrespective of caste and religion were permitted to enter into the temple even before the temple entry proclamation in 1936.

#### **4.IV.13 Ardhnareeswara Temple at Illikkal Kumbalangi**

The deity of this temple is Ardhanāreeswara. The installation of idol was performed by the Guru on *Rohini* day in the month of *Meenam* 1084 M.E. (May 1908). The temple is governed by the temple *sabha* called *Vijñāna Pradayini Samajam* which has more than thousand families as members. Annual festival is being conducted in the month of

*Meenam*. It starts on *Rohini* day and ends on *Uttram*. The Harijans are allowed to adore and worship here. A mutt called Sree Narayana Guru Matt was constructed here by Narasimha Swamikal and the inauguration of that matt was done by the Guru in 1103 M.E. The temple *sabha* has a school and a playground. On advice of the Guru, Nedungayil Narayana Thandar conducted an inter dining for 300 people on 24<sup>th</sup> *Vrichikam* 1103 M.E. People belonging to different castes and communities participated in it; Ezhavas, Pulayas and educated Christians were there with Sahodaran Ayyappan.

#### **4.IV.14 Sreekumaramangalam Subrahmanya Temple at Kumarakam**

This Subrahmanya temple is at Kottayam district. The temple is situated on the banks of lake Kumarakam. The deity of this temple is Subrahmanya and idol of this deity was installed by the Guru in 1080 M.E. (1904). Harijans are also permitted to worship here. Annual festival for five days starts on *Pooyan* day of the month of *Kumbham*. Administration of the temple is under the control of Sree Kumaramangalam Devaswam Board. People of Kumarakam celebrate *Sree Narayana Guru Jayanti Kumarakam Vallamkali* on *Chatayam* day every year in memory of the Guru's visit to Kumarakam in 1904.

#### 4.IV.15 Bālasubrahmaṇya Temple at Parlikkad

Parlikkad is situated about 10 km north to Trichur. The Guru reached this place in *Meenam* 1101 M.E. on request of the people there. The deity of this temple is *Bālasubrahmaṇyan*. The idol was installed by Bodhananda Swamikal, the direct disciple of the Guru on behalf of the Guru. this temple is governed by Thalappalli Taluk S.N.D.P. Union. Annual festival starts on 9<sup>th</sup> *Meenam*. This is also known as Natarajagiri Bālasubrahmaṇya Temple.

#### 4.IV.16 Ananda Bhutheswara Temple at Mezhuveli

Mezhuveli is the native place of Guru's direct disciple Mooloor S. Padmanabha Panikkar. The Ezhavas of Mezhuveli organised an association called *Ezhava Samajam* in 1079 M.E. In 1081 M.E. the Guru laid the foundation stone for the temple. The idol was consecrated by Swamy Sivaprasad, a disciple of the Guru, in 1085 M.E. Another disciple Narasimha Swamikal installed a *Śivalinga* in 1090 M.E. in this temple. In 1091 M.E. the Guru came here and blessed the idol *Śivalinga* and declared that those who believe in idol worship could enter into the temple irrespective of caste and religion. Mooloor S. Padmanabhan and E.K. Kunhuraman were the members of Ezhava Samajam. Twenty acres of plot, Padmanabhodayam-a building constructed in memory of Mooloor S. Padmanabhan, a Higher Secondary School and a Training Institute are there under the control of Ezhava samajam. Now these are

controlled by Sree Narayana Trust.

#### **4.IV.17 Ananda Shanmugha Temple at Edappady**

Edappady is a place about 3 km away from Meenachil taluk and very near to Erattupetta. The deity of the temple is Subrahmanya. The Guru installed the idol lance in *Edavam* 1102 M.E. (1927). The administration of the temple was controlled by Meenachil S.N.D.P. Union. But now a trust is formed for this purpose.

#### **4.IV.18 Subrahmanya Temple at Poonjar**

Poonjar which is in Meenachil taluk, is about 15 km. away from Edappady. A temple was constructed by Mankuzhi family members. The deity of this temple is Subrahmanya. The Guru installed the idol lance in *Edavam* 1102 M.E. (1927) – the very next day on which the installation was done in Edappady Anandashanmugha Temple. This temple is also known as Mankuzhi Akalpantha Prashobhini Subrahmanya Temple.

#### **4.IV.19 Sree Kumaramangalam Temple at Prakulam**

The temple is at Prakulam a small village in Kollam district. It is 14 km. away from Kollam High School Junction. In the west of the temple premise is Arabian Sea and in the east there is Ashtamutikayal.

Sree Kumaramangalam temple was consecrated in 1078 M.E. (1903) by Neelakantan, the son of Pillamattu Vadakkathil Chattan Kunju.

The Guru installed the idol of the deity Gaṇapathy and a Photograph and a silver idol of Subrahmaṇya. A lance was also kept there and he himself lighted a lamp in front of the idol. He told the people gathered there that, now the lance is enough, in future there will be a big temple and the idol in this place. Annual festival for ten days is being conducted in the month of *Kumbham*. The temple festival is famous for its *Kettukazhcha* the procession of elephants and horses with the trappings. Hindus and non-Hindus take part in this procession.

#### **4.IV.20 Velayudha Mangala Temple at Anjalummood**

*Anjalummood* is a village between Kollam and Kundara. The exact date of the consecration of the temple is not known. It is said that it might be constructed in 1891 A.D. The temple was consecrated by Anjalummood Koyuvila Veetil Velayudhan a devotee of Subrahmaṇya. He kept the photograph of Subrahmaṇya in his house and used to adore the deity daily. The Guru installed a lance in place of the photograph in 1891.

The people of backward community are also permitted to enter to this temple. Renovation of the temple and reinstallation of the idol were performed in 1951-52 A.D.

#### **4.IV.21 Sreevallabheswara Temple at Poothotta**

This temple is at Poothotta, a small village about 25 km. South to

Kochi town. This place Poothotta is the confluence of three districts – Ernakulam, Kottayam and Alappuzha. This village is surrounded by Vembanattukayal (lake) in the west, Konathupuzha (river) in the east and the confluence of river Konathu and Vembanattukayal in the south. This place is rich in natural beauty. The deity of this temple is Vallabheswara (*Śiva*) and the idol was installed by the Guru on 10<sup>th</sup> Kumbham 1068 M.E. (20<sup>th</sup> February 1893 A.D.). This temple is under the control of S.N.D.P. Yogam. The educational institutions like High School, Higher Secondary School, Vocational Higher Secondary School, Nursery Training School and Industrial Training Centre are also functioning there.

#### **4.IV.22 Kapaleswara Temple at Kayikkara**

This temple is situated in Chirayinkeezhu taluk. The deity here is *Mokshadayaka Śiva*. The idol has the aspect of ascetic *Śiva*. This temple is situated in between Kumaranasan Park and Mumbally Church and it is also in midway between Kadakkavoor and Nedumkandak. The temple was consecrated in 1893 A.D. under the aegis of Edakkudy Govindan Vaidyar. Annual festival is conducted on *śivarāthri* day of *Kumbham*.

#### **4.IV.23 Velikkatt Karthikeya Temple at Prakkulam**

This temple is also known as Velikkatt Sri Narayana Mangalam

Karthikeya temple. The idol of this temple is *Śiva* and it was installed on *Thrikketta* day in *Meenam* 1068 M.E. (1893 A.D.). The idol of the deity Subrahmanya was also installed by the Guru. Today this temple is in a state of ruin.

#### **4.IV.24 Subrahmanya Temple at Chemmanathumkara**

This temple is situated about 4 km south to Vaikkam. A *Bhajana Muttam* was built by Alappurath Achuthan Vaidyar – a social worker and 41 families of Chemmanathumkara. The Guru was invited to this *Muttam* and the idol was installed by him in 1921. A photograph of Bālasubrahmanya was kept adjacent to the lance. Then the *Bhajana Mattam* was converted as temple. Harijans and non-Hindus are permitted to enter in to this temple. The administration of the temple is governed by S.N.D.P. Yogam. Many Nairs and Christians were the members of the unit at that time. The reinstatement of the temple was done by Sree Narayana Theertha Swamikal on January 28, 1964.

#### **4.IV.25 Siddheswara Temple at Chengannoor**

The deity of this temple is Siddheswara. The consecration of the idol of the deity was done by the Guru in 1090 M.E. (1915 A.D.)

#### **4.IV.26 Kunninezhath Bhagavathy Temple at Karunagappally**

The consecration of the temple was in 1069 M.E. (1895 A.D.). The deity of this temple is *Devi (Bhagavathy)*. The Guru installed the idol of the deity in 1895. this temple is known as Kunninezhath

Bhavāneeswari Temple.

#### **4.IV.27 Śiva Temple at Ayiramthengu**

The temple is at Ayiramthengu in Karunagappally. The deity of this temple is Śiva. The idol of Śiva was installed by the Guru in 1067 M.E. (1892). The administration of the temple is under the control of Azheekal S.N.D.P. Sakha.

#### **4.IV.28 Puthan Nada Deveswara Temple at Vakkom**

Deveswara temple is one of the three temples consecrated by the Guru in Vakkom. The precincts of the temple belongs to ten families. The administration of the temple is under the control of Vakkom Deveswara Kshetra Yogam Trust in which the ten families are the few members of the trust. The deity of this temple is Deveswara.

#### **4.IV.29 Vakkom Velayudhan Nada (Kovil) at Chirayinkeezhu**

This temple is in Vakkom Panchayath of Chirayinkeezhu taluk which is in Thiruvananthapuram district. This place is surrounded by Anjuthengu Kayal. Vakkom Kayikkara road (Kochu Pappu Tharakan Road) which runs through the central part of Vakkom, divides this region into two – northern and southern regions of Vakkom. The three temple including Vakkom Velayudhan Kovil consecrated by the Guru, are in the North Vakkom. Vakkom Velayudhan Kovil is also known as Vakkom Subrahmanya temple. This is the first Subrahmanya temple

consecrated by the Guru. Annual festivals are not conducted here. But the youths of this place use to conduct seminar and gifts of food in this temple.

The deity of this temple is Subrahmaṇya. The idol of the deity was installed by the Guru 1063 M.E. (1889 A.D.). This temple was consecrated after rebuilding and renovating the old temple Velayudha Nada as per Guru's instructions. The Guru met young Kumaranasan here.

#### **4.IV.30 Ananda Valleswara Temple at Puthiyakavu**

This temple is at Vakkom. The deity of the temple is Subrahmaṇya. The installation of the deity is done by the Guru. This temple was consecrated by a man named Kochu Pappu Tharakan. This is one of the three temples consecrated by the Guru in Vakkom. Kochu Pappu Tharakan was a member of Sree Moolam Praja sabha. He was the grand father of eleventh Kerala Legislative Assembly Speaker Vakkom Purushothaman. In old age he handed over the temple to S.N.D.P. Yogam. Now this temple is governed by S.N.D.P.

#### **4.IV.31 Sree Jñāneswara Temple at Anjuthengu**

Anjuthengu is a small village which is about 2 km to Kadakkavoor. Majority of the people are Roman Catholics. The remaining majority are Hindus. The deity of this temple is Jñāneswara (*Śiva*). The Guru

installed the idol of *Śiva* on 15<sup>th</sup> *Meenam* 1090 M.E.(1915 A.D.). Annual festival starts on *Makam* in the month of *Kumbham*. A committee of elected members from this village, governs the day today activities of the temple. The Guru started a Bhajana Mutt also in Anjuthengu.

#### **4.IV.32 Arthanāreeswara Temple at Kadakkavoor**

Kadakkavoor is a small village in Chirayinkeezhu taluk of Thiruvananthapuram district. This village is surrounded by Arabian sea in the west. Perumkulam forest in the east, river Vamanpuram in the south and Kavilthottam lake in the north. Kadakkavoor Oottuparamba temple was an old one with *Bhadrakāli* as the deity. Animal sacrifices were practiced in that temple before its consecration by the Guru. The reconstruction of the temple was done by Kochupilla Muthalali and the idol of *Bhadrakāli* was replaced. Then the Guru installed the idol of *Śivalinga* in *Kumbham* 1091 M.E. The administration of the temple is done by the committee of elected members of the Village. This temple is also known as Oottuparamba *Śiva* Temple.

#### **4.IV.33 Ananthavalleswara Temple at Mannanthala**

This temple is at Mannanthala, 6 km north east to Thiruvananthapuram. The deity of the temple is *Devi* and the idol was consecrated by the Guru on *Revathi* day 22<sup>nd</sup> *Kumbham* 1064 M.E. (1889 A.D.). In connection with this consecration the Guru wrote one of

his *Archavatara Sthutis – Mannanthala Devi Stavam*. The old Mananthala Durga Devi Temple was reconstructed and the idol of Durga was replaced with that of Devi. This temple is under the control of S.N.D.P. union at that place. Narayana Vilasam Primary School was started in 1082 M.E. (1907 A.D.) under the aegis of this temple administrators. Now this school is upgraded as Mannanthala Govt. High School. Annual festival of seven days starts in the temple on *Revathy* Star in the month of *Meenam*.

#### **4.IV.34 Kolathumkara Śiva Temple at Kulathoor**

At Kulathoor, a suburb of Thiruvananthapuram an old *Bhadrakali* temple was demolished and a temple of Lord Śiva was installed by the Guru in 1893. The devotional hymn *Kolatiresa Stavam* in Malayalam was written by the Guru in connection with this installation. This temple is about 5 km west to Kesavadasapuram in Thiruvananthapuram district very close to Chempazhanthi the birth place of the Guru. So he spent most of his childhood days in Kulathoor. Velimala where he used to meditate is also near to this place.

#### **4.IV.35 Arath Subrahmaṇya Temple at Kayikkara**

This temple is the renovation of an old Dharmasastha temple. The Guru enthroned the idol of Subrahmaṇya in 1069 M.E. (1894 A.D.). The old idol of Dharmasastha is also there. So this temple is known as

Arath Dharmasastha temple. This temple was consecrated by Arath Family. This is situated in the seashore in between Varkala and Kadakkavoor. The administration of this temple is done by eight selected members of Arath family. Only daily *Poojas* are performed. No annual festival is conducted. The first priest was Neelakantan Santhi. The daily *Poojas* were also performed by Kumaran Asan for years. So near this temple a building was constructed to commemorate him.

#### **4.IV.36 Sree Nayinar Deva Temple at Arumanoor**

Nayinar temple is about 8 km south to Neyyatinkara and about one km north to Poovar. The old temple was demolished and the idol of the deity *Śiva* was reinstated by the Guru in the month of *Edavam* 1088 M.E. (1913 A.D.). Besides this main idol the idols of deities of *Gaṇapathy* and *Devi* are also enthroned in this temple. Annual festival of ten days is being celebrated with pomp in the month of *Makaram*.

#### **4.IV.37 Subrahmaṇya Temple at Muttakkatu Kunnumpara**

The deity of the temple is Lord *Subrahmaṇya*. The idol of this deity was installed by the Guru in *Vrichikam* 1071 M.E. (1896 A.D.). This temple is situated near Kovalam on the top of the Muttakkatu hill which is in between the Arabian sea and Vellayani pure water lake. This is one of the most entrancing spots in Kerala. This temple is made up of huge rocks and it is built on the crest of a huge boulder known as

Kunnumpara. "The place commands a panoramic view of the expansive sea to the west, with the luxuriant vegetation, mainly of coconut plams, standing sentinel all around and the Sahya Ranges towering towards the east. From the rock oozes a perennial stream of crystalline water. This adds to the charm and attraction of the place. It is as it were the very symbol and emblem of indestructible *Prakṛti*. A statue of the Guru is installed in the temple premises and daily *Poojas* are performed.

#### **4.IV.38 Ganapathy Temple at Kottar Nagarcovil**

Kottar is a small town in the eastern part of Nagarcovil. There are eight *Pillatheruvukal* inhabited by Tamilians. They were superstitious and worshipped gods with toddy, egg and meat. There were forty two such temples at that time. Animal sacrifices were also prevailed there. The Guru was invited there and with the help of the people he demolished such temples. The umpteen idols in the old Arumugham Pillayar Kovil were also demolished and the idol of deity Ganapathy was installed by the Guru in 1083 M.E. (1908 A.D.). This temple is also known as Nagarcovil Pillayar Kovil or Kottar Ganapathy Temple.

#### **4.IV.39 Bhavaneeswara Temple - Tamil Nadu**

This is in a village known as Bhavani in Erode in Tamil Nadu state. The deity of the temple is Bhavaneeswara (Śiva). The Guru installed the idol of the deity in 1913.

#### 4.IV.40 Sree Chitambara Temple at Karamukku

Karamukku is a place in midway between Kanjani and Kandashankadavu. Kanjani is about 5 km east to Kandashankadavu. Kandashankadavu is about 20 km west to Truichur town.

Sree Chithambara Temple at Karamukku has a lighted lamp as symbol. The Guru made the *deepa prathishta* as the idol of this temple on 2<sup>nd</sup> Edavam 1096 M.E. (20<sup>th</sup> May 1920). The Guru declared 'let there be light' and placed a lamp on the pedestal prepared for it. All auspicious functions are conducted with a lighted lamp because we believe that when a lamp is lit, we feel the presence of the spirit more strongly. This is true of almost all religions. To the Guru light is synonymous with *Arivu* or knowledge or enlightenment. The Guru says

“The inner organ, the senses and counting from the body,  
The many worlds we know, are all, on thought, the sacred form  
Of the supreme Sun rises in the void beyond;  
By relentless cogitation one should attain to this,”<sup>9</sup>

So the philosophical implication of the unusual *prathishta* of the lighted lamp at Karamukku temple is profound. Annual festival is conducted here. The people of Karamukku and nearby places of Palazhi, Manaloor, Padiyam, Kanjani, Magattukara and Mambulli take part in the festival.

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<sup>9</sup> Nataraja Guru, *Life and Teachings of Narayana Guru*. Op. Cit., p. 445

#### 4.IV.41 Kalakanteswara Temple at Murukkumpuzha

Murukkumpuzha is about 24 km north to Trivandrum. This temple is situated about ½ km south to Murukkumpuzha railway station. Kalakandeswara temple was an old Kali temple where animal sacrifices were done. The Guru replaced the idol of the deity Kāli with a slab made of *panchaloha* on the middle of which 'AUM' is etched. Besides, the words *Satyam* (Truth), *Dharmam* (Duty), *Daya* (Compassion), *Sneham* (Love) are etched around the word 'AUM'. The reinstatement of the idol was done on 8<sup>th</sup> Dhanu 1097 M.E. (22<sup>nd</sup> December 1921). The idea behind the installation of the slab is that "Anything would do, if it helps you to concentrate. The greater the noble thought which a symbol evoke, the greater is the effect."<sup>10</sup>

In order to satisfy the worshipers the Guru's disciple installed the idols of the deities of Śiva, Bālasubrahmanya, Devi and Gaṇapathy in this temple. Now the administrations of the temple is carried out by S.N.D.P. Harijans are permitted to enter in to the temple since the consecration of the idol. Annual festival of ten days is celebrated in the month of Makaram.

#### 4.IV.42 Temple of Kalavamgodam

This temple was consecrated in 1927. At Kalavangodam near Shertallai the Guru installed an unusual *prathishta* of the Mirror with the

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<sup>10</sup> Moorkoth Kunjappa, *Sree Narayana Guru*. Op. Cit., p. 37

sacred symbol 'AUM' made palpable by scraping away part of the mercury. And this is the image which has been widely mistaken for a mere mirror. The *prathishta* was done on 31<sup>st</sup> Edavam 1102 M.E. (14<sup>th</sup> June 1927 A.D.). In order to placate the two groups who have differences of views regarding the idol to be installed, the Guru took this decision. The idol serves as the concretised symbol of the Guru's advaitic message of the realisation of Brahman in one's self. 'AUM' has a supreme significance in Hindu religion. "The *Kathopanishad* says that word which all the Vedas declare, which all austerities proclaim and on which men concentrate when they lead the life of a religious student – that word I tell you briefly in 'AUM'. According to *Māṇḍukya Upanishad* – the past, the present and the future – all this is only the symbol AUM- and whatever else there is that transcends the three fold time that too is only the syllable 'AUM'"<sup>11</sup> An image is formed if and only if there is an object. The object here is the self of which the image is formed. So the *advaitic* principle that Guru emphasised through the *mirror prathishta* with the sacred symbol of AUM is that the self, AUM or the Absolute Self and the image are one and the same though they appear as different. Here the Guru denies the duality that exist in between the world of reality and the world of appearance. The very same idea is expressed by the Guru in *Ātmopadēśa Śātakam* verse 85.

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<sup>11</sup> *ibid.*, p. 37

“No shadow could exist without depending on a model original  
 Since the manifest world is seen to have no original model  
 anywhere

Neither shadow nor actuality is this: all is seen

Like a snake that a gifted artist might cleverly sketch”<sup>12</sup>

This shows the climax and culminations of his mission to reform worship. He started with idols; the task ended with sponsoring and demonstrating the *Nirguṇa* form of worship which is the subliment stage of *bhakti*. The mirror *prathishta* is a highly intellectualised symbol of the Guru's philosophy of Advaida.

#### 4.IV.43 Ullala Aumkareswara Temple at Vechur

Vechur is on the eastern side of the river Kariyar, a tributary of Movattupuzha river. It is also the south western part of the Vaikkom taluk. The Guru installed a mirror with *Pranava Mantram* 'AUM' instead of an idol of particular deity. The consecration of the temple was in 1927 A.D. The installation of the *prathishta* was on 11<sup>th</sup> Midhunam 1102 M.E. (1927). The Guru installed a mirror with the sacred word AUM made palpable by scraping away part of the mercury on the pedestal. The annual festival is being celebrated in the month of Kumbham. The main festival is on *Bharani* day and it ends on *Karthika*. The replica of the idol taken out of the sanctum sanctorum for the ritual is that of *Murugan*.

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<sup>12</sup> Nataraja Guru, *Life and Teachings of Narayana Guru*. Op. Cit., p. 684

#### 4.IV.44 Śārada Mattom at Sivagiri (Monastery)

The name Sivagiri (Mount of Śiva) has been given to the Varkala hills. Varkala is a coastal town 20 miles north of Thiruvananthapuram. This is a holy place dedicate to Śiva and Śakthi (Śārada devi). The Guru laid the foundation stone for the Muttom in Sivagiri on *Chatayam* day 1908. the Guru chose Varkala, one of the most entrancing spots in Kerala as his religious headquarters. The Guru consecrated a temple with an image of Śārada Devi (Saraswathi Devi) along with a *Vaidika Vidyalayalam* (Vedic School) in 1912 (18<sup>th</sup> *Medam* 1087 M.E.) This Saraswathy temple is known as Śārada mattom (Monastery).

The Guru was usually keen and enthusiastic about the temple to Saraswathi Devi. It is made of bricks, neat and beautiful, octagonal in shape with windows of multi coloured glass planes. The image of Saraswathi is a statue impeded inside a lotus of marble. It serves as the concretired symbol of the Guru's message 'Educate and be enlightened'. The surrounding circular half-wall gives the impression that the Mattom is placed on a silver Plate and the yard is spread with snow-white sand devoid of dust. The beaming idol of the *Devi*, *Veena* in hand, radiates peace and tranquillity.it is pleasing as well as elevating to gaze on at it and worship. The installation ceremony was a mammoth festival spread out over several days. No other temple of the Guru was inaugurated with so much fanfare, enthusiasm and extended festivities.

Instead of customary religious rituals, facilities are provided for

devotees to sing hymns and meditate. There are no offerings of food, no festivals, no processions and no traditional poojas. The devotees can pay respects to the goddess, sing hymns or be lost in meditation. The Guru illustrated through this temple that idol-worship was not the be all and end all of Hindu religion. Idols are symbols used as aids to concentration as mentioned in early part of this chapter.

The Śārada Mattom marked the acme of his temple building activity. To him Saraswathi is more than the goddess of learning, She is also the very incarnation of Love. He conceived her as the eternal mother, as the most humane and endearing aspect of Śakti. Mother worship is basic to Dravidian culture. He wrote *Janani Navaratna Manjeri* (A Bouquet of Nine Gems to Mother) one of his finest hymns for the occasion.

The people of all caste and creed were permitted to chant the Gītā and the Upanishads. Many devotees and disciples regularly come to Sivagiri especially on the famous Sivagiri Pilgrimage days of 30<sup>th</sup> & 31<sup>st</sup> December and 1<sup>st</sup> of January every year. The Guru opened up a path to the common people for dedicated service to humanity in the name of God. He meant that the service of the poor and the weak was service to God.

The Guru started the Brahma-Vidyalyaya at Sivagiri for the proper study and propagation of Advaita Vedānta with other philosophies and religions on traditional and modern lines. The Guru's intension behind

the consecration of the Śārada Muttam at Sivagiri was to transform Sivagiri in to the intellectual Sringeri of the South. The consecration was the crowning act of his life. Here there is a training school for priesthood. Brahmacharis or youths who had taken the vow of celibacy were trained to become priests. They would dedicate themselves to campaigning for the spiritual and social progress of the people. Three trained priests are deputed to all the temples consecrated by the Guru. So the right pattern of worship and social service could be given effect everywhere. The Guru also gave certain instructions on the future role of Sivagiri Mattom.

- “a. To enlighten people about the fundamentals of religion and spread every where devotion and love of God.
- b. To serve the people in such a way as to help them attain the three fold purity that of body, mind and word.
- c. To speak to the people the grandeur of non-violence, love and unity and see that they are observed in action.
- d. To improve the educational level of the common people.
- e. To identify the right type of young men to be trained as *brahmachārīs* and choose from among them those who have the turn of mind for renunciation and admit them to monkhood and send them out as messengers of love to serve their fellows.”<sup>13</sup>

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K. Sreenivasan, *Sree Narayana Guru*. Op. Cit., p. 90

#### 4.IV.45 Advaita Asramam at Alwaye

In memory of Sri Sankara the Guru established the Advaita Asram in 1913 at Alwaye which is a place of nature's pristine beauty. This is the last and the most significant in the saga of temple installation by the Guru. This is not a temple but a prayer-hall where the Hindus, the Christians and the Muslims can, and do pray together, each according to his own faith. Students can read all religious literature and no religion is excluded from the collection of books in the Asram library. Christian, Muslim and Hindu students are studying in the Sanskrit school attached to the Asram and students without distinction of caste or religion occupy the hostel adjacent to it. In this Asram the devotees of different faith meditate in the same prayer hall, study and work together as partners in a common quest.

The Guru admitted students to the Sanskrit school from all communities including the Harijans. Students like T.T. Kesawa Sastri who was elected as Deputy Speaker of Keral Legislative Assembly, was a Harijan student of Sanskrit school. Another ardent disciple of Guru, C.V. Kunjuraman was a Harijan student and an inmate of Sivagiri Mutt, later became the Mayor of Trivandrum. The Sanskrit school at Alwaye and Sivagiri Mutt produced many scholars and social and cultural leaders who belonged to Harijan community. Thus the Guru's great message 'One religion' or 'Universal Religion' is put in to practice through various steps. 'Know thyself' or Self-knowledge is the key-word

of the Guru's Advaita philosophy. And this is the 'One Religion' he projected in his message 'One Caste, One Religion, One God for man'.

Thus the life mission of the Guru is fulfilled by the consecration of the kalavangodam Temple with the idol 'AUM' which contains the highest pinnacle of symbolic images. As an Advaitin the Guru was then in midway in the journey of religious renaissance. He established this religious renaissance by replacing the deities with a series of idols of Śiva, Subrahmanya etc. then with a lighted lamp and a mirror capping it by an Advaita Asram.

Guru's entire programme was a demonstration in concrete images and finally in the absence of images which represents the higher significance of idol worship. No other saint or sage had concretised these various steps as Narayana Guru had done. He was unique in teaching how to understand their own time honoured practices in a better light, a light that would illuminate their own path towards spirituality. Through these various steps the Guru taught people to apprehend the idea that religious rites so far practised by them would be adapted towards the Vedic doctrine of non-duality of the Divine-Being. He also wanted to teach the significance of Advaitic way of life.

#### **4.IV.46 Grudeva Birth Place Chempazhanti**

Chempazhanti, the birth place of Sree Narayana Guru is a little town about 12 km north of Thiruvananthapuram, the capital of the then

Indian native state Travancore. Today it is the capital of Kerala State. In Chempazhanti there stands a hut-Vayalvarath house which appeared to be too old to stand erect with no windows except for three iron bars in a lawn in the front for letting in air and light in to three small rooms. That was the house where Sree Narayana Guru was born. The floor was washed with cow-dung. The walls were of mud. "This small house, more than a century old, this cramped and stuffy room where was born the man whose fame enveloped the entire world- none can watch it except with a mind charged with emotion."<sup>14</sup> The house got its name Vayalvarath house because it stood on the fringe of a paddy field. "The caste-wise topography of Cehmpazhanthi was composed mainly of three castes- Nairs, Ezhavas and Pulayas. The three castes maintained their existence on three planes, almost three different worlds. Life at Chempazhanthi was also like its landscape – a dark forest dense with superstitions where evil customs roamed about like wild animals".<sup>15</sup> Adjacent to Narayana Guru's ancestral home was the Bhagavathi Temple of Manackal where the family members worshipped regularly.

#### 4.V IMPACT OF THE GURU PHILOSOPHY

The Installation of the Temple at Aruvipuram became a milestone in the history of India's spiritual emancipation. The news of this

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<sup>14</sup> M. K. Sanu, *Narayana Guru – A Biography*.(Bombay: Bharathiya Vidya Bhavan, 1978) p. 3

<sup>15</sup> *ibid.*, p. 2

silent revolution echoed to the far flung frontiers of India. Dr.Palpu, the Darbar Physician of the Maharaja of Mysore, who feverishly desired to change the destiny of the masses of India's working classes who were smothered by caste humiliation, was directed by Swami Vivekananda to seek the dynamic guidance of a living Guru and came to Aruvipuram to seek Narayan Guru's help in his campaign for establishing human rights.

Narayana Guru was a model of simplicity, purity and renunciation. He was the leader of extensive activities and various institutions and also the originator of a great cultural movement of universal significance and value. This is a combination of greatness more divine than human. In this respect we have hardly another instance in modern history to compare with the wonderful life of Sree Narayana Guru who was an ascetic and a human of great spiritual powers. He was the creator of a net work of large institutions – religious, social, educational, industrial and cultural.

People with various kinds of talents were attracted to the Guru. Among them were C.V. Kunjuraman, Mooloor Padmanabha Panicker, Mahakavi Kumaran Asan, T.K. Madhavan, K.P. Kayyalakkal, C.O. Madhavan, K. Kumaran, K. Govindan, K. Ayyappan and Satyavrathan. Sri. Narayana Chaitanyam Bodhananda, Govindananda, Atmananda, Dharma Theertha, Nataraja Guru, Ananda Theertha, Achutananda, Vidhyananda, Narasimhananda, Sankarananda and Narayana Theertha were sanyasins of the first round. All of them

worked as a single team with various chosen fields of activity. The result was the ushering in of three parallel organisations with three different but complementary ideals. These three organisations are Sree Narayana Dharma Paripalana Yogan (S.N.D.P. Yogam), Sree Narayana Dharma Sangham and Sree Narayana Gurukulam.

#### **4.V.1 Sree Narayana Dharmapariplanayogam (S.N.D.P. Yogam)**

Under the aegis of the Guru, Dr.Palpu, the disciple of the Guru and a great organizer, changed the Aruvippuram temple Worshipers association in to a corporate body in 1903 to propagate the ideals of Sree Narayana Guru in the model of a Sangham called S N D P Yogam. It was the congregation that came after the Loard Budha.

The aim of the Yogam was to protect 'dharma' i.e., to ameliorate the life-style of the long-suffering downtrodden classes, to retrieve their righteousness and prosperity and to enable them adequately to revive their education, industries, trade as well as their solicitude for their welfare and advancement of all the fellow being alike without any distinctions of caste, creed race etc.

The Guru's mission was not to be confined within segregated limits and the target of his religious assault was universalism. He himself agreed to be the Yogam's life-time President. Dr.Palpu was

assigned the general Secretaryship. Anyone from any caste could be a member of the society. Ezhavas were in an overwhelming majority among its members and the reins of the society came in to the hands of them. Even if it be so the Guru's ideal-universalism was not affected because every one of them worked for the uplift of all depressed castes. Ezhavas were at the top of the hierarchy of the untouchables and also were numerically the largest community. So they achieved strength of their movements. This inspired all castes below them to emulate their move for betterment and induced the higher caste to examine and improve their customs.

The many local *sabhas* merged in the Yogam. The Yogam began to harp vociferously on untouchability, unapproachability, denial of jobs under the government and the consistent denial of civic and human rights. Another reasonable claim was for admission in to government run schools and colleges which were out of bounds for non-caste Hindus. The agitation was mostly in the form of resolutions, speeches, representations and petitions.

In the vast annual gatherings of the S.N.D.P. Yogam engaged good speakers. They talked to people about moral and spiritual issues. The Guru insisted them to give importance to Religion, morality, education and industry.

**Religion:-** The Guru wanted to expose superstitions to dissuade people from worshipping with weird rites like animal sacrifice and evil spirits. He told the speakers to stress the superiority of prayers and to worship in a dignified manner and also to explain the *Saguṇa* and *Nirguṇa* aspects of Brahman according to the pure Hindu Philosophy. The Guru also informed them that wherever there is a genuine demand for a temple or Mutt, encourage people in an intelligent manner and not to criticise other religions in an objectionable or insinuating fashion.

**Morality:-** Guru exhorted to people to practice truth, cleanliness, fear of evil, faith in God and for unity. Further, he cautioned people against meaningless and harmful customs; urged them to give up these as far as possible and instead to adopt better modes of conduct in tune with the changing times. Speakers are expected to explain such views and win over people to those ideas.<sup>16</sup>

**Education:-** Guru highlighted its advantages and explained the danger in its absence. He encouraged and exhorted them by appealing to their self respect and natural inclination... When ever possible encourage people to start schools, reading rooms etc. under any auspices.

**Industry:-** Guru added that the speakers should insist on the ideas about how best to improve agriculture, trade, handicrafts etc.

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<sup>16</sup> K. Sreenivasan, *Sree Narayana Guru*. Op. Cit., p. 86

The Guru stressed on two points on which the speaker is enjoined to take precaution.

- 1) If the speaker is not sure about a point, he should not stress it.
- 2) Speeches should not, in their tone or style, hurt the feelings of the so called lower caste or cause resentment among the so called upper caste, As far as possible make everyone genuinely concerned with the progress and welfare of the depressed sections.

Wherever possible under the auspices of temple, arrangements to be made for discourses and speeches based on mythological stories which reveal the greatness of God and also illustrate philosophical truths. The annual meetings of S.N.D.P. Yogam were very often addressed by the higher castes and also by officialdom including the Devans of Travancore and Cochin. The Guru's concern for the uplift and well-being of the have-nots can be seen from this guide line. It also implies the humanitarian and socialist trend in the approach. In the annual meetings of the Yogam the Guru emphasised three things viz the advantage of united action, the benefits of education and to help the community register economic progress which were very dear to the Guru. In the first annual gathering Dr. Palpu reminded the people gathered there about the need for united action, hard work and industry. About education he said that "A society or for that matter a group, makes durable progress and achieves prosperity only through education. In our

community there should be none without at least primary education. For that one and all should specially strive. When you refer to an Ezhava male or female, it should imply that he or she is one who knows how to read and write”<sup>17</sup>

In the bye-law of the yogam Kumaran Asan pointed out that “Religion is the life breath of India. It alone animates the people who constitute its different bodily parts. When religion was practiced justly, the advantages arising from it were incomparable.”<sup>18</sup> He evolved a course of action which took care of the spiritual and material needs of the people. In the second annual gatherings of the Yogam held at Quilon an industrial exhibition was organised as part of it. At the exhibition were displayed articles and artefacts made by members of the Ezhava community in Travancore, Cochin and Malabar. It was an impressive sight and a flattering assurance about the potentialities of the community. The Yogam had a monthly Journal “Vivekodayam” edited by Kumaran Asan. The title was a tribute to Swami Vivekananda. The journal spread the message of the Guru and did yeoman service in ventilating the views of the Yogam.

The Guru wished to build up a classless and casteless society and stressed the advantage of united action. He made an attempt to correct the Yogam from becoming in practice the organisation of the

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<sup>17</sup>     ibid., p. 75

<sup>18</sup>     ibid., p. 75

Ezhavas. He sent a message to the Annual conference of the Yogam held at Sivagiri on 17<sup>th</sup> Makaram 1102 M.E. No group can gain strength and achieve prosperity by any means other than organised effort. It was on this principal that the Yogam was established. 'The term Ezhava does not denote caste or religion. Therefore anyone can be made a member of the yogam. I wish many more joined'.<sup>19</sup>

Dr. Palpu was the first secretary of the Yogam. Mahakavi Kumaran Asan who came next gave the S.N.D.P. a strong cultural base for its numerous activities. "His poetic content was a perfect amalgam of Western thought with upanishadic and Buddhistic philosophy as the base. They were all ignited by a passion for social reform of the highest order."<sup>20</sup> After kumaran Asan, T.K. Madhavan virtually held the reins of the Yogam for over a decade. N. Kumaran who later on became a judge, was the secretary. The period of Madhavan's youth witnessed one of the most extraordinary revivals, both spiritual and political in Kerala. The disunited Ezhava community which had suffered suppression for so long, suddenly woke up its spiritual tradition under the leadership of Sree Narayana Guru and become one of the strongest organisations among the Hindus. The S.N.D.P. Yogam which became the central organ of the entire community was instrumental in achieving a social, political, spiritual and educational transformation of the group. This

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<sup>19</sup>        *ibid.*, p. 78

<sup>20</sup>        Moorkoth Kunjappa, *Sree Narayana Guru*. op. Cit., p. 53

transformation was achieved within as short a period as a single generation.

Within thirty years miraculous achievements were gained by the untouchables as a whole. "The disabilities of the depressed castes dropped one by one. They could walk along the public roads without fear of polluting anyone, use roads around temples, get admitted to schools, college, hostels, hotels, secure jobs in Govt. service and even have certain percentage of job reservation for different groups of castes and then finally came the entry into temples in 1936."<sup>21</sup>

S.N. Trust was formed for the creation of the infra structure for college level education. More than two dozen colleges, a number of polytechnics and high schools, are now working under this trust. R. Sanker was responsible for this move. Thus he implemented Guru's exhortation "Educate to be free".

In the year 2000 the election of the office bearers of the S.N.D.P. Yogam was conducted on December 29<sup>th</sup>. Advocate Vidhyasagar was elected as the president and Vellappalli Natesan as the General Secretary. The Vice President is K.N. Satyapalan and M.B. Sreekumar is the Devaswom Secretary. They took charge on December 31, 2000. The term of the elected body is five years. Ten members are nominated to the Director Board. They are S. Sadasivan, Biju Kannezhath,

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<sup>21</sup>      *ibid.*, p. 52

S. Harilal, Shaji Vettooran, Dr. B. Vijayan, R.V. Viswaraj, K.A. Ravindran, T.K. Padmanabhan, Shyn and Chittaranjan. The centenary celebration of S.N.D.P. Yogam will be in 2003.

Now S.N.D.P. Yogam became a formidable force. It held a right declaration rally in Kochi on 10<sup>th</sup> March 2001. The massive right declaration rally and convention held by S.N.D.P. Yogam demanded representation for Ezhava community commensurate with its population in all legislative bodies from the Grama Panchayaths to Parliament and in all judicial bodies. Making the rights declaration at the public meeting held in the Marine Drive grounds in Kochi, S.N.D.P. Yogam general secretary also demanded a separate quota for backward classes and Dalits within the 33 percent reservation for women proposed in the legislative bodies. He further demanded proportional representation for Ezhava community in the administrative wing of Devasam Boards and appointment of Ezhavas as priests in temples. He said that 85% of the backward communities including Dalits were conspicuously kept out of the socio-political structure during the last fifty years. But now they have come to realise that they have been duped by the upper classes. And hence they are determined to free the country from their clutches. He also said that communal reservation should be incorporated in the Ninth Schedule of the constitution so that it should be insulated from interference by courts. Further the reservation policy should be extended to the private sectors. Appointment of teaching and non-

teaching staff in private aided schools, should also adhere to the provisions of reservation.

He added that as long as the government considers liquor as an industry, the rights of thousands of those employed in this sector should be protected, but the Yogam stood for total prohibition. In the agricultural sector he demanded subsidy for farmers for obtaining seeds and fertilizers and direct procurement of local products, providing financial assistance to entrepreneurs for starting small scale industries and refraining from rampant privatisation of public sector units. In the education sector also Vellappalli demanded the opportunity for the community to open more educational institutions. Students belonging to the Ezhava and other backward communities should be given free training in avenues like information Technology and free computer education from primary level itself.

Today the S.N.D.P. Yogam strongly entrenched as the biggest single corporation of Kerala to defend the natural and constitutional rights of all socially and economically depressed people of the state.

#### **4.IV.2 Sree Narayan Dharma Sangham**

The Guru was of the opinion that the establishment of an order of monks would be good for the realisation and propagation of his messages. S.N.D.P. Yogam has its own limitations because it is an

organisation fighting for the rights of downtrodden classes. So he considered it necessary to create an order of monks dedicated to the service of humanity for the propagation of ideals which have relevance for all times and places. He established an order of monks named S.N. Dharma Sangham for the above said purpose and for upholding his board-based spiritual and moral goals. It was registered in 1927 and became the monastic order of Sree Narayana Guru. Swami Bodhanad was anointed as Guru's successor. The Guru vested all his properties in the Sanyasi Sangh through his last testment and will. The Sangham is the caretaker of most of the religious institutions sponsored or founded by the Guru. Now several mutts and extensive properties are under the control of the Sangham and it strongly entrenched in Sivagiri, Varkala.

Narayana Guru himself framed the rules needed for the Sangham. These rules are in the form of a short work known as 'Ashram'. He says that the "Ashram should have a teacher who is a scholar, a man of few words and no prejudices, who is generous, dignified, master of his senses, helpful, compassionate, truthful, efficient, moral, quick and active. The teachers should assume the leadership and form a society. Those who join it should have a sense of fraternity. As in this Ashrams, so in other villages, schools, ashrams and societies should be founded separately for men and women. Each should have

an able leader and the whole would constitute the Advaita Āshram.”<sup>22</sup>

After the samadhi of the Guru, Bodhananda was to assume full control over these institutions. After Bodhananda, the control of the sangham was to pass on to a monk elected by the order of his monk-disciples from among themselves. On the principle of majority opinion and this arrangement of selection of successors was to continue. (S.N.D.P. Sangham Trust Scheme. Sivagiri Mutt. Varkala 1959) Many eminent scholars join as members of the Sangham for dedicated service to the people of India and abroad.

“The object of the Trust is to disseminate and propagate the teachings and principles of the Guru its founder, and to do service to humanity. The objects and the activities of the Trust are governed by a scheme prepared and approved by the High Court in an Appeal Suit of 1956. The Trust board is to consist of 7 to 11 numbers. Election to the board had been held on July 26, 1994 and an eleven member Board headed by Swami Prakasananda came to power. But there arose disputes and Litigations. The rival faction convened a general body meeting on October 26, 1994 and elected a new Board which was challenged in the court. Ultimately the High Court held that the board elected on July 26, 1994 was valid and directed the board elected on October 26, 1994 to hand over the management and assets to the board

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<sup>22</sup>

M. K. Sanu, *Narayana Guru – A Biography*. Op. Cit., p. 209

elected on July 26, 1994, which was directed to fill up the vacancies in the board as per the scheme. But there was reluctance to hand over power and ultimately the court order had to be enforced with the help of police on October 11, 1995. The dispute continued and attempts were made to convene a general body meeting on the ground that one of the members had resigned by then and so quorum was lacking. Both the factions issued notice to hold general body meeting on November 10, 1997 leading to clashes between two groups. Outside forces entered to fray and took positions on either side and the situation grew tense. Police regiments were deputed to keep law and order.<sup>23</sup>

Then the state Government had taken possessions of the Sree Narayana Dharma Sangham Trust Management, assets and Properties of Sivagiri Mutt due to factional feud between two groups. On August 10<sup>th</sup> 2001 A Division Bench of the Kerala High Court upheld the take over of the Management by the state Government. Swami Prakasananda, Swami Visudhananda and others challenged the Government action. The court turned down these contentions that the disciples of Sree Narayana Guru are a religious denomination entitled to protection under rule. Sree Narayana Guru was a great philosopher and social reformer and could not be characterised as a Guru who established a religion; nor his disciples characterised as a religious

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<sup>23</sup> The New Indian Express Daily, Kozhikkodu, August 11 2001.

denomination. This statement strengthens Guru's view of One Religion-universalism - and that the three organisations – S.N.D.P. Yogam, Sree Narayana Sangham and Sree Narayan Gurukulam are open not only to Hindus but for all men irrespective of caste, creed or religion.

Election to the S.N.D.P. Trust was held on September 11, 2001 after a gap of nearly more than three years. Thus the administration of Sree Narayana Dharma Sangam is taken over again by Sanyasis with the election to the 11 member board took place on 11 september. Swami Sampurnananda was elected to the post of general secretary, Swami Swaroopananda, the president and swami Paramananda the treasurers.

#### **4.V.3 Sree Narayana Gurukulam**

Narayana Gurukulam was founded in 1923 by Nataraja Guru with the approval of the Guru for the propagation of wisdom through *Guru-Sishya Parampara*. It stands neutrally above all particular expressions of faith or ideology. It is based on the non-dual wisdom of the Absolute. The Gurukulam situated on a hillock adjacent to Sivagiri is an independent body which disseminates the teachings of the Guru. It is an off shoot of the Sivgiri Mutt. Originally Nataraja Guru taught boys of the *Ashram* and now the Gurukulam's role is the interpretation of the Guru's philosophy in relation to advanced western speculations. This is the

most articulating organ of the Guru's philosophy and humanist teachings. This became a world wide fraternity of contemplative minded people. This has many centres outside Kerala as well as abroad especially in western countries.

After the death of Sree Nataraja Guru in 1973, Guru Nitya Chaitanya Yati became the head of this body. According to V.R. Krishna Iyer 'Nitya Chaitanya Yati is perhaps the most Luminous Indian scholar who could and did project the vision of Sree Narayana Guru. The Spiritual revolutionary that Narayana Guru was made it necessary for exponents of his perspectives and perceptions, divinity and universality, to spread his teachings to the billions who make up global humanity. It is in this background that Guru Nitya emerged and illumined the East and the West and taught through comparative studies in religion, literature and Yoga, the meaning of the unitive philosophy of the saint of Sivagiri."<sup>24</sup> Guru Nitya Chaitanya expired on 14<sup>th</sup> May 1999. Now the Head of this body is Swami Muni Narayana Prasad. Much effort towards explication of the thoughts of the Guru with reference to the concepts of Western Philosophy is what the Gurukulam is committed to do.

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<sup>24</sup> I. V. Das, (Ed.) *Nitya Chaitanyam*. (Kannur: Nitya Chaitanya Vedi, 2001) p. 19

#### 4.V.4 The impact of S.N.D.P. Yogam in Kerala

The impact of S.N.D.P. Yogam on the times was tremendous and there came in to being different organisations representing the major sections among Hindus.

**1. The Pulaya Mahājana Sabha:-** The Pulaya Mahājana Sabha began functioning in 1905 under the leadership of Ayyankali. Its services to that community were of immense labours and tremendous significans. The Pulayas under their organisation took up cudgels against humulating discriminations.

**2. Nair Service Society (N.S.S.):-** In 1914 the Nair Service Society of the caste Hindus, especially the powerful sudra (Nair) Community came in to being. It was devoted to eradicating the taboos and false beliefs prevalent in that community. The society was started by stalwarts like the later Gandhian Kelappan and a distinguished judge Changanassery Parameswaram Pillai. It was essentially a social reform movement. One of the early leaders of the society was Mannath Padmanabha Pillai. He played an important role in Vaikkom Satyagraha. In his autobiography, he acknowledged his indebtedness to the teachings of the Guru. Under the leadership of Mannath Padmanabhan the N.S.S. made the community a truly integrated one. The society campaigned successfully for a Nair regulation which assured a just system of inheritance.

**3. The Yogakshema Sabha:-** The Yogakshema Sabha is the organisation of the Hindu priestly class, the Nampoothiries. This Sabha was organised by the progressive minded young Nampoothiries to reform their community from within. The Malayalee Brahmin Organisations tended to move to ultra left radicalism. They tried to liberate Nampoothiri women folk who were treated as slaves in their own houses. The youth of the community gravitated swiftly to the left. Widow remarriage was one of the planks of the Sabha's activity.

Thus different organisations representing the major sections among Hindus came in to being. These organisations had the avowed goal of exposing superstitions and fighting the inhuman customs and taboos arising from them. Though the organisations represented the respective communities, they were not communal. Each of the organisations gave importance to their constructive and progressive activities. But now these organisations have more or less become the handmaids of the communal politics.

Thus we can say that the four organisations – the S.N.D.P. Yogam, The Pulaya Mahajana Sabha, the Nair Service Society and Yogakshema Sabha had done the yeoman service in modernising Kerala. The latter three organisations were indebted very much to the Guru and to the Yogam. And these three organisations represent their own respective communities. But S.N.D.P. Yogam is not a sectarian Organisation but upon to all irrespective of caste creed and religion.

#### **4.V.5 Sivagiri Pilgrimage**

Vallabhassery Govindan Vaidyar and T.K. Kittan, the disciples of the Guru, requested the Guru to announce Sivagiri a holy place for pilgrimage. The Guru acknowledged their wish and announced Sivagiri as the pilgrim centre and suggested the New Year Day – the first of January as the day on which the pilgrims would assemble at Sivagiri. The Guru requested the people to observe ten days austerities with the Five Purities advised by Lord Buddha. The five Purities of Buddha are of the body, of food, of mind, of the word and of deed. He suggested yellow dress the colour of Krishna's and Buddha's robes, for the Sivagiri Pilgrims. This yellow dress must be cheap, simple and clean cloths. The cloths in wear can be dyed yellow with turmeric and can be used. Later they can be washed white for everyday use. The Guru added that every act should have a purpose and the aims of Sivagiri Pilgrimage he explained are ten. They are Education, Industry, Religion, Cleanliness, Piety, Group living, Agriculture, Trade, Handicrafts and Technical Training. Experts should be invited to lecture on these topics on the first of January. The Pilgrims should listen them with discipline and attention. They should practice what they learnt and thus succeed in life and thus lead to the prosperity of the people and the country. Thus the life should be made worth living which is the chief aim of the pilgrimage.

#### 4.V.6 Social uplift

The Guru was jñānin of a unique kind who had a keen living sense of the people and of social necessities. He started a silent revolution against casteism and evil practices that were prevalent among the people of Kerala. He tried to eradicate the taboos and false beliefs prevalent in different communities. He exposed to public gaze the terrible harm that false benefits and superstitions actions have done.

In 1904 an Ezhava conference was held at Paravur (Quilon) under Guru's Chairmanship for the uplift of the community. In this conference the Guru decided to put an end to the evil practices like 'Thalikettu', Thirandukuli, Pulikudi etc and to evolve a new code for the conduct of marriages. These customs involve huge expenditure and held complete sway over the social life of those days: 'Thalikettu' was a mock marriage, a ceremonial tying of the marriage thread around the neck of a girl even before puberty. It was considered as an index of status and of social prestige. 'Thirandukuli' or ceremonial bath was a rite which amounted to the public announcement of a girl's puberty or adulthood. Pulikudi was another primitive custom for celebrating the fact of the first pregnancy, by ritually drinking a so-called sacred concoction. This was performed in the seventh month of first pregnancy. The husband was to give the wife a drink in which seven different ingredients of sour taste had been mixed. As in the case of other functions an elaborate feast was a traditional necessity.

The actual wedding consisted of the presentation of a garment to the bride by the groom's sister who then led her to the husband's house. The presentation used to be done inside the house. It was the Guru who changed this custom by having the ceremony performed on a platform in the open court yard of the house. According to him the marriage must be simple and the participants should not exceed ten persons – groom, their parents, one companion each of the girl and the groom, a priest and an important man of the locality. The Guru added that the priest is to hand over the garlands, his heart brimful of the thought of God. Marriage should be registered in the book kept for that purpose.

He also recommended rites connected with death "The kith and kin of the deceased pray for ten days, after bathing early in the morning, to the deity of their choice. Not more than ten *aṅṅas* (less than a Rupee) be spent for buying incense etc for these ten days. More good may come from earnest prayer for the eternal rest of the departed soul than by ritually offering handful of rice as per instructions of an ignorant priest. It will be worth while act if the money intended for arranging feast in the name of the dead is donated for some charitable cause."<sup>25</sup>

The Vivekodayam monthly of S.N.D.P. Yogam had published in detail the procedure to be followed while conducting a wedding, and rites connected with death. He knew that mere publication of directions

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<sup>25</sup> K. Sreenivasan, *Sree Narayana Guru. op. Cit.*, pp. 119,120

would not make them accepted in practice. For this purpose the Guru himself went to wedding ceremony in many houses.

The Guru was also concerned with educational and economic aspects besides the social problems. To the Guru education appropriate to the times was the sine-qua-non of all progress. In 1912 the Vijnāna Vardhini Sabha of Cherai, Cochin, arranged a reception in honour of the Guru and replying to the address the Guru made the following statements:-

“Few are those with high educational qualifications in our community. Of late many have begun showing interest in getting educated. This is most welcome. Education alone helps society to prosper... Those with means should help brilliant students who are poor to go abroad for higher studies. This will be in, many respect, advantageous to our community. The usefulness of the study of Sanskrit seems to be waning. The language which is now in great demand is English. Hence we must devote attention to its study. Not only men but also women must be educated. The latter should not be neglected in this respect.”<sup>26</sup>

The Guru encouraged adult literacy and establishment of libraries in every locality. Vivekodayam magazine started by the S.N.D.P. Yogam played an important rôle for the uplift of the community. Guru

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<sup>26</sup>      *ibid.*, p. 92

himself was a great educationalist. He began life as a village teacher, started a Sankrit school at Aruvippuram and at Varkala where it is still being run. At Alwaye he founded the Advaita Ashram Sanskrit school which is one of the best institutions of the kind in the state. It imparts free Sanskrit education to numerous pupils. Most of the temples he established have schools attached to them.

According to the Guru after education, industry is the next important thing for the uplift of the community. At Varkala, he established also a weaving school where pupils got free elementary instruction in weaving. It has helped man to acquire a means of livelihood. In order to make our economic power sufficient through industry and commerce, what is required is the involvement of the rich. Only moneyed people can import appropriate machinery and start small scale industries as well as handicrafts. Industrial progress is an important thing for social advancement and elevation of economic position of the community. Our children should get training in industrial institutions.

#### **4.V.7 Guru as a Humanist**

The guru a unique 'Jñānin of action' took the role of not only a saint and philosopher but also a humanist in his life. An assertion of the Guru "Man is not for Religion, Religion is for man" is a thorough going

statement of the philosophy of humanism. Like Vivekananda, the true correlation between *Karmayoga* and humanism is found in him. In *Atmopadēsa Satakam* the emphasis is laid on man. According to him the urge for freedom or salvation enables man to acquire knowledge and thus he conquers his environment by knowing. He stated that self-instruction is the best means to know one self and world. The Guru projected a God who would stand the test of reason and a religion which served progressive human and social purpose. The message such as 'One Caste, One Religion, One God, for Man' and 'Whatever be the religion, it suffices if it makes a better man,' propounded by the Guru reveals himself as a true humanist and internationalist. Even though he was a rustic saint he boldly envisaged the concept of 'One World' many decades back. This concept emerges only from a man who is an unstinted believer in humanity.

#### **4.V.8 Narayana Guru and Rabindranath Tagore**

The Guru preached a moral and spiritual universalism and thousands went for the *darsan* of the Saint. Among them Rabindranath Tagore and Mahatma Gandhi were the two distinguished noble souls who called on the Guru. The trio were at the helm of the spiritual and secular transformation that was taking place in India at that time.

Modern India's national bard Rabindranath Tagore was a great

educationalist seer and one of the outstanding humanists. Poet Tagore met the Guru at Sivagiri on 22<sup>nd</sup> November 1922. There was much in common between the Guru and the Bard. The two kindred souls conversed as much through silence as through speech.

About their meeting, Dr. P. Natrajan describes as follows: "The seer of Bengal broke the deep silence that marked their meeting; and complimented the Guru on the 'great-work' he was doing for the people. The Guru's reply was not delayed. "Neither have we done anything in the past nor is it possible to do anything in the future. Powerlessness fills us with sorrow." His words sounded as an enigma to some. Others thought he was just joking. Still others examined the logic of the statement. A characteristic silence followed the remark. The crowd looked at one another for a meaning, but it was the Guru's face itself that gave the silent commentary to the words. Deep silence and earnestness sat on his features. Smiles of curiosity and the rival expectations of the people were drawn in to the neutral depths of silence by the suggestion that was expressed on the features of the Guru. All were silent for a minute or two. The climax of the interview was reached in silence where all met in equality. Usual conversation followed and the poet and the crowd retired ... the apparently unproductive principle which the Guru stood was all the time ripening fruitful result all round..."<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> John Spiers, "Dharma of a Guru", *Sivagiri*. October, Book - 2 (Varkala: Sree Narayana Dharma Sangham – Sivagiri Mutt, 1948) p. 51

About the meeting Tagore made an ecstatic utterance as follows  
 “I have been touring different parts of the world. During those travels I have had the good fortune to come in contact with several Saints and Maharshis. But I have frankly to admit that I have never come across one who is spiritually greater than swami Sree Narayana Guru of Kerala-  
 nay, a person who is on a par with him in spiritual attainments. I am sure I shall never forget that radiant face, illumined by the self-effulgent light of divine glory and those yogic eyes fixing their gaze on remote point in faraway-horizon”<sup>28</sup>

#### 4.V.9 Narayan Guru and Mahatma Gandhi

Gandhiji’s visit to Vaikom and his meeting with the Guru were historic events. He visited sivagiri on March 12<sup>th</sup> 1925. The meeting was arranged at Gandhi Ashram. They discussed about untouchability. Vaikom Satyagraha, that was being held to remove untouchability and the conversion of religion.

Gandhiji believed *Varṇāshrama* concept as a divinely ordained dispensation and according to him the unflattering basis of this caste-system is the individual’s *karma*, past or present. Gandhiji tried his best to convert the Guru to this orthodox view by citing the example of the different sized leaves of the same mango tree in the Ashram. The Guru

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<sup>28</sup> K. Sreenivasan, *Sree Narayana Guru*. Op. Cit., p. 4,5

said that the juice of all leaves taste the same having one and the same quality. "So are all men in essence. Man every where belongs to one caste, one species." To the Guru service is the one religion, and have the one and only God of mankind. Then Gandhiji was convinced of the irrationality of caste and the sparks of dissent was vanished. Thence forward he vigorously worked to eradicate untouchability and caste observance. This meeting produced a healthy impact on our freedom struggle and on Gandhiji's leadership of it. After this the Indian National Congress approved fight against casteism and communalism as one of its major planks.

Guru's meeting with Gandhiji was an epoch-making one for the reason that it persuaded Gandhiji to reconsider his belief in *Chāturvarṇya*. There after Gandhiji considered caste as a man-made evil. It was the biggest divisive factor in Indian Polity, nay in Indian religion.

According to the Guru caste was not determined by God. If caste is necessary, let everyone be a Brahmin. To call one self a Sudra is to admit inferiority. The Guru's opinions were unambiguous and categorical. Both agreed in removing unouchability.

At Sivagiri the Guru trained untouchable boys for priesthood along with other Hindu Children. According to the Guru and Gandhiji the lower classes should get educated, and be given them equal

opportunities for betterment along with everyone else. On the next day of the meeting, in speech at a public meeting at Trivandrum Gandhiji rhapsodied as follows "I consider it the greatest good fortune of my life to have visited the beautiful Travancore state and met the most venerable saint Sree Narayana Guruswami Trippandangal."<sup>29</sup>

The meeting of the trio-the Maharshi Rabinda Nath Tagore, Mahatma Gandhi and the Guru was an event of great significance "This modern trinity was actually beckoning the nation to a new, exciting and significant vista of Brotherhood, Freedom, Service and unitive self realisation."<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> K. Sreevasan, *Sree Narayana Guru*. Op. Cit., p. 6  
<sup>30</sup> *ibid.*, p. 6

## CHAPTER V

# UNIVERSAL RELIGION

The Guru, one of the greatest of the modern saints exemplifies in his own life, the deal of the unity of all life, the oneness of mankind. Universality of outlook constitutes the striking feature of the great life and thought of the Guru. His *modus vivendi* explains powerfully the applicability of the principles of Vedānta to daily life. The Guru's dictum of one in kind, One in Religion and One in God for man is a dynamic pointer to One world religion or universalism. This can be attained if we equip ourselves with an outlook and understanding that is at once unitive and unifying. According to the Guru, man is of one family because of the unitive and all embracing nature of the self as expressed in *Ātmōpadeśa Śatakam*. Verse - 11.

The repeated I, I contemplated from within  
Is not many but remains one dwergent egorty  
Being multiple with the totality of such  
The self-substance too continuing assumes.<sup>1</sup>

Guru's message of One caste, One religion, One God is of urgent importance in India whose democratic system is based on secularism.

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<sup>1</sup> Nataraja Guru, *Life and Teachings of Narayana Guru*. (Sreenivasapuram, India: East-West University Publication, 1990) p. 493

This message helps to purify the hearts and minds of Indian humanity and lifts them beyond racial, religious, linguistic and parochial wrangles.

### **5.1 ONE CASTE, ONE RELEGION, ONE GOD FOR MAN (*ORU JĀTI, ORU MATAM, ORU DAIVAM MANUSHYANU*)**

One of the most important messages of the Guru, 'One Caste, One Religion, One God for man Implies Advaita philosophy in concrete, factual identifiable terms. This great and benignant message of the Guru is the second verse of his famous work. *Jāti Nirnaya* (A Critique of caste) which contains five verses of which first is in Sanskrit and the remaining four in Malayalam. It says so.

"One of kind, One of faith,  
and one in God is man,  
of one womb, of one form  
Difference here is none"<sup>2</sup>

In this message there is practical Vedānta, a message of harmony and unitive understanding with universal connotation and contemporary relevance. He declared that the men of the whole world belong to the same species. Being different manifestations of the Unitive Brahman, the self and the external world are one and the same. This is one caste and one God. By one religion he declared that the

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<sup>2</sup> *ibid.*, p. 273

essence of all religions is the same. All have the same goal but the only difference is in the means to attain the goal.

John Spiers, One of Guru's great disciples, paraphrases it "as there being only one External Reality, dedicated service to that is the true religion: and since all men are capable of that service, and since all people, all life and all things move and have their existence by that One, all separateness and division into race, caste colour and creed are nothing but illusion foisted on the minds of men by ignorance and forgetfulness of this sole Universal Reality."<sup>3</sup>

### 5.1.1 One Caste (*Oru Jāti*)

The Indian constitution envisages a secular casteless and classless society. The fundamental ideas inspiring these documents were given to the people by Sree Narayana Guru a century ago. The Guru accepted the non-duality of the individual self and the divine Self of Advaita Philosophy of Sri Sankara. This notion naturally led to the assertion of the non-duality of individual selves. Therefore he opposed caste system.

The caste system and its direct off shoot untouchability were degenerated form of traditional *chāturvarṇya* which was based on the division of people according to their family occupation. *Chāturvaṇya* was contrary to the very spirit of Advaita. The Guru's famous message

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<sup>3</sup> John Spiers, "A Warrior Rshi", *The Life and Teaching of Sree Narayana Guru*. (Colombo: Sree Narayana Guru Celebration Committee-133) p. 9

'One Caste, One religion, One God for men' was an outcome of his interpretation of Sankara's Advaita. The message has great relevance for us today when the traditional family occupations have broken down. People belonging to different social groups have been taking up occupations that are alien to their classes. The Guru's teachings enable us to fight against caste system and untouchability which still persist in our country.

The theory of One caste based on Non-dual knowledge is the basic principle of the theory of One Religion of the Guru. So one caste shall be accepted as the basis of human religion and the present caste system shall be abolished in every sphere of life. Based on the famous saying 'Every one is born as *Sudra* but he becomes *Brahmin* by his action' (*Janmana Ja yate Sudrah, Karmana Ja yate dvijah*), caste is an anomaly in religions. Nataraja Guru says that Sankara treated the subject of caste as part of the *Vyāvahārika* (the world of relative, every day life), a necessary and given aspect of social obligation taken for granted as something natural. For various historical reasons the critical revaluations of the subject of caste in the light of the full implications of contemplative, non-dual self knowledge was avoided in India. In our own times, as we know, this neglect has led to extreme forms of social inequality and discrimination, known today as caste, exclusive and

segregatory, leading to the extremism of untouchability. It is Brahmin verus pariah dialectics.<sup>4</sup>

The Guru states that castes such as Brahmin and Pariah have no reality. Caste distinctions have no basis in actuality. "Racial distinctions do not amount to distinctions in the species in any strict terms. Like languages and customs these may give an appearance of variety to the species, but they are only superficial factors of no importance intrinsically to biology"<sup>5</sup> The Guru defined caste as one in kind. Both the Brahmin and Pariah are essentially one in human content. Whatever asymmetry there may be in the appearance of one or the other is fictitious and quite irrelevant to spirituality. Humanity is one and indivisible in kind (*Jāti*). There is no room for any multiplicity at any level of human nature, socially, religiously or contemplatively. The caste distinctions have no basis in Advaita Philosophy. The duality that is apparent between the interests of two individuals can be viewed unitively as referring to the self-same central or neutral Self conceived in the context of the Absolute. In *Atmōpadeśa Śatakam* the Guru says that 'Ātman is one only without a second. So the whole humanity is one in kind.'

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<sup>4</sup> Nataraja Guru, *Life and Teachings of Narayana Guru*. Op.Cit., pp. 274, 275

<sup>5</sup> *ibid.*, p. 277

The distinction between caste and out-caste is artificial and unspiritual. The *Bhagvadgītā* explains the fourfold order based on guṇa (aptitude) and Karma (function) and not jāti (kind-birth).

“The fourfold order was created by Me according to the division of quality and works. Though I am its creator, know Me to be incapable of action or change.”<sup>6</sup> A class determined by temperament and vocation is not a caste determined by birth and heredity. The *varṇa* or the order to which we belong is independent of sex, birth or breeding. So the interpretation of some scholars in favour of caste system is due to the misunderstanding of the word ‘*varṇa*’ as caste in India. The vedās are not in favour of any discrimination of caste system which has prevailed in India. *Mahābhāratha* explains: The whole world was originally of one class but later it became divided in to four divisions on account of the specific duties.

“Ekavarṇam Idam purṇam viswam asid yudhistira

Karmakriya viśeṣena cāturvaṇyam pratiṣṭhitam”<sup>7</sup>.

In the *Mahābhārata* Yudhistira says that it is difficult to find out the caste of persons on account of the mixture of caste. Men beget offspring in all sorts of women. So conduct is the only determining feature of caste according to sages”<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> S. Radhakrishnan, *Bhagavadgītā*. (Bombay: Blackie and Son Ltd, 1970) p. 160

<sup>7</sup> *ibid.*, p. 161

<sup>8</sup> *ibid.*, p. 161

“There is nothing absolute about the caste system which has changed its character in the process of history. Functional groupings will never be out of date and as for marriages they will happen among those who belong to more or less the same stage of cultural development. The present morbid condition of India broken into castes and subcastes is opposed to the unity taught by the *Gītā*, which stands for an organic as against an atomistic conception of society.”<sup>9</sup>

Buddha was the only great Indian philosopher who would not recognise caste. Like Buddha, the Guru boldly proclaimed the theory of one caste and dedicated his life to the well-being of humanity. On the basis of Advaitic vision, the Guru proclaims the theory of One caste, One religion, One God for man in his short poems *Jāti Nirṇayam* and *Jāti Lakṣaṇa*. Through *Jāti Nirṇayam* the Guru explains that ‘humanity comes under a distinct species. Being so, its oneness and relatedness are beyond doubt’.<sup>10</sup> It rejects the idea of casteism.

‘Man’s humanity marks out the human kind  
 Even as bovinity proclaims a cow  
 Brahminhood and such are not thus wise;  
 None do see this truth alas!  
 One in kind, One in faith and one in God is man;  
 Of one womb, of one form; difference here is none.’<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> *ibid.*, p. 161

<sup>10</sup> K. Sreenivasan, *Sree Narayana Guru*. (Trivandrum: Jayasree Publications, 1989), p. 157

<sup>11</sup> Nataraja Guru, *Life and Teachings of Narayana Guru*. Op.Cit., p. 273

One caste for man means as bovinity proclaims cowness, humanness marks out the human kind. Thus being human all men belong to the same caste according to the Guru. The Guru also says that the human species is one because within the same species only offspring truly breed.

“Within a species, is not, that offspring truly breed?

The community of man thus viewed to a single caste belongs”<sup>12</sup>

Since there is no difference between man and man, both Brahmin and Pariah are essentially one in human species. The Guru exhorted that the great men are respected by their dedicated services and not by their birth. Birth was not a hindrance in the way of Parasara or Vyasa in their unique reputation as great sages and teachers.

“In bygone days of a Pariah woman the great sage Parasara was  
born,

As even he of Vedic-aphorism fame of a virgin of the fisher-folk”<sup>13</sup>

“The Guru’s aim here is to reveal to all that these saintly characters, Parasara and Vyasa, who were recognized everywhere as ancestors of holy cherished memory and worshipped as such by all castes in every home in the Hindu world, are themselves outstanding reminders that mere prejudice lingers round the notion of caste, since they come from the much - abused and misunderstood Pariah line and not from the Brahmin stock at all; hence here is the ultimate contradiction to be faced, of the Brahmin not only accepting and

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<sup>12</sup> ibid., p. 273.

<sup>13</sup> ibid., p. 273.

adopting the Pariah Guru but putting him on the topmost pedestal as a sage of supreme value from the Vedic point of view. In the contradictory absurdity thus proved, all caste prejudices based on heredity, dynasty and blind tradition must be dispelled, and the social atmosphere of the present ultimately and finally cleared of this major caste-impediment”<sup>14</sup>

The few verses of this short poem – *Jāti Nirṇayam* – convey even to the ordinary man the essence of his views on universal religion. With the aid of this short poem, the Guru establishes the undoubted fact of human solidarity of one kind genetically, of one fundamental faith religiously and of one supreme value considered under the many synonyms of God. He adds that the present cast system shall be abolished in every sphere of life.

In the poem *Jāti Lakṣaṇa* the Guru explains that the group (*inam*) or the caste of animals can be determined on the basis of the common or essential characteristics possessed by the members of a particular group. Sri Buddha was also of this opinion. Here the guru defines casteism scientifically and gives the common characteristics (*Sāmānya Lakṣaṇa*) on the basis of which caste can be determined.

- a. The animals which unite with each other and give birth to their off springs, belong to the same group. Which do not do so belong to other groups.

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<sup>14</sup> Nataraja Guru, *Life and Teachings of Narayana Guru*. Op.Cit., p. 291

- b. The members of a particular group possess similar physical posture, sound, body temperature and smell as the common characteristic.
- c. The group of animals can be determined on the basis of their *sāmānya lakṣaṇa*, possessed by the members of that particular group. Eg. 'humanness' is the *sāmānya lakṣaṇa* of human beings.
- d. We can enquire the name, native place and occupation of a person. But we need not ask about his caste because his *Jātilakṣaṇa*, 'humanness' is the same for all human beings and it can be perceived directly.
- e. We need not lie about our caste. All belong to the same caste, humanity. So there is no need of questioning about other's caste and there is no such distinction as lower and upper caste.

Thus the Guru exhorts that every group (*inam*) has its own *sāmānya lakṣaṇa* and the group or caste in which the animal belongs depends on their common or essential attributes. The groups can be divided only into two – the males and females. No other divisions exist. The Guru also adds that the group or *inam* is nothing but the *vivartha* of *Arivu*. He concludes the poem by making use of the vedāntic similitude of ocean and waves. Group is the waves that arise from the ocean of *Arivu*. The waves are nothing but the ocean itself. So the *inam* or group

is the *Arivu* or knowledge. The knowledge is essentially the nature of self. So there is no difference between one's self and the other's.

According to the Guru caste restricts man's freedom and destroys his intelligence. Caste makes it impossible to take up professions according to aptitude. Avocations become an obligation of birth in a community even if the person has not the ability or aptitude for them. So progress becomes impossible due to caste system.

Now-a-days instead of this caste system there emerged a new moral arena of life called community or *Samudāyam*. Hence Nair community and Ezhava community have been synonymous to Nair caste and Ezhava caste. The S.N.D.P. Yogam was established based on the principle of the Guru that without an organisation no community can achieve prosperity and strength. He stated that the Ezhava community does not indicate a caste or religion and people can be admitted into this organization irrespective of cast and religion. The concept of humanism or human equality put forth by the Guru differs from that of Mahatma Gandhi who wished to implement a modern network of the village republics to combat caste oppression. Thus the Guru was bringing Vedānta down from the intellectual heights to the laymen. As a '*jñānin* of action' he sensed the social evils of his day and contributed to the elevation of the oppressed classes in Kerala. To quote Nehru "he worked for a classless and casteless society". He said that Sree Narayana Guru lived here and from here radiated his message

– the message of no caste, no division and he wanted to build up a casteless and classless society. That message is still very much needed in these days. In order to get a casteless, classless society what are we to do? Many things have to be done. But the general approach which I presume is Sree Narayana Guru's approach through the mind and heart and not of a compulsion and coercion. Where there is not this turning of the heart and mind, all other changes are likely to be superficial.<sup>15</sup>

“Ask not speak not, Think not of caste”. This is the final warning the Guru has given to those who accept the message of human brotherhood; and this contains the simple answer to the caste system. The Guru says that caste exists in the ignorance and superstitions of the people and nothing more is required get out of that self made snare than to ignore it. One cannot come out of the spell unless the above simple rules are observed. The saint who taught with such broad – mindedness has been recognised by all the castes as their Guru and his birthday and Samadhi day have been made public holidays by the Government in Kerala.

The Guru also states that man is not made for caste, for the world or any such things; all these are for men. The S.N.D.P. Yogam is a body of people without any sort of caste leaning and to whom religion was not a creed but a matter of personal faith. His disciples should be

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<sup>15</sup> Souvenir to commemorate the 112<sup>th</sup> birthday of Sree Narayana Guru – A Sree Narayana Guru Mission Publication 31<sup>st</sup> August. 1966, p. 28

absolutely no thought of caste. He has openly proclaimed that only those who have given up caste mentality should be admitted in to the order of disciples.

The Guru declared that all humanity belong to the same species. This knowledge he acquired was because of the *Ātma-Jñāna* attained through the study of Advaita Darsana. The declaration made by the Guru in the last Millenium is now proved to be true scientifically by two famous scientists - Francis Collin (Director H.G. Project) J. Craig Venter (Director Celeia Genomics) based on their study on Gene mapping. And on 26<sup>th</sup> June 2000 the then American President Bill Clinton announced the world that all human beings in the world belong to one and the same human species.<sup>16</sup>

Legislative enactments may penalise the observance of the absurd distinctions and caste leanings; and we may hope that the forces which the Guru set in motion will in due time accomplish the downfall of that accursed system.

Legislative enactments may penalise the observance of the absurd distinctions and caste learnings; and we may hope that the forces which the Guru set in motion will in due time accomplish the downfall of that accursed system.

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<sup>16</sup> Mathrubhumi Daily, 21.9. 2000, Kozhikode. P.4

### 5.1.2 One Religion

The religious transformation taken place in Kerala was mostly due to the principles and practices established by the Guru. Many lakhs of people have been benefitted by this divine man's efforts. Even the first act of his public work-consecration of temple at Aruvippuram – shook the foundation of the fortress of orthodoxy, and this event was steadily becoming a revolutionary force heralding a new cultural renaissance. The epoch making Temple Entry Proclamation of his Highness Sri Bala Rama Varma, Maharaja of Travancore was an expression of the changing outlook and marks the dawn of a new age of freedom and reconstruction.<sup>17</sup>

One of the chief contributions of the Guru is his message of One caste, One religion and One God. He taught a better a way of life based on Advaitic theory of religion to all humanity including spiritualists and materialists as well. The Guru declared the theory of One Religion based on One ultimate reality. The Guru thus turned out to be a source of inspiration to all those who worked for the religious, cultural and material advancement of society. People belonging to all communities – Nairs, Ezhavas, Christians sought blessings from the Guru and he mingled with the people with equal love and affection. To him the whole world was one family (*Vasudhaiva Kudumbakam*) and he accepted and honoured all religions including Christianity and Islam.

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<sup>17</sup> Swami Dharma Theertha, "Prophet of the New Order", *Sree Narayana Guru Souvenir* - 1967. (Varkala: Sivagiri Mutt, 1967) p. 26

'In the course of his long quest for truth, he gathered much knowledge about world religions. Islam was very dear to him because of its emphasis on equality and brotherhood. Sufi Mysticism appealed to his devotional and poetic turn of mind. There were occasions when he gave his own interpretations of the verses in the Quran. They were acceptable to the Muslim divines too. Many were the Muslims of the south Travancore who considered him as their Guru. He revered Jesus Christ as the Apostle of love and peace. All these contacts and the experience so gained made him fully convinced of the universality of love and of the unitiveness of all religious doctrines.<sup>18</sup> The knowledge he gathered provided a practical orientation to his *Darsana* or vision of reality.

Through his message of One religion the Guru has emphasized the basic unity of all religions based on *Advaita Vedānta* and he never denied the usefulness of any particular religion. Religion is the realization of the ultimate truth. The Guru stated that "the aim of all religions is one. Once the different rivers run in to the sea all of them merge into it; the difference disappear. The aim of religion is to lift the thought of man towards the highest point. After this goal is achieved, each individual will find his way to it on his own. For the man who has experienced the ultimate truth, the aid or religion is no longer needed. He becomes the source of religious faith for other men. The Buddha did

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<sup>18</sup> K. Sreenivasan, *Sree Narayana Guru*. Op.Cit., p. 23

not attain the ultimate in enlightenment by studying Buddhism. He realized and then he preached what he had realized. And the sum total of those teachings became Buddhism. This is true of other religions also.”<sup>19</sup> The Guru exhorted that the religious wars and communal strives will have no end because no community can be annihilated. If religious strife is to end every one should be taught the other man’s religion and he should learn it with an open mind and recognize the other religions. That will pave the way to the realization of the same fundamentals of different religions, which is meant by the expression “One Religion for Man”.

The Guru lucidly explains that “Today Hinduism means the entire conglomeration of an immense variety of beliefs belonging to an entire scale of values which spans a considerable hiatus (gap) that exists in the matter of customs, manners, rites and philosophy among different groups and believers. *Veda, Mimamsa, Dvaita, Advaita, Visishtadvaita, Saiva, Sakteya, Vaishnava* all these are forms of the Hinduism. If this entire gamut of beliefs can be called one religion viz Hinduism, then all religions Islam, Christianity, Buddhism, Jainism etc can be collectively known as “One Religion”<sup>20</sup>

He also stated that “If the religion preached by its founder and subsequently elaborated into different branches by his followers, can be

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<sup>19</sup> Moorkoth Kunhappa, *Sree Narayana Guru*. (New Delhi: National Book Trust, 1982) p. 40

<sup>20</sup> *ibid.*, p. 42.

called one religion and given the name of the founder, the spiritual tenets preached by the different *Achāryas* can also, by an extension of this principle be termed as one religion. People should see the phenomenon of unity in diversity as it exists between different religions.”<sup>21</sup>

As the foreigners styled the people of Hindustan as Hindus and many distinctly different religions are called by the common generic name of Hinduism, it is not illogical to designate all the religions of the world by the appellation “One Religion” with a single unambiguous essence and goal. According to the Guru, the essence and the goal of all religions is the same. The gist of the Guru’s message is that the texts of religions should be studied without any discrimination. The religion of the Guru tolerates all form of worship as alternative approaches to Reality. It shows tolerance and universal outlook, and provides for the fellowship of faiths and inter-religious unity. He practiced and taught the Advaita way of life, i.e., “One Religion.”

### 5.1.3 Philosophical implications of one religion

*Ātmōpadeśa Śatakam* verses 44 to 49 give the philosophical implications of One religion. The Guru says that the ignorant people do not recognize the truth that the essence of all religions is one and the same. Their ideas may be compared to apparently conflicting view of

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<sup>21</sup> *ibid.*, p. 42

the blind men who cognized the elephant in many forms, touching the different parts of its body and interpreted the shape of the animal in different manner depending upon the particular portion each one touched.

“Not seeing that the various religions in the world  
Are essentially the same, advancing various arguments  
Like the blind men and the elephant, roam not like fools.  
But stop wandering and calmly settle down”<sup>22</sup>

The Guru then explains that the rules of one religion or faith may not be valid for another religion. Different religions came to be established under the influence of different external conditions, which make them appear as different, but they are essentially one and the same. So the arguments based upon illusion about the superiority of one religion over the other, has no meaning at all. Here the Guru is stressing the message “One Caste, One Religion and One God for man”.

“One faith in another’s view is low, and the doctrine  
Cardinal as taught in one, in another’s measure, lacks;  
Know, confusion in the world shall prevail so long  
As the unitive secret herein remains unknown.”<sup>23</sup>

The people who quarrel in the name of religions are ignorant of the fact that ultimately there is only one faith and one religion. The

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<sup>22</sup> Nataraja Guru, *Life and Teachings of Narayana Guru*. Op.Cit., p. 587  
<sup>23</sup> *ibid.*, p. 589

people who make no discrimination between different forms of faith know the secret. The Guru expressed this view in *Ātmōpadeśa Satakam* verse 47.

“All men do even plead for a single faith to prevail  
Which no disputant owns to himself withal;  
Those wise ones free from other-faith-dispute  
Alone can know here wholly, the secret here implied.”<sup>24</sup>

All kinds of religious practices have the ultimate goal. The difference between the religions is due to the difference in the method of practical teaching. The philosophical implications of One Religion that is explained by the Guru in the six verses of *Ātmōpadeśa Śatakam* verses 44 to 49 can be summarized as

- a) All religions have common aim and end i.e. – Happiness.
- b) Ardent mutual adoptions is implicit in religious affiliation.
- c) Rival religions argue for the same value.
- d) Essence of all religions is the same.

All religions have the common aim of Happiness. “To the eye of a person able to see the essential as distinct from the merely superficial aspect of religions, there is a common basic substratum of which the divergent expressions are only secondary and unimportant marginal aspects. All religions in essence answer to one central human need for

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<sup>24</sup> *ibid.*, p. 594

spiritual consolation. They all seek happiness and there is no religion in the world which aims at suffering rather than happiness.”<sup>25</sup>

“Every man at every time makes effort in every way.

Aiming at his Self-Happiness; therefore in this world

Know faith as one; understanding thus,

Shunning evil, the inner Self into calmness merge.”<sup>26</sup>

“The one religion of mankind, to which the Guru referred in his well known motto of One race, One religion and One Ideal or God for all mankind, is to be visualized on the basis of the common end of Happiness that all religions, however varied and different superficially have as the central value implied in their teaching.”<sup>27</sup>

Ardent mutual adoption is implicit in religious affiliation. According to the Guru all men have self realization already implicit in their relational life. When a man accepts certain religion as pattern of behaviour there is a deep seated fusion of the self and non self factors which take place within him. When the relation is with the true Self in man, adoption does not result in conflict. But the ego participates, it tends often to far and exaggerate the disparity of religions. “The possibility of adopting a religion as one's own is itself, as the Guru points out, only a recognition of the homogenous parity in the participation of the self and non self factors involved. By itself this possibility belongs to

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<sup>25</sup> *ibid.*, p. 588

<sup>26</sup> *ibid.*, p. 599

<sup>27</sup> *ibid.*, p. 589

the pure Self and when understood in such a pure perspective, is fully dignified and conducive to Self realization."<sup>28</sup>

"This dweller within the body from its existential body view

In respect of all things treats 'That' or 'This' as 'mine'

Transcending physical limitations; when we consider this

We should concede that any man immediate realisation has"<sup>29</sup>

*Atmōpadeśa Śatakam* Verse 46 underlines the fact that persecution only makes unilateral faith firmer. The martyrs to any deep belief prove the irony of the situation in the history of any religion, and this is contrary to What might be expected by me mechanistic reasoning. The apocalyptic touch of the last line of verse 46 give a prophetic touch of the Guru's philosophy of religion.<sup>30</sup>

To vanquish (a religion) by fighting is not possible, no religion

Can be abolished by mutual attack;

The opponent of another faith

Not remembering this and persisting in his fight,

His own doom shall be in vain fight for, beware!<sup>31</sup>

The religious reformers are trying to unite all humanity under one faith. A fanatic might want all others to come under his religion. Rival antagonism could be minimised if the religious zealots realise the fact that they are pleading for the same value. *Atmōpadeśa Śatakam* verse 47 brings this fact to light.

<sup>28</sup> Nataraja Guru, *The Philosophy of a Guru*. (Varkala: Sreenivasapuram, 1986) p. 130

<sup>29</sup> Nataraja Guru, *Life and Teachings of Narayana Guru*. Op.Cit., p. 597

<sup>30</sup> Nataraja Guru, *The Philosophy of a Guru*. Op.Cit., p. 132

<sup>31</sup> Nataraja Guru, *Life and Teachings of Narayana Guru*. Op.Cit., p. 591

The difference between religions is due to the difference in their method of practical teaching. All kinds of practice have the ultimate goal-the unfolding of divinity. The essence or the basic subject matter of all religious faiths or patterns of behaviour is the same. It is the direct global insight in to the nature of the Absolute or total truth. So Narayana Guru explains the need for taking a global view of religious system. He also stresses the need to see the underlying unity of all religions.

The Guru's last message to the people strengthens the view that ultimately there is only one faith and one religion. Just about a year and a half before he passed away, he gave his last message to the people gathered in the annual meeting of the S.N.D.P. Yogam near Alleppy. It ran thus.

"I am very much pleased to understand that you are having serious discussions about social organisation and religious reform. But the object of organisation should not be to bring together people of a particular caste and create a community. Our organisation should be such as will unite all mankind. Religion should allow full liberty of faith and be acceptable to cultured minds. It should be such as will lead men to a great ideal. The central principle contained in 'One caste, One religion, One God' can form the basis of such religion. It appears to me that the best method of organisation will be to unite all those who believe in this eternal truth. To those who think that without a change of religion the inequalities and injustices will not end, to such, accepting this as

their faith will be religious conversion and a proclamation of independence.”<sup>32</sup> This principle must be followed by all the religious reformers of India.

#### 5.1.4 One God

The Guru Proclaimed that the essence and the goal of all religions is the same. The main contribution of the Guru is the concept of One God on the practical side for the establishment of the concept of the non-dual Brahman in Advaita. The theory of One Religion aims at One God, i.e. Brahman. Those who believe in God can agree with Sree Narayana Guru that there is only One God. If we can understand the spirit of Advaitic theory of religion, we can do better services for the well being of humanity. The Guru upheld the oneness of the Absolute in all his philosophical poems. The Self and this external world which sustains us are one and the same. They are different manifestations of the One Absolute – The Unitive Brahman. That is the One God. All the religions in this world aim at this One Absolute. The Guru explains the One God as the creator, Creation and the innumerable creatures including ‘I’. So this world the cause of the world, the knower of the world are all One and same, i.e. The One God. Guru explains this view in his work *Janani Navaratna Manjari* – Verse 6.

You become the deer, and the fish too,

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<sup>32</sup> Swami Dharmatheertha, *A Prophet of Peace or Sree Narayana Guru of Malabar*. (Trivandrum: City Press, 1933) p. 111

The snake, and the heavenly bird alike  
 The firm earth, and the river also, woman as well as man.  
 Even the word on high and inferno within your name-form couple.  
 Assuming varied natures cognizes here,  
 As the 'I' that too is even You!  
 O, One of word content alone, all is comedy indeed!<sup>33</sup>

In Darśanamāla the Guru expounded that the Lord from whom the universe became manifested is Brahman. He is Viṣṇu, He is Śiva, He is the Supreme Self (*Paramātmā*) and He is everything indeed.<sup>34</sup> By this Brahma, the creator (in the vedic context) of the Indra, Varuṇa and others (Vedic gods) as well as Viṣṇu Who is the Lord of Vaiṣṇavas, and Śiva who is the Lord of Śaivites and the Supreme self of the Vedāntins, are all treated as one and the same. He is the Ultimate.<sup>35</sup> It is also indicated that the world originates from the same Lord having the three-fold character, and that it originates in Him, endures in Him, and dissolves in to Him once again.<sup>36</sup>

The One God, the Brahman is the instrumental and material causes – *nimitta kāraṇa* and *upādāna kāraṇa* - of the world.

In "*Daiva Daśakam*" Narayana Guru explains the concept of God in its universal numinous context as the One Absolute factor. *Daiva Daśakam* is an universal prayer in Malayalam, an open prayer for

<sup>33</sup> K. Sreenivasan, *Sree Narayana Guru*. Op. Cit., pp. 155,156.

<sup>34</sup> Nataraja Guru, *The Integrated Science of the Absolute*. (Varkala: East West University of Brahma Vidya, 1967) p. 184

<sup>35</sup> *ibid.*, p. 184

<sup>36</sup> *ibid.*, p. 184

freeing all humanity from suffering and ignorance. This work is deep in philosophical intent. It ends with the appeal that all may be merged in Universal Bliss – Brahman the One God of all religions. In this poem we find that 'The Guru equates the depth aspect of the ocean with the Absolute, God or Reality. The surface aspect of the ocean is meant to be analogous to the collective and overt aspect of the consciousness of humanity conceived as a unit.'<sup>37</sup>

## **5.II ALL RELIGIONS CONFERENCE AT ALWAYS.**

Sree Narayana Guru held an All Religions Conference on Sivarathri day in 1924 at Advaitasram, Always. It was to highlight the fact of the oneness of all religions. This was the first conference of religions held in India. In that conference Hindu, Christian, Muslim, Buddhist and Parsi thinkers and leaders gave discourses on various religions. The object of the big conference was, in his own words "To know and to make known not to argue and to vanquish" The motto was written large on the gate, in various parts of the assembly and on the dias too, serving as a backdrop to the speakers and as a background to their sermons. Justice T. Sadasiva Iyer of Madras High Court chaired the gathering. Scholars representing different religions and other secular views took part. Manjeri Ramakrishna Iyer and Mitavadi C. Krishnan spoke in defence of rationalism. Rshi Ram an Aryasamajist,

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<sup>37</sup> Nataraja Guru, *Life and Teachings of Narayana Guru*. Op.Cit., p. 573

Sivaprasad of the Brahma Samaj and a Buddhist Bikshu from Srilanka were among those present. Mohammed Maulavi and K.K.Kuruvila spoke about Islam and Christianity respectively. The deliberations took place in the august presence of the Guru.<sup>38</sup> The welcome speech of Swamy Sathiavrathan explained the main theme of unity among religions detailing how outward differences notwithstanding an inner unity prevailed.

Sathyavrathan said that the Guru was born as a Hindu and lived as one. Yet he has striven to understand the basic tenets of other religions also. All religions aim ultimately at moulding the good individual. Realizing this, he formulate his message of 'One caste, One religion and One God for man'. Just like different systems of medicines there are different philosophical approaches and consequently many religions. All help alike. Myths and tales associated with these religions have much in common. No religion is free from blemishes. Like the capitalists who exploit the producers of wealth, in all religions there has emerged the system of priesthood. It is the priests who have turned religion into rites and rituals. Religion has been commercialized. Sree Narayana Guru sponsors courses of study which will impart knowledge on all religions and their philosophies. He intends starting an institution for such studies.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> K. Sreenivasan, *Sree Narayana Guru. Op. Cit.*, p. 97.

<sup>39</sup> *ibid.*, p. 97

The message of the Guru was read out by Swami Sathyavrathan at the end of the two day conference. That follows as such “As the speeches in this conclave of religions have shown that the ultimate goal of all religions is the same, and that there is no need for conflict among those who take different paths, we have decided to provide facilities to study the message of all religions at the proposed Academy at Sivagiri.<sup>40</sup> Thus in India the dialogues among different religions were set in motion for the first time and ever since 1924 Navarathri day, the holding of a “Conference of all religions” has become an annual feature at Alwaye. Every function in honour of Sree Narayana Guru has a conference of religions and also the leaders give discourses on various religions. “Hindus, Buddhists, Muslims and Christians assembled at the Hindu temple festivals; came together in union by their respect for Sree Narayana Guru. It is the most inspiring, soul stirring sight for any man to see. Believers and atheists can be seen seated side by side on the dias when the Guru is being honoured.<sup>41</sup>

The need for the recognition of the unity in essentials of all the major faiths of the world, is greatest now in India. Religious strifes are interminable because the fight is over matters of which the warriors are not sure, and decisive victories are not possible. The verses of the Guru’s “*Matamimamsa*” has got the popularity in Kerala. It can be easily grasped and practiced by all: and help us to bring unity amongst us.

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<sup>40</sup>     ibid., pp. 97,98

<sup>41</sup>     Moorkoth Kunhappa, *Sree Narayana Guru*. Op.Cit., p. 44

Thus we can see that, different from Sankara, the Guru brought Advaita philosophy out of the closets of sages and scholars into the open common grounds.

### **5.III PROSELYTISM**

Customs, faiths and modes of worship differ from religion to religion, from sect to sect. These differences condemn humanity to several separate compartments denying opportunities for closer understanding. Customs drive people farther and farther away from each other. But beneath these superficial differences there is a universal stratum of noble humanity. According to the Guru knowledge or education should create opportunities to awaken this innate humanity.

Sree Narayana Guru saw that by applying the essential principles of religious teaching to their daily lives, the people could come out of their poverty and social degradation; and attain a new outlook and better standard of living. He, therefore, initiated measures of religious and social reforms by building schools and educating people. He revived the forgotten essence of the religions by bringing out the similarity rather than differences. He restored into the mind of Indian people a sense of proportion and a consciousness of their own worth and significance in society. Thus a spirit of self confidence and self discipline were instilled in their minds.

The Guru again and again stressed the point that there is no difference in the basic principles of all religions. The religions thus revealed is the "One Religion". About conversion the Guru was of the opinion that the religion has an external and an internal aspect. The external conversion is not religious conversion but social transformation. Change of the internal aspects is taking place naturally with the increase in understanding. If one realizes that he has lost faith in his religion then he should give it up. According to the Guru to follow a religion in which one has no faith is both cowardice and hypocrisy. His conversion is good for himself as well as for the religion in which he has lost faith. Increase in the number of non-believers is not good for any religion. But it is a fact that if one try to understand or study this basic principles of the religion in which he has lost faith should not have any change in the internal aspects of religions.

According to the Guru change of religion of man should be on the basis of conviction and not for convenience. Each man should have the freedom to follow the faith of his choice and it naturally followed that the freedom enjoyed by Hindus to embrace Christianity, Islam and Buddhism should be available to all non-Hindus for conversion to Hinduism. The Guru believed that the conversions are due to the sufferings of the downtrodden classes and the proselytism can be stopped by the spiritual, social and economic uplift of the backward community. Conversion to Hinduism was difficult in those days because

Hinduism was not a proselytizing religion. The reason for this was that the castes which constituted Hinduism were not prepared to accept converts. But the Guru made arrangements to reconvert the converts who wished to become Hindus. The Guru proclaimed that whatever be his faith a man should continuously strive to improve himself and men should maintain purity in thought, word and deed. Whatever be the creed man should be good.

If unity in diversity and vice versa are possible in respect of one particular religion, we can extend the same understanding in respect of the common world religion. As Gandhiji pointed that as the leaves of one and the same tree were different from each other, men were found to be different and as long as differences existed the religion of man had to be different.<sup>42</sup> In other words we can say that each individual has a separate religion of his own. If Hinduism has twenty crores of individuals these twenty crores of religions are grouped under one religion Hinduism. There are some features common to all religion. But the study of all religions would reveal the fact that there is no difference in their basic principles. Religions are mutually complementary and one cannot exist without the other. No religion is nobler than the other. No religion can survive unless it has a hard core of certain internal truths, dharma. Owing to the factors of time and place, it becomes necessary to give priority to one or the other. Islam gives primacy to brotherhood

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<sup>42</sup> K. Sreenivasan, *Sree Narayana Guru*. Op.Cit., p. 134

for may be in Arabia, during Mohammed Nabi's time, it was incumbent to give pride of place to brotherhood. Christianity gives primacy to love but brotherhood is rooted in love and love is built on brotherhood. Eternal values are of equal significance. During Guru's time India need deliverance from the conflicts between caste and religions. So the Guru put forth a suggestion to all to study and understand all religions with open minds and equal attention and try to give each other the wisdoms so gained. Then we could realize that conflict was due not to religion but to pride, and the basic tenets of all religions are the same. Then the desire for proselytism would also disappear. It is said,

“In spite of his criticism of the caste system which is Hinduism in practice today, the Guru was not in favour of conversion to other religions. Members of the lower castes were being proselytised by means of material inducements. He was against this. If conversion to a particular religion took place as a result of genuine preference for its philosophy and ideals, there was no harm in it. Even that was superfluous because according to him the essence of all religions is the same. Indeed there is only one religion”<sup>43</sup>

As a religious philosopher the Guru accomplished a revolution in the three great institutions of the Hindus, the caste representing the social system, the temples representing the religious system and the Matt of sanyasins representing the philosophical system. He has shown

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<sup>43</sup> ibid., p. 113

how and in what manner these three have to be reformed and brought into harmony with the changing conditions and ideals of our life. According to him caste existed because we attributed it to ourselves and others. He advised his followers 'Ask not, Say not and Think not caste'. He says that the followers of any religion do not speak of caste and why should the Hindus alone be branded with caste.

The Guru has shown to us in a practical manner through his numerous temples, schools, mutts and other institutions, the possibility of realizing the ideal of One race, One religion and One God. He has given to the world a new interpretation of life – problems pointed the way to One world religion for universal peace and brotherhood.

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## CONCLUSION

Sree Narayana Guru, the greatest spiritual and social master of Kerala, with a profusion of writing became a unique figure leaving behind a philosophic and poetic cornucopia of thought and wisdom. A traveller from abroad who visited Kerala has written thus, "In India a Christ is roaming about as a Hindu *Sanyasi* along the cost of the Arabian Sea."<sup>1</sup>

The Guru is a religious philosopher and a spiritual teacher more than a social reformer. Therefore any interpretation of his work disregarding the aspect of his being a spiritualist and religious philosopher will be incomplete. Four decades starting from 1888 and ending with 1928 of the Guru's active ministry for the poor and downtrodden saw a tremendous awakening throughout the length and breadth of Kerala. His life and work give us a practical demonstration of the way in which even the highest ideals of universal brotherhood and religious fraternity could be effectively used to reconstruct society.

The religious philosophy of the Guru is so practical, his influence was so powerful in purifying the lives of his followers and his own life was so pure, simple and full of divine kindness for the poor and helpless, that many of his followers compared him with Buddha. He was such an inspiring picture of dedication and self-sacrifice, that some compared him to Christ, Guru's religious teachings of equality and brotherhood so

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<sup>1</sup> Basheer M.M., *Samakaleena Malayalam*.(Weekly) 15-09-2000, p. 12

much resembled those of the Prophet of Islam that he was revered as great teacher by many Muslim devotees.

Kerala was a hot bed of casteism, untouchability and unapproachability during the days of the Guru. The Guru, a revolutionary religious reformer, made a decisive onslaught on caste system by the consecration of the first Śiva temple at Aruvippuram. This ceremony was regarded as the exclusive prerogative of Brahmins. He succeeded in the upliftment of the masses by establishing more temples in tune with their aspirations. It was at a time when temple entry was prohibited to the lower castes and untouchables who formed the vast majority. The Guru established temples which were open to all irrespective of caste and religion. This helped to satisfy the curiosity and fulfill their aspirations. When the critical enthusiasm in entering the temple subsided, the temples established by the Guru became more and more helpful for the enlightening of the masses. The idol of mirror with the inscription of 'AUM' in the temple of Kalavancode and the lighted lamp in the temple at Karamukku are excellent epitomes. He proved that any symbolic idol that makes man turn to the Higher can be installed in the Sanctum Sanctorum. He had given clear instructions as to how temples should be made useful for the development of man. Thus the Guru could demolish the edifice of meaningless rituals that existed for centuries which even Sree Sankaracharya, the great exponent of 'Advaita' could not change. As in religious beliefs, customs and

practices it was his reforms that brought about tremendous change in social customs.

Though casteism still exists today, untouchability has been almost eradicated. This is a great achievement that has been accomplished through the life and work of the Guru. The Guru expressed his ideas on the problems facing man and society through poems and verses in Sanskrit, Malayalam and Tamil. His crusade against superstitions and evil practices, his stress on the cleanliness of the body, mind and environment, the importance he attached to education and the establishment of industries and his unconventional ways of consecrating temples, all there were parts of his efforts to bring about the regeneration of man.

Guru's religious teachings and messages have contributed a great deal towards the making of modern Kerala. So categorically we can say that the Guru is the father of Modern Kerala. He became a cynosure of all eyes in the course of less than half a century of service of his fellowmen. He was a far-sighted leader of men and a rare preceptor. He was a man of incomparable elevation of thought and profound spiritual preceptor. As a '*jñānin* of action' and spiritual preceptor, he is parallel to himself. To the one who follows the Guru's teaching religion will not be like 'opium'. To the contrary one experiences it as a system based on philosophy which helps the betterment of man to the level of universal consciousness. Through the path of knowledge, Devotion and

Action he reached the heights of spiritual life. From there he descended to the midst of his prejudiced fellowmen to provide them insights into social equality. Religious tolerance is an accepted tradition of India. The interpretation of secularism as the universal oneness of all religions might have been based on the Guru's words 'the underlying principle of oneness of all religions'.

The temple he established are also the growing centres of education, economic regeneration and all-round activity of the people. He was using his spiritual powers for the material and moral uplift of the people. The greatness of his practical achievements for the good of the world and the magnitude of the concrete work he has done made him grow beyond all description in the love and reverence of the masses. Many thousands of people kept his picture and offered prayers and flowers to it everyday because of the unparalleled service and sacrifice of his life and also the grand and universal value of his message in all respects viewed from any stand point. In nutshell the Guru elevated to the rank of Godheads by the people of Kerala. This is evident from the fact that one of the members of eleventh Kerala Legislative Assembly, Umesh Challiyil from Kodungalloor, swore as the members of Legislative Assembly by the name of Sree Narayana Guru. The Guru was a religious reformer who has come in the nick of time as it were, to rescue a depressed and lethargic people from the tyrannical excesses of a hierarchical society. That is why in many Keralite home, today, his

portrait has an honoured place alongside the divine Gods – Śiva, Viṣṇu etc. Kumaran Asan, the famous poet of Kerala and the direct disciple of the Guru, wrote a short poem of felicitation in 1916 on the Guru's birth anniversary. It was the most perspicuous and comprehensive assessment of the Guru's life and mission. In this poem he adored the Guru as the God supreme.

“The God Supreme, if sought for is but the Guru  
 Who dispels darkness and lights Primal Glory's pristine path  
 Cognising this, to us art thee worshipful,  
 Revered Narayana, O Revered Guru Narayana  
 .....  
 .....  
 O Ocean of Mercy, who counts as thy own Self  
 Anto and all else, to thee the whole world eternal life wish,  
 A hundred years may you live, as of old, in felicity absolute  
 with that foot's tip which, to those who touch, brings felicity,  
 O Revered Guru.”<sup>2</sup>

The Guru considered religious reform and education as pre-requisite to spiritual and temporal freedom. The so called depressed classes recovered their self-respect and they claimed their right for the whole philosophic and ritual wealth of Hindu heritage. He was the first to realise that casteism was the bane of Indian social and religious

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<sup>2</sup> K. Sreenivasan, *Sree Narayana Guru*. (Trivandrum: Jayasree Publications, 1989) pp. 205,206

organisations. He encouraged all movements which would lead to the elimination of the system. He carried his activities stage by stage up to the greatest and highest platform of universal Religion. Sree Narayana Dharma Paripalana Yogam and Sree Narayana Dharma Sangham were organised by the Guru to care for the material welfare and to cater to the spiritual needs of the people. Both these organisations and Sree Narayana Gurukulam organised by the disciple Nataraja Guru, were and are open to all people irrespective of their caste or creed. The essence of his views on universal religion can be seen in the verses of his short poem '*Jātinirṇayam*'. The Guru belongs to the great line of teachers and seers who enlighten man's difficult paths towards sublime planes of existence.

By the slogan of 'One caste, One religion, One God for man' what he meant was 'happiness to all'. The world of one religion is still a distant dream. To materialise this ideal society we should study and practice the Guru's teaching. If this is put into practice, we can ward off the frequent communal riots which constantly threaten the peace and harmony of this multi religious nation.

Guru's teachings can be accepted by followers of all religions as they are based on spirituality and tolerance to all religions. So even without hurting ones religious beliefs and feelings the followers of any religion can practice and preach his ideals. His vision enshrines the goodness of all religions. In the present days one should practice his

ideologies with sincerity and an open mind to attain progress and to lead a contented life. If this, is done the dream of Guru's 'One world, One religion' and the craving of the modern times for a 'peaceful world' are attainable.

"Gary David the famous scholar who had insights into the Guru's teachings has opened an office in front of the Headquarters of the United Nations Organisation in the U.S.A. for the realization of the Guru's dream. When great men like Buddha, Jesus Christ and Mohammed Nabi founded new religions, the Guru never tried to found a new religion. Instead he taught "irrespective of one's religion man should improve."<sup>3</sup> Through this he put forward an ideology propounding religious tolerance and religious unification. With this intention the first world religious conference was held in Asia. There after he started the first centre of teaching for all religions at Sivagiri. No other great saint has made such an attempt. The Guru who gave the valuable teaching of 'One caste, One religion for man' with a scientific footing and who had a firm belief in universal oneness of man was really a teacher of the whole world. He was a great teacher not bound to any caste or religion. He triggered a social upheaval by installing a Śiva temple at Aruvippuram on 20<sup>th</sup> February 1888 on Śivarathri day. The message he gave through this had spiritual, social and cultural bearing as well as the principle of oneness of mankind. This installation is the embodiment of

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<sup>3</sup> Koyikkal K. Jacob, *Sree Narayana Guru*. (Ernakulam: New Sobha Publications, 2001) p. 8

his saying This is the place where all men live in brotherhood without religious ill will and caste discrimination.

The installation of deities in various parts of Kerala had evolved from his ideologies. The Śivalinga at Aruvippuram has the cosmopolitan outlook as its essence. The religious rejuvenation initiated through the idol of Lord Siva helped to awaken the sense of morality in the society. He made successful efforts to sustain this spirit of awakening through the spread of education with the support of the S.N.D.P. Yogam founded in Kerala in 1903. There is no educationist in Kerala as far sighted as the Guru. He had his own vision of the subjects to be taught in the educational institutions. He ushered in a revolution in the field of education. The contributions by the Guru to the development of Kerala are unparalleled. By the final phase of his life Sree Narayana had laid the foundation of modern Kerala. One can experience a thoroughly scientific format in the enunciation of life applicable for every sphere of life leading to a free and flawless society. The Guru's vision of society is quite conducive to Kerala and India as a whole. He was a great spiritual leader who imbibed the ideals of Śaiva, Arya and other great religious paths to give it a socio- spiritual outlook. Thus he tried to eradicate ignorance, superstitions and evil practices of the society. Not only was he a cultural and spiritual master but also a great social reformer. He imbibed the views of great religious and cultures, understood the equal

importance of all of them and then gave a unified outlook which led to great progress in the field of spirituality.

The views and messages of the Guru gave the society a sense of unity. It was he who paved the way for performing free spiritual practices by the downtrodden. The declaration of "whatever be the religion let man become good" and "One caste, One religion, One god" can be considered as the first spiritual declaration of freedom. He utilised this spiritual freedom to revamp the society and to lead into the universal culture of one world, one religion for social reforms and modernisation. Spirituality is a boon to mankind. The great reformer gave Kerala a new life with this tool. He advised people to respect all religions and modes of worship. He organised a world religious conference in 1924 to highlight the aims of various religions and how that should be used to minimize the distance and enmity between different religions. He knew that religion had an inherent quality to affect the feelings of people. So he desired that all his followers should know the essence of all religions. He had apprehensions regarding competition between religions which could endanger human society. We find how relevant his views are in our strife torn present world. Distancing from spirituality has led to this despicable condition. In June 2000 while referring to the great discovery by man, the then American President Bill Clinton along with two famous scientists Francis Collin (Director H. G.Project) and J. Gaig Venter (Director Celeia Genomics)

said, "the knowledge regarding genetics and origin of life is undergoing tremendous changes. The birth and life and nature of man are all determined by genome. Even though human are divided into races, 99.9% of humans belong to the same family."<sup>4</sup> The thoughts in the ancient religions have thus been vindicated. The ultimate truth is that we all belong to the same human family. The great scientist Arthur Kaulen has told that the gene map shows that we all should live in harmony as brothers and sisters. The knowledge that the Guru imparted, 'One religion, One God, Which was based on pure *Advaita* and spiritual insight and the great scientific discovery of modern times are all one and the same. Both tell us that man belong to the same famiy.

The Guru never had any belief in this caste system. This is what the scientists had discovered through genomes and what Clinton had meant when he told about the teachings of ancient religions.

A conference of all religions was held in New York under the auspices of the U.N. in August 2000. About 5500 invitees of the secretary general attended the conference. About 300 of them were from India, the great spiritual superpower. The subjects discussed were world peace, eradication of poverty and protection of environment. All agreed that only education and inter religious discussions can do away with religious intolerance and violence. This will lead to world peace. The spiritual bliss and heritage of India extend from '*Rigveda*' to

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<sup>4</sup> Mathrubhumi. (Daily), Kozhikode, 21-09-2000, p. 4.

'*Ātmōpadesā Śāthakam*'. Only a peaceful and constructive revolution based on this heritage can save the world from its inherent evils.

Keeping a firm foot on this peaceful and harmonious land of *Advaita*, through his great message of unity of man-kind, importance of education of the masses and idol installations he led the march of the spiritual revolution of Kerala to victory. Sree Nriyayan Guru paved the way for freedom to the down trodden through the path of universal brotherhood. If one can imbibe the message of the Guru who demolished through a bloodless revolution the edifice of social evils, and injustices which were in vogue in the guise of *Sanathana Dharma*, one can realize the dream of peace and harmony in the world.

To the Guru, India and the whole world owe an immense debt of gratitude which can best be repaid by adopting his principles and teachings which are timeless. He is worthy to be remembered not only by celebrating his birthday and death anniversary but by following his glorious example and by leading a life based on his teachings and messages. As far as the novelty of religious concepts are concerned the Guru stands far above than any other preceptor India had ever seen.

The work of the Guru had its effect even after his departure from this world. His teachings echoes through the years after his Samadhi. Behind the statesmanship of Dewan Sir C.P. Ramaswamy Iyer and the broad and benevolent disposition of His Highness the Maharaja of Travancore, there was the unconscious effect of the work and teachings

of the perfect Guru of Kerala. That unconscious effect led to the Temple Entry Proclamation in 1936. The Guru showed how caste system can be abolished and world unity can be attained. This is implied in his teaching “to whatever religion, you belong, it is enough that you lead a good life”.

From the serious probe and interpretation of Guru’s teachings we can conclude that he is really a true religious philosopher and his teachings has echoes of concepts found in the Vedas, the *Upaniṣads* and the *Bhagavatgītā* in addition to the originality of his thought. The teachings and message of the Guru are the result of a dynamic system which links the present with the past and also with the future. They are the messages for all ages and are terrifically topical for us.

We can recommend that the study of all major religions of India must be included in the school curriculum to inculcate moral and spiritual values in the tender minds of the students. As a secular country, all religions are equal and there is no state religion in India. We respect all religions as different paths leading to the same goal. The purpose of all religions is to reform man and elevate him to a higher cultural level. Teaching the basic aspects of religions will influence students considerably in this character building and thereby they will get a good religious and cultural base which will enable them to cultivate good qualities and to build up a virtuous life consistent with our background. The religious philosophy of the Guru contains the basic tenants of all

religions and his famous quintessential message "One caste, One religion, and One God for Man" has a high religious and philosophical value. So the study of the religious philosophy of the Guru will help the students to become responsible citizens with an ethical base in the future. It is capable of protecting the youth from religious fundamentalism. All religions should unite for the good will of the society as well as maintaining social justice. All malicious speeches or actions against other religion which may cause internal conflicts and riots must be averted.

Guru's philosophy is one of the living systems of Indian Philosophy. It is a religious philosophy in the proper sense of the term. The object of his philosophy is not merely to advance in knowledge or to find a correct way of thinking. It is more a right way of living. It is not a mere view of life but a way of life. It is essentially a religious philosophy of values. His philosophical ideal is a direct experience of reality and not a mere intellectual mode of apprehending it. He is the great one and also the rare one about whom it could be said '*Guru Sākshāt para Brahma, tasmai Sri Guruve Namah*'.

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## Appendix – A

### SELECTED BIOGRAPHICAL DATA OF THE GURU NARAYANA.

- 1854 : Birth on August 20<sup>th</sup> at Vayalvaram House in Chempazhanthi, a village ten miles north of Thiruvananthapuram the capital of Kerala State.  
Father : Madan Asan  
Mother : Kutty Amma
- 1859 : Early education starts at the age of five under Chempazhanthi Mootha Pillai.
- 1872 : Completes primary education.  
Death of mother.
- 1876 : Higher education under distinguished Sanskrit scholar Kummum Pilli Raman Pillai Asan at Puthupally
- 1879 : Severe attack of dysentery.  
Higher education completed and returns home.  
Teaching and contemplative life of seeker begins.
- 1882 : Marriage and then complete renunciation begins.
- 1884 : Death of Father.  
Renounced life at Maruthuvamala.
- 1888 : Aruvippuram Shiva prathishta on 10th February.
- 1889 : Consecrates Mannanthala Devi Temple.
- 1894 : The Guru met young Kumaran Asan at Chirayankizhu. Sends him to Bangalore for education.
- 1897 : Composition of Ātmōpadeśa Satakam at Aruvippuram.
- 1901 : Recognition as a spiritual leader. State census records him as Erudite Sanskrit scholar.
- 1903 : Association known as Sree Narayana Dharma Paripalana Yogam (S.N.D.P. Yogam) comes into being.
- 1904 : Settler at Sivagiri, Varkala.  
Consecrates temples at Peringottumkara and Kumaramangalam.
- 1907 : Bangalore tour with Dr. Palpu.
- 1908 : Consecration of Jagannatha temple at Thalassery.

- 1909 : Mangalore tour.
- 1910 : Consecration of temple at Calicut and Mangalore.
- 1912 : Consecration of Śārada Temple at Sivagiri, Varkala.
- 1913 : Establishment of Advaida Ashram at Alwaye.
- 1916 : Celebration of 60<sup>th</sup> birthday (Due to uncertainty of his year of Birth, which the Guru left unrecorded, there is an error of two Years).  
Composition of Darśana-mālā in Sanskrit.
- 1918 : First tour of Sree Lanka.
- 1921 : Conference on brotherhood at Alwaye.
- 1922 : Rabindra Nath Tagore visits Guru at Sivagiri.
- 1924 : Conference of all religions at Advaida Ashram, Alwaye.
- 1925 : Mahatma Gandhi visits Guru.  
Laid foundation stone of Brahma Vidya Mandir at Sivagiri.
- 1926 : Visits Coimbatore and Nilagiris.  
Second visit to Sree Lanka.
- 1928 : Mahasamadhi on 20<sup>th</sup> September.

## Appendix – B

### THE LIST OF WRITTEN WORKS OF THE GURU.

#### I. Hymns on Vināyaka or Gaṇapathi

1. *Vināyakāshṭakam* (Sanskrit) - Eight verses to Vinayaka, 1884.

#### II. Hymns on Vishṇu.

1. *Srikrishna Darshanam* (Malayalam)
2. *Srikrishnāsthavam* (Malayalam)
3. *Sri Vasudevāshṭakam* (Sanskrit). Eight verses to Vasudeva, 1884.
4. *Vishṇu Āshṭakam* (Sanskrit). Eight verses to Vishnu.

#### III. Hymns on Shiva

1. *Ardhanāreeswarāsthavam* (Malayalam). Hymn to Androgynous God.
2. *Cidambarāshṭakam* (Sanskrit). Eight verses on Cidambaran or Mental space, 1887-'97.
3. *Cijjada-Cindanam* (Malayalam). Reflection on Mind and Matter, 1881.
4. *Indriya Vairāgyam* (Malayalam). Detachment from sense pleasure. 1887-'97.
5. *Kolatiresa satvam* (Malayalam). Hymn on Kolatiresa - A hymn on the deity of Shiva installed by the Guru at Kolathukara or Kolathera, 1893.
6. *Mananatītam* (Malayalam). Beyond comprehension. 1884.
7. *Pindanandi* (Malayalam). Prenatal gratitude, 1887-'97.
8. *Prapancha Sṛishti* (Malayalam). Creation of the World.
9. *Sadā Shiva Darśanam* (Malayalam). A vision of sadāshiva, 1887-'97.
10. *Shiva Prasāda Panchakam* (Malayalam). Five verses on Shiva's Grace. 1887-'97.
11. *Shiva Satakam* (Malayalam). One hundred verses on Shiva.
12. *Svānubhava gīti* (Malayalam). Amrutha Tharangini - Song of intuitive experience, 1894.
13. *Tevāra Patikankal* (Tamil). Four Tamil Songs of ten verses, each praising Shiva -Nayinar Temple - Re-consecration at Arumanoor, 1887.

#### IV. Hymns on Devi- the Mother Goddess.

1. **Bhadrakalyāsthakam** (Sanskrit). Eight verses on Bhadrakali, 1884.
2. **Devi Pranāmāstakam** (Sanskrit). Eight verses prostrating to Devi.
3. **Devi Stavam** (Malayalam). Hymns on Devi, 1887-'97.
4. **Kali Nātakam** (Malayalam). The Dance Drama of Kali, 1887-'97.
5. **Mannanthala Devisthavam** (Malayalam). Hymns on the Devi of Mannanthala, 1889.

#### V. Hymn on subrahmanya.

1. **Bhuleyashtakam** (Sanskrit). Eight verses on Bhuleya Subrahmanya, 1887-'97.
2. **Guhāstakam** (Sanskrit). Eight verse on Guha (Subrahmanya), 1884.
3. **Navamanjeri** (Malayalam). A bouquet of nine verses, 1884.
4. **Saṅmaturāstavam** (Malayalam). Hymn on Sanmatura - the six mothered God.
5. **Saṅmukha Dasakam** (Malayalam). Ten verses on Sanmukha - the six headed God, 1887-'97.
6. **Saṅmukha Stotram** (Malayalam). Hymn on Sanmukha - the six headed God, 1887-'97.
7. **Subrahmanyakīrthanam** (Malayalam). In praise of Subrahmanya.
8. **Subrahmanya Stuthi** (Malayalam). A hymn of sixty verses on Subrahmanya.

#### VI. Philosophical Poems

1. **Advaita Deepika** (Malayalam). The lamp of Non- Duality.
2. **Arivu** (Malayalam). Knowledge - consciousness – Gnosis, 1887-'97.
3. **Ātmōpadeśa Satakam** (Malayalam). One hundred verses on self instruction, 1897.
4. **Brahmavidya Panchakam** (Sanskrit). Five verses on Final absorption, 1914.
5. **Daiva Dasakam** (Malayalam). Ten verses to God - a universal prayer, 1914.

6. **Darsana-Mālā** (Sanskrit). Garland of visions of the Absolute – One hundred verses in ten sections, 1916.
7. **Homa-Mantras** (Sanskrit). A mantra for Burnt-Sacrifice. Prescribed on the essence of Vedic ritual and adapted for use in Ashrams dedicated to wisdom, 1924.
8. **Janani-Navaratna- Manjeri** (Malayalam). A cluster of nine Gemmed Bouquet to Mother, 1904.
9. **Kundalini-Pattu** (Malayalam). Song of Kundalini snake - Seventeen verses, with a refrain, 1887-'97.
10. **Sloka-Trayi** (Sanskrit). A work in three verses.
11. **Vedānta Sūtras** (Sanskrit). The philosophy of Vedanta in Aphorisms.

## VII. Instructive Composition.

1. **Ahimsa** (Malayalam). Five verses on Non-violence.
2. An Obituary of Two Verses on Chattambi Swamikal, 1924.
3. **Anukampa - Dasakam** (Malayalam). Ten verses on Mercy, 1914.
4. **Aśramam** (Sanskrit). Five verses on how to run an Asram, 1920.
5. **Bhāryā-Dharmam** (Malayalam). Pattern of good behaviour of Housewives.
6. **Dharmam** (Sanskrit). One verse on Dharma.
7. Filling of an Incomplete verse (Malayalam).
8. Greetings to the Dharmakumaram - Monthly (Malayalam), 1926.
9. **Jāti - Lakshanam** (Malayalam). Definition of Kind, 1914.
10. **Jāti - Nirṇayam** - Five verses - the first in Sanskrit, the remaining four in Malayalam - A critique of Caste.
11. **Jīva-Kāruṇya-Panchakam** (Malayalam). Five verses on kindness to life, 1914.
12. **Municharya Pnachakam** (Sanskrit). Five verses on the Way of the Renounced Recluse, 1914.
13. **Sadacharam** (Malayalam). Pattern of good behaviour.
14. **Sanyāsi-Mahima** (Malayalam) Ten verses on the greatness of Recluse.
15. **Varsha-Varṇanam** (Malayalam). Ten Verses on the Importance of Rain.

### VIII. Translations.

1. A Tamil Single Verse - Sanskrit to Tamil.
2. *Ísa-Upanisad* - Sanskrit to Malayalam. 1887-'97.
3. *Tiru-Kural* - Tamil to Malayalam. 1894.

### IX. Prose work.

1. *Ātma-Vilāsam* (Malayalam). Self's self-Manifestation.
2. *Cijjada-Chintakam*. (Malayalam). Reflections on mind and matter, 1881.
3. *Daiva Chintanam I* (Malayalam). Reflections on Devine, 1881.
4. *Daiva Chintanam II* - (Malayalam). Reflections on Devine, 1881.
5. *Gadya Prārthana* (Malayalam). A prayer in prose form.

*Aadvaita Jeevitham* is a prose in Malayalam published by Kumaran Asan on behalf of Sree Narayana Guru in 1908. It contains the principles given by the Guru at the time when the foundation stone of Sivagiri Mutt at Varkala was laid.

*Sree Narayana Dharmam* is another prose in Malayalam written by Swami Atmananda in 1924. It is a code of conduct instructed by the Guru.

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