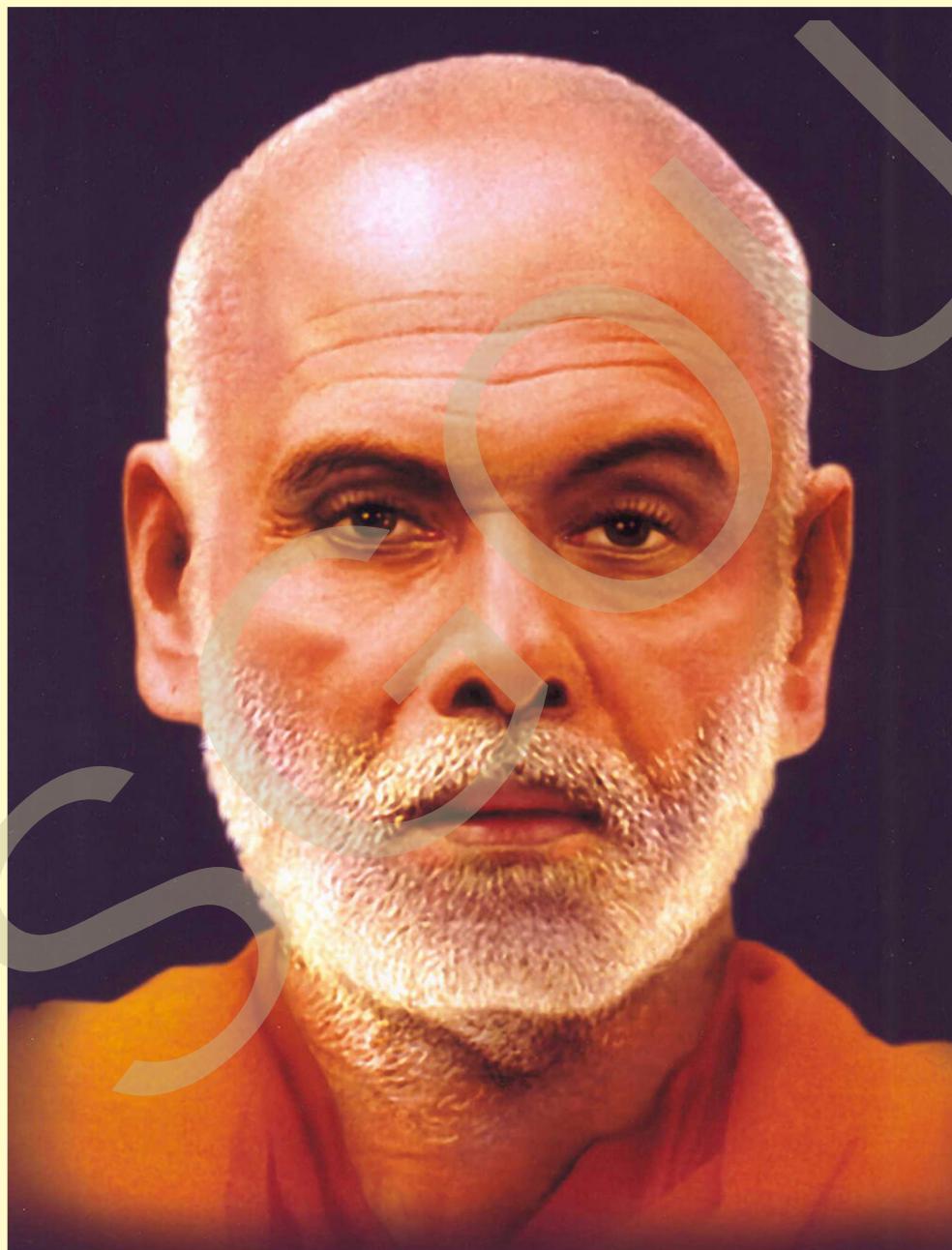


SREENARAYANAGURU: A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

COURSE CODE: B21PH03DC

Discipline Core Course

Undergraduate Programme in Philosophy



SELF LEARNING MATERIAL



SREENARAYANAGURU OPEN UNIVERSITY

The State University for Education, Training and Research in Blended Format, Kerala

SREENARAYANAGURU OPEN UNIVERSITY

Vision

To increase access of potential learners of all categories to higher education, research and training, and ensure equity through delivery of high quality processes and outcomes fostering inclusive educational empowerment for social advancement.

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Access and Quality define Equity.

**Sreenarayanaguru:
A Historical Perspective**
Course Code: B21PH03DC
Semester - III

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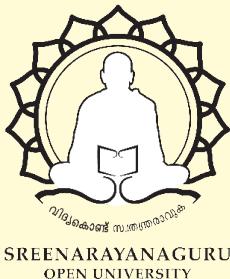


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The State University for Education, Training and Research in Blended Format, Kerala

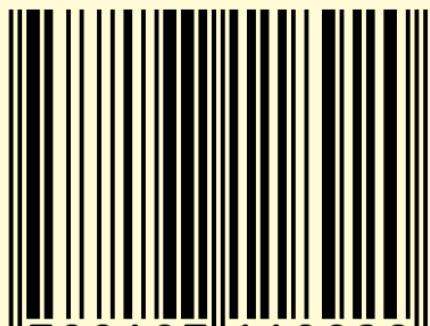
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Course Code: B21PH03DC
Semester - III
BA Philosophy



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MESSAGE FROM VICE CHANCELLOR

Dear learner,

I extend my heartfelt greetings and profound enthusiasm as I warmly welcome you to Sreenarayanaguru Open University. Established in September 2020 as a state-led endeavour to promote higher education through open and distance learning modes, our institution was shaped by the guiding principle that access and quality are the cornerstones of equity. We have firmly resolved to uphold the highest standards of education, setting the benchmark and charting the course.

The programmes offered by the Sreenarayanaguru Open University aim to strike a quality balance, ensuring students are equipped for both personal growth and professional excellence. The University embraces the widely acclaimed “blended format,” a practical framework that harmoniously integrates Self-Learning Materials, Classroom Counseling, and Virtual modes, fostering a dynamic and enriching experience for both learners and instructors.

The university aims to offer you an engaging and thought-provoking educational journey. The undergraduate programme in Philosophy has structured its curriculum based on modern teaching approaches. The course integrates current debates into the chronological development of philosophical ideas and methods. The programme has carefully maintained ongoing discussions about the Guru’s teachings within the fundamental framework of philosophy as an academic field. The Self-Learning Material has been meticulously crafted, incorporating relevant examples to facilitate better comprehension.

Rest assured, the university’s student support services will be at your disposal throughout your academic journey, readily available to address any concerns or grievances you may encounter. We encourage you to reach out to us freely regarding any matter about your academic programme. It is our sincere wish that you achieve the utmost success.

Warm regards.
Dr. Jagathy Raj V. P.

01-07-2024

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Birth, Early Life, Ascetic Life and Enlightenment of Guru





Birth and Early Life of Guru

UNIT

Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of this unit, the learner will be able to:

- ◆ know *poorvashram* (life before practising Sanyasa) of Sree Narayana Guru.
- ◆ Know his family, parents, birth place, education etc.
- ◆ understand his approach towards society based on humanism.
- ◆ Understand Guru's path towards ascetic life as a seeker of truth

Prerequisite

To know about a famous personality, one must know the socio-cultural conditions of his time. The social and cultural conditions of each era have influence on the personality development of an individual. People were divided on the basis of communal discrimination. Kerala society did not have a suitable environment for the formation of a person's character. At the same time, the social and cultural situations of that period influenced the character formation of a person. For example, Ayyankali was a social reformer who made an impact on society. He fought and raised his voice against discrimination and for education of the underprivileged children. This action was based on the socio-cultural situation of his time. Similarly, during Guru's childhood, society practised caste discrimination among people, forced him to act and transform the society.

Key themes

Chempazhanthy, Vayalvaram House, Sree Krishna Darsanam, Nanu Asan, Aruvippuram

Discussion

1.1.1. Different Versions of the Year of Birth, Place of Birth, Parents and Family

Once a disciple of Narayana Guru asked his permission to write a biography of the Guru. Instead of giving permission, Guru put a counter question: “*Aalukal Visvasikkumo*” (Will people believe it)? This question points towards an element of mystery inherent in Guru's life. Like the lives of any other guru or prophet, the life of Narayana Guru too has a mysterious dimension, which is beyond grasp for

people who are not enlightened. The question put by the Guru is a key to assess many events that followed.

1.1.1.1 Guru's birth

Sree Narayana Guru was born in A.D. 1855 in Vayalvaram House in Chempazhanthy, a village at the suburbs of Thiruvananthapuram. Guru's parents were Kochuvilayil Madan Asan and Kuttu Amma. Guru's birth star was *Chatayam* on the Third Onam day in the month of *Chingam* of M.E. 1031.

The biographers of Guru have recorded different years as Guru's birth. Kumaran Asan, who wrote the biography, when Guru was alive has recorded M.E. 1032 (A.D. 1856) as the year of birth. The early biographies of Guru like that of Mayyanad K. Damodaran and Moorkoth Kumaran recorded it as 1856. But Mayyanad K. Damodaran left a footnote in his book quoting his father C. V. Kunjuraman as Guru told him that Guru's birth year was M.E. 1030. It has been also recorded as a passing comment of Guru like 'My *Shashdipoorthy* has already been over when Sree Narayana Dharma Paripalana Yogam (SNDP Yogam) was making preparations to celebrate Guru's 60th Birthday in 1916.

Sree Narayana Guru's direct disciple Nataraja Guru, the founder of Narayana Gurukula in his famous work 'The World of the Guru' has mentioned the birth year of Guru as A.D. 1854.

The ascetic order established by Guru, the Sree Narayana Dharma Sangham Trust, Sivagiri Mutt recognizes Guru's birth year as M.E. 1031 (A.D. 1855), based on Astronomical calculations mapping the *Grahanila* (Position of Cosmic bodies) and the birthday of Guru has been established as M.E. 1031 *Chingam* 14th (28th August 1855). The first General Secretary of Dharma Sangham Trust and direct disciple of Guru, Swami Dharma Theerthar (Later John Dharma Theerthar) also recorded M.E. 1031 as Guru's birth year. Sivagiri Mutt had celebrated Guru's Birth Centenary in 1954 and 150th year of birth in 2004 based on the above date of birth.

1.1.1.2 Guru's birth place:

Chempazhanthy is the birth place of Guru, a village which is located about 12 km north to Thiruvananthapuram City center. Chempazhanthy was the home village of one of the Eight Pillai's (Ettuveettill Pillais) who challenged the Travancore Royalty and revolted against the Maharaja. Guru was born at 'Vayalvaram' (the ridge of a paddy field) house, which is located very close to Manakkal Bhadrakali Temple. Only a small portion of Vayalvaram House is currently preserved; the small room where Guru was born is still intact. This three-room portion was used by the ladies in the family during their monthly menstruation periods and as a 'Soothika Griham' (like a labour room) in those days. The other portions of that house including the residential part, kitchen, granary and cattle shed etc. got destroyed over a period of time.

Chempazhanthy was a calm village where two major communities Nairs and Ezhavas had lived in harmony, though Nairs were having many privileges during those days and Ezhavas were untouchables. Both these communities had equal rights over the administration of Manakkal Bhadrakali Temple. There were two 'Kalithattu' (Elevated Gazebos made out of wood) in front of the temple and the Local Chiefs from these two communities used to sit on those gazebos for taking important decisions regarding the administration of the temple. But they always kept the norms of untouchability, while sitting separately as groups in those gazebos.

Chempazhanthy was earlier part of Sreekariyam Grama Panchayat and is now merged with Thiruvananthapuram Municipal Corporation. Vayalvaram House and Manakkal Temple (Now Guru is the main deity) are now under Sree

Narayana Dharma Sanghom Trust as 'Sree Narayana Gurukulam'. An International Convention Centre cum Digital Museum Complex is being built by the Government of Kerala in the Gurukulam complex. The other important institutions that came up in Chempazhanthy over the years are the Sree Narayana College, a Post Graduate College and Sree Narayana Gurukulam Higher Secondary School. Both are under the Sree Narayana Trust. An International Centre for Sree Narayana Guru Studies, an institution for fostering the studies and research on Sree Narayana Guru's life and teachings, under the Department of Culture, Government of Kerala is also functioning in Chempazhanthy.

1.1.2. Guru's Parents and Family

Guru's father was Kochu Madan Asan. In those days, 'Asan' title had been given as a mark of respect to teachers and people whom the society held in high regard. Madan Asan was basically a farmer but the 'Asan' title says that he was a learned person of those times. He knew Malayalam, Sanskrit and Tamil. He was also having basic knowledge in Ayurveda. Madan Asan's family has got their roots in Nedunganda near Varkala.

Guru's mother was Kutty Amma, a pious woman of gentle disposition. She was from Elanjikkal (Muttiyattu) family. She had two brothers and four sisters. Raman Vaidyan was her elder brother and Krishnan Vaidyan was the youngest in the family. Kutty Amma was the eldest among the sisters. Both her brothers were Ayurveda practitioners. Krishnan Vaidyan was a scholar in Sanskrit and also an influential person in the community and in the locality.

Madan Asan and Kutty Amma had no children even after many years of their

marriage. They had made many offerings to temples for blessing them with a child. Sree Narayana Guru was born as their first child. The couple had three daughters as younger sisters of Guru - Kochu, Thevi and Matha. Madan Asan had married a sister (or cousin) of Kutty Amma and had three sons and one daughter in that relation.

During the term of pregnancy, Kutty Amma stayed with the family of her elder brother Raman Vaidyar at Vayalvaram House and gave birth to the child in the same house. This is the child who later became Sree Narayana Guru.

1.1.4 Unique Behavior of the Child and Childhood Stories:

Normally newborn babies cry when the umbilical cord is cut. Contrary to this universal phenomenon, Guru as a newborn baby didn't cry. This caused little panic among the family members initially, but the child was active otherwise like a normal baby.

During the naming ceremony the child was called Narayanan by his maternal uncle Krishnan Vaidyan. Everyone in the family called him 'Nanu' affectionately. Nanu was very active during his childhood. He used to eat the offerings kept for Gods during special occasions without the knowledge of elder members in the family. When questioned, the reply from little Nanu raised the eyebrows of

elders: "If I am pleased, then God will also be pleased."

Another childhood play of Nanu was to 'pollute' the elders in the family purposely by touching them after playing with lower caste children of the village. The elders used to scold but Nanu used to enjoy the fun of repeating the same next day.

Once Nanu was walking through the Pulaya settlements near his house. In one of the huts, he noticed a rice pot boiled on a country stove overflowing in the kitchen and there was nobody to attend the same. Nanu entered the hut and kept the pot away from the fire. Nanu's friends went and reported this incident to his parents and they were very angry. When questioned, Nanu replied: "If I hadn't done that, the whole family would have been starving tonight without any food".

One day a death of an elderly lady happened in Nanu's family. Nanu observed that his relatives were crying continuously in a loud voice till the time the body was taken to the funeral place. On the day of the funeral, people at home were very sad and gloomy and many of them were not interested in eating anything. But the very next day the complete atmosphere changed to festivity. This made Nanu confused. He went to a nearby forest and sat there for a long time thinking about this contradiction in human behavior. To young Nanu, this incident was also an occasion to ponder over the cycle of birth and death.

Recap

- ◆ Guru was born at Vayalvarm house
- ◆ Untouchability was practised among the Ezhava and Nair community
- ◆ In the name of Guru there are many educational institutions, schools, college and buildings constructed under the SNDP Yogam and SN Trust
- ◆ Madan Asan had basic knowledge in Ayurveda
- ◆ Kutty Amma was the member of Vaidyan family
- ◆ Guru was a unique child because of his humanness

Objective Questions

1. Where does Sree Narayana Guru born?
2. Who were Guru's Parents?
3. Who was born in A.D. 1855?
4. What was Guru's nick name?
5. How Guru became unique child ?
6. Name the two-communities lived in the Chempazhanthy

Answers

1. Chempazhanthy	4. Nanu
2. Kochuvilayil Madan Asan and Kuttyamma	5. His Humanness
3. Sree Narayana Guru	6. Ezhava and Nair

Assignments

1. Describe the circumstances surrounding Guru's birth and his family background.
2. What unique behaviours and childhood stories are associated with Guru's early life?
3. Explain how Guru's upbringing influenced his later ascetic life and spiritual journey.
4. Discuss the significant events that led to Guru's enlightenment.

Suggested Reading

1. Guru, Nataraja (2003). *The Word of the Guru, The Life and Teachings of Guru Narayana*. New Delhi: DK Print World Pvt Ltd.
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UNIT

Education of Guru

Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of this unit, the learner will be able to:

- ◆ understand a brief account of the education system prevailed in Guru's period in Travancore.
- ◆ get brief knowledge about the education of Guru.
- ◆ understand the challenges the Guru faced in the education

Prerequisite

In the modern era, family and society play an important role in the education of children. During the time of the Guru, caste discrimination prevailed, and education was denied to the lower castes. Therefore, getting educated was not so easy in that period. There was a big difference between the rich and the poor. It was also reflected in education. Guru studied at the home of the gurus. Teachers played an important role in education during that period. The method of education in those days was to learn directly from the faces of the gurus. The Sanskrit language was dominant then. It is in this situation that the Guru prepared to attain his higher education.

Key themes

Education, Varanapalli, Kalari, *Kudi Pallikoodam*

Discussion

1.2.1. Early Education

The *ezhuthiniruthu* or ‘vidyarabham’ (induction to the world of letters) of Nanu took place at the age of five by Kannankara Mootha Pillai, the head of the family of Chempazhanthy Pillai’s. At the time of the ceremony Mootha Pillai predicted that Nanu will learn at higher levels and become a famous personality. Though Kannankara family were orthodox Nair family, they were in close friendship with Madan Asan’s family. Nanu’s education was started in the traditional way of that time. Nanu learned basic letters and numbers from his father Madan Asan. He also learned stories of Purana and Ithihasa during that time. He learned basic Sanskrit from his father Madan Asan and uncle Krishnan Vaidyan. He imbibed basic texts like Sidharoopam, Balaprabodhanam, Amarakosam etc. Nanu was a curious student and quick learner.

Since there were no facilities for higher learning in his village, Nanu had to do the normal works of a member in an agrarian family. He started herding cattle to the nearby bushy forests. He enjoyed the solitude and sitting alone in the shade or branches of the trees, when cattle were grazing. He was also assigned to plough the paddy fields. But Nanu never liked to beat the cattle to guide them a particular path for ploughing; instead he used to allow the cattle freely in the field. This act was not appreciated and liked by the elders. Nanu took keen interest in growing and nurturing ‘vettila kodi’ (betelnut leaf), which used to be a highly skilled farming of those days.

Even from a very early age, Nanu was very particular in cleanliness and

personal hygiene. He used to take bath twice a day and pray at home or nearby temple without fail. Instead of playing with children of same age group, he liked to go to nearby forests and temples and sit for meditation for long hours. These were the early signals of choosing his future path of seeking the ultimate truth. When Nanu got smallpox, he spent the whole period inside the Bhadrakali Temple and the family members came to know only when he returned home after complete cure. In those days, grown up boys used to hop between the houses of relatives and stay there for weeks together. Nanu’s parents thought he might have gone to his relatives’ places Nedumganda or Anchuthengu during these days.

One day Krishnan Vaidyar received a letter from his friend Paravur Kesavan Asan, a scholar and founder of ‘Sujana Nandhini’ newspaper. But the letter was in the form of a poem written in Sanskrit. Since Krishnan Vaidyar couldn’t comprehend the complete meaning of that poem composed at a higher level of Sanskrit, he called Nanu for assistance, as he was doing self-study of Sanskrit reading Kavya, Nataka, Alankara etc. Nanu was very quick in interpreting the meaning of that poem to his uncle. Krishnan Vaidyar was very pleased with the ability of his nephew, but he was worried as well, because of the lack of facilities for Nanu in Chempazhanthy for doing higher studies in Sanskrit.

1.2.2 Brief Account of the Education System Prevailed in that Period in Travancore

English education was introduced in

Travancore in the year 1834 by Maharaja Sree Swathi Thirunal. But it was limited to only a few schools during the second half of the 19th century with access only to the children from elite class. The majority of the people were depending on the *Kudi Pallikoodam* (village schools with Single teacher) and Gurukula way of education, where children from different places go to the Guru's house and stay there and continue their education there. Only upper caste children were admitted to the schools run by the Government. Missionary Schools were an exception where children belonging to all castes were able to study.

1.2.2.1. Guru at Varanapalli

Krishnan Vaidyar was in search for a suitable place for sending Nanu for higher studies. From the members of a Kathakali troupe came to Manakkal Bhadrakali Temple from Kayamkulam, Vaidyar came to know about the Gurukulam of Kummanpalli Raman Pillai Asan at Cheruvannur, close to Puthupally in Kayamkulam.

Krishnan Vaidyar decided to put Nanu at the Kalari (school) of Kummanpalli Raman Pillai Asan. He made enquiries about the place and found that the Varanapalli Tharavadu, an affluent Ezhava family close to Asan's Kalari was offering free accommodation and food to the deserving students coming from faraway places for studies there. Krishnan Vaidyar himself decided to take Nanu to Varanapalli. While leaving his house at Chempazhanthy, his parents tried giving him some money. But the reply given by Nanu was loaded with some cues on his future plans. Nanu said: "it is not good to lose son as well as money at a time! Please keep the money with you as I wouldn't require the same at Kayamkulam".

According to Ulloor S Parameswara Iyer, Kummanpalli Raman Pillai Asan was a scholar and poet. He has written 'Varkala Sthala Mahatmyam' a poetic work and few Attakatha for Kathakali. Asan started his schools at Cheruvannur mainly because of the interest and generosity of the Heads of Varanapalli Tharavadu. They were educated people and were very keen to impart education to children from untouchable castes especially to Ezhavas. The Karanavar (Head of matriarchal family) of Varanapalli family at that time, Kochukrishna Panickar, was a scholar and a socially active person. They were extending full support to students from far and wide by providing food and accommodation at their house.

Kummanpalli Raman Pillai Asan was focused on imparting knowledge on Kavya, Nataka and Alankara of Sanskrit to his students. Since Nanu had already got the basics of these areas from his father and uncle, he was looking forward to learning Tharka and Vyakarana from Asan. But considering the level of other students, Asan couldn't change the curriculum only for Nanu. Thus, Nanu was way ahead of leaning in his class and spent most of his time meditating and supporting weaker students. There were some brilliant students like Perunelli Krishnan Vaidyan, Velutheri Kesav Vaidyan, Manampur Govindana Asan etc. as Nanu's classmates. All of them were successful in their life as scholars, Ayurveda practitioners, poets etc. There used to be discussions on various topics after the class at Varanapalli Tharavad by these students with the encouragement of the Karanavar. It was a practice for everyone to resort to Nanu for a final word during heated debates and when questions remained unsolved.

One day Nanu visited the hut of a Pulaya boy who was a regular worker who used to look after cattle at Varanapalli. Nanu already made him his friend. Nanu went to his house because he was not coming for work for few days. Seeing Nanu at his home, the boy really got worried as it was unheard of those days. The boy was suffering from leprosy. Nanu gave him some medicinal leaves and told him to boil those in water and take bath with that water. Nanu also gave 'Marotti Oil' to apply on the body after the bath. The boy got cured by following the treatment suggested by Nanu.

With his knowledge, gentle behavior and maturity, Nanu had won the heart of everyone at the Kalari and Varanapalli. Since he was ahead of the portions taken at the class, he devoted most of his time for meditation, prayers and visiting temples. One day the inmates at the tharavadu witnessed an unusual behaviour of Nanu running behind something and after few meters he fainted and collapsed to the ground. When he regained consciousness, Nanu said he saw his favorite deity Sri Krishna and he ran away and disappeared. On that spot Guru recited one of his early poems, Sri Krishna Darshanam. Guru was a devotee of Vishnu at that time. It is

believed that he wrote his early works like 'Vasudevashtakam' and 'Vishnuashtakam' during this period.

Nanu came to Kayamkulam in ME 1053 and left in 1055 after two years of higher studies. Murkoth Kumaran has marked his departure from Asan's Kalari as ME 1057. Towards the end of his studies Nanu had a severe attack of dysentery and he became very weak due to heavy bleeding. His uncle came all the way from Chempazhanthy to take him back home. Everyone present there during the departure at Varanapally were very sad and were weeping, seeing the condition of their dear Nanu. That was the end of the formal education of Guru.

Recap

- ◆ Guru's education started at the age of five
- ◆ Guru followed his father's path that was farming when he could not continue education
- ◆ Guru used to sit for meditation for long hours
- ◆ Guru was an intelligent scholar
- ◆ Nanu (Guru) started to learn kalari

Objective Questions

1. Who was Nanu's first teacher?
2. Why Nanu turned into farming?
3. Where did Nanu spend the whole period when he got smallpox?
4. Who decided to put Nanu at the Kalari?
5. Why Nanu met Kummanpalli Raman Pillai Asan?

Answers

1. His father Madan Asan
2. there were no facilities for higher learning in his village
3. Bhadrakali Temple
4. Krishnan Vaidyar
5. to learn Tharka and Vyakarana from him

Assignments

1. What was the nature of Guru's early education and its influences?
2. Describe the education system in Travancore during Guru's formative years.
3. How did Guru's experiences at Varanapalli shape his educational journey?

Suggested Reading

1. Balachandran, Mangad (2019), Sree Narayana Guru: The Mystical Life and Teachings, Thrissur: Kerala Sahitya Academy
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2. Guru, Nataraja (2003). *The Word of the Guru, The Life and Teachings of Guru Narayana*. New Delhi: DK Print World Pvt Ltd.
3. Sanoo, M.K (1998), *Narayana Guru*, Bombay: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan.





UNIT

Leaving Home as a Wisdom Seeker

Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of this unit, the learner will be able to:

- ◆ understand how Nanu became Guru
- ◆ learn his relationship with Chattambi Swamikal
- ◆ acquire knowledge about Guru's personal life

Prerequisite

To understand deeply how a person becomes a monk, it is necessary to know his life from the educational period to the embrace of monasticism. Monks enjoy the social and religious ties that come with adopting the monastic life. For example, Swami Vivekananda was a person who was influenced by the thoughts of Sri Ramakrishna and chose the ascetic life. The Guru was a genius with knowledge. He was also proficient in Malayalam, Sanskrit, and Tamil languages. Here, the Guru's way of life and views were different.

Key themes

Advaita Vedanta, Chattambi Swamikal, Poorvasrama, Spiritual Life , Marrige

Discussion

Nanu got cured of his illness after returning to Chempazhanthy. He had undergone treatments under the supervision of his uncle Krishnan Vaidyan. After recuperation of his health, Nanu showed a complete detachment to family affairs. He spent most of his time in meditation, visiting temples and houses of his relatives like a wanderer, without taking any household responsibilities. This caused lot of worries to his parents. As responsible parents, in order to make their grown up and educated son settle down, they established a *Kudipallikoodam* (A one teacher school) for Nanu at Chempazhanthy. Nanu was an excellent teacher and his fame spread across the boundaries of his village. He was invited to Anchuthengu, a coastal village in Thiruvananthapuram, by some of his relatives to establish another *Kudipallikoodam* there.

1.3.1. Meeting with Sree Chattampi Swamikal

Sree Chattampi Swamikal was a contemporary of Sree Narayana Guru. Both were followers of Advaita Vedantha. The *poorvashrama* (before sanyasa) name of Sree Chattampi Swamikal was Kunjan Pillai, who was born in the year 1853 (ME 1029) at Kolloor, Kannamoola in Thiruvananthapuram. His father was Vasudeva Sharma and mother Nangamma Pillai. He struggled a lot during his childhood even for getting primary education due to poor living conditions at home. He was very keen to study and was a brilliant student. He could continue his studies at the Kalari of Pettayil Raman Pillai Asan, another acclaimed teacher of those times. Seeing his fast-learning

capabilities made Kunjan the Chattampi (Monitor) of the class and over a period that name got attached with Kunjan.

There are different stories on the first meeting between these two great souls. Some biographers are of the opinion that Sree Narayana Guru met Sree Chattampi Swamikal when Guru was staying at the house of his classmate Perunelli Krishnan Vaidyan, near Manacaud, Thiruvananthapuram. There is also a view that the meeting took place at Aniyoor Bhagavathy Temple, an old temple in Chempazhanthy, which was under the administration of Nair community. Still others say that they met at Aruvippuram House on the banks of Vamanapuram river, where Swamikal was a regular visitor.

Sree Chattampi Swamikal was an ardent devotee of Sri Subrahmania and had assumed the name Shanmughadasa. Swamikal took Guru to Thycaud Ayyavu for practising Yoga. Thycaudu Ayyavu was a Superintendent at British Residency in Thycaud, Thiruvananthapuram and a Raja Yoga practitioner. Both Guru and Swamikal continued practising yoga under Ayyavu for some time. Their friendship became very strong during this period and they started travelling to various places together. Sree Chattambi Swamikal had the good fortune of receiving the Subramanya Mantra from an unknown saint. Swamikal was very kind to share that Mantra with Sree Narayana Guru during this period.

1.3.2. Guru Learning Tamil

Sree Narayana Guru had written his philosophy and teachings mainly in three languages, Malayalam, Sanskrit and Tamil. Guru had absolute command over

all these three languages. We know about the sources of his learning in Malayalam and Sanskrit, but not much is known about the formal education of the Guru in the Tamil language. Biographers have mentioned that Guru used to work as a helper at a Tamil Book Stall in Chalai Bazar, by seeing the young Nanu's commitment, the shop owner used to leave the responsibility of the shop with him after some time. During this time, it is believed that Guru spent his spare time at the shop reading Tamil books, especially works of Nayinars and Saiva Sidhantha.

1.3.3. Guru's Marriage

Guru's parents were worried about the detached lifestyle of him from the family. While establishing *Kudipallikoodam* for him at Chempazhanthy and Anjuthengu, they thought he would settle down with his favourite activity of teaching. But, as he grew up further, Guru was showing his inclination more towards a spiritual path. To bring him back to the life of a house holder, his family thought of getting him married. The message was communicated to Nanu through a 'Vaathy' (Priest of a community or barber), but he didn't say anything in favour or against the proposal and kept his silence. Elders of the family interpreted Guru's silence as the approval of marriage and proceeded further.

The family had identified a girl named Kali Amma as the bride. She was from Madan Asan's family at Anchuthengu. There were two versions on her relationship with Madan Asan – as Madan Asan's sister's daughter and as nephew's

daughter. The second version looks more factual because, when heard about this proposal, Guru commended that 'she would be like a daughter to me'.

As per the prevailing custom of those days the sister of Guru went to the bride's house as a proxy and gave *Pudava* (Wedding Cloth) to Kali Amma and brought her to Chempazhanthy. The wedding happened in the absence of Guru. This was in 1884 (ME1059). There is not much known about their wedded life. There are different versions available about Guru's response to this marriage. Guru left the house when his sisters and relatives brought his bride there. Guru came back after two months to the house where Kali Amma was living along with the 'Vaathy' (Priest of a community or barber). Guru didn't enter the house, but sat outside. Kali Amma brought few bananas and snacks. Guru took two bananas and gave one to Vathi. While leaving the house Guru told Kali Amma that "People are taking birth in this world for fulfilling different purpose. For me and you there are different goals to achieve. Thus, you can look after your affairs and let me do mine". Kali Amma lived in that house few more months after this incident and later she was dropped at her house in Anchuthengu. That was the end of that marriage episode, which may appear to be unsuccessful when looked through ordinary norms.

Guru lost his father soon after his separation from marriage, (in 1885). Mother left him few years before in 1881 (ME 1056). Thus, Guru became free from all his family bonding.

Recap

- ◆ Nanu was an excellent teacher
- ◆ Chattampi Swamikal follows Advaita
- ◆ Guru was interested in spiritual life
- ◆ Guru Given Importance to his goals and respect others goal also
- ◆ Guru had command over Malayalam, Tamil and Sanskrit
- ◆ Guru met with Chattampi Swamikal

Objective Questions

1. What was the name of Sree Chattampi Swamikal in Poorvasrama?
2. Under whom both Guru and Swamikal practised yoga?
3. What are the similarities among Chattampi Swamikal and Guru?
4. Who was Guru's wife?

Answers

1. Kunjan Pillai
2. Ayyavu
3. both were followed Advaita Vedanta
4. Kali Amma

Assignments

1. Chattambi swamikal and Guru were good friends. What are the similarities in their perspectives? How their friendship was useful to the kerala society?
2. Did Guru marry Kali Amma? Write about his spiritual life as well as family life

Suggested Reading

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Ascetic Life and Enlightenment

UNIT

Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of this unit, the learner will be able to:

- ◆ know the ascetic life of Guru
- ◆ know Guru's Life at Aruvippuram
- ◆ learn about the self-realization of Guru

Prerequisite

We had heard that most of the ascetics lived in the forest as their lifestyle will be different and they will be curious to gain knowledge for a peaceful life. Also, the Saints traveled around the world and across the country. The real purpose of their journey is to know the source of life. For that, monks try to know life by separating from the world and family life. The goal of most saints was to find the meaning of life and to answer the question about life and the world. Sankacharya was born in Kaldi, Kerala before Sree Narayanaguru. At the age of 32, he traveled across the country with his Advaita philosophy. Most of the saints followed the spiritual life and path of devotion and spread them to the world. It is in this situation that we should know someone who entered into the saints. This will help us to know the philosophy of saints.

Key themes

Maruthua Mala, enlightenment, Aruvipuram, self-realization

Discussion

After leaving his home in Chempazhanthy, Nanu Asan started travelling to far off places in Kerala and Southern Tamil Nadu as an *awadhoota* (wanderer). He used to walk 30 to 40 *Nazhika* (1 *Nazhika*=24 minutes) a day through coastal areas. During those days he used to sleep at different places, sometimes on top of fishing boats and catamarans kept at the seashore, at other times in temples etc. He ate whatever he got as *bhiksha* (alms) during his travels. He was least bothered about his self-esteem or identity during that mystic life. Sometimes he helped fishermen to pull the net from the sea. Fishermen loved this young wanderer and they believed that if he touched their net or boat, they would get a bumber catch on that day. Wherever he went, he loved to mix with common people irrespective of their religion or caste. He was a very dear visitor to many Muslim and Christian families in the coastal area.

There is very little knowledge about the life of Guru during this *awadhoota* period. But biographers agree that Guru had travelled extensively in Tamil Nadu, especially in Tirunelveli, Madurai, Trichy regions, visited temples, met yogis, mystics and studied Shaiva Sidhantha of Nainars and other great works in Tamil language, like Thirukkural, Thirumoolam, Ozhivil Odukkam, etc.

Guru continued his yoga practice during this period also. He did regular practice of yoga during his stay at Velimela near Padmanabhapuram. Guru had meetings and friendship with many Sufi mystics in Tamil Nadu. Guru understood about Islam and Quran from them during these

interactions. Biographers of Guru like Kumaran Asan and Murkoth Kumaran had mentioned about Guru's meeting with a Maha Yogini called Ammal who was on yogic sleep near Nagercoil.

1.4.1. Guru at Maruthua Mala

Maruthua Mala is almost in the southern tip of Western Ghat mountain range situated about 12 km from Nagercoil between Sucheendram and Kanyakumari. Maruthua Malai literally means Medicinal Mountain. As per the local myths, this mountain was a piece missed out from the hands of Hanuman, while he was carrying the Mritisanjivani to Lanka to cure Lakshman. There is a cave on the top of this mountain called 'Pilla Thadam' where Sree Narayana Guru did his penance for years together.

When Guru came here for penance, the area was a thick forest and habitat for wild animals like leopard, tigers and venomous reptiles. Guru had visited Maruthua Mala before with Sree Chattampi Swamikal during their wandering period. That time itself Guru might have identified this place for his penance. Guru always liked to choose very picturesque and naturally beautiful places for his camps. The view from the top of Maruthua Mala is really amazing even now. At the Plaines one could enjoy the vast expanding greenery of paddy, banana and lotus flower cultivation. Since the mountain is directly facing the ocean, there is always a good breeze blowing towards the mouth of the cave at Pilla Thadam.

Guru as a yogi had no fear in living

inside that forest area along with the wild animals and reptiles. Yogis were even trained to live many days without food. Guru used to eat leaves of herbs, tubers, fruits etc on those days. Among those, a particular herb called 'Kattukodi' deserves a special mention. When the

juice extracted from the leaves of this herb is kept in a large leaf folded in a conical shape, for some time, it will settle and become firm like solid jelly. One could eat that jelly and live without food for many days.

Guru had many strange experiences during his penance at Maruthua Mala. One day he woke up from meditation in the middle of the night. He was feeling hungry as he hadn't had any food for the past few days. Suddenly he noticed one person climbing up the hill and coming towards the cave. He asked Guru 'are you **feeling hungry**' Guru replied yes. Then the man told 'I have brought some pounded rice and water; we can have it together'. Since Guru was so **hungry**, he ate the same food along with the stranger and didn't notice or ask any details about him. When Guru finished eating, he couldn't find that person anywhere **near the cave**. It is humanly not possible for anyone to reach that forest at that time and climb down the hills at night itself. The devotees of Guru had another **version** of this incident. According to this version the stranger was a leper but they believed that Lord Shiva himself came and blessed Guru during that incident as the stranger. It is believed that Guru, as an ardent devotee of Shiva, had composed *Sivasatakam* (One Hundred verses on Shiva) during this period.

Guru attained enlightenment while observing intense penance at Maruthua Mala. Guru has expressed that ecstatic experience in his own words in his work *Cijada Cintanam* (Reflections on Mind and Matter).

*Ten million suns rising all at once
Eclipsing earth, water, fire and all else-
Such is thy ascendant presence;
Effulgent it ever should be.*

(Translated to English by Swamy Muni Narayana Prasad)

Verse thirty-five of *Atmopadesasatakam* (One Hundred Verses of Self Instruction) also reflects the same experience:

*Like ten thousand suns rising all at once
Dawns the discriminative enlightenment.*

Guru had chosen the Pilla Thadam cave on top of Maruthua Mala inside dense

forest to get solitude for his penance but the ordinary devout people who came there to seek his blessings disturbed him. One such incident was the visit of a devotee called Chettiamma along with her husband, who was an overseer in a government department. Few helpers cleared the way to the peak through the forest and they reached the cave. They got really frightened by sighting Guru at penance inside the cave guarded by Tigers at the entrance. By seeing the visitors, Guru gave instructions by hand gestures to the animals and they had walked away and disappeared to the forest.

After the visit of Chetti Amma, many people from the nearby villages started going to Pilla Thadam by trekking through the forest to visit Guru seeking his blessings. The number of devotees started increasing day by day and finally Guru decided to leave Maruthua Malai once for all.

1.4.2 Guru at Aruvippuram

After leaving Maruthua Mala, Guru started travelling again the length and breadth of South Travancore. He started again mingling with common people after a few years of solitude during the penance. But his desire to meditate at a tranquil setting led him to Arivippuram on the banks of river Neyyar. Arivippuram was a dense forest at that time, the Neyyar river still shows her wilderness when she flows through the rocky terrain of Aruvippuram. Guru discovered two caves at Aruvippuram for his penance, one very close to the bank of the river and another one on top of the hill 'Kodithookki Mala', which acts as a backdrop to Aruvippuram river bed.

Within no time the villagers who came to collect firewood and other forest products spotted the Young Yogi and they started visiting his cave for blessings. One day a young boy who came to collect fodder for his cattle found Guru inside the cave near the river bank. His name was Kochappi Pillai from a nearby village called Marayamuttom. He stood at a distance with reverence for some time. Guru spotted this boy and asked him to come close to him. The boy jumped over the huge granite rocks on the banks and reached in front of the cave, but he got frightened seeing a leopard lying near to the cave. Guru made the boy comfortable and asked him whether he could get something to eat as he was feeling so hungry. Kochappi Pillai told Guru that he could bring tender coconuts. But Guru asked whether he could get tapioca. The boy said yes and brought a few pieces of tapioca within no time. They both cooked the tuber in the fire. When the tapioca was ready, Guru invited Kochappi Pillai also to have the same along with him. The boy joined happily and ate that meal together.

Kochappi Pillai became a daily visitor to Guru. But his parents, belonging to the Nair community, were not happy about his close contacts with Guru and eating meals with him. But Kochappi Pillai didn't care about those restrictions and finally started staying with Guru at Aruvippuram as an apprentice to Guru. Kochappi Pillai was Guru's first disciple and Guru gave him *deeksha* (initiation to monastic life) with the name Swamy Shivalinga Dasa.

Incidentally, the last person to receive saffron from Guru was Ananda Shenoy, who as a sanyasi was later known as Ananda Theerthar. Guru had a Western disciple – Ernest Kurk. Induction of disciples by Guru and people seeking discipleship of Guru, from such a varying background can be seen as a clear manifestation of the well-known dictum of Guru: One Caste, One Religion and One God for Humans.

1.4.3 Life after Self-Realization

A Self Realised person can opt different methods or models to spend his/her rest of life on Earth. Narayana Guru gives a list of such models in the last chapter of his Sanskrit philosophical work, *Darsanamala*. The chapter is named as *Nirvana Darsanam*. Verse five of this chapter aptly suits the life of Guru after his Self-Realisation.

*Brahmavit is the one who,
Having burnt down everything
In the fire of wisdom,
Finds himself in brahman
He performs actions in conformity with
Prescribed rules of conduct,
Aiming at the good of the world.*

(Translated by Muni Narayana Prasad)

Guru too performed actions aiming at the wellbeing of the world and so there is nothing wrong to consider him as a *Brahmavit*. After establishing Sivagiri Mutt, Guru published a message. This message is a hint on the application of Guru's philosophy in transactional life and a guideline for framing socio economic policies. This message is titled *Advaitha Jeevitham*, which can be translated as Unitive Life or Non-dual life. The message is given below:

“All people desire happiness equally. This is the ultimate terminus of all congregations, both secular and religious. The human spirit prefers everlasting, permanently shining happiness to the momentary and transient pleasures of the senses. The human spirit is on a great sojourn towards this happiness. The quality of happiness attained by each society will be in proportion to the inner transformation it has reached.

The religious and ethical perseverance of the members of a community help much in gaining physical, mental and spiritual wellbeing of all kinds of the community. Temples and places of worship are found to be very helpful to bring this about for all people in a society, but for all this to happen, economic wellbeing of the members of the community is very essential. For this, innovations must be made in agriculture, industry, technical education etc. The material and spiritual are not two. In fact, both work for the same goal. When all the limbs of the body work harmoniously, the body enjoys happiness. Similarly, the unified working together of all faculties, material as well as spiritual, is necessary if humanity is to reach its final goal of happiness”.(Translated by Vinaya Chaithanya)

Biographies of Narayana Guru usually place him against the social and historical context of Kerala. But, like any other guru or prophet, Narayana Guru too has to be

Narayana Guru on his Statue

The first statue of Narayana Guru was unveiled when Guru was alive. It was at Thalassery on 1927 March 13. Did he encourage it as the correct way of following him? Guru's own words will clarify it. The organizers of statue installation sent a photographer to Varkala to get Guru's photograph. Guru did not object it. But the conversation that took place between the Guru and the photographer reveals Guru's attitude:

Guru: From where?

Photographer: From Thalassery, they have sent me to take Guru's photos to make a statue.

Guru:(Pointing to a ripe mango on a tree nearby) Can you take a picture of that?

Photographer: Yes.I can.

Guru: Can you take the picture of its *rasa* (essence or taste)

Guru gave the message that just like a photo of mango does not give its taste, the ‘essence’ of Guru can't be captured through his statue. It is possible only through his words.

looked up on through the history of Guru hood also. Such a perspective requires a study of Guru against the cultural and philosophical background of the world as well, in addition to the local settings of

Kerala. ‘The Word of the Guru’, a book by one of the disciples of Narayana Guru, Nataraja Guru, offers such a universal perspective of Narayana Guru.

Recap

- ◆ Guru started to travel for identifying his Mystic Life
- ◆ Guru learned about other religions
- ◆ Guru had practised his penance at Marutha Mala
- ◆ Nanu transformed into yogi
- ◆ Guru lived in forest
- ◆ Guru started to travel across the south Travancore
- ◆ Peoples came for Guru’s Blessings
- ◆ Kochappi Pillai from Nair family had close relationship with Guru

Objective Questions

1. Why Maruthua Mala is important?
2. Arivippuram was a dense forest- how Aruvipuram is important to Guru?
3. Who was Kochappi Pillai?
4. Who wrote the book ‘The word of the Guru’?
5. What is the title of the famous meaasage Guru conveyed after establishing Sivagiri Mutt?

Answers

1. It is Medicinal Mountain
2. He chooses for meditation
3. Belonged Nair family and very close to Guru
4. Nataraja Guru
5. Advaitha Jeevitha (Unitive Life)

Assignments

1. Describe Guru's experience and activities during his time at Maruthua Mala?
2. Describe the significance of Guru's presence and teachings at Aruvippuram.
3. How did Guru's life change after achieving self-realisation?
4. Explain Guru's message 'Advaitha Jeevitham'

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The Age and Social Settings



Socio-Political Scenario of Travancore during 19th and early 20th Centuries

UNIT

Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of this unit, the learner will be able to:

- ◆ get an overview of the Travancore society in the 19th and 20th century.
- ◆ to understand the nature of the different social institutions which existed in Kerala
- ◆ grasp the primitive cultural practices which existed in Kerala
- ◆ to understand how the practices, religion, legal system etc., lead to the degradation of Kerla society

Prerequisite

At the turn of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century, the social and political landscape of Kerala was characterized by the prevalence of social obscurantism and religious superstitions. As the most detrimental agents of societal retardation, the decadent aspects of the feudal system, which dates back hundreds of years, as well as slavery and primitive behaviors, played a role. Low-caste people's lives were made more difficult by the feudal system and the institution of slavery. As a result of the deeply ingrained caste structure and the stringent regulations on pollution, the society of Kerala has degenerated into the status of a lunatic institution. Untouchability, unapproachability, and unseeability were all practices that higher castes used against lower castes, and these practices made the land seem silly to the people who had originally inhabited it. Despite the fact that *avarna* made up more than half of the population in Kerala, they were regarded as if they were nothing more than beasts and were denied all of the rights that the *savarna* were entitled to. This unit is an explication of some of the key features of the prevalent socio-political system in the 19th and early 20th century Kerala. Such an explication will lay the foundation for understanding the social and political system at a time when Sreenarayana guru lived.

Key themes

Feudal System, Slavery, Primitive Practices, Judicial System and Punishment, Taxation System

Discussion

2.1.1. Feudal System (Jenmi System)

The growth of Jenmi System was one of the most important aspects of the medieval Kerala society. The 'Jenmi' means the 'land lord'. Kerala Society was dominated by the Jenmi system spearheaded by the Nambuthiri Brahmins. According to Elamkulam Kunjan Pillai, the Jenmi system developed during the eleventh century, as a result of the Chera-Chola wars. The entire resources of the country were to be diverted towards the war. Majority of the people were involved in the war. The Nambuthiris utilised this occasion and consolidated the landed property, especially the temple property in to their control. At the same time the tenants and the small land holders entrusted their landed property either to the Nambuthiris or to the temples. It was the common belief that the temple property and the Brahmin property would not be destroyed by the enemies. Further the Devaswam and Brahmaswam lands were exempted from the payment of tax. It was in this background that the Jenmi system had developed in medieval Kerala.

Some of the modern historians like to characterise this *Jenmi* system as the 'Uralar System' or the 'Karalar System'. The 'Uralar' were the owner-proprietors of the Devaswam and the Brahmaswam lands and the 'Karalar' were the intermediary men in the agrarian structure. The growth

of Indian feudalism was mainly due to the land grants given by the rulers to the Brahmins and other dominant sections of the society. But as far as Kerala was concerned this was not the case. The expansion of the agriculture together with the bringing up of land for cultivation, were the result of the expansion of the Brahmin settlements in Kerala. Naturally the Nambuthiri Brahmin became the owners of the land.

As the Nambuthiris wanted to maintain the ideological and social dominance over the society, they made the temples as the main centres of the society. They donated a part of their land to the temple and the temple land came to be known as the 'Devaswam' land and the Nambuthiri-owned land was known as the 'Brahmaswam' land. In the course of time, the temples became the biggest land-owners of medieval Kerala. The ownership - proprietorship of the 'Devaswam' land was in the hands of the Nambuthiri Brahmins. In practice, both the 'Brahmaswam' and 'Devaswam' lands in Kerala were under the Nambuthiris. These proprietors were known as the 'Uralar' and those who took up the land for cultivation on the basis of rent were known as the 'Karalar'. The 'Karalar' were not the actual cultivators. The Uralar and Karalar formed the back bone of the feudal society of medieval Kerala. This Uralar-Karalar dominance became strengthened when Kerala was undergoing a period of anarchy as a result of the disintegration of

the Chera kingdom. With the feudal social formation, a hierachal social structure of Uralar-Karalar, the actual cultivator and the craftsmen emerged in the society. When the material status was joined with the customary social status the feudal relations achieved a new dimension.

One of the most important characteristics of the agrarian structure of medieval Kerala was the emergence of the intermediary group. As the proprietors of the Devaswam land and the owners of the Brahmaswam land, the Namboodiri Brahmins or the Uralar leased their land to the Karalar for annual rent. In turn, the Karalar leased the same land to the actual tiller and extracted high rate of rent from them. A part of the rent thus received by the Karalar was given to the Uralar. The Karalar thus acted as the intermediaries between the land-lord and the actual cultivator. They were directly related with the Uralar on the one side and with the actual cultivator or the 'Paniyalar' on the other. The intermediaries directly contacted the Paniyalar and other group of labourers. The Karalar collected the resources from the Paniyalar and consolidated it and a small part of it was given to the Uralar and the remaining part was kept by them. Thus these intermediaries, Karalar, became rich and closely associated with the brahmins. The portion given to the Uralar by the Karalar was known as the 'melvaram' or 'pattam' (rent).

The Karalar were generally Nairs. It is assumed that they were the tribal people in the ancient times and were involved in agriculture of the land of the Brahmins. In the course of time these tribal cultivators learned armed training and 'kalari' and acted as the guards of the Brahmins. Apart from the duty of providing protection to the Brahmins, the Nairs were entrusted the duty of supervising the work of the Paniyalar. Gradually they became the

intermediary group. The Nairs made it a point not to relate both the Brahmins and the actual cultivators directly for fear of their existence and they acted as the middle men between the Uralar and the Paniyalar. The Karalar Nairs became the connecting link between the Namboodiris and the Paniyalar. The Brahmins enjoyed the surplus of the agricultural production and led a leisurely life and the Nairs skillfully exploited this situation. They, recognizing the superiority of the Brahmins enjoyed the power of the land-lord in practice and took up the duty of protection of the society itself. In practice, the Kerala Nairs became a dominant section of the agrarian society of the medieval Kerala. The Nairs continued the matrilineal system of the tribals. They gave silent permission to the 'Sambandham' (a peculiar type of marriage between their women and the Nannboodiri men, and thereby maintained a close alliance with the Namboodiri. By this, the social position of the Karalar Nairs became high.)

The close alliance between the Nairs and Namboodiris acquired social and economic superiority and their political dominance became a reality in the society of medieval Kerala. The Namboodiri men granted many types of concessions to the Nairs in order to satisfy the Nair women with whom they had 'Sambandham' alliance. These concessions were skillfully utilised by the Nair and they strengthened their position and hold over the landed property. In practice the Namboodiris remained as the 'nominal' owners of the land, the Nairs enjoyed the fruits of the work of the agricultural labourers and tenants. The intermediary group, Karalar Nairs, enjoyed the powers and rights of the actual land owner in the name of the Namboodiri Jenmis.

The Nairs, taking over the temporary control of the land could increase the

production in the land and thereby accumulate more and more resources. Though they could not enjoy the absolute ownership of the land, they could extract a major portion of the agricultural product and could maintain the system of mutual alliances. Corresponding with the development of the position of the intermediaries in the agrarian structure, the position of the actual cultivator was pushed down. The work load of the 'Paniyalar' group increased and their social position was decreased. The Nairs enjoyed power, strength and resources and jumped in the social hierarchy.

2.1.2 Slavery

Slavery is another deep-rooted social evil in the society of Kerala. It was widely prevalent throughout the region. The highly hierarchical society of Kerala practiced slavery in the most vulgar and brutal manner. In India the origin of slavery was closely associated with the inception of the caste system, which in turn was based on a hierarchical social order. There were many "slave castes" that were owned, bought and sold like any other property by the masters and landlords. In Kerala, slavery was purely a hereditary system and a person born in a slave caste, could not change his caste throughout his life. In Kerala, slavery was closely connected with the system of caste. Inscriptions, kolezhuthu records, foreign accounts, etc., found in different parts of Kerala, have brought into light the evil practice of slavery. The first references about slavery were found in the inscription of 849 A.D. According to this inscription, the Venad ruler Ayyan Adikal Tiruvadikal granted certain privileges to the congregation of the Tarisa Church at Quilon. The inscription also mentions the prices of the slaves. According to the inscription, the price of the male slave

was fixed at 100 fanams and that of the females at 70 fanams in the 9th and 10th centuries A.D. References to slavery in early colonial documents prove its existence well into later historical records. The term *adima* meaning slave, referring to an individual slave, repeatedly occurs in the documents in Malayalam that deal with land and slave transactions from ancient to the modern times. The system of control and ownership of the *adima/ adimatham* was equivalent to the word slavery. In the traditional caste hierarchy, the untouchable castes, referred to as Dalits today, were relegated to the status of *adima* and had to perform most arduous physical labor in agriculture. Their labor was central to the wetland paddy cultivation and the later expansion of dry land farming. Untouchable agrestic serfs were the part and parcel of the agricultural field where they were born. The land owner had the right to sell them along with the soil and could dispose them when he pleased. The slave's children lived as slaves, just as their parents. They lived from hand to mouth the whole year round and rarely knew when they could procure food for the next day.

The slavery prevailed as the most significant feature of the feudal society. The beginning of the Brahmin supremacy marks the commencement of the institution of slavery in the country. Slavery was the result of the widening gulf between the upper and lower castes by the Brahmins. The slavery was integrated with the caste system and strongly maintained by privileged classes. The Parayas, the Pulayas, the Kuravas, the Velas and the Ulladans who together constituted one-eighth of the entire population were brought in to the slavery. They were deprived of the rights and enjoyments of freemen and citizens. The slave castes had once been a free people. It was the feudal nature of society, the agrarian economy,

the division of labour and caste system that ushered in slavery. Under this system, the polluting castes such as Pulayas, Parayas etc. lost their privileges. During the medieval period, slavery was most common in Kerala.

Under the system of slavery, the depressed classes had been denied all privileges. They were born as slaves, lived as slaves and died as slaves. The slaves were cruelly treated by their masters who enjoyed the right to sell, chain and kill the slaves. They were tortured both physically and mentally and were given only a small quantity of grain for their subsistence. Those who escaped were chased and brought back and severe punishments were inflicted on them. The absolute control that the upper-caste masters had on the slaves had reduced the humanity of the latter to an inconsequential level. Various forms of dreadful punishments, including corporal punishments, which awaited the slaves, showed their extreme subordinated position in the social hierarchy.

Slave markets existed in different parts of Kerala. Women and children were sold as slaves. Children of the slaves were the property of the mother's master not of the father's master. In this cruel trade, the husband and the wife, the parent and the child were rudely separated and sold in different directions. In an article on hill tribes of Travancore, Mr. Conner states that 'in earlier times the murder of a slave was scarcely considered a crime. The slave trade deed of transfer goes to say 'you may sell or kill him or her'. In 1853, the number of slaves in Malabar district was 144000 and in 1842 it was 159000 in Travancore. About 11% of the total population in Travancore during 1842 was slaves. The number of persons originally reduced to a state of slavery was increased by the sale of children in times of famine and distress. Even though slavery was banned

in 1820, it continued to exist. Through a long period of customary regulations and social taboos, the slave communities were impoverished of dignity and were forced and subjected to social as well as religious humiliation by a dominant minority.

2.1.3 Primitive Practices

Talikettu Kalyanam

Most forms of marriages in traditional Kerala among all castes were very expensive. There were ceremonies and rituals that extended for two or three days. Talikettu Kalyanam was prevalent among most of the castes. It was to be conducted before a girl attains puberty on the failure of which her family would be excommunicated. Usually it was performed at the age of eleven and was more expensive than the marriage ceremony. The fact that the head of the family was allowed to alienate Tarawad property for the proper conduct of that function shows the nature of expenses and pomp of this ceremony. It was not obligatory for the girl to marry the same person who tied the tali or even to retain the tali. At the same time, if the girl so desired, there was no objection in accepting him as her husband. It was believed that the virginity of the girl ceased with the performance of the Talikettu Kalyanam. It was practised also by many lower castes including Pulayas.

Pulikudi

During pregnancy of a woman two types of ceremonials called *theyyattam* and *pulikudi* were performed in the fifth and seventh month respectively. The ceremony, called *theyyattam*, a corrupt form of *devattam* (*deva aattam*), playing of Gods, took place in the fifth month of pregnancy of a woman. A leafy arbor was constructed, and in front of it, the terrible figure of *Chamundi*, the queen of demons,

made of rice flour, turmeric and charcoal powder, was drawn. A party not less than eighteen washer men dressed as demons appeared on the stage before this figure in pairs, danced, jumped, roared, fought and drenched each other with saffron water. They worked themselves up to frenzy and are given fowls and goats to appease their fury. These they attacked, and killed and teared, as a tiger did to its prey, and drank the blood. After half an hour the convulsion cease, the demon declared its pleasure, and with much fatigue, retired to give place to others.

The ceremonies called *pulikudi*, (tamarind drinking) and *vayattupongala* (ritual offering of sweet rice), corresponded to the *pumsavana* of Brahmins, were observed in Travancore at the seventh month of pregnancy. On the first day, at twilight in the evening, the pregnant woman accompanied by the priestess, proceeds to the foot of a tamarind tree on the Southern side of the compound. Arriving there, she receives a thread seven yard in length, to which a silver ring was attached at the end, and, by means of circumambulation, entwines the tree with the thread. Next day, the thread was unwound from the tree, and handful of tamarind leaves were given to the woman by her husband. On re-entering the house, juice of the tamarind leaves was poured through the hands of the husband into those of the wife, who drank it. These customs were prevalent in most parts of Kerala and the expenses in their connection, especially for the feast that followed, led the community towards economic degradation and stagnancy.

Tirandukuli

Another primitive practice existed in Kerala was *tirandukuli*, which was related to the puberty of a girl. This practice was prevalent among the various communities with a little variation. The occasion was

one for a seven day's religious ceremony. On the seventh day the guests were invited to a luncheon. The most important rite in connection with puberty was the ceremonial bath (*tirandukuli*) on fifteenth day to remove her pollution. After the ceremonial bath she wears the *mattu* and puts on new clothes and ornaments. Caste women and others of the locality are invited and treated with a grand feast on this day too.

Pulakuli

The ceremonial bath related to death was called *pulakuli*. The death pollution lasts fifteen days at the expiry of which *pulakuli*, bathing to be free from the pollution, takes place. Then the priest (barber) sprinkles water mixed with cow-dung to purify them from pollution. Rice balls, *manapindam*, offered to the soul and the bones of the departed already preserved are placed in a metal plate and carried by the chief mourner, who is accompanied by other family members to a river or sea where they are deposited.

Sambandham

Sambandham also known as Pudavakoda is the type of marriage of some castes including Kshatriyas and Nairs. The meeting of the bride and the bridegroom was not essential and sometimes they saw each other only at the time of the marriage. If their horoscopes agreed, their heads of families decided the marriage without consulting the concerned. Regarding the legal validity of *Sambandham* union, there are different views. The main problem among Nairs was that the husband of a Nair woman was not always from Nair caste. If the husband happened to be a Namputhiri, the validity of the union became confused, because the Nair wife followed Marumakkathayam system and the Namputhiri husband

followed Makkathayam system. The Nair woman's children by the Namputhiri got their mother's property, while the Namputhiri's children by his Namputhiri wife got their father's property. This means that the Namputhiri's children by the Namputhiri wife got the benefit of the right to inheritance under Makkathayam system, but the same right was denied to his children by the Nair wife, throwing in to nullity even their paternity. These children were also considered untouchable by Namputhiri father. All these norms and rules were framed, only to protect the interest of the Namputhiries at the cost of the lower castes. Sambandham was prevalent also among many lower castes including the Pulayas.

Divorce was easy and common among Nairs. The marriage lasted only as long as the parties wished. In order to terminate it, they did not have to go through any process. All that the woman had to do, if she was tired of her husband, was to put his sandals outside the house, which meant that he was no longer welcome. Nair women were so proud that they would not go and live with their husbands; it was for the men to go to their women.

2.1.4 Hypergamy, Polyandry and Polygamy

Hypergamy was prevalent in Kerala. It was very common among the Kshatriyas, the Ambalavasis and the Nairs. According to the customs that existed, Namputhiries could consort with the Antarala, Kshatriya and Nair women. So, Innes observed that it is difficult to see any material difference in blood between Namputhiries themselves and those lower castes even though they styled themselves. Nair, Samanta or Kshatriya followed the Marumakkathayam system restricting their women folk to Namputhiri consorts. The Antaralas and the Kshatriyas also

were permitted to consort with Nair women. The Nairs could consort with women belonging to sub divisions of their caste held to be lower than their own like those who reared cattle. But they were not allowed to consort with women of sub divisions whose touch would impart pollution. However, in no case a woman belonging to higher class was permitted to consort with a man of lower class. The Madras Census Report 1901, refers to the form of hypergamy between different castes which existed on the West Coast, where women of castes equal to or higher than Nairs were prohibited from forming unions with men of castes below them in rank though the men of these castes are not similarly restricted. It is considered that polyandry and Marumakkathayam were introduced by Namputhiries. Polyandry existed among the Nairs and many other castes. One opinion regarding how the Nairs came to be polyandrous is connected with their martial habit. The Nairs were good fighters and military men. Wives and children are burdens to military men. Their life is different from that of others in many respects. Military men like to be free from all kinds of family attachment. They are less encouraged to marry. Only one brother, usually the eldest one in the family, got married; others remained bachelors. But the woman so married had to serve as the wife of her husband's brothers also and satisfy them sexually. Among Kammalans, carpenters and blacksmiths in Calicut, Walluvanad and Ponnani Taluks, several brothers have one wife for them. There was a belief among the Kammala women that the more husbands they had the greater would be their happiness. Kaniyans used to have one wife in common among several brothers. Panikkans also practised polyandry. Polygamy was in existence among the many castes including Velans, Parayas and others.

Marumakkathayam

Joint family system and the Marumakkathayam or matrilineal system of inheritance was in existence among many caste groups of Kerala including Kshatriyas and Nairs. Their family was commonly described by the term *tarawad*. In Marumakkathayam a man belonged to his mother's family and father was a comparatively less important figure. His properties would not go to his sons and daughters but will go to his sister's children. Though the descent was by mother's side, the management of the tarawad property was vested in the hands of the eldest male member of the woman's family, known as karanavan whose authority in the family was unquestioned.

2.1.5 Legal System

The Kerala society in the 19th century was not based on the principles of social freedom and equality. The low castes were not entitled to enjoy any civil liberties. There was no free and fair administration of justice. Caste Tribunals decided on offences inside the caste. For inter caste offences, feudal lords or priests administered justice. Justice was administered on the basis of *Vyavaharamalika*, a *smrithi* text of customary laws based on caste equations as interpreted by Nambuthiris. Many customs and precedents of the land were also considered as law according to convenience. In this judicial arrangement, Namputhiri hegemony was predominantly reflected and they were regarded as the super custodians of the commandments. They only had the authority to interpret the law and pronounce judgments. Thus, the all-powerful priestly class who were also the feudal lords was the interpreters of law and they did it according to their whims and fancies in the most discriminatory manner. The Namputhiris

as a class were outside the orbit of the law of the land. Men of high caste found guilty were given comparatively light punishments while ruthless punishments were served on low caste offenders even for simple or trivial offences. A criminal from Namputhiri caste was never given capital punishment. But if he was a low caste he was hanged, or beheaded even for petty crimes like stealing coconut. Thus, the low caste people with no legitimate social or religious hold were the genuine victims in the judicial frame work of pre modern Kerala.

Trial and Punishments

To check the crime and to regulate social order, there emerged the need for correctional institutions. Various traditional methods were used to detect the crime, which had no empirical or scientific base. These ordeals are mainly based on mere faith in super natural force. In the medieval Kerala, there was no such structure of judicial system or written code of law in these matters. As the King was the highest authority, he was the last voice to the settlements of the trials. There were no uniformity in trials and punishment of same crime and they varied from caste to caste and place to place.

In the early period, a popular method employed in detecting crime was dealt with the traditional system of trial by ordeal. The ordeals were not applied to all sections. They were held based on their caste distinction. The Brahmins were tried by the ordeal by balance (*thookupareeksha*) whereas Kshatriyas by fire, the Vaishyas by water and the Sudras by poison. But those who were below the status of Nairs were subjected to trials by ordeal. Generally, ordeals were held in front of King's palace, in a temple or in the public market. Ordeal for the accused involved in heinous crimes was held in

the premises of a temple and the person accused of treason were held in front of the king's palace. Persons born of high caste mother and low caste father were tried in the public market. Ordeals proved that causes or motives for murder were jealousy, sex, property dispute and money dispute. Implements used for perpetration of crimes were knife, chopper, dagger, axe, pestle, plank, hammer and the methods were strangulation and drowning.

Water Ordeal (Jala Pareeksha)

Different methods of water ordeal were followed, for the trial of murder cases. Among them the most popular one was that the accused was forced to collect three vessels of water, used for washing the deity and directed him to drink it for fourteen days continuously. If he was not affected by any sickness, he was considered innocent. But if he was affected by any sickness or internal pain, he was proved guilty and proper punishment was given to him. In the latter half of the 17th century, a different form of water ordeal was followed. In this ordeal, the accused was compelled to swim across the river infested with crocodiles. If he returned safe, he was considered innocent. If the crocodiles devoured him on his way, he was proved guilty. Another kind of water ordeal was that the images of God of Justice in silver, iron and clay were put in water. Then the accused was directed to take one image from the water. If he picked up the silver image he was adjudged innocent. On the other hand, if he picked up iron or clay image, he was considered as guilty. An interesting water ordeal was that both the defendant and the plaintiff were directed to remain under the water holding fast stakes. Those who remained in water for longer time were considered innocent. This method of trial was dropped in course of time.

Fire Ordeal (Agni Pareeksha)

To find out the truth, the culprits were directed to take the ring placed in the boiling ghee. Their hands were sealed and opened after three days. If there was no mark like a burn, they were released from the charge. This system was very popular and it was also adopted among the higher castes including the Brahmins.

Ghee Ordeal (Kaimukku)

The ghee ordeal was followed mainly to prove adultery. It was popularly known as *satya pariksha* in Malayalam and *kaimukku* in Tamil. *Kaimukku* literally means dipping of the hand in boiled ghee. The palm leaf records indicated that *Kaimukku* ordeal was conducted for the violation of sexual morality. It showed the importance given to feminine chastity. It was adopted mainly to determine the guilt of the accused. If the suspected persons were Nambudiris (Kerala Brahmins), the ordeal was held in the temple at Suchindram near Cape Comorin in South Travancore, for others the ordeal was held in a temple at Karthigapalli. The adulteress was set apart from the family and the partner involved in crime was given an opportunity to prove the innocence by putting the finger in the boiling ghee. After dipping the fingers in the ghee, the hand was tied with a cloth. On the third day, the cloth was removed from the hand and if the hand had no wound or blister he was declared innocent. On the other hand if the hand had blister, his guilt was confirmed. The punishment for this was that the accused was declared as an outcaste. The last of such trial took place in 1844 in which two Namboodiris were set free. But in 1844, Maharaja Swati Thirunal abolished this system on the ground that it was outdated, unscientific and cruel.

Ordeal of Poison (Visha Pareeksha)

Giving poison to the culprit was another kind of ordeal. There were two kinds of poison ordeals. In one form, the Brahmins used to chant mantras and mixed three barley corns of a poisonous root or white arsenic along with ghee. The accused was compelled to eat it. If it did not affect him he was proved innocent. Otherwise, he was declared guilty. The second form of such ordeal was that a cobra or any other venomous snake was placed in an earthen pot and the accused was asked to put his hand inside. If he was bitten, he was considered guilty. Otherwise he was proved innocent.

Ordeal by Balance (thookku pareeksha)

It was an ordeal for the Namboodiri to prove his innocence. The weighing apparatus for this purpose was decorated with garlands. On one scale of the apparatus the clay from the temple tank was put and on the other scale the Namboodiri was made to sit. As per this ordeal, if the scale in which the Namboodiri sat went up, he was considered innocent. On the other hand if the scale went down, he was adjudged guilty.

Smarthavicharam

Another type of ordeal was popularly known as *Smarthavicharam*, which was practiced mainly among the Namboodiri women. This type of enquiry was mainly in the charges of immorality against Namboodiri women. After the trial, woman got exiled from her family. The Hindu law followed in Travancore was known as *Vyavahara Malika*. Justice was administered according to this Hindu law. The judgment based on this

was extravagant and cruel. Even then, this system was followed till the middle of 19th century. But, due to the spread of Western education and work of Christian Missionaries, awareness was created among the people. As a result, the trial by ordeal system was replaced by examination of witnesses, conduct of enquiry and evidences. With the adoption of the new system, the traditional system of ordeal vanished.

Types of Punishments

There are different punishments for different crimes.

Punishment on Debtors

In Travancore, a peculiar method of punishment was given to debtors and criminals during 18th and 19th centuries. The Government or Chief of the district confirmed the punishment. The method of collecting money from the debtor was that, the defaulter was taken by the chief of the district and placed him within a circle drawn around him. A sharp stone was placed on his head and if the defaulter still persisted in non-payment, the Chief placed another sharp stone and tied the two stones firmly. Additional weights were placed again and again, till he accepted to pay the amount. As the weights of the sharp stones penetrated into the head of the defaulter, he had either to make the payment or to suffer in pain. Defaulters of payment of tax were also punished severely. They were made to stand in the hot sun for hours with huge stone on their back and finally were put in prison. Corruption and bribery were serious crimes. Public servants, involved in these crimes were punished severely. Temple servants, appointed as accountants were expected to discharge their duties without any corruption and to keep correct account. If they were involved in corruption, severe punishments were

given to them. For instance, during the reign of Maharaja Balarama Varma (1798-1810), the accountants of Suchindrum temple maintained false accounts and swindled money. The government viewed it seriously and the then Dalawa Velu Tampi punished them severely. The temple accountants were directed to sit on wooden planks by placing their palms on the thigh and a nail of two feet was pierced through the palm. Moreover, two statues of this kind were made and kept in the northern entrance of the temple at Suchindrum as a warning to the people.

Mutilation

Mutilation of limbs was another kind of punishment that was meted out to criminals in ancient Travancore. One of the post Sangam literatures, Naladiyar mentions that one who trespassed into another's dwelling house with the intention of committing adultery, had his legs cut off. A thief arrested with stolen property was beheaded. In 1799, Velu Tampi Dalawa demanded arrears of taxes from a Christian Matthoo Tarakan. He expressed his inability to pay the large sum of money. Thus, he was punished by cutting off his ears.

For certain kinds of offences, the offender was imprisoned in a tiger cage and exposed to public gaze and ridiculed. People converted to Christianity faced many hardships and punishments. In 1752, Devasahayam Pillai, a convert to Christianity was taken on a buffalo from village to village. On the way, he was beaten with strips and pepper was rubbed in his wounds. He was exposed to the sun and was given stagnated water to drink. In 1829, the Christian converts at Padmanabhapuram were chained and their legs were swollen by the irons.

Exile

Exile was another kind of punishment. It was a common punishment for those who were disloyal to the government. Those who were involved in such activities were exiled to Pulopino, an island near the coast of Burma or other equally far off places. In later days, it was meted out to robbery and anti-social elements also. For the easy identification of exiled criminals, they had "tattoo" marked on their foreheads. It helped to identify them when they escaped from captivity. Sometimes a rebel was sent to thick forests or mountains of Malabar with strict orders of not to return. The aim of branding was to humiliate the offender by attaching some marks on the body. There are evidences to show that during the reign of King Martanda Varma branding was in existence. Inscription of a special letter or sign on the forehead, or hands using the juice of some herbs was the method of branding. Tatooing on the forehead the figure of a dog was the punishment meted out to four Brahmins who were proved guilty of conspiring against the king. The Mathilakam Records furnished details of branding fourteen Brahmins for the offence of eating non-vegetarian items. The mark of dog was branded on their forehead and they were transported to Thovala.

Punishment of Death

Punishment of death was reserved for severe cases like acts of violence or protest against rulers or Naduvazhi or Chieftains. Capital punishment was awarded for counterfeiting currency, theft, murder, treason and harassment of women. As killing of cow was a severe offence, capital punishment was also given for it. Ibn Batuta, the Moorish traveler who visited India between 1333-1345 mentioned

that the Hindus in Travancore were put to death, even for stealing a nut. When a fruit dropped on the ground, nobody had the right to pick it up except the owner. In one instance a Hindu passed by the road picked up a nut without the knowledge of the owner. As it was considered a crime, the governor ordered a stake to be driven into the ground and its upper end to be cut and fixed on a wooden plank in such a way that a portion of it showed up above the plank. The culprit was placed on it and fixed the stake so as to enter his abdomen. He was left in this posture to serve as a warning to the spectators.

2.1.6 Taxation

Other than social and religious humiliations, the low caste people had faced serious economic disabilities. They were exploited and burdened with oppressive fines and taxes. Innumerable poll taxes like *thalayara* (poll tax), *valayara* (net tax), *kettilakkom* and *velappadivu* (tax on labour) were imposed on them. The government also levied extra cesses like *desakaani*, *thozhil karam*, *aal karam*, *kudil vari*, *chekkuvari*, *desa karam*, *thirunal kazhcha*, *thonippattam*, etc. They were also obliged to pay dues at the festival of Onam harvest and occasion of royal marriage, birthday etc. In Travancore, there were hundreds of such taxes imposed upon the lowest sections of the society. Therefore, in Travancore, everything was taxable, and every occasion made an excuse for squeezing the labor class of their hard earnings. Under the system of slavery, the poor servants were obliged to render bonded services on all days as required by the government officials and the higher castes. It was a paradox that the people who toiled for the construction of the roads could not walk along the same.

Travancore was a land of female degradation. Many unjust taxes existed

in the state. Most of the taxes were based on caste system. The high caste people enjoyed many privileges and they were exempted from taxation. While *Avarnas* were victims of taxation, they suffered a lot in the society. They had to pay tax for their customs and rituals based on the orders of rulers of the state. The *Avarnas* were levied with unjust taxes like 'Tali Eral'. The low caste people were allowed to live in mud huts constructed near the paddy fields. They were paying a house tax known as *kappakazhcha*. They paid one panam for each hut. The widow of a weaver had to pay the tax on the loom long after the death of her husband and the cessation of the work which consisted of a rupee per annum. The peasants also paid a water tax known as *Neerkkooli*. Net tax was another one extracted from the fisher folk. *Viruthi*, another kind of feudal exaction was also prevalent. The poor farmers were forced to supply provisions for the use of *Oottupurahs*. The taxes such as *vannarappara*, *kusakknam*, *thattarappattam*, *valakkaram* etc. were paid by Vannans, Kusava, Thattan and Mukkuva community.

Another tax levied on the *Avarnas* was called Breast tax (*mulakkaram*). The women aged between 16-35 were forced to pay this tax. The lower caste men had to pay a similar tax called *thala-karam* (head tax). It was imposed to compensate the loss caused by constant wars waged by the rulers. Another obnoxious tax prevailed in the eighteenth and early part of the nineteenth centuries was that if the Sudras, Ezhavas, Shannars and other low caste women wanted to wear silver and gold ornaments, they should obtain a license from the government on payment of a fee which was called *Adiyara*. The amount of fee varied from caste to caste. Another tax imposed upon them was a succession fee called *purushantaram*. Another important tax prevailed in Travancore was poll tax.

This tax fell heavily upon the members of Ezhava and Nadar communities for generation to meet military expenditure. They paid the tax not only for these who were alive, but also for the dead. *Adimapanam* was a tax related to slavery.

The other arbitrary taxes unjustly collected from the Avarnas were *ulk* or *chumkam* (customs duty), *kozha* (payment against getting things done), *Taraku* (commission), *Angadipattam* (market rent) and *mannan para* (tax on washerman). The tax defaulters were given most inhuman and primitive punishment such as cutting in to pieces, mutilation, amputation of limbs etc.

2.1.7 Uliyam and Viruthi

In addition to these taxes, certain customary obligations such as *uliyam* and *viruthi*, stood in the way of moral, social and economic progress of the people of Kerala. The low castes not only cultivated the land of their masters but also rendered *uliyam* (forced labour) to them. The feudal masters, the government and even temples exploited their labour without any payment. The *sircar* made use of this unpaid service for doing public works, such as construction of buildings, roads and canals and their repairs. Thus, the government extracted maximum labour

force for the public works through *uliyam*. The irony is that the *avarna*, who shed their sweat and blood for the construction of these public places, were not permitted to enter into it or even to approach these places. On the occasion of temple festivals, palace ceremonies and royal tours, they had to render these gratuitous services. Government employed them in government forests for felling trees and transporting timber. They were also employed to watch government timber lying excise stations and the elephant pits in dangerous jungles. They were also used to carry salt from the wholesale to the retail bank-shalls, cadjan from the landing place to the bank-shalls and firewood from the forests to the *pagodas* and *oottupuras*. Some of the Ezhava families were even allotted to certain *jenmies* who were at liberty to obtain free services from them. If any one dared to resist or refused, he would be crushed.

Viruthi was another customary duty that Ezhavas and other *avarna* castes had to provide. According to the *viruthi* system, the *viruthi* holders were required to render manual service and supply provisions to palace, temples and *oottupuras* in return for the lands enjoyed by them. They had to work all the days of the week on the land of the *jenmi* and also at busy seasons to do extra work called boon-work.

Recap

- ◆ The Nambuthiri Brahmin-led Jenmi system dominated Kerala in the 19th and 20th century social setting.
- ◆ The Jenmi system in Kerala was alternatively termed as Urular and karalar systems
- ◆ The ownership of land as Dewaswam and Brahmaswam

- ◆ Within the feudal hierachal social structure of Uralar-Karalar, the actual cultivator and the craftsmen emerged in the society.
- ◆ Paniyalars were the actual cultivators of land
- ◆ The gradual emergence of Karalar, mainly Nairs, as the middle men between the Uralar and the Paniyalar.
- ◆ The shift in the status of karalar Nairs as the custodian of the society itself.
- ◆ The practice of Sambandham helped the Nairs to elevate their social position.
- ◆ Feudalism, agrarian economy and caste system lead to Slavery or Adimatham.
- ◆ Slavery was largely seen as hereditary.
- ◆ Thalikettu kalyanam was a social practice of marriage across different communities.
- ◆ Pulikudi and Vayattupongala were practices associated with pregnancy
- ◆ Thirandukuli was a practice associated with the puberty of a girl.
- ◆ Pulakuli was a practice associated with death.
- ◆ Hypergamy- the restriction on women belonging to higher class to consort with a man of lower class was practiced.
- ◆ Polyandry and polygamy were practiced across communities
- ◆ Marumakkathayam or matrilineal system
- ◆ Caste discrimination was prevalent in judicial system where the upper caste enjoyed all the privileges.
- ◆ Trial by ordeal was the popular method employed in detecting crime.
- ◆ Different kinds of ordeals such as water ordeal, fire ordeals, ordeal by poison were employed
- ◆ Ghee ordeal was employed to detect charges of adultery
- ◆ Ordeal by balance was the ordeal meant for Namboodiri Brahmins alone.
- ◆ Punishment for debtors and the corrupt were severe including mutilation of limbs
- ◆ Exile was another method of punishment
- ◆ Branding or tattooing in publically visible body parts was another mode of punishment.
- ◆ Capital punishment was given for cases of violence and for protest against the administration.
- ◆ Avarnas or the untouchables were at the receiving end of oppressive and obnoxious forms of taxation.
- ◆ Uliyam or forced labour was imposed on to the lower castes
- ◆ Viruthi or boon-work was imposed onto the land holders of the lower caste

Objective Questions

1. What was the *Jenmi* system alternatively known as?
2. What is the name of land property owned by temples?
3. What was the name of the working class in medieval times?
4. Which is the social system of marriage?
5. What does the practice of *Pulakuli* related to?
6. Which ordeal was followed to prove the immorality among Brahmin women?
7. What is the ordeal by poison called as?
8. What was capital punishment given for?

Answers

1. Karalal-Uralalr system
2. Dewaswam
3. Paniyalar
4. Thalikettu Kalyanam
5. Death
6. Smarthavichaaram
7. Visha pareeksha
8. for the offenses of violence and protest against the administration

Assignments

1. Why was the system of taxation in Travancore oppressive? Explain.
2. Explain in detail the systems of punishment existed in the medieval Kerala.
3. How was the system of slavery that existed in Kerala was both casteistic and hereditary? Explain.
4. What is water ordeal(Jala pareeksha)
5. Write an essay about primitive practices in Kerala

Suggested Reading

1. Chandramohan, P (2016), *Developmental Modernity in Kerala - Narayana Guru, SNDP Yogam and Social Reform*, Chennai: Tulika Books.
2. Menon, A. *Sreedhara* (2007), *A Survey of Kerala History*, Kottayam: DC Books.
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4. King, Mary Elizabeth (2015), *Gandhian Non-violent Struggle and Untouchability in South India: The 1924-25 Vykom Satyagraha and the Mechanism of Change*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press.
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Caste System and Untouchability

UNIT

Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of this unit, the learner will be able to:

- ◆ get an overview of the caste system prevailed in Kerala society.
- ◆ to understand the social practices which existed in Kerala
- ◆ understand the caste-ridden cultural practices
- ◆ to understand the plight of the slave-population

Prerequisite

The influence of caste was pivotal in the emergence and spread of malevolent customs and practices within Kerala society. The development of social ills such as pollution, untouchability, unapproachability, and unsightliness occurred concurrently with the caste system. Furthermore, it fostered a number of social inequities that were venerated as products of economic exploitation and social oppression. Throughout the middle Ages, these malevolent institutions were institutionalized. It gradually assimilated into the fabric of Kerala society. The caste system originated in Kerala during the height of the Brahmin immigration influx in the eighth century AD. The caste system's implementation precipitated a stalemate in Kerala society. The ascendancy of the Brahmin caste potentially prompted subsequent transformations within the social milieu. While some may have appeared the victors, others may have dispersed. As a concession or compromise, those who formed alliances with the victorious Brahmins might have obtained particular privileges, positions, and advantages. Individuals else might have been repressed, excluded, or strictly supervised. The former consists of caste-Hindus, while the latter comprises non-caste Hindus and depressed strata. Thus, distinctions including Nairs, Ezhavas, Pulayas, and others originated from

the same human lineage. One of the most notable characteristics of the nascent society was the relative subordination of the lower castes in comparison to the superior castes. Evidently, the Brahmins occupied the apex of the social hierarchy, with the Nambutiris holding the most elevated position. The primary communal classifications can be succinctly described as follows: caste-Hindus, non-caste Hindus, Scheduled Castes, and Scheduled Tribes, with each category containing a multitude of sub-divisions. The Hindu caste system comprised of the uppermost levels of the social structure. They belong to the savarnas, or upper caste. Caste Hindus included the Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Nairs, Ambalavasis, Samantas, and others. The non-caste Hindus, known as the Avarnas, comprised of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, beginning with the Ezhavas and ending with the Pulaya, Paraya, Cheruma, Pana, Kurava, Ulladan, Irulan, Malavedan, and Nayadi. Kerala society was plagued by the most oppressive and highly contaminated caste system until the early decades of the 20th century. The Nambutiris established a society conducive to their own delight and amusement. They exerted dominion over all other indigenous inhabitants of Kerala and manipulated a number of legal codes to prevent outsiders from intervening in their affairs. As a result of the increased enforcement of stringent regulations, the Hindu community in Kerala deteriorated to the point where it resembled a lunatic asylum. In the most irrational fashion, the evils of untouchability, unapproachability, and unseeability were observed. Hindus of the caste system believed that the approach of certain social divisions, in addition to their touch, could pollute them.

Key themes

Caste system, Untouchability, practices like ‘Pulapedi’ and ‘Mannapedi’

Discussion

Untouchability was a unique phenomenon of the Hindu society. The term “untouchability” meant *teental* in Tamil and *pula* in Malayalam, which generally meant “pollution”. The untouchability was legitimized by the Dharmashastras, therefore the practice was followed by each and every member of the society in their day-to-day life. Untouchability is not simply a caste reflection or caste

phenomenon but is one of the underlying socio-economic factors of semi feudal relations. The social oppression of the untouchables had religious sanctions. They have been the victims of brutal exploitation, local isolation, residential segregation, economic deprivation, political subjugation and cultural degradation. In the pre-Capital agriculture society, untouchability was used to

maintain the exploitative relation between the feudal lords and the serfs, the tenants and the slaves, the croppers and the bonded laborers.

The concept of purity and pollution played a crucial role in maintaining the social distance between different castes. The pollution-distance varied from caste to caste and from place to place. The hierarchy of caste was decided according to the degree of purity and pollution. The caste-Hindu preserved the scale of distance within which they will be polluted if the lower caste approached them. Many castes regarded as polluting by proximity, and are not allowed to approach within certain distances of Hindu temples; so much is the case that common expressions of spatial measurement are, or were, *Thiyyapad*, *Cherumapad*, etc., indicating a distance equivalent to that within which a Thiyyan or a Cheruman, as the case may be of course, must not approach a man of high caste.

There was an unwritten law about the approachable distance of the people. The Ezhavas must keep 36 paces from the Brahmins and 12 paces from the Nairs, while a Kaniyan would keep the distance to a Namboothiri at 24 paces. The Shannars must keep 36 paces from the Brahmins and 12 paces from the Nairs. The Pulayas must keep 96 paces from the Brahmins. Among the higher castes, Nairs must not come within 3 paces of the Namboothiri Brahmins. The artisans must keep 24 feet from the Brahmins and the Nayadis must keep 74 paces from the Brahmins. Jonathan Duncan, in his *Remarks on the coast of Malabar*, says that a Nair may approach a Namboothiri Brahmin, but must not touch him. Pollution however acquired by the near approach of a low caste men or by touch, can only be washed out by complete immersion in water. The bath is necessary before food can be partaken,

or a sacred place entered, or several other acts performed. If a Pulayan touches a Brahmin, the Brahmin must at once bathe, read much of the divine books', and change his Brahminical thread called *poonool*.

In Kerala, unsightliness is the most peculiar and abhorrent form of caste pollution. Even the sight of certain castes of individuals, according to this, will pollute the Namboothiris of the highest caste. Consequently, they were confined and segregated in specific regions due to their moniker "unseeables." According to Anthropology of Nayadis by A. Ayyappan, the Nayadis constituted the most pollutant caste in Kerala. 74 to 124 feet separated them from the Brahmins. Water that is being bathed in by men of higher castes will lose its purifying properties whenever a Nayadi enters the water while the bathers are present to observe. A man must bathe in seven streams and seven containers and release the blood from his little finger if he has been contaminated by a Nayadi.

Unsightliness, which was practised in Kerala, swept away the low caste from the mainstream of the society. The high castes always used the term "po", "po", in times of their travel on the public roads which was the warning to the low castes to move away from the public road. When they heard the sound "po", "po", the low castes used to run away from the roads and hide in the bushes of the roadsides. Some of the low castes were not allowed to appear before the public in the day time, because they feared that their sight would cause pollution to the higher castes. In some places, they had to go seeking shelter in the jungles immediately on seeing caste Hindus. The unpleasant sound 'hoi', 'hoi', used to be repeated in order to avoid pollution from seeing the caste Hindus. Therefore, the unfortunate low caste men were made to trample along the marshes

in a deep mud often went up their hips to avoid polluting their caste superiors. The failure on the part of the members of the lower castes to make way for those of the higher order would have invited even to death penalty.

There were also manifold restrictions in regard to their language, dress, ornaments, mode of conveyance, use of domestic vessels, manner of construction of houses etc. The language and expressions of the caste Hindus could not be used by the *avaranas*. An *avarna* must address a caste-Hindu male as *Thampuran*, my Lord, and female as *Thampuratti*, my lady. He should not refer himself as 'I' but only as *adiyan*, your slave. They can't use the common language and were compelled to use the most degrading language. When speaking he must place the hand over the mouth, let the breath should go forth and pollute person whom he is addressing. They, when speaking about parts of their body such as eye or ear, to a superior, had to prefix it by the epithet "old". Thus, they had to use mean and degrading words like *pazhamchevi*, old ear or *pazhamkannu*, old eye. They were not supposed to say 'I' but 'adiyan', (your slave). His rice was not "choru" but "karikkadi" or dirty gruel. While speaking to caste superiors they had to begin by saying "your slave". They had to call the higher caste members as *yajamanan* or king while they could not approach the Brahmins. The untouchables could not give their children those names which resembled the names of the higher castes. Thus, they had primitive names. Kali, Chathan, Chadayan, Veluthan, Killiyan, Chakki, Eivi etc. were some of the names prevalent among the untouchable castes.

The ornaments of the untouchable castes must be no more valuable than brass or stone. They were not permitted to use gold or silver ornaments. They could use

only stone and shell for making ornaments. There were different types of hair styles among the untouchables. Like the dress, hair style also identified the caste. The high caste used different types of tuffs or *kudumis* like *pappada kuduma*, *chakkara kuduma* etc., but the untouchables were not allowed following such hair style. They were not allowed to use footwear for protecting their feet from the thorns and sharp stones on the jungle path. They were lived in hopeless poverty and a great number lacked sufficient means to procure even the coarse clothing. They went out almost naked, or at least clothed in the most hideous rags.

The untouchables were forbidden from receiving any type of knowledge. Education was totally denied to them and doors of no educational institutions were opened before the untouchables. Their language was unpolished and they followed a primitive form of worship. Politically, the untouchables were a suppressed lot and had no right to engage in political activities. Similarly, the untouchable could not enter into the courts for justice as the court houses were tabooed to low castes that had to keep from 40 to 100 paces off, and at one court house near a temple Pulayas used to have to keep 200 paces off. So the untouchable categories cannot give their evidence with convenience. They had to shout from the appointed distance and take their chance of being heard and receiving attention. A policeman sometimes stood halfway between the untouchable witness or petitioner and the high caste magistrate to transact question and answers.

Entry into the temples was denied to the non-caste Hindus even though they were required to contribute to its maintenance. In temples there have been regular scale of distance beyond which certain castes must remain, and just as caste polluting

distances vary, the distance at which temple pollution is involved varies much in different places. No Ezhavan or Tiyan must come within 325 feet of the curtain wall of the temple of Guruvayur in Malabar. The public road which skirted the temple at Vaikom was forbidden to be used by untouchables and the same applied to that which passed the Suchindram temple, likewise in Travancore. The social scene of Kerala, in fact presented many paradoxes. One such glaring paradox was that while a non-Hindu like a Christian or Muslim was not barred entry into approach roads to temples or admission to schools, those Hindus who by accident of birth happened to be born in the low castes were kept out of these places and subjected to social humiliations.

The untouchables did not have a proper hut to live in. Their huts were no better than “large baskets”. These were put up in the rice fields while the crop was on and near the stacks while thrashing. The untouchables were permitted to erect only temporary huts as the masters wanted them to move about when work was demanded in different places. With regard to their personal comfort and deportment, the only dress of the degraded class of people was a piece of coarse cloth fastened round the loins. The men as well as women of the lower castes were forbidden to wear any clothing whatever above the waist. They should not wear gold or silver ornaments like that of the high caste people. The ornaments must be no more valuable than brass or beads. They couldn't use umbrellas to shelter the body from the scorching heat of the sun. They must not have the right to wear shoes to protect the feet from the horns and sharp stones. They denied the right to build houses like the upper caste Hindus. The *avaranas* can't ride on horseback or to travel on palanquin. The poor *avaranas* could not attend schools, visit open markets, touch

and draw water from public tanks and wells etc. Individuals among them who had wanted to enjoy privileges in these matters had to make payments to the *sarkar* or to the *naduvazhi* and obtain licenses. *Menippon, mulaivila* (the payments to get the privilege to wear gold ornaments and to cover the breast of the low caste women respectively) etc., were the examples of such payments. This arrangement led to a series of inequitable imposts which imposed an intolerable burden on the members of the backward communities. The fact is that the dichotomy between the *savarnas* and *avaranas* continued to be the bane of Hindu society and stood in the way of advancement of the backward communities.

2.2.1 *Pulapedi*

Pulapedi and *Mannapedi*, were customs by which men of the Pulaya and Mannan castes could ‘pollute’ women of higher castes like Brahmins, Nairs and so on and make them their own. Mannan, Pulaya and Paraya pedi meant the fear of such men who belonged to the untouchable communities. It actually meant the forcible dragging of ladies on certain months with the full approval of the society. This custom was a source of threat to the prestige of the privileged classes like the Brahmins and the Nairs. According to this tradition the members of unprivileged sections such as Pulayas, Parayas and Mannans enjoyed the privilege of polluting the high caste women during the months of February-March.

The custom known as *Pulappedi* was that, on the evening of a particular day (Kartika), if an upper caste woman found alone at dark was either seen or touched by a man of Pulaya caste the upper caste, was excommunicated. If the man of the lower caste touches or throws something like a stone or a stick at a woman of higher

birth, she would be declared as defiled and excommunicated. Moreover, a man of a lower caste could see a Nair woman and shout 'Njan Kande Kande' (I saw, I saw) and appropriate this woman. The man who polluted the woman would become her 'owner'. If a woman was 'defiled' by this custom, she would lose her original caste instantly. She would be banished from the community and home. Her two options were to either marry her 'owner' (the man who 'spoiled' her) or spend the rest of the life begging. So the higher caste women should not come out their houses alone at night. If they could travel anywhere at night was accompanied by a male child at least three years old.

The Portuguese traveller, Durate Barbosa has recorded this strange custom. He writes that on that particular day the lower caste men used to hang around the upper caste residences and if they saw an upper caste woman alone in the evening they would throw a stick or a stone to the woman. This long distance 'touch' was enough for the excommunication of the upper caste woman. Once she is excommunicated from her caste the lower caste man can have her. This strange custom is seen stopped by the Kottayam Naduvazhi Kerala Varma in 1696 AD.

2.2.3 *Mannapedi*

Like *Pulappedi*, *Mannappedi* was also existed during the months of *Kumbha* and *Meena* (February – March). The Mannans were washer men community who served the lower caste. They enjoyed same rights of the Pulaya to seize higher caste women. In this season Mannan caste men enjoyed the liberty to seize high caste women who were present there as spectators. If the women subjected *Mannappedi* was pregnant, she was not be accepted as wife by Mannan until her delivery. If she gives birth to a boy, she can go back to her house. The husband and her relatives would gladly receive her. If she gives birth to a girl she must became Mannan's wife.

Like *Mannappedi* another custom was *Parappedi* practiced by Pariayas of north Travancore. In this custom the females of high castes were kidnapped and treat afterwards in a brutal manner. This custom was to turn robbers in the month of February just after that month in gathering of the harvest, when they free without any work in the field. They broke in to the houses of the Brahmins and Nairs to carry away their women, children and property to which act they pretended motives of revenge.

Recap

- ◆ Untouchability was widely practised in the Kerala society
- ◆ The social oppression of the untouchables had religious sanctions
- ◆ The concept of purity and pollution played a crucial role in maintaining the social distance between different castes
- ◆ The primary composition of society involved caste-Hindus, non-caste

Hindus, Scheduled Castes, and Scheduled Tribes, with each category containing a multitude of sub-divisions.

- ◆ Untouchability between the upper and lower castes was severely practised
- ◆ Unapproachability of the caste and non-caste Hindus took the society to an extreme lunatic state
- ◆ Unsightliness then prevailed was symptomatic of the extreme version of caste practices
- ◆ The language of the lower castes was also subjugated to that of the upper caste
- ◆ The untouchables were forbidden from receiving any type of knowledge
- ◆ The untouchables were denied access to courts of justice and were banned from political processes.
- ◆ The untouchables were lacking the freedom of bodily expressions such as wearing gold ornaments or choosing their hairstyles
- ◆ The untouchables were pushed to the fringes of the public places
- ◆ Some of the practices of caste were detrimental to the women of the upper castes

Objective Questions

1. What is untouchability called in Malayalam?
2. What are the expressions *Thiyyappad* and *Chemumappad* standing for?
3. Which is the most peculiar and abhorrent form of caste pollution?
4. What is the literal meaning of the term *adiyan*?
5. Whose rice meal is termed as *karikkadi*?
6. Which hair style was not allowed for the men of the lower castes?
7. Which temples skirted by roads had disallowed the untouchables from entering?
8. Name one of the customs which leads to the excommunication of upper caste women if they were seen by lower caste men in the dark.

Answers

1. <i>Pula</i>	5. Of the lower castes
2. Measurements of spatial polluting distance	6. Kuduma
3. Unsightliness	7. Vaikom and Sucheendram
4. Your slave	8. Pulapedi or mannan pedi

Assignments

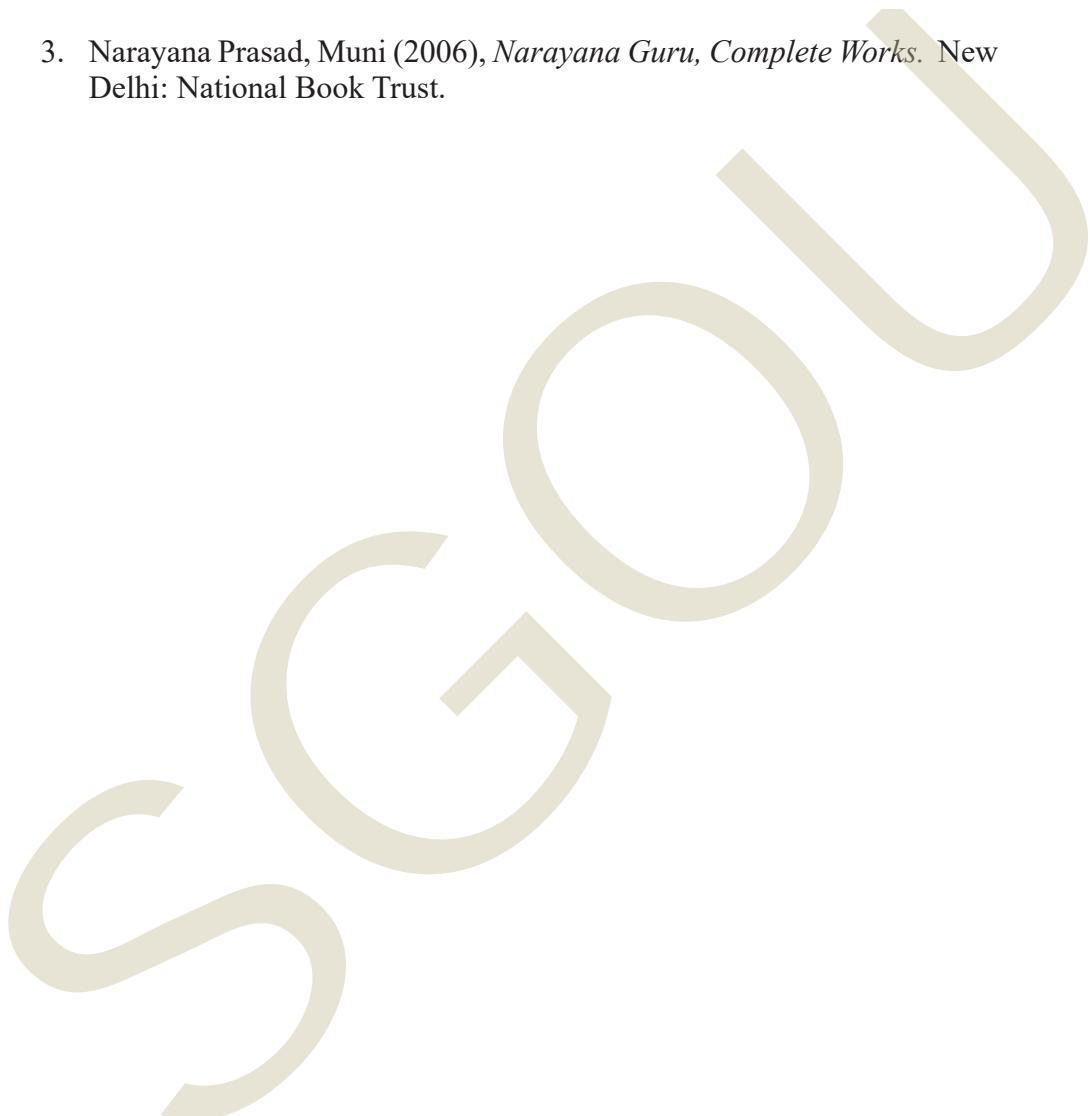
1. How did the customs such as Pula Pedi, Manna Pedi and Para Pedi eventually became detrimental to the upper caste women?
2. Sketch out the system of spatial distance of pollution practised in the erstwhile Kerala
3. How did the caste system shape up discriminatory language usages by following examples in the Kerala context?
4. What is Pulapedi and Mannapedi?

Suggested Reading

1. Menon, A. *Sreedhara* (2007), *A Survey of Kerala History*, Kottayam: DC Books.
2. Jeffry, Robin (2015), *Politics, Women, Well-Being: How Kerala Became a Model*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press.
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Revolts and Rebellions

UNIT

Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of this unit, the learner will be able to:

- ◆ get an overview of the rebellions which existed Travancore society.
- ◆ expose the significance of the historical strikes which brought progressive changes in the Kerala.
- ◆ know the contributions of Christian missionaries in the domain of education.
- ◆ aware the role of social reformers in Kerala in propelling social movements

Prerequisite

Western education sparked social change. Though the royal order patronized the upper castes in Travancore and Cochin, the British administration did not discriminate in service recruitment. The Nairs and Christians of the area eventually adopted Western schooling to qualify for government service. The spread of Western education and liberal principles by Christian missionaries need special emphasis. The pre-colonial Kerala social structure was not free and equal. It had religious superstition and societal obscurantism. Caste has dominated the economy and culture, resulting in disparities, civil disabilities, and low caste degeneracy. Colonial governance and interventions changed people's lives. Christian missionaries shaped Kerala society by introducing English education and western liberal philosophy. Christian missionaries pioneered English education and social reform. Protestant Christian missionaries like London Missionary Society, Church Missionary Society, and others spread missionary work in Kerala in the early 19th century. They promoted education, cleanliness, health, and customs reform. The rise of European forces in Kerala helped Christianity. Before the missionaries arrived, the political climate was good. Several English missionary societies were founded in the early 19th century to spread the gospel. Examples include

the London Missionary Society (LMS), Church Mission Society (CMS), Baptist Missionary Society (BMS), Basel Evangelical Missionary Society (BEMS), etc. In 1806, Col. Macaulay, the first British Resident of Travancore, gave Fr. William Tobias Ringeltaube, the first L.M.S. missionary in Kerala, a passport and travel costs. Col. John Munro (Resident 1810-1819), Macaulay's successor, was "still more zealous" and helped spread Christianity by helping missionaries. Christian missionaries had official authority to work and founded several missionary societies under his Residency. In 1816, North Travancore's Church Missionary Society (C.M.S.) began working in Kerala. The Salvation Army, Brother Mission, and Lutheran Mission established headquarters at Nagercoil in 1890, 1898, and 1907. Catholic missionaries worked in Travancore. The oldest was Changanacherry Diocese, founded in 1831. Diocese of Quilon and Verapoly were founded in 1853 and 1886. The main goal of these missionary societies was evangelization, although they combined it with social work. London Missionary Society (LMS) and Church Missionary Society (CMS) were Kerala's main protestant agencies. While the LMS missionaries worked in South Travancore, the CMS worked in North and Central Travancore.

Key themes

Role missionary, English education, Revolt, Strike, Revolutiont

Discussion

3.1.1 London Missionary Society (LMS)

The London Missionary Society (LMS) was the first protestant community to begin its work in Travancore. They concentrated mainly in south Travancore especially in the places like Nagercoil, Neyyoor, Mylady, Trivandrum, Quilon, etc. The real founder of the Travancore mission of the LMS was William Tobias Ringeltaube. He was a Prussian by birth. He started his gospel campaign in Travancore on 25th April 1806. From 1806 to 1816 he devoted his attention to evangelical work and educational activities. In this enterprise Ringeltaube

received substantial support from the British Residents at the court of Travancore state. His most important assistant was Vedamanickam, a Paraya convert from Mylady. It was this Vedamanickam, who persuaded Ringeltaube to settle in Mylady and who offered him land for the construction of the chapel and a parsonage. Along with his mission of evangelization Ringeltaube laid the foundation of English education in Travancore. He established several schools in different locations where free education was given to all peoples irrespective of caste and creed. In 1809, he opened the first English school at Mylady in South Travancore. In 1813, he had six schools under his supervision and

there were 188 students in these schools. The seed of transformation sowed by Ringeltaube shoot-up and in course of time grew in bulk to give shelter to the depressed classes.

After Ringeltaube, a fresh party of missionaries had arrived from England and one of them was Charles Mead. Mead took over the native assistants and continued his missionary activities in South Travancore, along with social and educational works. With his efforts the LMS mission achieved a greater number of converts. More than that it was under his leadership the girl's education received much progress in Travancore and for the purpose separate girl's schools were started by him. He also worked for the social upliftment of the womenfolk of Travancore by providing a lead to the attainment of dressing right the Christian converted women of Travancore.

3.1.2 Church Mission Society (CMS)

The Church Mission Society (CMS), which was the child of Evangelical Anglicanism, was formed by the Evangelicals in the Church of England in 1799. Its original name was the 'Society for Mission to Africa and East'. In course of time, it was known as 'The Church Missionary Society of Africa and the East'. The society chooses missionaries to be sent to Africa and to the Eastern countries. They decided that a friendly intercourse should be maintained with other protestant missionaries for propagating the gospel of Jesus. The work of the CMS started in Kerala because of the interest and support of Colonel Munro, the British Resident of Travancore. Munro, from the very first took deep interest to preach the protestant faith. He wrote to Marmaduka Thompson, the CMS secretary in Madras for missionaries to come to Kerala. In

response to this, Thomas Norton was thus sent to Kerala as a missionary on the 8th May 1816. After Norton, three missionaries, Benjamin Bailey, Joseph Fenn and Hendry Baker, reached Kerala in 1816, 1818 and 1819 respectively. These three settled in Kottayam and were known as the "Kottayam Trio". CMS missionaries concentrated its activities on the Central and the Northern parts of Travancore. In central Travancore CMS began their work initially among the Syrian Christians.

Besides protestant missionaries, Catholic missions including monks and nuns worked for the social and cultural revitalization. The missionaries supported women's entry into the religious equality. The Catholic Church laid the foundation of modern secular education in Kerala. Fr. Candidus Korde Marie, Msgr. Marsilions Santa Tresia, Fr. Zacharias, Fr. Lowin Vaippissery, Fr. Kuriakose Elias Chavara, etc. contributed a lot in the educational realm of Kerala. The Congregation of the Mother of Carmel (CMC) was founded by Fr. Kuriakose Elias Chavara in 1866 at Koonammavu in close collaboration with an Italian Carmelite missionary, Fr. Leopold Beccaro. It was the first indigenous congregation of women in India.

3.1.3 Missionaries and Introduction of English Education

Education is one of the important catalyzing agents of social transformation. As far as the social awakening of the low castes were concerned, English education played a dominant role. As the low castes were not admitted in educational institutions run by government or high castes, the majority of them remained illiterate till the coming of Christian missionary institutions. The educational

scenario of Kerala began to change with the advent of colonial missionaries. Though their principal aim was conversion and spread of biblical knowledge or Christianity, the low castes achieved great advantages from the attainment of education. Fees concessions were offered mostly by the converts to Christianity.

Along with consecration of churches, the Christian missionaries also started a number of educational institutions. They realized the supreme importance of education in evangelization, and so they became pioneers of education wherever they went. Their expectation was that some of their scholars would be converted and that some 'converts' would become 'native agents' equipped for evangelising their neighbours. The conversion of the natives, propagation of the gospel and the preparation of the native agents for evangelical work were the main aims of the Christian missionary and thus the educational activities became an essential part of the missionary societies that came to work in this land.

William Tobias Ringeltaube received the honour of having taken the first step for the introduction and diffusion of western learning and education in Kerala. From 1806 to 1816, he devoted his attention to evangelical and educational activities. He established many schools in south Travancore, where free education was given to all poor children irrespective of caste and creed. He did his best to improve the educational system and each church erected by him acted as school. Following Ringeltaube, Rev. Mead, another great L.M.S. missionary, devoted his whole energy to educational activities. He established a number of elementary schools in South Travancore. Separate schools were established for educating the girls also. The first Girl's school was established in Nagercoil in 1819 due to the

efforts of Madam Mead.

The C.M.S. missionaries made their valuable contribution in the field of English education mainly centered in the North Travancore areas. The first C.M.S. missionary to Kerala, Thomas Norton arrived at Alleppey in May 1816 and from the beginning, he devoted himself to educational and evangelical activities. He established a school at Alleppey. This was the first C.M.S. primary school established in central Travancore. In 1827, ten years after the first school was opened, he had seven schools and few years later he had eleven schools. He also started a number of girls' schools, where learning in spinning, plain needle work, and lace making were given along with evangelical and English learning. Like Ringeltaube and Mead, Norton also admitted pupils of all castes and creeds in his schools.

In addition to religious and secular educational institutions, the missionaries established several special educational institutions such as the industrial schools, weaving schools, teacher training institutes, kindergarten schools and deaf and dumb schools. The object of these institutions was to give the children of the Christian community belonging to the depressed castes good religious training, primary education, proficiency in one of the common trades of the country as a means to an honest livelihood, and the resultant elevation of the despised section of the Christian community in Kerala.

3.1.4 Conversion as a means of Emancipation

Conversion was a great force of social change among the lower caste Hindus. Conversion to a new religious belief, Christianity, created a drastic change in the overall structure of Travancore society and it disseminated new values and

morals among their Christian converts. To the low castes conversion was one of their most important apparatuses of social transformation. With the coming of colonial missionaries the non-castes of Kerala, primarily Shannars, Ezhavas, Pulayas, and Parayas, were provided with an alternative solution to get rid of their disabilities and escape from the atrocious rigors of the caste system. Conversion to Christianity of the low castes was the first protest movement from their side though it was sponsored by the missionaries. Conversion of the low castes to Christian religious faith began to take place with the advent of Portuguese missionaries to Kerala. They forcibly and tactfully converted large number of populations, especially from the low castes by giving them financial support and promising shelter from suppression of the high castes

It was only with the advent of British Protestant missionaries in the first decade of the nineteenth century that mass scale conversion had taken place and people began to convert themselves to Christianity without persuasion or by force. The work done by the L.M.S. and C.M.S. missionaries in the domains of Travancore attracted more and more low castes towards their faith. To the low caste people, it was the best way of overcoming their disabilities and the high caste injustice successfully.

The lower caste people were deeply impressed by the kindness of the missionaries and they were speedily and effectually redressed the grievances. The missionaries believed that it was the inalienable right of the lower segments of Travancore to fight for their rights and to enjoy fruits of their toil. The missionaries sought immediate and adequate resolution to the grievances of the converted people.

The missionaries wanted to seek quick and satisfactory settlement of their converts' grievances. The first of this kind was taken place in 1812, when the missionaries pressurized Col. John Munro to give some incentive to the converted and a Royal Proclamation was issued permitting Shannar women who had converted to Christianity to cover their upper part of their bodies. It was Rev. Charles Mead, the belligerent champion of converts, who fought for the first time for the right of the converted Christian women to cover their upper part and after much disturbances with the high castes, in 1814, he extracted from the *sirkar* the right for Shannar Christian women to cover their breasts with a distinctive jacket (*kuppayam*). Shannar Christians' achievement in getting the right to cover their bosoms with a jacket gave a little shake to the traditional society and helped the missionaries to show their sincerity. This enhanced the self-respect and self-esteem of the women who converted to the new faith. It inspired more non-Christians to account their readiness to convert to a new religion which promised protection and opportunity for material improvement.

Most interesting fact was that the converted low castes became free from many pollution rules and disabilities and acquired access to roads, temple streets and courts but their brethren were still denied off these rights. As the low castes were prohibited from enter in to the government schools or the schools run by the caste Hindus, the missionary educational institutions were open to them. The missionary schools became the only place of English learning to the low castes. They also permitted girls to their educational institutions and provided them with the opportunity for vernacular as well as English education.

3.1.5 Revolts and Rebellions

Social and political scenario in Kerala before Independence witnessed several revolts and rebellions during the later part of the 19th century and 20th Century. These social and political movements shaped the economic and political layout of a state. The 18th century remained calm till the end and didn't have many social movements in Kerala. The beginning of colonial administration, missionary interventions and social movements gave birth to several revolts and rebellions in the state during the 19th century. The desire for freedom and social transformation has become strong since the onset of the century. The rise in literacy made people aware of their rights. People began questioning social injustice. This accelerated Kerala's social movements. Most social movements in Kerala were peaceful. However, they strongly held militancy in their protests.

3.1.6 Channar Revolution (1813-1859)

The Channar Rebellion, the struggle for the right to wear upper garments, was part of broader movements for social reform and equality in Kerala during the 19th and early 20th centuries. It contributed to the dismantling of some of the caste-based restrictions and paved the way for social transformation in the region. The Channar Rebellion was started by the Channar community of South Travancore for the right of their women to cover their upper part of the body with cloth, like that of the higher caste women. The struggle also called Melmundu Kalapam or Melsila Kalapam, had the support of Christian missionaries. The military and the police had to be rushed to the agitated area to deal with the situation arising from serious breaches of law and order.

During the Diwanship of Col. Munro an order was issued in 1812, permitting the Channar women who became converts to Christianity to cover their bodies with jackets. But because of the resistance from the caste Hindus, two years later the order was modified and it denied the rights of the converted women to wear dress as Christians of other countries. Instead, the government permitted them to cover their bodies with a *kuppayam* (jacket), but not to wear the upper cloth as was usual among the Nairs.

The Channar women, in addition to the prescribed jacket, began to appear in public with an extra cloth or scarf over the shoulders, as worn by the high caste Hindu women. Imitating them, later on the Hindu counterparts of the Channars in certain localities began to adopt the upper cloth as worn by the Nayar women, over the *kuppayam*, there emerged clashes and tension between the upper caste Nayers and the lower sections. The women in Eranial and Kalkulam who, against rule, covered their breasts, were mocked, abused and ill-treated in 1822. Their jackets were torn apart at various places in markets and way side by the high caste men. As a result of the missionary interventions the Travancore government issued a Proclamation on 3rd February 1829 restricting the practice of the Channar women covering upper parts of their body with scarf or cloths like the Nairs and permitting them to wear *kuppayam* or jackets.

The second stage of Shannar rebellion had its beginning in the second half of the 19th century. The Christian Shannar ladies began to wear increasingly the forbidden upper cloth, often on top of the *kuppayams*, and the Hindu Shannar and Ezhava women also started wearing the upper cloth and appeared in public places. This invited the fury of the caste Hindus and violent clashes occurred at different

places. At many places the upper castes took violent action against the Channars and the Channars fought back. Serious breaches of peace occurred with the caste Hindus tearing the jackets of the Channar and Ezhava women in many places such as Balaramapuram and Neyyattinkara. Burning schools, chapels and shops of the Protestant Christians took place and the Channars also retaliated at several places. The Channars also gathered together and attacked the caste Hindu shops and markets and even molested their women. The attacks and retaliations continued for several months and spread to most parts of Travancore. Finally, the Maharaja decided to remove the restrictions on the dressing of Channars. The government issued a proclamation on 26th July 1859 which marked the end of widespread rebellions of the Channars.

The proclamation did not grant permission to the Ezhavas and other low castes, except Channars, to wear upper garment. Slowly at several places unconverted Ezhavas began to wear jackets and the caste Hindus tore them out and molested at public places. Serious struggles occurred at Paravur, Mayyanad, Chavara and several other places between the Ezhavas and the high caste Hindus.

3.1.7 *Achippudava Strike (1858)*

Achippudava Samaram that took place in 1858 was another important revolutionary social movement in Kerala against the restrictions imposed upon the marginalized women of erstwhile state of Travancore. This historical event was an agitation for the right to wear upper cloth by the Ezhavas in Kerala. The Ezhavas, who were considered lower caste, were agitating for the right to wear upper cloth along with the Shannars. The proclamation of 1859, issued by

the Maharaja of Travancore, did not grant permission to certain lower castes, including the Ezhavas, to wear upper garments. The Ezhavas, however, began to defy these restrictions by wearing jackets, which led to violent confrontations with caste Hindus. *Achippudava samaram* was the result of the protest or resistance movement initiated by the Ezhava community in response to these attacks and molestation incidents.

According to one account of the story, the agitation began when upper-caste Hindus attacked Ezhava women who were weavers of a particular kind of smooth white cotton cloth with a beautiful gold border. The upper castes argued that the weavers could not claim the right to use this prestigious cloth, known as *achippudava*, as it was typically worn by women of the upper castes as a mark of distinction. Another version of the story suggests a different interpretation. In this version, an Ezhava woman walking in the market at Kayamkulam with her breasts covered was brutally attacked by men from the upper castes. Aarattupuzha Velayudha Panicker, a prominent Ezhava chieftain, upon hearing of this incident, stormed into the market armed and distributed clothes to all the women who were prohibited from covering the upper part of their bodies.

Arattupuzha Velayudha Panicker was indeed a prominent social reformer in Kerala, known for challenging caste restrictions and advocating for the rights of lower-caste communities. It was at this time at Pathiyoor, near Kayamkulam an affluent Ezhava woman who was walking along the ridge of a paddy field wearing the *achipudava* was humiliated by the Nairs. In this particular incident, the humiliation of an affluent Ezhava woman by Nairs for wearing upper cloth served as a catalyst for Panicker's protest movement.

He rushed into the market armed and distributed clothes to all the women who were prohibited from covering the upper part of their bodies. Panicker also responded by organizing a protest where subordinate caste agricultural laborers boycotted their work. The demand was simple but powerful: an apology from the Nair men who had humiliated the Ezhava woman for breaking caste prohibitions. The participants in the movement faced attacks, molestation, and violence from the upper castes, but their resistance played a significant role in challenging and eventually changing these oppressive practices. This action marked the first of its kind in pre-independent Kerala, specifically targeting the empowerment of lower-caste women. The Ezhava riots presented an occasion for the Travancore Government finally to issue a Proclamation in 1865, allowing women of all castes to wear whatever dress, as they wished.

3.1.8 *Mookuthi Samaram* (1860)

Mookuthi Agitation was probably a late nineteenth century event that unexpectedly acquired the dimension of a movement. Actually, women of the low castes like the Ezhavas had no right to wear the *mookuthi* or nose-stud. But the resistance to the wearing of nose studs did not seem to endure compared to the opposition faced by lower caste women regarding their dress code, specifically the upper cloth. This might be attributed to the fact that the nose stud was not inherently associated with upper caste identity. The absence of sustained opposition and the lack of widespread pressure from women to wear the nose stud contributed to its relatively smoother acceptance.

The triggering incident took place at the Pandalam market (Pathanamthitta district) in 1860. An Ezhava woman in

Pandalam entered the market wearing a *mookuthi* (nose stud). The men of upper castes, who came to know about it, ripped off the *mookuthi*, resulting in injury. The act was rooted in the discriminatory practice of denying lower caste women the right to wear the nose stud. In response to this injustice, Arattupuzha Velayudha Panicker, a local leader known for his integrity, reacted strongly. Panicker then had come forward supporting the Ezhava women by making gold nose-studs in hundreds and his attendants took them to Pandalam. Panicker and his companions accompanied on horseback and distributed them among lower caste women and encouraging them to wear the ornament. The noses of all *avarna* women who had come to the market were pierced and they were made to wear the gold nose-stud. For meeting any threat or to avert any unfortunate development, Panicker and his followers camped at Pandalam till peace was completely established. This is known as *Mookuthi Samaram* of 1860.

Even though wearing of nose stud was not significant in the context of caste marker of identity, the assault of the Ezhava woman by the landlord has social structural implications. Wearing of the nose stud by the woman meant assertion of her right over her own body, which was violation of the age-old system of the landlord holding proprietary right over the body of the lower caste person. Both the act of wearing as well as the resistance are significant as an attempt at the liberation of the bonded body through self-assertion and the attempt at preventing it for safeguarding the social system.

3.1.9 *Kallumaala* and *Irumpuvala* Agitation (1915)

If the *Mookuthi* agitation was for the right to wear an ornament, the *Kallumaala* and *Irumpuvala* agitation

was for the right to discard certain humiliating ornaments. Pulaya women of the untouchable slave caste made this agitation into a movement. The *kallumaala* and *irumpuvala* were typical ornaments of the Pulaya women, while gold and silver ornaments distinguished the upper caste women. The Pulaya women were not allowed to wear ornaments made of gold or silver, instead, they used to wear *Kallumaala* (stone necklaces) - a mark of subjugation. Like other women the Pulaya women too wanted to wear ornaments made of other materials and metals that they could afford. Various low-cost ornaments reached their fairs and festivals. Nevertheless, fearful of inviting the wrath of their owners, none of them dared to buy and wear these substitutes to their traditional ornaments.

Ayyankali, the great leader and social revolutionary challenged all these caste restrictions. He persuaded the Pulaya women in south Travancore to discard stone necklace which was a badge of a slave past and to wear upper garments to cover their breasts. Inspired by this, the women attempted to discard their *kallumaala* and *irumpuvala*, but were ruthlessly prevented by their landlords from doing so. A few times such events became rebellious and the Travancore police had to interfere. Ayyankali gave the Pulaya women of Perinad in Quilon district the courage to discard these disgraceful ornaments. The upper castes reacted sharply against the call of Ayyankali to violate the age-old customs. Things came to a crisis, when one of the Pulaya leaders of central Travancore, Gopal Das, exhorted Pulaya women in that area to emulate their sisters in the south and discard bead necklaces. The attempt of untouchable castes to break the tradition created tensions and large-scale confrontations between Pulayas and Nairs took place in different parts of central Travancore. The riots lasted for

some time incurring heavy losses on both sides.

In Perinad (in Kollam district) and nearby villages the women discarded the traditional ornaments in October-December 1915. In a meeting chaired by Ayyankali on 21st December 1915 at Perinad, several Pulaya women threw away their *kallumaala* and *irumpuvala*, proclaiming that like others they would also wear other ornaments. At last, an agreement was reached between Nair and Pulaya leaders. Following the settlement, a mass meeting was organized at Quilon town, wherein the presence of Ayyankali and Nair social reformer Changannacherry Parameswaran Pillai, hundreds of Pulaya women publicly threw away their bead necklace. This was a great victory for the Pulayas and other downtrodden castes.

3.1.10 The Story of Nangeli

Mulakkaram, often referred to as the 'breast tax' was a poll tax imposed on lower-caste women in the erstwhile kingdom of Travancore. This tax was levied on women from lower-caste communities, and it was a discriminatory practice that sought to enforce social hierarchies and reinforce the lower status of certain communities in the region. The term 'breast tax' can be misleading, as it doesn't necessarily mean a tax on breasts themselves, but rather it was a tax that was levied based on the gender of the individuals. It was a symbolic and oppressive measure that targeted women from lower castes, and its payment was seen as a way for these women to cover their chests, emphasizing their lower social status. The tax was not applicable to upper-caste women in Travancore, highlighting the discriminatory nature of the practice.

The story of Nangeli was very much

connected with this poll tax. It is a tragic and poignant chapter in the history of social injustice and resistance in the princely state of Travancore during the 19th century. Nangeli, an Ezhava woman who lived in the 19th century in Cherthala (Alappuzha district) cut off her breasts to protest the 'breast tax' imposed by the Kingdom of Travancore on women belonging to lower castes. To fulfill personal and colonial revenue demands, royal officials coercively extracted the horrendous "breast tax" from low caste Ezhava women. Nangeli, who lived in Cherthala, endured the humiliation of paying the breast tax just like any other Ezhava woman until she was done with it. One day, when the *parvarthiyar* (a tax collector official) was doing his door-to-door rounds collecting taxes, Nangeli was determined with rage that she will not pay the tax that day or ever again. As the official knocked and asked for the payment, Nangeli chopped off her breasts

and offered to the royal officials as her "final settlement of the tax." The home of Nangeli, where the incident took place, became known as *Mulachi Parambu*.

Nangeli's courageous act of self-mutilation was a powerful form of protest against the oppressive taxation. Her defiance and sacrifice brought attention to the discriminatory practices prevalent in the society of that time and played a role in challenging the status quo. The incident became a symbol of resistance and solidarity. Her story, though tragic, became a catalyst for change and contributed to the eventual abolition of the breast tax. The Breast Tax Agitation initiated by Nangeli left a lasting impact on the social consciousness of the time, highlighting the need for reform and challenging the oppressive practices deeply ingrained in the caste system. Her story continues to be told and remembered as a symbol of resistance and a call for social reform.

Recap

- ◆ The London Missionary Society (LMS) was the first protestant community to begin its work in Travancore
- ◆ The Church Mission Society (CMS) was the child of Evangelical Anglicanism
- ◆ The Christian missionaries also started a number of educational institutions since they realized the supreme importance of education in evangelization
- ◆ Conversion to Christianity of the low castes was the first protest movement from their side.
- ◆ The missionaries introduced and promoted English education
- ◆ To the low castes religious conversion was one of their most important apparatuses of social transformation.

- ◆ Girls' education was also promoted by the missionaries
- ◆ Kerala witnessed several revolts and rebellions
- ◆ The Channar Rebellion was started by the Channar community of South Travancore for the right of their women to cover their upper part of the body with cloth, like that of the higher caste women.
- ◆ Acchipudava strike was an agitation for the right to wear upper cloth by the Ezhava women in Kerala.
- ◆ Mookuthi Samaram was an agitation against the prohibition of lower caste women from wearing nose-studs
- ◆ The *Kallumaala* and *Irumpuvala* agitation was for the right to discard certain humiliating ornaments. Pulaya women of the untouchable slave caste made this agitation into a movement
- ◆ Nangeli's courageous act of self-mutilation was a powerful form of protest against the oppressive taxation namely breast tax for lower caste women.

Objective Questions

1. Which is the first protestant mission started in Kerla?
2. Name the social reformer who led *Mukkuthi* Samaram.
3. Who introduced English education in colonial Kerala?
4. Which strike was an agitation for the right to wear upper cloth by the Ezhava women in Kerala.?
5. Which rebellion was started by Chaanar caste women for the rights to cover their upper body?
6. Name the place. Which was later called so, where Nangeli self-mutilated herself in protest?
7. Name the strike lead by Pulaya women for the right to wear golden ornaments?
8. Name the social reformer who supported Kallumala. Irumpuvala strike.

Answers

1. CMS	5. Channar rebellion
2. Arattupuzha Velayudha panikkar	6. Mulachi Parambu
3. Missionaries	7. Kallumala, Irumbvala samaram
4. Achippudava Strike	8. Ayyankali

Assignments

1. What are the important contributions of missionaries to Keralam ?
2. How does Nangeli expressed her protest against the caste-discrimination? Explain
3. Why did lower caste people think that converting to Christianity is an emancipatory practice. Answer in detail.
4. Write on Achippudava strike

Suggested Reading

1. Menon, A. *Sreedhara* (2007), *A Survey of Kerala History*, Kottayam: DC Books.
2. Jeffry, Robin (2015), *Politics, Women, Well-Being: How Kerala Became a Model*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press.
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4. King, Mary Elizabeth (2015), *Gandhian Non-violent Struggle and Untouchability in South India: The 1924-25 Vykom Satyagraha and the Mechanism of Change*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press.
5. Narayana Prasad, Muni (2015), *Narayana Guru Sampoorna Kritikal*, New Delhi: National Book Trust.

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3. Jeffry, Robin (2015), *Politics, Women, Well-Being: How Kerala Became a Model*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press.
4. Kumaran, Moorkothu (2007), Sree Narayana Guru Swamikalude Jeevacharitram, Sivagiri Mutt: Sree Narayana Dharma Sangham Trust.



Early movements in Social Reforms

UNIT

Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of this unit, the learner will be able to:

- ◆ get an overall idea about major early social movements in Kerala
- ◆ be familiar with the leaders of the early social movements
- ◆ aware the social reforms resulted in lower caste communities

Prerequisite

It is essential to understand the context of modernity and development that shaped the Kerala region. Kerala, located on the southwestern coast of India, has a unique socio-economic and cultural history that distinguishes it from other parts of the country. The state is renowned for its high literacy rates, advanced healthcare system, and progressive social policies, often referred to as the “Kerala Model of Development.” However, Kerala, like most of the Indian states, was completely immersed in a heinous caste system and practices. Swami Vivekananda referred to Kerala as a “lunatic asylum” due to the severe caste inequalities prevalent in the state during his visit in the late 19th century. This statement highlighted the oppressive caste system that deeply divided society and perpetuated social injustice. Kerala is what today due to the dedicated efforts of some great visionaries.

Key themes

Social reform, memorials, ezhava, social equality, justice

Discussion

2.4.1 Overview of Major Movements

The early social reform movements in Kerala were pivotal in shaping the sociocultural landscape of the region. These movements primarily aimed to challenge and transform the rigid caste system, promote education, and address social injustices. Here are some of the significant early social reform movements in Kerala:

a) Sree Narayana Movement

Sree Narayana Guru was a social reformer, spiritual leader, and advocate of the idea of “one caste, one religion, one God for humanity.” He established temples open to all castes, started educational institutions, and promoted the idea of self-improvement and social equality. His efforts were crucial in uplifting the Ezhava community and promoting a broader sense of social unity and equality.

b) Vaikom Satyagraha (1924-1925)

Objective of the Vaikom Satyagraha was to fight for the rights of the lower caste. It was a nonviolent protest and civil disobedience. The movement was significant in challenging caste-based discrimination and eventually led to the opening of the roads around the temple to all castes. Besides K. Kelappan, T.K. Madhavan and Mahatma Gandhi were involved in the movement.

c) Temple Entry Movement (1936)

The movement was to secure the right

of lower castes to enter temples. The Temple Entry Proclamation on November 12, 1936 by Maharaja Chithira Thirunal Balarama Varma of Travancore allowed all castes to enter Hindu temples was result of this movement. This proclamation was a landmark in the fight against untouchability and caste discrimination in Kerala.

d) SNDP Yogam (Sree Narayana Dharma Paripalana Yogam)

SNDP was founded in 1903 by Dr. Palpu and other followers of Sree Narayana Guru, to promote the social and educational advancement of the Ezhava community. The movement initiated establishment of schools, colleges, and other educational institutions; and organizing community activities and cultural programs.

e) Ayyankali Movement

Ayyankali was a prominent social reformer who fought for the rights of the Pulaya community and other lower castes. He led campaigns for the right to education, access to public spaces, and the abolition of untouchability. His efforts led to significant advancements in the socio-economic status of the Dalits in Kerala.

f) Prathyaksha Raksha Daiva Sabha (PRDS)

It was founded by Poikayil Yohannan (also known as Kumara Gurudevan) to fight for the rights and upliftment of the Dalits. These religious and social reform activities aimed at improving the condition of the Dalit community.

g) Nair Service Society (NSS)

It was founded in 1914 by Mannath Padmanabhan to promote the social, economic, and educational interests of the Nair community. The society led the establishment of educational institutions, social services, and cultural programs. These movements collectively contributed to the progressive transformation of Kerala's society by challenging entrenched social hierarchies, promoting education and social equality, and paving the way for a more inclusive and just social order.

2.4.2 Vaikunda Swamikal

Also known as Ayya Vaikundar, was a prominent social reformer and religious leader in South India during the 19th century. He is revered as the incarnation of Lord Vishnu in the Ayyavazhi religion, which he founded. His teachings and actions were significant in challenging the caste-based inequalities and social injustices prevalent in his time.

Vaikunda Swamikal was born as Mudisoodum Perumal on March 3, 1809, in the village of Poovandanthroppe (now Swamithope) in the present-day Kanyakumari district of Tamil Nadu. His parents were Ponnu Madan and Veyilal Amma. In 1833, at the age of 24, Mudisoodum Perumal experienced a spiritual transformation after being immersed in the Thamirabarani River. He emerged as Ayya Vaikundar, declaring himself an avatar of Lord Vishnu. He began preaching his vision of social equality, religious unity, and moral living.

Vaikunda Swamikal's teachings emphasized the following principles:

1. Social Equality: He strongly opposed the caste system and advocated for the equal treatment

of all human beings, irrespective of their birth.

2. Religious Unity: Vaikundar sought to unify people across different religious backgrounds, promoting a universal worship that transcended traditional Hindu Akilattirattu Ammanai, which details the mythology, teachings, and prophecies related to Vaikundar.

Vaikunda Swamikal's impact on South Indian society was profound. He inspired a movement that not only addressed religious and social issues but also laid the groundwork for future reformers and social activists. The Swamithope Pathi, his primary temple, remains a significant place of pilgrimage for his followers. Although not as widely known outside his regional context, Vaikunda Swamikal's contributions to social reform and religious thought have been increasingly recognized in scholarly works and among communities dedicated to social justice.

His life and teachings continue to be a source of inspiration for those advocating for social equality, religious harmony, and moral integrity. He fought for social equality and strongly opposed the caste system. Vaikundar sought to unify people across different religious backgrounds, promoting a universal worship that transcended traditional Hindu practices. He encouraged his followers to lead a life of righteousness, truth, and non-violence.

Ayyavazhi, the religious movement founded by Vaikunda Swamikal, is centered around the worship of Ayya Vaikundar as an incarnation of Vishnu. The primary scripture of Ayyavazhi is the Akilattirattu Ammanai, which details the mythology, teachings, and prophecies related to Vaikundar. Vaikunda Swamikal's impact on South Indian society was profound. He inspired a movement that

not only addressed religious and social issues but also laid the groundwork for future reformers and social activists. The Swamithope Pathi, his primary temple, remains a significant place of pilgrimage for his followers.

2.4.3 Arattupuzha Velayudha Panicker

Arattupuzha Velayudha Panicker was a prominent 19th-century social reformer and warrior from Kerala, India. He is celebrated for his efforts in fighting against caste-based discrimination and for his significant contributions upliftment marginalized communities, particularly the Ezhava community.

Arattupuzha Velayudha Panicker was born in the village of Arattupuzha in the Alappuzha district, Kerala. He belonged to the Ezhava community, which was historically subjected to social injustices and untouchability practices. Panicker is best known for his role in the temple entry movements. He played a crucial part in challenging the social norms that barred lower-caste individuals from entering temples and participating in religious activities.

He worked towards securing education and equal rights for the Ezhava community and other oppressed groups. He advocated for the abolition of discriminatory practices and the inclusion of all communities in social and religious spheres. Panicker was also a warrior who led several confrontations against oppressive feudal lords and upper-caste domination, using his influence and martial skills to defend and protect the rights of his people. His efforts inspired subsequent generations of social reformers in Kerala, including the famous leader Sree Narayana Guru, who continued the struggle for social equality and justice.

Panicker's life and deeds are commemorated in Kerala through various cultural and historical narratives. He is remembered as a symbol of resistance against caste oppression and a pioneer in the fight for social justice. Arattupuzha Velayudha Panicker's life was cut short when he was assassinated by his opponents who opposed his reformative actions. Despite his untimely death, his legacy continued to influence and inspire social movements in Kerala. He remains a significant figure in the history of Kerala's social reforms. His courageous actions and unwavering commitment to equality have left an indelible mark on the socio-cultural landscape of the region.

2.4.4 Malayali Memorial

The Malayali Memorial was a significant petition signed by over 10,000 people in 1891, demanding fair representation for Malayalis (native inhabitants of the princely state of Travancore, now part of Kerala) in the state administration. This movement marked a crucial step in the social and political history of Kerala, as it highlighted the need for greater representation and opportunities for the local population in government jobs, which were predominantly held by Tamil Brahmins and other non-Malayalis at the time.

In the late 19th century, the administrative and government positions in Travancore were dominated by non-Malayalis, especially Tamil Brahmins. This led to significant discontent among the local population, who felt marginalized and discriminated against in their own land. The memorial was drafted and submitted to the Maharaja of Travancore, Sree Moolam Thirunal, on January 1, 1891. It was a formal complaint that demanded more government jobs and administrative roles for the educated

Malayali community. The memorial was signed by over 10,000 people, including prominent figures from various sections of society such as intellectuals, professionals, and other influential community leaders. This broad base of support highlighted the widespread nature of the grievances.

The Malayali Memorial is considered a landmark event in the history of Kerala. It led to the formation of the Travancore Legislative Council in 1888, which included representatives from the local population. Over time, this movement contributed to greater social reforms and the development of a more inclusive administrative structure in Travancore. The memorial is seen as an early expression of regional and ethnic identity and a precursor to later movements for social justice and equality in Kerala. It helped set the stage for subsequent political activism and the eventual establishment of a more equitable society in the region. The Malayali Memorial is a significant event in the history of Kerala, representing the early struggles for fair representation and social justice in the region.

2.4.5 Villuvandi Samaram

Also known as the Bullock Cart Strike, Villuvandi samaram was a significant event in the social and labor history of Kerala, India. It took place in 1893 in the princely state of Travancore. Here are some key points about the Villuvandi Samaram: The strike was primarily organized by the Ezhava community, which was one of the major marginalized and oppressed communities in Kerala. They faced severe social discrimination and economic hardships.

The immediate cause of the strike was the exorbitant taxes and oppressive practices imposed by the ruling authorities on the bullock cart owners, who were

mostly Ezhavas. These cart owners were required to pay high fees and taxes to transport goods, which severely impacted their livelihoods. The strike was led by Ayyankali, a prominent social reformer and leader of the SC community. Ayyankali was instrumental in mobilizing the community and advocating for their rights.

During the strike, bullock cart owners refused to transport goods, which led to a significant disruption in the supply of essential goods and services. This act of civil disobedience was aimed at forcing the authorities to acknowledge their grievances and bring about change. The strike eventually led to negotiations between the striking cart owners and the authorities. It resulted in some concessions being granted to the Ezhava community, including the reduction of taxes and easing of oppressive regulations.

Villuvandi Samaram is remembered as a landmark event in the history of Kerala's social movements. It highlighted the plight of the marginalized communities and set the stage for future struggles against social injustices and for economic rights. The success of the strike and the leadership of Ayyankali inspired many other movements and reforms aimed at improving the socio-economic conditions of the oppressed communities in Kerala. Ayyankali's efforts also contributed to the larger movements for social justice and equality in India.

Villuvandi Samaram remains an important episode in Kerala's history, symbolizing the power of organized resistance and the fight for social and economic justice. The Ezhava Memorial is a significant historical document in the history of Kerala, India. It marks a pivotal moment in the socio-political landscape of the region, particularly in the struggle for

social justice and equality.

The Ezhavas are a prominent community in Kerala, traditionally involved in various occupations including agriculture, toddy tapping, and trade. Despite their significant presence and contributions to society, they were subjected to severe social discrimination under the caste system prevalent during the 19th and early 20th centuries. They were considered “avarnas” (outside the traditional varna system) and faced restrictions in education, employment, and public spaces.

2.4.6 The Memorials

There were two significant Ezhava Memorials, submitted in 1896 and 1900, respectively, to the Maharaja of Travancore.

First Ezhava Memorial (1896)

The memorial highlighted the community's grievances, especially the denial of educational and employment opportunities. It requested the Maharaja to allow Ezhavas to compete for government positions and to grant them access to schools funded by the state. It was signed by over 13,000 members of the Ezhava community, showing a significant level of organization and unity.

Second Ezhava Memorial (1900)

The second memorial reiterated the community's demands for access to education and employment, emphasizing the continued social and economic disadvantages faced by Ezhavas. It

gathered an even larger number of signatures than the first, indicating growing support and determination within the community.

The submission of the Ezhava Memorials was a crucial step in the broader social reform movement in Kerala. It drew attention to the discriminatory practices faced by lower-caste communities and contributed to the gradual opening up of educational and employment opportunities. The memorials also played a significant role in the empowerment of the Ezhava community and inspired other marginalized groups to fight for their rights.

Dr. Palpu, a prominent leader in the Ezhava community and an ardent advocate for social reform, played a central role in drafting and organizing support for the memorials. Sree Narayana Guru, a revered social reformer, worked tirelessly for the upliftment of the Ezhavas and other marginalized communities. His teachings and actions significantly influenced the movement for social equality in Kerala.

The Ezhava Memorials are remembered as a foundational moment in Kerala's history of social justice. They symbolize the community's resilience and determination to fight against social inequalities and have left a lasting impact on the socio-political fabric of the region. The movement contributed to the eventual abolishment of many discriminatory practices and paved the way for a more inclusive society. The Ezhava Memorials were a catalyst for change, highlighting the injustices faced by the Ezhava community and pushing for reforms that would lead to greater social equity in Kerala.

Recap

- ◆ Malayali Memorial was a significant petition signed in 1891 which highlighted the need for greater representation and opportunities for the local population in government jobs
- ◆ Immediate cause of the strike was the exorbitant taxes and oppressive practices imposed by the ruling authorities on the bullock cart owners, mostly Ezhavas.
- ◆ Vaikunda Swamikal promoted social equality and religious unity
- ◆ Malayali memorial is an early expression of regional and ethnic identity
- ◆ Malayalam memorial is a precursor to later movements for social justice and equality in Kerala
- ◆ Temple entry movement to secure the right of lower castes to enter temple

Objective Questions

1. What was the main demand of Vaikam Satyagraha?
2. When did Vaikom Satyagraha occur?
3. In which year was the First Ezhava Memorial
4. What was the immediate cause of Villuvandi Samaram?

Answers

1. Opening of the roads around the temple to all castes.
2. 1924-25
3. 1896
4. The immediate cause of the strike was the exorbitant taxes and oppressive practices imposed by the ruling authorities on the bullock cart owners

Assignments

1. Give an overview of major movements in Kerala including Sree narayana movement, Vaikom Satyagraha, Temple entry movement, SNDP, Ayyankali Movement, NSS.
2. What were the contributions of Vaikunda Swamikal to social reform?
3. Discuss the significance of Arattupuzha Velayudha Panicker in Kerala's history.
4. Explain the demands and outcomes of the Malayali Memorial movement.
5. How did the Villuvandi Samaram influence agricultural labor movements?

Suggested Reading

1. Chandramohan, P (2016), *Developmental Modernity in Kerala - Narayana Guru, SNDP Yogam and Social Reform*, Chennai: Tulika Books.
2. Menon, A. Sreedhara (2007), *A Survey of Kerala History*, Kottayam: DC Books.
3. Jeffry, Robin (2015), *Politics, Women, Well-Being: How Kerala Became a Model*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press.

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1. Menon, A. Sreedhara (2007), *A Survey of Kerala History*, Kottayam: DC Books.
2. Jeffry, Robin (2015), *Politics, Women, Well-Being: How Kerala Became a Model*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press.
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Social Reform Movements



Consecration of Siva Idol at Aruvippuram

UNIT

Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of this unit, the learner will be able to:

- ◆ get an idea of the relevance of Aruvippuram consecration
- ◆ get familiar with the impact of the Aruvippuram installation led by Sree Narayana Guru
- ◆ get exposed to the role of religious reform in driving social change
- ◆ assess the historical context and implications of Kumaran Asan's engagement with Sree Narayana Guru.
- ◆ get to know SNDP Yogam as a platform for social and educational reform among the Ezhava community

Prerequisite

The 19th century in Kerala was characterised by hierarchical caste structures, entrenched religious beliefs, and discriminatory practices like untouchability. The significance of socio-religious reform movements, particularly the contributions of leaders like Sree Narayana Guru, lies in challenging Brahmanical norms and fostering social inclusion. The central focus is on the historical significance of the Aruvippuram installation, which symbolised a departure from traditional practices, initiated religious and educational reforms, and promoted social equality. Familiarity with the biographies of Sree Narayana Guru and Kumaran Asan and the evolving discourse on religion and social justice is essential to contextualise the interplay between religious ideologies and social change during this transformative

period. The legacy of Sree Narayana Guru resonates in Kerala's history, creating major shifts towards social equality and religious reform. His endeavours not only challenged entrenched hierarchies but also ignited a discourse that continues to shape contemporary understandings of religion, justice, and societal transformation.

Key themes

Aruvippuram installation, Idolatry, Religious revolution, Temple consecration, SNDP Yogam, Kumaran Asan, Dr. Palpu, Educational revolution

Discussion

Religious superstitions and social obscurantism were the major evils with which Indian society was fraught within the nineteenth century. The decadent elements of the centuries-long caste system acted as the worst agents of social retardation. Kerala was no exception to this system and the society was divided into *avaranas* and *savarnas*. The notions of untouchability, unapproachability, and unseeability were practiced by higher castes with fanatic rigour. Though the *avarna* consisted of more than half of the population of Kerala, they were treated as mere creatures and denied all the rights enjoyed by the *savarna*. Because of their degraded status, they faced many restrictions on their food, shelter, dress, language, use of public properties, access to public paths or civic amenities, right of worship, and so on. Sree Narayana Guru emerged as a redeemer of the deprived segments of society and by dint of his innovative and psychotherapeutic efforts raised the so-called 'Lunatic Asylum' to the status of a modern state. Through multiple ways of responses to the challenges posed by the then-existing social stratification

system, Narayana Guru led a silent but powerful revolution and transformed the severely diseased society of Kerala. In the words of P. Govinda Pillai, a Marxist theoretician, Sree Narayana Guru was the master sculptor of the Kerala Renaissance.

Sree Narayana Guru understood the interdependencies and interconnections between religious and social life, and also between religious beliefs and social stigmas. He was well aware of the material, psychological, and spiritual problems that affected the deprived sections of Kerala society. As elsewhere in India, reformers in Kerala who believed that social behaviour could be influenced by rearticulating the existing religious idioms were more successful than groups that organised themselves under nonreligious leadership and gained their ends through constitutional means and secular organizations. This was perhaps due to the fact that religion was the dominant ideology of the time and it was not possible to undertake any social action without reference to it. Having understood the interconnections between religious beliefs and social practices,

Narayana Guru started his reform activities by making them resonant with religious idioms in order to legitimize the need to reform oneself and others. Keralites met with religion at every turn in their lives- at birth, puberty, marriage, death, etc. As social life was strongly influenced by religious tenets, Narayana Guru realized that religious idioms were a necessary prerequisite for social reform. This is exemplified in the famous consecration of Siva at Aruvippuram.

In many instances Narayana Guru sought to replace the existing abominable religious beliefs and practices with a different form of worship. The establishment of temples and consecration of idols by the Guru was an expression of this alternative path. In contrast to the attitude of most nineteenth century Indian reformers and intellectuals, Narayana Guru conceded to idolatry, rituals and the practices of traditional religion for the sake of the masses, who could not live peacefully without such practices and beliefs. He believed that idolatry was necessary for the people in the early stages of their religious understanding, before they can grasp the abstract truth embodied in spiritual philosophy. That is why, although he himself did not believe in idolatry, he sanctioned it as the nucleus around which an alternative form of worship could evolve. The first step in this direction was the consecration of an idol of Siva at Aruvippuram in 1888.

3.1.1 Background of Aruvippuram Installation

Being untouchables, *avarnas* were not permitted to enter the temples of *savarnas* and were not allowed to worship Siva, Vishnu or any other Satvik Gods. They had tutelary deities in the form of *Madan*, *Marutha*, *Chattan*, *Kali*, *Mallan*, and so on. They pleased these gods with meat,

blood, toddy, and human and animal sacrifices. Their ethnic gods and worship patterns always kept the *avarnas* dirty and untidy. It was because of this the *savarna* relegated them from the mainstream. The *avarnas* were destined to lead an uncivilised life without freedom and learning. These people formed the majority of the society, but they were destined to live like animals. To enable them to live like human beings and make their lives fruitful, it was essential to liberate them from their ignorance. The Aruvippuram installation was the powerful clarion call for such a preparation.

After his profound meditations and realisation of enlightenment at Maruthvamala Sree Narayana Guru reached Aruvippuram during 1885 and selected it as the inaugural place of his social reform activities. Aruvippuram was a small village in the Agasthya hills and situated six kilometres to the North East of Neyyatinkara taluk in Southern Travancore. The river Neyyar which originated from Agastya hills passed through the valley and made it a thick forest and fertile land with extreme natural beauty. It was because of this wild beauty that Sree Narayana Guru selected Aruvippuram for his meditation and it was in this scenic village that his quest reached its final stage. Aruvippuram got the fortune to the initiation of the great revolution started by Sree Narayana Guru.

The presence of a young *sanyasi* in the impenetrable jungle soon came to the notice of people in the adjoining village. They met him and were won over. Then there began a steady flow of people. Young and old flocked to the place to have seen the ascetic man. Many stories spread there and crowds gathered on auspicious days. The *sanyasin* prescribed simple herbal remedies to those who were ill. Many of them were cured. Faith worked

as a strong decisive factor and his presence produced a strong impact on the common people. Thus, was ready the psychological background for effective action. At that time the poor low-caste people of the locality approached Narayana Guru and informed that the caste Hindus were not allowing them to worship in the temples. So, in order to satisfy their dreams, Sree Narayana Guru decided to install a centre for worship for the *avarnas*.

The great historic event of Aruvippuram installation of Sree Narayana Guru happened on 11th March 1888 at 3 AM. The auspicious Sivarathri night sacred to Lord Siva was chosen for consecrating the idol. Devotees arrived at Aruvippuram from different parts of the country. A *pandal* (temporary thatched shed) was already built over a flat rock on the bank of Neyyar. Dipping into the waters of Neyyar, at Sankarankuzhy, Narayana Guru picked up a stone shaped like Sivalinga and installed it on the pedestal, and sprinkled water over it repeating hymns. Through this installation, Sree Narayana Guru started a silent revolution and great social transformation in Kerala soil.

Kumaran Asan, in his brief biography of the Guru, gives the following factual account: -

“At dead of night, Swami had a dip in the river. He came up after sometime with a Sivalingam in his hands and walked into the makeshift temple and stood there with his eyes closed in deep meditation his hands holding the Sivalingam to his chest, tears flowing down his cheeks, completely lost to the world. For full three hours, he stood motionless in that posture, while the entire crowd rent the midnight air with continuous cries of ‘*Om Nama Sivayah*’, ‘*Om Nama Sivayah*’ for full three hours. The whole lot of them seemed to have only one mind, one thought, one prayer,

among them: ‘*Om Nama Sivayah*’. At three in the morning Swami placed the Sivalingam on the pedestal, consecrated it with all the formalities of that sacred rite, including the *abhisheka* of the idol.”

The installation of Sivalinga at Aruvippuram was not done according to the proper norms and rituals to be followed in the installation of a deity. It was a violation of Brahmanical norms and *Tantrasamuchaya*, which upheld that only Brahmins had the right to install a temple and initiate as priests. Challenging the age-old customs and practices, Guru took a stone from the riverbed and gave godhood to it. Through this, Guru proved that God is everywhere and does not constitute the monopoly of a particular section of society. Through this installation, Guru demolished the myth of Brahmanic hegemony and the aura of their spiritual monopoly.

Against this courageous deed also there were opposition and protest. An *avarna* dared to install an idol with Vedic rights and established a new abode of God! It caused many eyebrows to raise. The most orthodox Brahmin priest's age-old privilege and prerogative were usurped by one with the stigma of untouchability. A certain simple-minded Nampoothiri scholar raised the issue. When the orthodox sections of society raised a hue and cry about the *pratishta*, Guru silenced them with a remarkable reply. “The idol of Siva we have installed here is not that of Brahmana Siva but of our Siva”. This reply embodies a new and hitherto unheard-of approach to worship. He disarmed opposition through reasoning. It declared in unmistakable terms that God does not give predilections for particular castes, and that worship is free and unhindered for everyone. The installation sent shock waves to the strongholds of orthodoxy throughout the length and

breadth of Kerala.

3.1.1.1 Impact of Aruvippuram Installation

Sree Narayana Guru inaugurated a silent revolution through his Aruvippuram installation, which had its imprint on the material and spiritual lives of the people of Kerala. *Avarnas* got a new identity through this installation. It provided the *a varnas*, an opportunity to install any idol and worship any God in whatever shape they deem fit. By denying Brahmanical customs, the Guru proved the invalidity of such practices and Brahmanical rules. Guru opened the doors of the Aruvippuram temple to all without any restrictions. The glorious dictum the Guru engraved on the temple wall was as follows:

*“Devoid of dividing walls
Of caste or creed
Or hatred of rival faiths
All live here in brotherhood
Such, know this place to be
This model foundation”*

This means all people irrespective of their caste or religion could equally live as brothers and sisters in the temple premises. For the *a varnas* it was the first chance for them to realise the concept of social equality. The words he inscribed on the temple wall eloquently declare his vision of universal brotherhood and the oneness of humans. The Guru wished the temple to symbolise the brotherhood of human beings and the equality of all before God. One of the most striking features of his religious reformism was a universal outlook based on the unity of Godhead. By his consecration of Siva, he unleashed an attack on the sacred order of varna dharma. That act symbolised a struggle

between the status quo and change, or, more precisely, a rational action to change in attitude related to oneself. It was on the basis of religious universalism that the Guru formulated his doctrine, “One caste, one religion, and one God for mankind.”

By Aruvippuram installation, Sree Narayana Guru provided a *sattvic* God Siva, and a new mode of worship for the *a varnas*. In the place of bloody sacrifices and toddy offerings, he introduced *savarna* mode of worship, i.e., offering of fruits and flowers instead of blood, meat, and toddy. Instead of obscene songs, he wrote ‘*Sivasatakam*’ for chanting to the worshippers. Guru wanted to purify the worshiper physically and mentally. Guru insisted a library, school, garden, and open spaces along with the temple to provide a healthy atmosphere for the worshipers.

Along with a religious and social revolution, the Aruvippuram installation also inaugurated an educational revolution on Kerala soil. In order to bring the *a varnas* to the mainstream, Sree Narayana Guru provided education to them through this temple. Sree Narayana Guru started a Sanskrit school and Vedic-tantric studies along with the temple compound and opened its doors to all without any restrictions. Though Sanskrit was denied to lower castes, Guru opened its doors to all without any caste distinctions.

Adjacent to the temple, a Mutt was also built where the *Sanyasin* and his close disciples lived. Mutt should impart knowledge to the people in matters of religion and worship. Brahmacaris admitted into the Mutt were taught philosophy, tantric practices and other subjects in preparation for taking up the priesthood. The Mutt should prepare the people intellectually and morally to challenge and face the possible onslaughts from the caste Hindus. Slowly

Aruvippuram became a mutt for saints. The educated and devotee persons came there and stayed as Guru's disciples. Guru also started a weaving centre at Vadakke mutt to make the downtrodden self-sufficient and self-reliant. Thus, *avarnas* got a chance to attain self-confidence and march forward on the path of liberty and social justice.

The Aruvippuram installation stands as a milestone in the historic process of social transformation in modern Kerala. It marked a new era in the history of Kerala and became a beacon of light to millions of downtrodden in the region. *Avarnas* got a new identity through this temple installation and from the position of mere creatures, they were elevated to the level of human beings and became conscious of their rights. It was really a radical event in the history of 'social inclusion'. The historic event created self-confidence and self-respect in the minds and visions of the *avarnas* who were plunged into the chasm of rejection.

After the Aruvippuram consecration, Narayana Guru proceeded to install deities in more than 60 temples in different parts of Kerala. During the first phase, Gods of the Brahmanical pantheon were consecrated in place of lower satanic gods of primitive religion. The Guru forbade the worship of evil spirits and the keeping of images representing such beliefs in temples and houses of well to do Ezhavas. Their place was taken by the newly consecrated temples. He also brought about changes in the method of worship, replacing animal sacrifices and offerings of fermented drinks with flowers and fruits.

The objective of Narayana Guru's religious reform efforts was not to enable the low castes to have access to the Brahmanical Gods but to create a system

of worship of their own. That he initially consecrated the idol of Siva, despite his disapproval of idolatry, was an indication of the influence of both the elite and the popular culture. At the same time, he was eager to create a system distinct from both, which explains the changes he made in consecration in the later stages, when he was transforming or reformulating his own selfhood.

Through his Aruvippuram installation, Guru proved temples were not only centres of worship, but they were the centres of the overall development of mankind. Guru's attempt can be considered as a process of re-humanisation of a dehumanised society. One can see the theme of humanism being woven into his Aruvippuram installation.

Narayana Guru was simultaneously a social reformer and an icon par excellence of a charismatic religious leaders. Religious reform for him was tantamount to social reform, since religious beliefs and social practices were so closely intertwined as to be inseparable. Though the Guru's appeal may appear to be religious, the first major public event in his life, the consecration of Aruvippuram temple, was in fact a social reform activity mediated or articulated through the religious idiom. It has been observed that in many of the reform endeavours in nineteenth-century India, religious sanction was invariably sought as a means for bringing about social change. Narayana Guru too formulated his system of thought with social transformation as a necessary prerequisite for the upliftment of the downtrodden. His social reform endeavours are mainly concerned with caste, popular customs, beliefs and rituals, education, freedom of work, temperance, and economic improvement.

The origin of the Sree Narayana Dharma Paripalana Yogam (SNDP Yogam) may be traced back to Narayana

Guru's consecration at Aruvippuram and his founding of an *Ashram* there in 1888. In 1889, this *Ashram* was renamed as the Aruvippuram Temple Association. It consisted of twenty-four members with Kumaran Asan as the founding secretary. Streamlining of the temple, the madam and its properties, performance of daily rituals, and celebration of annual festivals were the administrative reasons behind the formation of this Association. In other words, in the beginning, this Association was more of a religious organisation. It was this Association that later transformed itself into the SNDP Yogam, in January 1903. Dr Palpu and the educated middle class of the Ezhava community were not satisfied with the limited activities of the Aruvippuram Temple Association. It was not that they were against the daily pujas and the annual festivals of the temple, but they felt this was not adequate to fulfil their objectives. Hence, they took the initiative to expand its field of activities and to alter its name in order to encapsulate the newly included intentions. In December 1902, the ten life members of the Association met Kamalayam Bungalow in Trivandrum, presumably at the invitation of Kumaran Asan. At this meeting, they unanimously decided to register the Temple Association as a joint stock company under the name of the SNDP Yogam.

3.1.2 Kumaran Asan's first meeting with Guru

N. Kumaran Asan was one of the makers of modern Kerala. Along with Ullur S. Parameshwara Iyer and Vallathol Narayana Menon, he belongs to the Trinity of the Romantic Revival in Malayalam poetry. But he was more than an original poet who rebelled against just outdated literary conventions. Born in a community condemned for centuries to untouchability, he fought against the

inequities of our caste -ridden society and passionately wrote for individual dignity, social freedom and the brotherhood of man. The great creative genius to come from the socially backward classes in modern Kerala, he unconsciously asserted, by his very emergence as a major poet, the cultural equality which was due to the downtrodden sections of our society. Thus, he was, in more ways a symbol of the consciousness of modern Kerala.

Kumaran, as he was called in his early years, was born on the 12th of April 1873 at Kayikkara, a small coastal village some forty kilometres to the north of Thiruvananthapuram. His father was a petty trader by profession, but was in his own way a cultivated man who enjoyed some social position in the locality. Kumaran received little formal schooling. He had his first lessons in Malayalam and Sanskrit under village School masters. This was followed by a few years' study at a Malayalam school. He was for a few months a school master and for two years trader's clerk. After his interval, he pursued the study of Sanskrit for another year.

Kumaran Asan's first meeting with Narayana Guru occurred when Asan was 17 years old. This encounter had profound impacts on Asan's life and the trajectory of his contributions to society. Asan was fascinated by the emerging spiritual leader of his community and he spent two years in close association with Sree Narayana Guru. These were years of an intensive study of Hindu religious philosophy, fostering his intellectual and spiritual growth. This initial meeting marked the beginning of a transformative journey for Asan, shaping his perspectives on social reform, spirituality, and the pursuit of knowledge. Throughout his life, Asan remained deeply influenced by Narayana Guru's teachings, contributing

significantly to Kerala's cultural and social landscape as a poet, scholar, and advocate for social justice.

Sree Narayana Guru recognised the rare intellectual spiritual gift of his young disciple and decided to give him ample opportunities for development. Accordingly, he was sent to Bangalore where a highly talented member of the community, Dr. Palpu, occupied a high position in the Mysore government service. Asan was a student of the Sanskrit college in Bangalore with the outbreak of an epidemic in the city he went to Madras and then to Culcutta where he spent two years. The five years he spent outside Kerala were of the greatest significance in the development of Asan's personality. These were years of strenuous study of Hindu and Buddhist philosophy and Sanskrit literature. It was at this time that he was also introduced to English language and literature with which he became closely acquainted. The wider horizons in the big cities must have extended his personality, and, in particular, the two years he spent in the heart of renascent Bengal had enriched his inner life in an indefinable way.

In 1900 Asan returned to Kerala. He stayed with the Sree Narayana Guru at his headquarters at Aruvippuram, a village to the south at Thiruvananthapuram, giving lessons in Sanskrit and lending a helping

hand in the conduct of the affairs of the temple there. In 1903, the Shri Narayana Dharma Paripalana Yogam (SNP Yogam) was established for the all-round upliftment of the Ezhava community. The Yogam was to play a great role in the social life of the State. Asan was its 1st General Secretary and he shouldered this heavy burden for 16 long years. To organise a socially, economically and educationally backward community of millions with a view to achieve elementary human rights suppressed by age-old conventions was no easy task. The intellectual and spiritual gift and the sheer physical energy needed for such an endeavour, could not be expected from an average man. Asan's superhuman efforts in this direction paid rich dividends to the community. By the time he gave up his Secretaryship (1919), his community was well-knit and set firmly on the road to advancement. Asan was the editor of the journal - Vivekodayam during his secretaryship. He also represented the community in the Travancore Praja Sabha as a nominated member for many years from 1905. He followed the moderation of a liberal in his activities for social reform and he had little interest in the purely political aspects of the resurgence of India. From his early youth, Asan lived away from home, at first pursuing scholarship and then devoting himself to social work.

Recap

- ◆ The social life of Keralites was strongly influenced by religion.
- ◆ Guru recognized religious idioms were necessary for social reform.
- ◆ The caste- Hindus not allowed the avarnas to worship in the temples.
- ◆ Aruvippuram installation was on 11th March 1888.

- ◆ Aruvippuram installation was a violation of Brahmanical norms and Tantrasamuchaya.
- ◆ Guru tried to prove that God is everywhere.
- ◆ Through Aruvippuram installation, Guru demolished the myth of Brahmanic hegemony and the aura of their spiritual monopoly.
- ◆ The idol of Siva Guru installed is not that of Brahmana Siva, but of our Siva.
- ◆ Aruvippuram temple symbolise the brotherhood and the equality of all before God.
- ◆ Guru attacked the sacred order of Varna Dharma.
- ◆ Guru insisted library, school, garden, and open space along with the temple.
- ◆ Aruvippuram installation also inaugurated an educational revolution on Kerala soil.
- ◆ Sanskrit was denied to lower castes, but Guru opened its doors to all.
- ◆ Aruvippuram installation was a radical event in the history of ‘social inclusion’.
- ◆ Guru’s process is re-humanisation of a dehumanised society.
- ◆ Meeting of Asan with Sree Narayana Guru
- ◆ Asan’s devotion to scholarship and social work.

Objective Questions

1. What were the major societal evils addressed by Sree Narayana Guru?
2. When did the Aruvippuram installation led by Sree Narayana Guru take place?
3. What was the significance of Sree Narayana Guru’s installation of the Sivalinga at Aruvippuram?
4. What social and educational initiatives did Sree Narayana Guru undertake alongside the Aruvippuram temple installation?
5. What transformation did Sree Narayana Guru bring to the worship practices of the avarnas?
6. What was Kumaran Asan’s role in the Sree Narayana Dharma Paripalana

Yogam (SNDP Yogam)?

7. What was the primary objective of the SNDP Yogam?
8. What role did Kumaran Asan play in the Travancore State Legislature?
9. What deity was consecrated at Aruvippuram installation?
10. How did Sree Narayana Guru address the restrictions faced by the avarnas in accessing temples?
11. What was Sree Narayana Guru's response to the objections raised by orthodox society regarding the pratishta (installation) of the idol of Siva at Aruvippuram?

Answers

1. Religious superstitions and social obscurantism.
2. On 11th March 1888
3. It challenged Brahmanical norms and demolished the myth of Brahmanic hegemony.
4. Establishment of schools, libraries, gardens, and open spaces; initiation of Sanskrit and Vedic-tantric studies.
5. Replaced bloody sacrifices and toddy offerings with offerings of fruits and flowers; introduced chanting of 'Sivasatakam'
6. He served as the 1st General Secretary.
7. The all-round upliftment of the Ezhava community.
8. He represented the Ezhava community as a nominated member.
9. Sivalingam
10. He established temples where avarnas could worship without restrictions
11. 'The idol of Siva we have installed here is not that of Brahmana Siva but of our Siva'.

Assignments

1. What historical and social factors led to the Aruvippuram installation in 1888?
2. How did the Aruvippuram installation by Sree Narayana Guru challenge caste norms?
3. Discuss the impact of the Aruvippuram installation on the social identity of avarnas.
4. Explain the significance of Kumaran Asan's first meeting with Sree Narayana Guru.
5. Describe the long-term effects of the Aruvippuram installation on Kerala society.

Suggested Reading

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Foundation of Sree Narayana Dharma Paripalana Yogam

UNIT

Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of this unit, the learner will be able to:

- ◆ get an awareness of SNDP Yogam and its efforts for social justice.
- ◆ recognise Sree Narayana Guru's reform activities against caste discrimination.
- ◆ familiarise how Guru integrated Hinduism with principles of equality.
- ◆ get exposed to the emergence and objectives of social organisations in 20th-century Kerala.
- ◆ identify important figures like Ayyankali, Sree Narayana Guru, and Mannathu Padmanabhan and their contributions.
- ◆ familiarise the goals of organisations like Pulaya Mahasabha, Nair Service Society, and Yogakshema Sabha in addressing social issues

Prerequisite

Sree Narayana Guru, an important figure in the history of Kerala, spearheaded a non-violent revolution against caste discrimination, aiming to uplift marginalised communities. In the backdrop of prevalent social discrimination, Guru established the Aruvippuram Kshetra Yogam, challenging caste hierarchies. Collaborating with Dr. Palpu, SNDP Yogam emerged as a cornerstone social organisation dedicated to community welfare. The efforts of SNDP Yogam towards socio-cultural and industrial progress were instrumental in addressing social inequalities.

The intermittent association of Guru with SNDP Yogam left a lasting legacy, inspiring profound social reforms and fostering a collective sense of community empowerment. Despite initial collaboration, Guru distanced himself from SNDP Yogam due to ideological disparities.

The formation of social organisations like the Aruvippuram Kshetra Yogam, later transformed into Sree Narayana Dharma Paripalana Yogam, marked a significant milestone in the social reform movement of Kerala. Similarly, Sadhu Jana Paripalana Sangham of Ayyankali, focused on the upliftment of Dalits, particularly the Pulaya community, by advocating education and social justice. The Nair Service Society (NSS) emerged as a response to the challenges faced by the Nair community, including disunity and social stagnation. The Yogakshema Sabha sought to modernise and reform the Namboothiri community. Through their collective efforts, these organisations sought to dismantle caste-based discrimination and empower marginalised communities, laying the foundation for a more inclusive and equitable society in Kerala.

Key themes

Vavoottuyogam, Aruvippuram Kshetrayogam, Sree Narayana Dharma Paripalana Yogam, Dr. Palpu, Sadhujana Paripalana Sangham, Ayyankalipada, Nair Service Society, Yogakshema Sabha.

Discussion

Sree Narayana Guru, the architect of a bloodless revolution in Kerala, laid the foundation of social protest for a social dynamic where the entire downtrodden sections of the population would achieve self-esteem through availing their socio-religious and political rights. It was his ideas, ideals, and ideologies that created ripples of protest and change among the *avarna* castes. The symbolic consecration of *Siva Linga* at Aruvippuram heralded the beginning of a mass revolution against

the established caste customs of the period. It also marked the death knell to the monopoly of the upper caste Brahmins over the priesthood and marked the beginning of a bloodless social revolution in Kerala.

3.2.1 Formation of Aruvippuram Kshetrayogam

Aruvippuram came to be considered a holy pilgrimage centre by both the natives

and outsiders. After the arrival of Sree Narayana Guru and *Sivalinga* installation at Aruvippuram, the place became a holy place. After the Aruvippuram installation, people reached there in larger numbers to conduct prayers, to observe Bhajans, and to perform various religious rites like *Pithrutharpanam* (the rituals related to ancestral homage). Sree Narayana Guru had organised a small committee named *Vavoottuyogam* in Aruvippuram in 1888 to look into the activities of the temple and to guide the devotees in the procedures of the customs and traditions of worship and to stimulate and create awareness among the devotees. He elected a president, secretary, and treasurer for the organisation.

In 1889, *Vavoottuyogam* had been expanded and thus an organization called *Aruvippuram Kshetra Yogam* was formed. Consisting of twenty-four members holding eleven shares, Aruvippuram Kshetra Yogam was formed with the objective of performing daily Pooja and conducting annual festivals in the temple. With the blessings of the Guru, Pulivathukkal Madan Asan and other prominent members of Aruvippuram took the initiative for the formation of the *Kshetra Yogam*. To avoid the problem of priority among the members, the Guru wanted them to write their names in a circle format. So, all got priority and equal importance and no superiority or inferiority complexes existed. Membership was given to all castes without any distinction.

3.2.1.1 Foundation of SNDP Yogam

The formation of the Sree Narayana Dharma Paripalana Yogam (SNDP Yogam), with the combined visualisations and mobilisations of the great spiritual leader and scholar Sree Narayana Guru and the fireball of protest Doctor P. Palpu,

became one of the greatest turning points in the history of Kerala. Sree Narayana Guru's great dictum of "strengthen through organisation" joined with the dynamism of Palpu's social protest gave birth to one of the earliest and most influential social organisations in Kerala.

Dr. Palpu played an important role in the formation of SNDP Yogam. During this period, Dr. Palpu was fighting against the caste system which deposed and insulted the backward castes and pushed them down to the lowest rung of the society by denying education, profession, and freedom. Sree Narayana Dharma Paripalana Yogam was born out of the collaboration of Dr. Palpu's efforts to uplift the community and Guru's straightforward ways of social renaissance. When Palpu met Swamy Vivekananda at Bangalore in 1891, Vivekananda advised him that no movement in India that did not have a leader with a sacred halo of spirituality around him could move the hearts of the masses. It was this advice from Vivekananda that brought Narayana Guru and Dr. Palpu together.

In 1901, Narayana Guru, Dr. Palpu, and Kumaran Asan met together and planned to expand the *Aruvippuram Kshetra Yogam* into a widespread one and took the decision to register the 'Yogam' into a Joint Stock Company. For this purpose, a special meeting of the Aruvippuram Kshetra Yogam was convened in 1903, by inviting prominent and wealthy Ezhavas of Neyyattinkara and Thiruvananthapuram taluks, at Kamalayam Banglaw at Kunukuzhi in Thiruvananthapuram. In this public session, the crucial decision to register the "Yogam" into a Joint Stock Company was taken. So, with the combined efforts of these leaders and with the admirable support of the prominent Ezhavas of Travancore, the "Aruvippuram Kshetra

Yogam" was renamed and registered as Aruvippuram Sree Narayana Dharma Paripalana Yogam, popularly known as SNDP Yogam, a limited company to 'promote the religious and material welfare of the Ezhavas'. The Yogam was born on 7th January 1903 at Aruvippuram under the shade of the jackfruit tree and it was registered according to the Company Act and it turned into a Joint Stock Company. With the license issued by the Dewan of Travancore, Krishnaswamy Rayar, on 28 March 1903, the Yogam was officially registered under the Company's Act on 15 May 1903. Sree Narayana Guru was the lifetime president, Dr. Palpu was the Vice President and Kumaran Asan became the Secretary of the SNDP Yogam.

The first annual session of the Yogam was held at Aruvippuram in February 1904. In his address Narayana Guru expected the Yogam to propagate education, morality, industry, and religion and reach out to the masses, and help the spiritual and material welfare of the people. Palpu, the powerful force behind the meeting, exhorted the Ezhavas by giving an inspiring speech and proclaimed that the mission of the Yogam is to make Ezhava men an educated, skilled, and cultured population. He also urged for the women's wing along with all annual meetings. He organised a women's conference under the auspices of his mother even in the first annual session itself. Palpu's wife also made a thought-provoking speech and stirred the audience. The Yogam started a journal, *Vivekodayam*, for the purpose of popularising the reformatory activities and opinions of the Yogam. The second anniversary of the Yogam was celebrated on a grand level in 1905 at Quilon with an All India Industrial Exhibition. Dozens of exhibits of coconut and other agricultural products were exhibited and a large number of people attended the function. This exhibition gave the Ezhavas a sense

of pride and enthusiasm and created a wider community feeling. It demonstrated the emergence of a community from suppression, exploitation, and servitude and showed that they are growing powerful social segment that could not be avoided by anyone.

The original aim of the S.N.D.P. Yogam was to manage the affairs of the Aruvippuram temple and to establish other institutions for the spiritual and material progress of Ezhava community. But the Yogam was not confined to this limit. The Yogam having as its objective all-round socio-cultural and industrial advancement of the society gave the lead to the community in its struggle for social, religious, economic, educational, and political equality. The Yogam carried its annual gatherings and people assembled in hundreds and later in thousands, and at certain special meetings more than half-a-lakh. They were graced in earlier days by the presence of Guru who gave them guidance and determination to their efforts. Each annual meeting became the centre of discussion and many crucial resolutions were passed.

The formative period of the Yogam was marked by the remarkable crusade for social reform by Narayana Guru. During this period, Kumaran Asan was the General Secretary, with the exception of one year when N. Krishnan was the Acting Secretary, made sober efforts through constitutional ways to achieve the rights of the low castes. Asan succeeded in his endeavors and achieved many civic rights for his community, hitherto denied to them. To a great extent, Dr Palpu helped him to carry on his work as General Secretary of the Yogam. Thus, the period came to be known as the Doctor (Palpu)-Asan period. Dr. Palpu personified rationality, English education, and new employment patterns; Kumaran Asan high

culture, refined sensibilities, and aesthetics hitherto prerogatives of the upper castes; Narayana Guru himself stood for mimetic appropriations of high caste religious styles. These three stands coalesce in the S.N.D.P Yogam, eventually to become the community's mouthpiece. In addition to these three dynamic personalities, the S.N.D.P. Yogam was fortunate to get the services of a group of eminent young and educated men like C.V. Kunjuraman, Paravoor Kesavan Asan, Sahodaran Ayyappan, T.K. Madhavan, C. Krishnan, Moorkothu Kumaran, etc.

3.2.1.2 S.N.D.P. Yogam and Socio-Religious Reforms in Kerala

The founding fathers of the Yogam realised that the miserable condition of low caste communities like the Ezhavas could be improved only through its reform. So, they gave first preference to social reforms. They fought against the conservatism and orthodoxy of the upper caste Hindus on the one hand and battled against the same traits of the Ezhava community on the other. These reformist activities helped the Ezhavas to achieve strength and solidarity. The identified adversaries of the community were ignorance, illiteracy, superstition, conservatism, and orthodoxy. So, in its early years, the S.N.D.P. Yogam concentrated its attention on the abolition of these social disabilities and made every effort for the educational advancement of the community. The activities of the Yogam in the religious, social, economic, educational, and employment fields benefited the Ezhava community much, and the causes of their backwardness in these fields were gradually removed one by one.

The earliest endeavor of the Yogam was to eradicate the social and religious

obscurantism. For the removal of the evil practices and superstitious customs, the Yogam prepared an agenda of activities. This included consecration of new temples and *ashrams*, demolition of traditional temples having the worship of inferior deities and spirits, discontinuance of animal sacrifice and devil dance, abolition of the singing of obscene songs in some temples, etc. These actions were necessary because it was partly on the basis of religious worship and customs that led to degradation and stagnancy of the Ezhava and the high castes uphold superiority over the lower castes. The Yogam under the guidance of Narayana Guru focussed its attention first on having temples thrown open for Ezhavas and other low castes all over Kerala as the Hindu temples were inaccessible to the Ezhavas and other backward classes. Sree Narayana Guru set off the religious reformation as a first step towards social transformation and the Yogam inspired the people to construct more temples with superior Gods and gave propaganda to the activities of Narayana Guru. Accordingly, a large number of temples were constructed all over Kerala. The 21st annual general meeting of the S.N.D.P. Yogam unanimously passed a resolution to give admission to all classes of Hindus to Ezhava temples. Thus, gradually all temples of Ezhavas were opened even to other religionists also.

In the course of social reform, the S.N.D.P. Yogam under the auspices of Sree Narayana Guru raised voice against the customary religious rituals and ceremonies prevalent among the Ezhavas. The Yogam continued the crusade started by the Guru against superstitions, irrational customs, and expensive ceremonies, as they led to the economic decay of the community. In the very next year after the founding of the Yogam, Kumaran Asan wrote in the Vivekodayam about the senselessness of the unwanted customs like *Talikettu*

kalyanam, pulikudi, thirandukuli, etc., and explicated the need to throw away these customs from the community. Narayana Guru gave instructions to the community to abandon these useless customs and published his instructions in the *Vivekodayam*. At Karumkulam near Neyyattinkara, Guru directly involved and obstructed a *talikettu kalyanam* and declared that he had obstructed *talikettu kalyanam* and stopped this practice in the community forever. At the 6th annual general meeting of the Yogam, it was resolved unanimously to replace the practice of *Talikettu kalyanam*, with the new marriage system introduced by Narayana Guru. In order to bring the marriages under legal procedure Yogam decided to register all marriages of the Ezhavas in the register kept in the Yogam office. On account of the relentless work of the Yogam, many outdated practices connected with puberty, marriage, pregnancy, birth, death, etc., were abolished and all expensive social customs were given up. These reforms of the S.N.D.P. Yogam raised the social position of the Ezhavas and brought many economic advantages to the community.

The Yogam commenced its work at a time when ordinary people were lacking in social consciousness, and the circumstances for the emergence of political plenitude were at the low sky. As a result of the relentless work of SNDP Yogam, the basic rights of ordinary people in the social, economic, and educational spheres were on the verge of being established one by one. Within fifteen years of the Yogam's establishment, the superstitions that had run their banal roots into the social reformation process, the economic reconstruction endeavor, and the orthodox thinking showed conspicuous vibrations towards change, this paved the way for a social renaissance.

3.2.1.3 Narayana Guru and SNDP Yogam:

Narayana Guru lived without any taint coloured by human-made divisions like caste or religion. Here a question becomes pertinent. Then why did he cooperate with SNDP Yogam which was inclined more towards one caste? Actually, a question with this meaning was asked by one person, directly to Guru himself, and both the question and Guru's reply are quoted by Dr. T. Bhaskaran in his 'Sree Narayana Guru Vaikhari' (page 120).

Guru compared the caste system to *maddalam* (a musical wooden drum used as a percussion instrument) and further added that Ezhavas stood at the centre. At one end of the *maddalam* Guru saw not only the cultural and educational level but irrational rituals also of *Nampoothiris* and like communities. At the other end, he could see *Chandalas* and similar categories, along with their ignorance and irrational rituals of their life. By standing at the centre, Guru replied that he could pull both ends towards the middle.

Certain 'unknown history' of SNDP Yogam had been narrated by NityaChaitanya Yati and published on page 251 of his book *Narayana Guru Ente Atmasakshatkarathinte Pramanam* (Narayana Guru the Norm of My Self Realisation) published by Poorna books. In that section, we read the objection raised by Guru in giving his name to the organisation. But Kumaranasan replied that the name had already been given for registration so it can't be changed. On hearing the explanation Guru kept quiet, but put a question to the organisers: "Are we inside or outside your organisation?" (It was the way of Guru to refer himself as 'we' instead of 'I') They replied – "Outside". Guru's usage 'your' is filled

with meaning!

Still, he associated with Yogam, probably because of the *maddalam* nature of the caste system. In 1905 he proposed a four-point programme for the upliftment of society, centered on religion, ethics, education, and industry. In 1928, these topics, in an elaborated form, was given by Guru as subjects to be discussed and implemented as part of the Sivagiri Pilgrimage.

But in 1916, Guru totally disaffiliated from Yogam and made his decision known to the public. Two reasons were cited for this decision- SNDP Yogam did not consider Guru's opinions in decision-making and the increasing caste mindset of the organisation. Guru also took back all properties entrusted with the Yogam. After a decade Guru again yielded to the request of certain leaders and gave a message to the annual conference of the Yogam in 1927. This message categorically states that the purpose of the organisation should not be to create an organisation by giving membership only to a particular category of people.

3.2.2 Birth of Other Social Organisations in Kerala

As a result of the social reform movements, many social organisations emerged during the 20th century. Aruvippuram Kshetra Yogam which was turned as Sree Narayana Dharma Paripalana Yogam was the forerunner of all the social organisations. The Sadhu Jana Paripalana Sangham started by Ayyankali in 1906 later transformed into a social organisation called the Pulayar Mahasabha in 1938. The social reform movement initiated by Chattampi Swamikal and others among the Nair community later paved the way for the formation of an organization of the Nairs

called the Nair Service Society (NSS) in 1914. Likewise, Eradication of illiteracy and providing modern education among the Namboothiries, Yogakshema Sabha was formed in 1908.

By the beginning of the second decade of the twentieth century, it can be seen that there was no single caste or community in Kerala without an organisation based upon the community. The lower caste people, suppressed for centuries, were consolidated by the emergence and growth of these organisations and later provided the mass base for the popular movements in Kerala.

3.2.2.1 The Sadhu Jana Paripalana Sangham

Ayyankali was a prominent figure in the social reform movements in Kerala. He worked towards breaking the caste barriers and promoting education among the marginalized communities, especially the Pulayas. The formation of the Sree Narayana Dharma Paripalana Yogam influenced Ayyankali. He established Sadhu Jana Paripalana Sangham (SJPS) in 1907, on the model of Sree Narayana Dharma Paripalana Yogam, for the emancipation of the lower castes like the Pulayas. The Sangham had its inception in 1905 as "Chit Sabha", later in 1907, it was renamed and registered as Sadhu Jana Paripalana Sangam. However, as the title indicated, it was not an organisation to look after the interests of the Pulayas alone; it had greater aims and functional scope. It was for all depressed servile people (sadhu janam). Its primary focus was on the social and educational upliftment of the Dalit community in Kerala. SJPS played a crucial role in these efforts by establishing schools for Dalit children.

By starting an organization Ayyankali was successful in creating a platform for

the Dalits for the first time. Ayyankali established the Sadhu Jana Paripalana Sangam with a view of activating his community to seek the path of progressive change and reform. He began the first step towards the social emancipation of his brethren. There were violent clashes on several occasions but Ayyankali was bent on putting an end to the obsolescent practice of social discrimination. The militant attitude of this fearless fighter had telling effect, and the caste Hindus were forced to move in accordance with the social change of the time. The Sadhu Jana Paripalana Sangam also played an important role in contemporary social movements. The SJPS and its activities can be considered the genesis of the emergence of modern Dalit consciousness in Kerala.

The main objective of this organisation was to bring the untouchable poor together and work for these low castes. The low caste people had been working for their masters day and night all-round the year and never had a day's rest. Ayyankali asked the Pulayas to work in the fields of their landlords only six days a week and observe Sunday as a holiday. On Sundays, Ayyankali organised meetings and other common functions which both men and women belonging to the untouchable communities, mainly the Pulayas, joyously attended. This new freedom, which they achieved through their struggles, was something exhilarating for these people. In each and every functional meeting, Ayyankali charged a small subscription from the members of the Sangham, which enabled the association to buy a small plot of land within three years.

Ayyankali himself was the first secretary and all branches, working in different parts of Kerala, functioned under his control. The secretary of the Sadhu Jana Paripalana Sangham was called *kanakkan*. The first executive committee of the Sangham

started functioning with Thaivilaku Kali, Moolayil Kali, Thomas Vadyar, and the brothers of Ayyankali named Chathan, Gopalan, Velayudhan and Velukutty as members.

In the early stages, the Sangham started functioning very secretly and organised meetings on some hillsides or maidans because the Savarnas objected to public meetings of the untouchables. At these meetings, the leaders took classes and educated the audience on their rights and duties and the importance of education to everyone. Because the education of their children was the aim of the Sangham, the leaders urged the people to observe cleanliness, temperance, and self-control. The Sadhu Jana Paripalana Sangham gave much stress to educational progress, cleanliness, and possession of land for the landless, which were the primary needs of the untouchables. Ayyankali was the first to raise the Slogan "land for the tillers of the soil". So, the formation of the SJPS was a landmark in the history of the Pulayas, or of the outcastes in general.

Under the auspices of the Sadhu Jana Paripalana Sangham, a youth organisation of the Pulayas known as Ayyankalipada was formed by Ayyankali. It rendered valuable services conducive to their future programmes. Whenever the honour and self-respect of a Pulaya was challenged Ayyankalipada intervened effectively. This youth organisation under the leadership of Ayyankali defied the caste restrictions and walked along the prohibited roads in his native place Venganoor.

Dalits were not given the rights to make proper use of redressal mechanisms since the 'upper' castes were the court functionaries. The exclusion of Dalits from the 'mainstream' legal system necessitated them to establish a separate judicial body to sort out their pleadings

and complaints. Besides, the caste ridden courts subjected the Dalits to brutal punishments. Therefore, in order to amicably solve the problems of the Dalits, Ayyankali established a Samudaya Kodathi (Community Court) at Venganoor and its local offices functioned in every branch of the SJPS. Those preferring an appeal of the decisions of these lower courts could approach the Supreme Court at Venganoor where Ayyankali was the Judge. Punishments given by the court to the guilty persons included imposition of fines, excommunication, and so on.

The SJPS provided a forum for the Dalit community to meet, discuss problems, and chalk out plans for their solutions. Organisational base and organised strength provided them an uncommon confidence to face situations of any kind be it from the orthodox Hindus or from the partisan government officials. But after the death of Ayyankali, there were differences of interest among his followers, which invited a split in the organisation. This led to the formation of the Pulayar Maha Sabha, Cheramar Sangham, Adhakrita Varga League and the like.

Narayana Guru was highly sympathetic towards the problems faced by people represented by SJPS. In 1916 he addressed a meeting of *Pulaya* community at Muttathara, Thiruvananthapuram. Guru tried to convince them about the oneness of humanity. He also presented means for economic and educational developments of the community and advised them to refrain from consuming liquor.

3.2.2.2 The Nair Service Society

The Nairs who constituted a predominant position in the social hierarchy of modern Kerala came forward with a number of associations among which the Nair

Service Society (NSS) became very prominent. The Nair Service Society was founded by Mannathu Padmanabhan on 31st October 1914. The social inequality and the outmoded customs which decayed the Kerala Society to a greater extent led to the formation of the Nair Service Society. It came into being at a crucial stage in the history of the Nair community which was facing a crisis brought about by disunity and blind adherence to outmoded customs, beliefs, and practices. They had a glorious past, but ignorance, accumulated over centuries, and reinforced by inadequate education, proved disastrous for the community. Gradual loss of land holdings, underemployment and unemployment due to lack of modern education completed the process of disintegration.

The Nair Service Society has got a long history of evolution. As the Nairs resented the hold of non-Malayali Brahmins on the most powerful positions in the Government Service, they formed the Malayali Sabha in 1886. The efforts taken by C. Krishna Pillai were memorable in this respect. The object of Malayali Sabha was to promote the welfare of the Malayali community, aiding western education, encouraging female education and reforming the marriage system. It helped in commencing new indigenous schools and industrial training centres. Though the Sabha had a few non- Nair members, its aims were Nair oriented. It wanted to wipe out *marumakkathayam* and Brahmin supremacy, impart education to the poor and promotes the welfare of the community. The crowning achievement of Malayali Sabha was the submission of the famous 'Malayali Memorial' or 'Travancore Memorial'. This mammoth petition was signed by 10028 people and submitted to the Maharaja of Travancore on 1st January 1891. After the Malayali Memorial, the Travancore Government took revenge against C. Krishna Pillai

and C.V. Raman Pillai, two pillars of the Sabha and the importance of Malayali Sabha began to fade out.

C. Krishna Pillai continued his efforts and tried to establish and encourage the growth of *karayogams* in all parts of Kerala under local leaders of the Nair community. He realized the importance of reviving the old *karayogams* or *kuttams* instead of starting a new organization for the revival of the Nair community. He prepared a detailed plan of action and submitted before the *karayogams*. His plan included the redressal of grievances among the Nairs like economic weakness, eradication of customs and practices like sambandam marriages with Brahmins, *talikettukalyanam*, *tirandukuli*, and abolition of extravagant ceremonies.

Greatly influenced by C. Krishna Pillai's reform activities, Kainikkara Govinda Pillai started a magazine called *Nair* in order to reform the community. It was he who organized a Nair Samajam on 13th June 1903. Later it became 'Changanassery Taluk Nair Samajam'. He organized another Samajam at Thiruvananthapuram called Travancore Nair Samajam. Under his guidance, Nair Samajams were set up in different parts of Travancore including Thiruvananthapuram, Padmanabhapuram, Neyyattinkara, Nedumangad, Changannassery, Alappuzha, Kottayam, Pathanamthitta, and Kozhikode. These *Samajams* tried to reform the outmoded Nair customs and to propagate the importance of trade, agriculture and education.

In 1905 *Keraleeya Nair Samajam* was formed. It was a unified organization of the early Samajams scattered over various regions of Travancore. It was registered as a joint stock company under Travancore Company Regulation in 1912. Soon it became a powerful movement which created a stir in the economic, social, political and educational fields.

But the internal disputes, groupism and personal rivalry of its leaders affected the Samajam and its working to a great extent. So, the Keraleeya Nair Samajam did not last long. Soon, the Samajam began to fade out from the scene and hence the situation necessitated the need of a new organisation.

The efforts of Changanassery Parameswara Pillai led to the formation of new Nair Samajams. His support to C. Krishna Pillai gave a new spirit of renaissance to the community. They convened the meeting at Changanassery which was attended by 4000 members from different parts of Kerala. About 86 Samajams sent their delegates to the Changanassery conference. This great Kerala Nair Samajam Conference later became popular by assuming the name Samastha Kerala Nair Samajam. Kainikkara Govinda Pillai was its earliest leader. He promoted women's education and started a Girls School at Perunna. The death of Kainikkara Govinda Pillai forced Mannathu Padmanabhan to take up leadership of the *karayogam* at Perunna in 1911.

Mannathu Padmanabhan was elected as the Secretary of the new *karayogam* at Perunna in 1912. The *karayogam* grew into a *Taluk Samajam* in October 1913. Changanassery Taluk Nair Samajam was managed by an executive committee with Mannam as its Secretary. Considering the need of an All Kerala Organisation to the betterment of the community, he discussed the matter with his colleagues and framed the ways and means to attain his end. Thus, a new organisation was born on 31st October 1914 with the name Nair Samudaya Bhrityajana Sangham. It was the ensemble of the Nair youths including Mannathu Padmanabhan. The activities of Nair Bhrityajana Sangham were extended to Malabar under the leadership of K.

Kelappan, the president of the Sangham.

It was decided to expand the Nair Samajams to different parts of Kerala. Malabar also responded well to the organization. K Paramu Pillai advised Mannam to change the name of Nair Samudaya Bhrithya Jana Sangham as it was inadequate to convey its proposed purpose and aims of the community. Under his advice, the *Sangham* was renamed as the Nair Service Society. On 30th June 1925, the Society was registered as a non-trading organisation. Mannathu Padmanabhan gave up his profession as a pleader and became the fulltime worker of the society. He devoted the rest of his life to the cause of the Nair Service Society.

The Nair Service Society came into existence with a view to serve the community in particular and to bring welfare to the entire society in general. The main agenda of NSS was to do away with the meaningless and humiliating rituals of *talikettukalyanam* and *tirandukuli*, to eradicate the slavery resulting from the relations maintained with temples and the Brahmins, to abolish social divisions among the Nairs, to remove all the factors that divide the Hindus including evils like untouchability and unapproachability and to provide education to the Nairs and to unite them.

The Nair Service Society played a decisive role in the removal of unwanted customs and outdated practices those prevailed in the Nair community. The period from 1925 to 1940 is noted for a series of Regulations leading to the removal of certain fossilized institutions and practices like *marumakkathayam*, *sambandham* and ownership of *taravad*. The Travancore Legislative Council took the responsibility of enacting Nair Regulation in 1913 and the Nair Service Society became instrumental in this

task. With several amendments the Nair Regulation II was passed in 1925, fulfilled the demand of the Nair Service Society i.e. the demand for individual partition and it paved the way for the breakup of joint family system and on its place nuclear families came into existence. The Regulation also changed the system of inheritance i.e., *marumakkathayam* system gave way and *makkathayam* came into existence. Polygamy which was prevalent among the Nairs was made unlawful and monogamy was enforced.

3.2.2.3 Yogakshema Sabha

‘Namboothiri Yogakshema Mahaa sabha’, later known as Yogakshema Sabha, (Namboothiri community welfare organisation), was formed on 1908 by a revolutionary group of Namboothiris. The meeting was presided over by Desamangalam Valiya Sankaran Nambudiripad. This movement was spearheaded by stalwarts like Kurur Unni Nambudiripad, Chittoor Narayanan Namboothirippad and V.T. Bhattathiripad. The main objective of the young Namboothiris was to remove the superstition and customs that they saw as redundant in the new era of Western education and upward mobility. V.T. Bhattathiripad was very much radical in the action and desired change not only for the Namboothiri community but for the entire Kerala society. He encouraged widow remarriage in the Brahmin society and tried to reform the conservative practices of the Namboothiri community in particular and the society at large. He conducted the first mixed-race marriage in Brahmin society.

It was in the field of education that the Yogashema Sabha had its major advancement. Unni Nambudiripad, one of the prominent leaders of the sabha used to advise the youngsters to continue to

learn Vedam and also to study English. For realizing their goal, a central or main school, called Nambodiri Vidyalayam at Edakkunni, near Thrissur with two regional schools at Peringottukara and Edappalli was founded by Namboodiri Yogakshema Sabha in 1919. Goal of this Vidyalayam was to give modern education to Namboodiri boys and girls. In order to help in achieving the educational goals of the Sabha, and to prepare the students to get admission in the main Vidyaalayam, English coaching by appointed teachers was undertaken at BrahmaSwam Madhom in Thrissur and a few other places. The administration and governance of Namboothiri Vidyaalayam were done through an Education Committee elected by the Mahaasabha. The Sabha started a monthly publication called 'Yogakshemam', as a medium to create awareness among all members of the community as to why the Sabha was formed, what its aims and objectives are, and how they can be achieved. V.T. Bhattatiripad, one of the great social reformers of Kerala, served on the editorial board of Yogakshemam weekly. The essentiality of English education and the drawbacks in its absence were themes that were constantly treated in the magazine.

A major reform introduced by the sabha was related to marriage within the same community. Tradition had it that only the eldest son married from the Namboothiri community, often more than one, while his younger brothers had marital relationships ("Sambandham") in royal or other high class ("Stthaani") families, Warier or Nair families. This practice was viewed as inhuman and as only degrading the community and should be eliminated. The sabha handled the matter and tried to make changes to this peculiarly complex issue. As a result of the efforts of the Sabha the younger brothers were also

permitted to marry from the Namboothiri community ("Kanishtha Vivaaham"), and the practice of *Sambandham* was stopped. The Sabha also chalked out progressive action plans to understand the problems faced by *Antharjanams* and made sincere efforts to solve the problems.

The reformatory works launched by the Yogakshema Sabha were inadequate. V.T. Bhattatiripad, the great nationalist leader from the Namboodiri community, therefore tried to activate the community by a series of pragmatic reforms. He chalked out a radical plan of action. The formation of the Namputiri Youth League on 4th Aug. 1928 is a turning point. A journal called 'Unni Namputiri' was published under its auspices. V.T. Bhattatiripad was the editor, printer, and proofreader of the journal. V.T. made a social revolution by championing the cause of widow remarriage. He gave his sister-in-law to M.R. Bhattatiripad. This marriage in 1934 was the first known widow remarriage.

Through his writings, he inculcated the spirit of modernization among the people. His most important works are *Adukkalayil Ninnu Arangathekku* and *Kanneerum Kinavum*, which made a profound impact on society. In these works, he expressed the yearning of the community for reform. As a result of his thought-provoking revolutionary articles and works, the Namputiris caste aside their inhibitions and came to the forefront of the reform movements. V.T. Bhattatiripad's activities influenced the government. As a result, the Nambutiri Acts was passed by the Travancore, Kochi, and Malabar governments giving legal rights to younger members of the community. The Namputiri community which was in the vortex of superstition was emancipated from its social decay by the Yogakshema Sabha and its dynamic youth wing headed by V.T. Bhattatiripad.

Recap

- ◆ Guru organised Vavoottuyogam in Aruvippuram.
- ◆ Aruvippuram Kshetra Yogam formed in 1889.
- ◆ Guru and Dr. Palpu led to the formation of SNDP Yogam.
- ◆ SNDP Yogam advocated for the opening of temples to Ezhavas and other low castes.
- ◆ Guru compared the caste system to maddalam.
- ◆ In 1905, SNDP Yogam celebrated its second anniversary with an Industrial Exhibition in Quilon.
- ◆ In 1916, Guru disaffiliated from Yogam.
- ◆ Ayyankali founded Sadhu Jana Paripalana Sangham in 1907.
- ◆ Sadhu Jana Paripalana Sangham is for the upliftment of Dalits.
- ◆ Sadhu Jana Paripalana Sangham emphasised education, cleanliness, and land ownership for the landless.
- ◆ Nair Service Society is founded by Mannathu Padmanabhan in 1914 to address social inequalities among Nairs.
- ◆ NSS advocated for reforms like individual partition, monogamy, and education for Nairs.
- ◆ It helps in the abolition of marumakkathayam and sambandham.
- ◆ Yogakshema Sabha initiated in 1908 by Namboothiri reformists to address superstitions and outdated customs.
- ◆ Established schools like Nambodiri Vidyalayam for modern education among Namboothiris.
- ◆ Encouraged widow remarriage and challenged traditional practices like Sambandham.
- ◆ The writings of V.T. Bhattacharipad, and activism led to legal reforms.
- ◆ The monthly publication of Yogakshema Sabha is called 'Yogakshemam'

Objective Questions

1. Who organized the Vavoottuyogam?
2. Who were the key figures behind the formation of SNDP Yogam?
3. What metaphor did Sree Narayana Guru use to represent the caste system?
4. How did SNDP Yogam celebrate its second anniversary?
5. Who founded Sadhu Jana Paripalana Sangham?
6. What is the primary objective of Sadhu Jana Paripalana Sangham?
7. Who founded the Nair Service Society (NSS)?
8. Which are the reforms advocated by NSS?
9. Which organisation helped in the abolition of marumakkathayam and sambandham?
10. What was the purpose of Yogakshema Sabha?
11. Name the monthly publication of Yogakshema Sabha?
12. Which are the important works of V.T. Bhattatiripad?

Answers

1. Sree Narayana Guru
2. Sree Narayana Guru and Dr. Palpu
3. Compared the caste system to maddalam
4. With an Industrial Exhibition in Quilon
5. Ayyankali
6. Upliftment of Dalits
7. Mannathu Padmanabhan
8. Individual partition, monogamy, and education for Nairs
9. NSS
10. To address superstitions and outdated customs among namboothiris
11. Yogakshemam
12. Adukkalayil Ninnu Arangathekku and Kanneerum Kinavum

Assignments

1. How did the Aruvippuram Kshetrayogam contribute to the foundation of SNDP Yogam?
2. Explain the primary objectives of the SNDP Yogam at its formation.
3. Discuss the role of SNDP Yogam in socio-religious reforms in Kerala.
4. How did Sree Narayana Guru influence the activities of the SNDP Yogam?
5. What led to the creation of other social organizations like the Sadhu Jana Paripalana Sangham?
6. Describe the impact of the Nair Service Society and Yogakshema Sabha on Kerala society.

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Abolition of Social Evils and Establishment of Temples

UNIT

Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of this unit, the learner will be able to:

- ◆ recognise religious superstition and social obscurantism existed in the 19th century Kerala.
- ◆ examine the efforts of Sree Narayana Guru to reform the existed religious beliefs and practices, through temple establishment.
- ◆ know Narayana Guru's concept of temples as centers for education, culture, and social progress.
- ◆ get to know the philosophical elements behind Guru's temple installation through symbols like lamps, mirrors, and divine mantras.
- ◆ assess the impact of vocational and industrial training programs initiated by Sree Narayana Guru

Prerequisite

In the late nineteenth century, Kerala society was deeply rooted in social practices and religious beliefs that Sree Narayana Guru vehemently opposed, labelling them as 'religious superstition' and 'social obscurantism'. The practices like elaborate life cycle rituals, burdened families financially and perpetuated societal inequality. Therefore, Guru initiated temple installations across Kerala as part of his efforts to reform religious beliefs and practices, prioritising education, culture, and social progress. His goal was to free individuals from caste distinctions and empower marginalised communities, promoting education as vital for social mobility and progress. Through his initiatives, Guru challenged traditional norms, advocating for a society grounded in reason, education, and equality. While some criticised

his widespread temple installations, they were rooted in his deep commitment to social reform, equality and provide platforms for spiritual and social transformation, aiming to create a fairer and more inclusive society for all. Through his temple installations, Guru sought to embody his Advaita philosophy, promoting harmony and unity among people of diverse backgrounds. In essence, the endeavours of Guru went beyond mere construction projects; they symbolized his tireless efforts to create a more just and equitable society for all.

Key themes

Temple installations- Lamp installation- Phalaka Prathishta- Kannadi Prathishta - Aum installation

Discussion

The social practices and religious beliefs prevalent in late nineteenth-century Kerala society were perceived as 'religious superstition' and 'social obscurantism'. Narayana Guru vehemently opposed them as having no social, moral or religious significance. Even so, these life cycle rituals were celebrated with elaborate preparation and involved huge expenditures which impoverished many families. Therefore, in 1904, the Guru summoned a meeting of Ezhavas at Paravoor to discuss the modalities for abolishing such customs. He devised a new order of marriage rites which was simple, uniform, less expensive, and involved more transparency so as to avoid impersonation, a common feature in Ezhava marriages of those days. In a sense, he was advocating against wasteful expenditure as a utilitarian. Apart from giving marriage a new symbolic significance, he advocated monogamy in the place of polyandry and polygamy. As he saw that the society was under

the influence of ostentation rather than necessity, the Guru sent two messages to the Ezhavas, in 1908 and 1911, in which he criticized the unnecessary expenditure incurred in the celebration of these customs. At pilgrim centres, during the time of festivals, he organised lectures on varied subjects like religion, social customs, education, industry and morality. Thus, the purpose of the pilgrimage was modified with new aims to suit the demands of changing socio- economic realities.

Another important constraint in the path towards progress of society in general and particularly of Ezhavas, was the habit of consuming liquor. Apart from economic impoverishment, its effect on health and the social stigma attached to consumption of liquor, the movement of the Guru could be viewed as an intervention in popular beliefs and practices linked to caste and occupation, based on varna dharma. He made a scathing attack against the

manufacture, sale and consumption of liquor. Comparing toddy tapping to plague and leprosy, he said: 'Liquor is poison, it should not be manufactured, should not be given to others, or used by oneself. The toddy tapper's body stinks, his clothes stink, and his house stinks, whatever he touches stinks.' He considered the cutting of hair and shaving of beards as much more respectable jobs, and hence he sarcastically remarked that the knife used for tapping toddy should be split into four sharp knives so that they might be used in a barber shop.

3.3.1 Establishment of Temples

Along with questioning social evils Guru also tried to end religious superstitions. The popular notion was that the Hindu religion was an admixture of magical animism and superstition. Polytheism and idolatry made the religion full of ceremonious rituals. The backward communities were not generally allowed to participate in the institutionalized pattern of worship followed by the *savarnas*. The religious beliefs and practices of the *avarnas* resembled the so called 'abominable' practices: the worship of totems, guardian deities, and demons of destruction replete with detestable rites and abhorrent practices. *Mantravada* or the chanting of spells, offering of fermented drinks, sacrifice of roosters and goats, singing obscene songs about female genitals, copulation and masturbation, and devil dancing were all part of the rituals for the worship of the spirits. Religious beliefs and practices were thus a mixture of magic, sorcery, witchcraft, divination, and several other forms of popular religion. It was often said that such practices led to the decadence of the society and religious reform was an essential thing for their development.

Having understood the interconnections between religious beliefs and social practices, Narayana Guru started his reform activities by making them resonant with religious idioms in order to legitimize the need to reform oneself and others. The first step in this direction was the consecration of an idol of Shiva at Aruvippuram. Through this installation, the Guru wished the temple to symbolise the brotherhood of man and equality of all before God.

3.3.2 Sree Narayana Guru's Concept of Temples

After the Aruvippuram installation, Narayana Guru proceeded to install deities in more than sixty temples in different parts of Kerala. The temple installation process of the Guru had passed through various phases. During the first phase, according to the wishes of the ordinary masses, he consecrated Satvik Gods and Goddesses. The Guru forbade the worship of evil spirits of the low castes and ended the practices of bloody sacrifices and rituals. He also brought about changes in the method of worship; animal sacrifices and offerings of fermented drinks were replaced by flowers and fruits. He also wrote *Stotras* for praying of Gods. Immediately after Aruvippuram Guru installed Vakkom Puthiyakavu Anandavalleeswaram temple, Mannanthala Devi temple, Kulathur Kolathukara Siva temple, Kunnumpara Subrahmanyam temple, Thalasseri Sree Jagannatha Temple, Kottar Sri Pillayar Kovil and so on.

In the second phase, Guru tried to impart the deified version of knowledge to enlighten the ignorant masses. With the Sarada installation at Sivagiri, Sree Narayana Guru inaugurated a new phase in his temple installation process. By installing the Goddess of Knowledge Guru started propagating his educational

ideology. In this phase, Guru gave a lead to start educational institutions along with the temples. In 1917, he publicly declared that the ‘main place of worship should be educational institution’. The second phase was marked by the establishment of exceedingly simple and inexpensive temples. Though these temples had idols, pujas and celebrations were dispensed with. They were, in fact, conceived more as community spaces with gardens and libraries, which provided a serene and educative atmosphere.

In the third phase, Guru consecrated ideals and values rather than idols. This category of temples had no idols or images. The temple at Karamukku where, in 1920 he installed a lamp in place of an idol and pronounced the benediction, ‘Let there be light’. At Murukkumpuzha, in 1921, he placed a plate with the inscription ‘Satyam (truth), Dharmam (Duty), Daya (Kindness) and Santhi (Peace)’. At Kalavamcodam in 1927, he installed a mirror that symbolically represented the fact that God is present in the self or the principal *Tatvamasi* (Know Yourself). These innovations in Narayana Guru’s consecratory practices not only differentiate his concept of temples and temple worship from Brahmanical notions but also illustrate his precept that ideals are more important than idols.

The Guru was quite different in inspiration, character, and message from the traditional saints of pre-modern reform movements as well as later, westernized movements. That was his uniqueness. A significant aspect of his religious reform was the freedom it afforded to an individual to be critical about one’s own tradition and one’s position within the unfolding of modern ideas and practices, without either totally renouncing the former or selectively accepting the latter.

Irrespective of whether the consecrations were looked upon as ‘Sanskritization’ or protest, the fact that they sought to change the popular form and attitude of worship among the lower castes is undeniable. At the same time, the system he created was not a replica of what the upper castes followed. It was an intervention intended to create a new mode, distinct from both the popular and the elitist. Unlike his successors in socio-religious reform, he did not demand homogenization of identity among the lower and the upper castes through temple entry but strived for the creation of a new religious ethos.

The consecration of temples by Narayana Guru cannot be viewed either as an attempt to revive the past or as a rebuttal of it. His consecration of temples not only signified a rational approach to customary practices but also an effort to embellish faith with rationality. If religion did not keep pace with the demands of the times, it would get fossilized and justifiably relegated. While consecrating idols in the temples, he was least concerned about religious sanctions or about whether such practices had existed in the past. The important intellectual criteria that marked the consecrations were persuasive reason and convincing rhetoric. His only concern at that time was the effect the consecration would have on society. He was concerned about creating social mobility and promoting individual initiative rather than toeing the line of the scriptures. Thus, his consecrations broke the rules of customary practices, and resulted in emotional and sentimental ruptures in society; but then, the times were such that reason prevailed over both.

Temples, for Narayana Guru, were but a means to an end. Once the end was achieved, he did not bother about the proliferation of temples. In 1917, he

advised his followers, 'Do not encourage construction of temples any longer; if at all any temple is to be constructed it should be a small one. The educational institutions should be the chief temples.' In religious sphere, his reforms sought to remove priestly monopoly of knowledge, and also to simplify rituals on the basis of the ideals of humanism, economic rationalism and perhaps nationalism as well.

The social implication of his religious reforms was to liberate individuals from conformity born out of fear and from uncritical submission to exploitation by the priests. The religious activities of Narayana Guru were an explicit expression of his opposition to all distinction based on caste and varna. He started his journey towards dismantling *varnadharma* by liberating himself from its bondage, not by demanding rights from others but by freeing himself of all dependence on caste practices and stipulations. He was a practising model of how to take care of oneself in changing times. The uplift of communities that were lower in social status was considered by the Guru as a part of his life's mission. He opened the doors of the temples to all without any caste discriminations. Narayana Guru's outlook was quite different from that of the upper caste elite thinkers of the Indian renaissance. As Hindu culture and the caste system rested upon Brahmanism, Narayana Guru geared his moves in opposition to the cultural and ideological hegemony of the savarnas through his temple installations.

Sree Narayana Guru's temples were not only religious centres, but they were the centres of education, culture, cleanliness, progress, and development. The temple installation process of the Guru provided ample occasions for the propagation and application of the Guru's notions

of social renovation and abandonment of unnecessary customs and rituals. Restraining extravagant expenditure on superstitious, futile and receding customs was a step forward in the process of social revolution inaugurated by the Guru through his temple installations.

Sree Narayana Guru knew clearly that education is inevitable for the practical implementation of his programs in an effective manner. He realised that the spread of education was essential for better social mobility. It was because of this that along with his temple installations, the Guru gave prime consideration to education. By starting schools for the *avaranas* themselves mostly within the temple premises, Guru solved the problem of denial of education to the low castes. Guru stressed the need of schools and libraries along with the temples. Through his temples Guru tried to create a reading culture among the commons. Imbibing the ideas of the Guru, libraries were started along with the temples installed by the Guru. Libraries at Mannanthala Devi temple, Poothotta Sree Narayana Temple, Palluruthi Sree Bhavaneeswara temple, Thalasseri Sree Jagannatha temple, etc., are some of the examples.

3.3.3 Important Temples Consecrated by Sree Narayana Guru

3.3.3.1 Mannanthala Devi Temple

There was a Bhadrakali temple at Mannanthala in Thiruvananthapuram. There, animal sacrifice was in practice for decades, and liquor and meat were offered to the Devi as *Naivedyam*. The temple was renovated in 1885. The office bearers of that temple approached Guru, who was already famous among the masses by

Aruvippuram installation, and requested him to perform the installation in the temple.

In March 1889, Sree Narayana Guru installed the Satwik deity Devi in the place of Bhadrakali, whom people used to propitiate with animal sacrifice and liquor as *Naivedyam*. Here also, Guru performed the installation not according to the norms prescribed for the installation nor in an auspicious *rasi* (zodiac sign). A scholar who found that there were no auspicious *rasi* for the installation on that day, raised a doubt to Guru, "What was the *rasi* of the installation?" Guru said "the horoscope of a baby is cast after its birth and not vice versa. Now that the installation is over, you can find out the *rasi*." The scholar understood the meaning of what Guru said and praised him.

By installing Devi in Mannanthala temple, Sree Narayana Guru liberated the people of that area from evil customs like animal sacrifice. To pray and worship the Goddess, he wrote *Mannanthala Devisthavam*, a hymn consisting of 9 slokas and gave it to them. Those who recite this prayer with concentration and worship the goddess will definitely enjoy eternal peace and happiness.

3.3.3.2 Kulathur Kolathukara Siva Temple

Kolathukara Bhagavathy Temple was an ancient temple. Sree Narayana Guru used to visit Kulathur and stay there now and then, during his wanderings as an ascetic. Sree Narayana Guru decided to make changes in the traditions of worship practiced in this temple, for ages. Among the old traditions like *janthubali*, *Thullal*, *Sarpa pattu* and *Thookkam* etc. existed there. Guru decided to stop the primitive customs and introduce new ones and aims to renovate Kolathukara temple as

a renaissance centre to redeem the people of that area who were victims of social backwardness. On 17th March 1893, Guru pulled out goddess Bhadrakali who had been the deity of Kolathukara temple until that day, and installed Satvik God Lord Siva instead. Sree Narayana Guru introduced satvic forms of worship also. Guru placed the Bhadrakali idol on the northern side of the compound wall. Guru wrote a hymn and gave it to the devotees of Lord Siva in Kolathukara temple to praise and worship their Lord. This hymn which contains 10 stanzas is famous as *Kolatheeresasthavam*.

3.3.3.3 Thalassery Jagannatha Temple

The first temple to be consecrated by Sree Narayana Guru in Malabar was in Thalassery. V K Kunjikkannan was foremost among the people who strove to found that temple. He had taken great care to follow the instructions and orders of Sree Narayana Guru and to work for the establishment of the temple. The site for the temple was bought from a gentleman in Thalassery, named Cheruvari Krishnan. The place was named Madathil Parambu. Meanwhile, Guru paved the way for a compromise between the supporters and opponents of Brahma Samaj and united them in matters concerning the consecration of the temple.

The foundation stone of the temple was laid by Sree Narayana Guru on 23rd March 1906 in Madathil Parambu. This was also the first foundation by Guru for the spiritual and social reformations in British Malabar. Though the construction of the temple started, many a time, it had to be stopped due to lack of funds. When the situation became desperate, V. K. Kunjikkannan again came to Sivagiri and presented his supplication to Guru. "A

temple will built by itself”, Guru replied. Kunjikkannan returned to Thalassery and installed a collection box there. From the newly established collection box, they got sumptuous amounts through offerings and contributions. Money started flowing in through other sources also. Kunjikkannan and others participated in the construction of the temple with renewed devotion. Soon, the temple was completed.

Sree Jnanodaya Yogam was formed to look after the administration of the temple. Sree Narayana Guru who was invited by the Yogam installed the deities Siva, Ganapathi and Subrahmanya in the temple on 13th February 1908. It was named Jagannath temple by Guru. It acted as the nucleus of Guru’s actions and from there radiated his messages and the social reformations and changes in customs and traditions in north Kerala. The historic Jagannath temple in Puri, is dedicated to Lord Vishnu whereas the Jagannath temple in Thalassery is dedicated to Lord Siva. A lot of money came to the temple as offerings and arrangements were made to utilize the same for the education of poor children and the welfare of poor people, following the ordinance of Guru.

It was the advice of Sree Narayana Guru that all people, irrespective of caste and creed should have the freedom of worship in the temples consecrated by him. But some orthodox people expressed their displeasure in allowing Pulayas to enter Thalassery Jagannath temple. When Guru came to know of this, he made arrangements for them to worship at the temple from a certain distance. In due course of time, they were driven away from that distance by people with vested interests. Guru reached Thalassery to find a solution to the problem. He called for meeting of the people who supported and those who opposed the move. In the meeting, Guru stressed on

the meaninglessness of caste and the need to allow the Pulayas to enter the temple. A local chieftain who was a fanatic said that a decision can be taken after a period of one year (*Varsham*). Hearing this, Guru nodded his head several times. Before the meeting ended itself, the sky was clouded and a *varsham* (rain) came and ended. All were surprised. “What do you say, now that one *varsham* (rain) is over? So, now we can allow them to enter the temple.” These sacred words of Guru silenced all fanatics. The Pulayas who entered the temple fell at the feet of Guru and paid obeisance to him. Recognizing the devotion, love, and innocence of those people, who were always marginalized by society and led a life of misery and poverty, Guru’s eyes filled with tears. This incident led to the demolition of all the walls erected in the name of caste and creed in North Kerala. With this, people became aware that untouchability practiced in the name of caste is meaningless and despicable. Today, Thalassery Jagannatha temple remains a divine centre to spread Guru’s concept of God and temple.

3.3.3.4 Sarada Mutt

With the Sarada installation at Sivagiri on 30th April 1912, Sree Narayana Guru inaugurated a new phase in his temple installation process. Sarada installation was the first and foremost example that shows the evolution and transformation in the temple concept of Sree Narayana Guru. In this phase Guru gave greater importance to the metaphysical aspect of knowledge. Most important peculiarity of this induction was that it was visualised totally according to the Guru’s concept rather than the wishes of the masses.

In 1908, on the occasion of the 53rd birthday celebrations of Sree Narayana Guru, he himself laid the foundation for Sarada Mutt in Sivagiri. On this occasion

Guru wrote a poem about Sarada Devi and named it as *Janani Navaratnamanjari*. Here the Goddess of knowledge- Sarada Devi is hailed as Janani or mother. In this hymn, the idol of Sarada Devi is extolled as *Onnayamamathi* (the union of all intellects), *Melayamoolamathi* (the elevated mind), *Nadaroopini* (goddess of music) *Aagamaantha nilaye*, (the finale of all Vedic knowledge, mother of spiritual awakening, mother of mystic powers), *Ullakha Bodha Janani*, *Rajayoga Janani* etc.

Janani Navaratnamanjari consists of 9 four lined stanzas and each one is a poetic and philosophic gem by itself. So, the whole poem is a bunch of gems. Janani is the image of the mother of all creations. The concept is that all movable and immovable entities of this universe have originated from the womb of this mother. So, *Janani* or mother generates a sense of integration as she is the shelter and refuge for all. This hymn helps the devotee to merge with the holy spirit of Sarada Devi through piety and prayer. Guru has blessed us by giving us this hymn Janani Navarathna Manjari enriched with the essence of all scriptures. It is considered a prayer of the superior degree to worship and seek the blessings of the Universal Mother Janani who is the root cause of all.

Guru's Sarada Devi is the embodiment of knowledge and the goddess of all learning. Guru installed the idol of Sarada Devi at Sarada Mutt in Sivagiri on 1st May 1912. There are many evidences to prove that Sarada Mutt was established after pondering over the idea for quite some time. In 1906, in one of the issues of *Vivekodayam*, Kumaranasan, who was also the secretary of SNDP Yogam had written; Swamiji wants to install a temple in Varkala Sivagiri which is flourishing day by day, with the sacred presence of our Holiness- the Swamy. In

1907, another declaration was given in the name of Guru, about the founding of the temple. "Because we wish to establish a permanent temple and Sanskrit school for the use and benefit of our people, it is requested to contribute one rupee for the expenses by each one of the people who have the capacity and the will to give. To collect this amount, trustworthy people will be appointed. They will carry with them a list of the people, papers under Gurudev's stamp and the list to collect the same. You can pay the amount and sign the list. If you wish to contribute more, hope you will inform the same to us here".

There were many people who were ready to bear the whole expenses, if Guru ordered. But, Guru wanted to collect one rupee each from the common man and use it for the purpose. From this, we can conclude that Guru wanted all people to have a share in the construction of Sarada Mutt. Sarada installation was done on the occasion of the 9th Anniversary celebrations of SNDP Yogam. Dr. Palpu was the president and Kumaranasan was the secretary of the committee appointed to execute the proceedings of the installation.

The architectural style of Sarada Mutt and the iconographic features of the Sarada idol were entirely different from his earlier temples and installations. Different from traditional temples, it was constructed in an octagonal shape with two doors and eight windows to get enough air and sunlight. The *sreekovil* was constructed in an open space where devotees can easily sight the deity. The idol of Sarada Devi was depicted as sitting in a silver lotus with a book, pot, parrot and *chinmudra* in her four hands - all symbolically represent wisdom. Book is the abode of knowledge and it is filled with enlightenment that eradicates ignorance. Pot is the symbol of all that gives prosperity and abundance of knowledge. Parrot is the symbol of

transformation and elevation of the spirit. Chinmudra proclaims the way to salvation. In this temple, there are no *Naivedyam* (offerings), procession for the deity or festivals. Devotees can sing hymns and pray peacefully and meditate also.

The meeting of SNDP Yogam conducted on this occasion was presided over by the Editor of Mithavadi- Sri.C. Krishnan. In his speech, he said “this institution will become the Sringeri for our future welfare and this holy hill will be the place where our people come in search of the meaning of life, wisdom, knowledge and universal brotherhood.” The Sarada installation was celebrated as a great festival. Along with the installation, a student congress and woman’s conference were also conducted and thousands of people from all walks of life participated in these meetings. Many meetings and competitions in Sports and Games were also conducted during the great celebrations of Sarada Installation. Thus, the Sarada shrine can be said to be a perfect paragon of the Guru’s temple concept as a free and fair centre of popular confluence without any distinction of caste or creed in the pursuit of knowledge- physical and metaphysical.

3.3.3.5 *Deepa Prathishta* at Karamukku

Each one of Sree Narayana Guru’s temple installations is the visible expression of his philosophic concept of God. At the first stage, by installing Satvik deities like Siva, Ganapathi, Subrahmanya and Devi, Guru led the people who were plunged in evil ways of worship to the path of serene worship. Though these gods differ in their external appearances, in spirit, they are the symbols of the same God. The deities installed by Guru are the proclamations of the various forms of that Supreme Being who is the embodiment

of Sath, Chith, and Ananda (truth, unconditional consciousness, and bliss combined, i.e. the Supreme Soul)

Sree Chidambara temple in the village of Karamukku in Trissur district is one of the most distinguished temples installed by Sree Narayana Guru. It was entirely different from the traditional temple concept. In the place of an idol, here the Guru installed a three branched lamp on the pedestal. It was a temple installation totally different from the temple installations so far. Lamp means light. Light means that which removes darkness and that which does not give place for darkness. Darkness stands for ignorance. It is darkness that keeps the Eternal Truth wrapped up. It is ignorance that creates the feelings and visions that are not connected with Truth. It is the ignorance that takes man away from truth. It is the one which causes sorrows to man by rapping him in illusory desires. So, we should get rid of the darkness of ignorance. For that, the pure light of knowledge is needed. Lamp is the source of that pure light. Lamp is also the symbol of the soul that is self-illuminating. It is the soul that keeps alive a living being. The soul is the lamp without a beginning. That is not a lamp lighted by man. The soul or the lamp which is the embodiment of consciousness is always burning in the body. Self-fulfilment is the realization of Truth in the light of that lamp. That is also called salvation.

Guru’s lamp installation is the symbol of the self-realization which is the ultimate end of human life. This lamp installation is the light that overflows crossing the barriers of the three worlds and the one that shines out when the three expressions of knowledge, known matter, and one who knows (knower) are merged into one. To worship this installation means to adore our own embodiment of the soul. In short, it can be assessed that the Guru installed

the lamp as the image of the realization of Truth in the Karamukku temple. Through this symbolic representation of light, he tried to spread the idea of knowledge to everyone. Turning to symbolic representations, Sree Narayana Guru was attempting to prove that values are more important than idols.

3.3.3.6 *Phalaka Prathishta* at Murukkumpuzha

Sree Kalakandeswara temple, located in the village of Murukkumpuzha in Thiruvananthapuram district, is another example illustrating the transformation in the temple concept of Sree Narayana Guru. Here, in this temple, in the place of an idol Sree Narayana Guru installed a Bronze Plate with the divine mantra of *Aum* written on it. Around that splendor of *Aum*, the words *Sathyam* (truth), *Dharmam* (righteousness), *Daya* (compassion) and *Shanthi* (peace) were inscribed. Guru performed this installation in 1921.

This installation is at its height of visionary stage than that of ordinary installations. *Aum* is the magic chant that shines as the basis of the whole Universe. It is the symbol of the epitomized power of the Absolute. The aim of *Aum* installation was to lead the people to an ethereal bliss of knowledge and happiness through the worship and chanting of this mystic mantra *Aum*.

The inscriptions around *Aum* like *Sathyam*, *Dharmam*, *Daya*, *Shanthi* etc. are the greatest human values. If these values are followed and practiced in life, one can escape from the sorrow of worldly life. After the installation, he explained that these values inscribed on the Plate around the *Aum* are the synonyms of God. If God dwells in our mind, we must follow the great ideals like *satyam*, *dharma*, and *daya*. When we are truthful (*satyam*) and

live a righteous life (*dharma*), fulfilling our duties with compassion (*daya*), and then these will automatically lead us to the fourth divine quality, inner peace (*santhi*), which we all strive to achieve in life. Accomplishing of these values will lead us towards ultimate reality.

3.3.3.7 *Kannadi Prathishta* (Mirror Installation) at Kalavamkodam

The temple which became famous as Kalavamkodam Arthanaareeswara temple was founded on a land where an ancient Bhadrakali temple existed before. It was built by Panickaveetil Padmanabha Panicker- a rich and pious man. He had also made idols of deities for installing in the temple. Guru reached there, along with his disciples, to perform the installation. He had already come to know of the two groups discussing and arguing whether the idol installation was needed or not. People were anxious and tense. Guru called for a meeting with the members of both the groups. Afterward, he ordered a mirror to be brought to him. A devotee called Kattiparambil Gopalan brought the mirror. After examining the mirror, he asked them to cut the mirror into the required size. He instructed them to scrape the mercury at the back of the mirror to form the letters '*Aum Shanthi*' in the centre. *When the work was completed, the long vowel from Aum was missing; it came as the short vowel 'Om'*. The *Dhirgha* (long vowel sound) was lost while scraping. When this mistake was brought to his notice, Guru said: "this is enough. The short vowel '*Om*' is also meaningful."

That mirror inscribed with '*Om Shanthi*' was installed in Kalavamkodam temple on June 14th, 1927. After that, Bodhananda Swamy installed an idol of Arthanareeswara in front of the mirror

in the same day as suggested by Guru. With this, the quarrel ended between the groups who argued for and against idol installation. The philosophical symbolism of the temple installations of Sree Narayana Guru was expressed in the mirror installation of Kalavamcodam. The highest optima of Indian philosophy which is reflected in the *Upanishads* is expressed through the Kalavamcodam mirror consecration that is 'know yourself'.

The message conveyed by this installation is that the devotee looking at the mirror is outward demonstration of spiritual knowledge. Mirror installation elevated the devotee from an ordinary one to a supreme being. Guru performed this highly philosophic installation in order to reflect the devotees upon the self (*jivatma*) and thus make unison with the supreme self (*paramatma*) and experience the feeling of oneness with God. By the symbolic installation of the mirror at Kalavamcodam, Sree Narayana Guru proved that the great *Vedanta* philosophy of *Advaita* can be utilised as a tool to solve the problems of society. Through this installation, the Guru tried to remove all discrimination among men in the name of caste and religion.

3.3.3.8 Installation of 'Aum' at Ullala

It was on the 11th day after the installation of the mirror in Kalavamcodam that Guru installed Aum in Ullala, the village in the south east of Vaikkom Taluk. The installation here is a mirror inscribed with the letter *Aum*. The similarity, specialty, and parallelism of the temple installations in Kalavamcodam and Ullala are to be specially highlighted. It was on 25th June 1927 that Guru installed *Aum* in Ullala. The temple officials had readied an idol for installation. Guru discarded that

and asked them to bring a mirror. Then he instructed them to write *Aum* on it by scraping the mercury at the back. It can be generally assessed that the intention behind the *Aum* installation in Ullala is Guru's directive of raising the ways of worship from the lowest grade of idols of deities to the higher level of enlightened worship.

The message conveyed by the installation of *Aum* in Ullala is to attain salvation by reaching the ultimate level of fulfilment by rising step by step from all differences and concentrating the mind through the recitation of the Pranava Mantra *Aum*. The installation of *Aum* which openly reveals the meaning of this philosophy unveils the uniqueness and totality of Guru's concept of God. The concept of *Advaita* was the core of all these symbolic representations of Sree Narayana Guru. He utilised the philosophy to solve the problems of his own age and proved that *Advaita* can be translated into action. In short, Sree Narayana Guru utilised temples as a device for the practical implementation of his *Advaita* Philosophy.

Guru was willing to establish places of worship for all sections of society, irrespective of caste or religion and did the needful to those who approached him. Dr. C.N. Somarajan quotes an incident where Malloor Govinda Pillai identifying Guru to fulfil the need of Nair community for consecrating temples for them. It was during a speech in the conference of Keraleeya Nair Mahajana, held at Kottayam in 1913. Guru was present in the meeting (*Sree Narayana Guru Viswamanavikathayude Pravachakan*, page 64). Also, Guru once declared that he consecrated temples as per the request of a section of Hindus and further added that he was happy to do the needful for members of other religions like

Christianity and Islam too, if they wish so (T.K. Madhavan's *Desabhimani* daily dt.16-07-1916).

3.3.4 Schools- an Integral Part of Sree Narayana Guru's Temple Installations

As ancillary to his exalted message, "let the people be illuminated through education and knowledge; that is the pill for their ills", the Guru soon set out on a life mission of establishing schools wherever he had an anchoring. The Guru began by establishing a Sanskrit school in the vicinity of the Aruvippuram temple and Mutt. As he travelled the length and breadth of the state and outside for purposes of temple installations, he proclaimed how the temple should have, as an integral part of it, a library and a school along with gardens and open spaces for the devotees to have a healthy time in the lap of the environment. As a sequel to his ideals, the Guru took the initiative to establish a great variety of schools at various places.

He had an educational vision wherein materialistic, scientific, and environmental ideals should be synthesised with spiritual, philosophical, and yogic concepts. Guru had a practical vision of conceptualising social reform and revolution through enlightening the mental horizons of the deprived by providing knowledge through all means possible. Besides the earlier public patasalas in Chempazhanthy, Anjengo, and Aruvippuram, the Guru when he selected the solitary Sivagiri hills enunciated a programme of providing ample educational facilities to the lower castes. As a staunch reaction to the denial of education to the lower classes, Guru took the initial measures at Varkala to launch a school for the Kuravas. At the instigation of the Guru, a primary school was started at a place called Thazhava

in Kollam, intended for the unprivileged sections.

It is seen that Narayana Guru had initiated organised schemes for not only Sanskrit and Malayalam teaching but also prompted some enlightened men to auger measures for the establishment of English schools and girls schools too in different corners of Travancore, Cochin, and Malabar. Along with this Guru had synthesised materialistic and spiritual education. In Aruvippuram and Sivagiri, Guru had arranged for the inculcation of the Vedic and tantric studies to children of all castes. The first-generation priests from the avarna castes in Kerala moulded in the tradition of the Vedic ritual training belonged to these batches of disciples initiated by the Guru.

3.3.5 Vocational and Industrial Training programmes

As a man of practical genius, Sree Narayana Guru promoted Vocational and Industrial Training programmes. The modern, innovative, and vocational educational ideals of Guru, prompted to stress the need for industrial training. He induced the rich people among the avarna castes to invest in advanced types of machines with which multifarious industrial and technical jobs could be done and avenues opened for amassing wealth. He had a clear vision of capital investment and the creation of individual business enterprises or joint stock companies with which persons can courageously advance. In one of his messages he cited, for instance, the example of how finished products made out of the copra, coir, etc. exported to other lands claimed greater price when they returned to our own land.

A solution to this, he suggested as delegating our students to these countries

and get advanced industrial training. The concretization of the vocational and industrial technologies enunciated by the Guru materialized in a handloom training centre founded in Varkala where a number of people received employment and skill training in weaving.

3.3.6 Sivagiri Free Industrial and Agricultural Gurukulam

An elaborate scheme for vocational and industrial education was prepared at the behest of the Guru in 1927 by his European disciple Ernest Kirk. The plan envisaged a whole technical university conceived besides an English and Sanskrit school, an Ayurveda patasala, weaving school, girls school, etc. Education and training were to be given in agriculture, weaving, carpentry, smithy, gardening, dairy farming, tilling, etc. In addition, it was planned to start industries for women, more particularly for widows.

Admission was to be opened for applicants of 10 years of age and upwards irrespective of caste, sex or creed. The scheme was to establish a network of institutions in which youngsters would be trained at least in one craft or industry up to a point where they will be qualified to earn a decent livelihood. The Guru had schemed in a well-planned manner the magnificent project, but in the next year he entered his Samadhi and in the ensuing conditions, the project could not be materialised. It was realised, it would have created wonders and would have provided the blue print for a model educational plan for free India. A biographer of Narayana Guru has stated that this project was an inspiration for Gandhiji to start a similar scheme at Wardha (*Poornendu Pranava Swaroopan* – Upendran, page 167).

3.3.7 Libraries and Publications as Instruments of Knowledge Transmission

Early in his religio-cultural reformist agenda, the Guru had an eye for the status of libraries as agents of mental reform. He insisted that along with a temple or a school, there should be a *Granthasala* as its nerve centre and accordingly libraries commenced working in the nook and corner of Kerala. As another potent machinery of information, publications like weeklies, monthlies, magazines and newspapers were being published at the inspiration of the Guru. *Dharmam*, a weekly from Sivagiri, *Sujananandini*, a daily from Paravur, *Vivekodayam* the official monthly magazine of SNDP Yogam were some unique specimens of such publications. These publications gave a great fillip to the dissemination of the Guru's revolutionary agenda of a fervent fight against caste, polyandry, polygamy, alcoholism etc. and staunch support to carving a condition of social equality and fraternity.

3.3.8 Making Sivagiri as the Headquarters

Sivagiri, the abode of the eternal rest of Sree Narayana Guru became a beacon of religious tolerance and universal brotherhood in an age of strife, bigotry, and racism. Sivagiri emerged itself as an important pilgrim centre for the rich as well as the poor and for the ignorant and the wise. It is a place from where Sree Narayana Guru launched his relentless battle against the bastion of superstitions, hatred and social injustice. Sivagiri, near Varkala, in the northern part of Thiruvananthapuram district had developed into a nerve centre of the social movements began under Sree Narayana Guru. For the propagation of his messages,

Guru selected Sivagiri as his headquarters. Sree Narayana Guru's residence in Varkala became famous and people of different places and different categories came and visited the place. Gradually a Sanskrit school, Training Institute for Weavers, and a Night School for Kuravas were started near Sivagiri Mutt. As a man of practical genius, Guru gave much importance to English education, and an English Medium School also was started at a later stage. Later, Sivagiri became the centre of activities of Sree Narayana Guru.

3.3.9 Sarada Mutt

Sarada (Saraswathi) is the Goddess of Wisdom, Jnana or Vidya. Sarada is Vidya Devatha. The place where Sarada Devi was installed is called 'Sarada Madam'. Details of the idol, architectural style, and iconographic features of Sarada Mutt are given in the previous section on temples consecrated by Narayana Guru.

3.3.10 Aluva Advaita ashramam

Sree Narayana Guru, a great advaitin, gave a concrete form to the solitude of Advaita philosophy in the Advaita Ashram at Aluva. During 1913 on the banks of river Periyar, Advaita Ashram was built with no specific idol. The ashram had been established for the propagation of the Advaita principles. There were all the facilities for meditation for the devotees for realising the Absolute power. A Sanskrit school was opened close to Advaita Ashramam just to proclaim to the world that Sanskrit was not meant for savarnas only. It was modelled more perfectly than any other school and was run most efficiently. The Advaita Ashram at Aluva, which is famous all over the world is the most important ashram established by the Guru for the propagation of his Advaita philosophy.

Recap

- ◆ Guru's vision of marriage was simple, uniform, and less expensive.
- ◆ Guru vehemently opposed the manufacture, sale, and consumption of liquor.
- ◆ Guru recognized the need for religious reform due to prevalent superstitions and practices.
- ◆ Guru proceeded to install deities in different parts of Kerala.
- ◆ Guru was against the worship of evil spirits and ended the practices of bloody sacrifices and rituals.
- ◆ Animal sacrifices and alcoholic offerings were replaced with flowers and fruits.
- ◆ Guru installed temples include Vakkom Puthiyakavu, Mannanthala Devi,

Kulathur Kolathukara, Kunnumpara Subrahmanya, Thalasseri Sree Jagannatha, and Kottar Sri Pillayar Kovil.

- ◆ Guru declared that ‘the main place of worship should be educational institution’.
- ◆ Temples were transformed into community spaces with gardens and libraries.
- ◆ Later, Guru consecrated ideals and values, rather than idols.
- ◆ At Karamukku temple, the Guru installed a lamp symbolizing enlightenment.
- ◆ At Murukkumpuzha, he placed a plate inscribed with ‘Satyam, Dharmam, Daya, and Santhi’.
- ◆ At Kalavamcodam, Guru installed a mirror symbolizing self-realization.
- ◆ For Guru, educational institutions should be the chief temples.
- ◆ Guru tried to open the doors of temples to all without any caste discrimination.
- ◆ Temples for Guru were hubs for education, culture, cleanliness, and development.
- ◆ Guru addressed the denial of education to lower castes by establishing schools within temple premises.
- ◆ Guru used temples to implement his Advaita philosophy practically.
- ◆ Guru established a Sanskrit school near Aruvippuram temple and Mutt.
- ◆ Guru initiated a school for Kuravas in Varkala.
- ◆ Guru promoted vocational and industrial training programmes.
- ◆ A handloom training centre was founded in Varkala.
- ◆ Sivagiri became Guru’s headquarters for social movements.
- ◆ Advaita Ashramam at Aluva was established to propagate Advaita principles

Objective Questions

1. What changes did Sree Narayana Guru introduce in marriage rites?
2. What was the primary objective of Sree Narayana Guru’s establishment of temples?
3. What significant change did Sree Narayana Guru make in temple worship practices regarding sacrifices and offerings?

4. What did Sree Narayana Guru emphasise should be the chief place of worship?
5. What was the symbolic significance of the installation at Karamukku temple in 1920?
6. What was the purpose of the consecration of temples by Sree Narayana Guru in the third phase?
7. What broader message did Sree Narayana Guru's temple installations convey?
8. What symbol did Sree Narayana Guru install at the Sree Kalakandeswara temple in Murukkumpuzha?
9. What does the lamp installation at Karamukku temple symbolize?
10. What was installed at Kalavamkodam temple instead of an idol?
11. What was inscribed on the mirror installed at Kalavamkodam temple?
12. What message does the installation of Aum in Ullala convey?
13. What did Sree Narayana Guru emphasise as an integral part of his temple installations besides temples?
14. What was the primary objective of the Sivagiri Free Industrial and Agricultural Gurukulam?

Answers

1. Simplicity, uniformity, transparency
2. Religious reform
3. Replaced with flowers, and fruits
4. Educational institutions
5. Light
6. Consecration of ideals
7. Social renovation, abandonment of customs
8. Bronze Plate with Aum
9. Eradication of ignorance
10. Mirror
11. Om Shanthi
12. Salvation through concentration
13. Schools and libraries
14. Vocational education

Assignments

1. Why did Sree Narayana Guru establish temples, and what was their purpose?
2. How did Sree Narayana Guru's concept of temples differ from traditional views?
3. Discuss the significance of any two important temples consecrated by Sree Narayana Guru.
4. How were schools integrated into Sree Narayana Guru's temple installations and their importance?
5. Describe the role of vocational and industrial training programs in Sree Narayana Guru's reforms.
6. Why was Sivagiri chosen as the headquarters, and what was its significance?

Suggested Reading

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Vaikom Satyagraha and All Religions Conference at Aluva

UNIT

Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of this unit, the learner will be able to:

- ◆ get exposed to the historical significance of Vaikom Satyagraha in the anti-untouchability movement of India.
- ◆ familiarise the leadership, events, and strategies of the Vaikom Satyagraha.
- ◆ acquaint with the contributions of Sree Narayana Guru to the Vaikom Satyagraha, including practical support and financial backing.
- ◆ comprehend Panthibhojanam as a symbol of social reform and resistance against caste-based discrimination.
- ◆ get an idea of the historical significance of the All Religions Conference at Aluva, focusing on its aims, participants, and messages.

Prerequisite

Before discussing Vaikom Satyagraha, it is essential to understand the social landscape of early 20th century Kerala, characterized by entrenched caste-based discrimination and rigid social hierarchies. At that time, society was deeply divided along caste lines, with specific communities facing severe oppression and exclusion from public spaces and religious institutions. The prevailing social norms enforced strict untouchability rules, denying marginalised communities fundamental human rights and dignity. The need and significance of the Vaikom Satyagraha arose from these injustices, as it aimed to challenge the discriminatory practices that barred individuals from lower castes from accessing public roads leading to

temples, symbolising the broader struggle against untouchability and caste-based discrimination in India. The Vaikom Satyagraha, led by visionary leaders like T.K. Madhavan and with the support of figures like Sree Narayana Guru, became an important moment in the fight for social equality and justice, highlighting the urgent need for reform and solidarity across communities. Understanding the social context and the relevance of the Vaikom Satyagraha is crucial for appreciating its historical significance and its impact on the trajectory of social reform in Kerala and beyond. Panthibhojanam helps break down social barriers by encouraging individuals from different castes and backgrounds to share meals together, even at a time when community dining was considered a sin. Similarly, the All Religions Conference holds significance in promoting interfaith dialogue and understanding among diverse religious communities, thereby fostering religious tolerance and harmony.

Key themes

Temple entry movement, Vaikom Satyagraha, Theendal palakas, Panthibhojanam, All Religions Conference, Inter-religious peace

Discussion

3.4.1 Sree Narayana Guru and Vaikom Satyagraha

The Vaikom Satyagraha was a landmark anti-untouchability movement that unfolded in the early 20th century in the kingdom of Travancore, centered on roads leading to the Mahadeva temple at Vaikom. This movement was driven by the sustained struggle for the right of individuals, irrespective of their caste, to access public roads leading to the temple. The *avaranas* were technically Hindus but they were denied entry into the temples of caste-Hindus or of the state. Although

taxes to support the temples were collected from everyone, these temples were closed to the groups considered to be outcastes. The most undignified fact was that the so-called *avaranas* were not even allowed to enter and walk through the approach roads of the temples. Roads being the strategic areas of contact between different castes, the defiling segments were prohibited from passing through them. The Vaikom Satyagraha, led by social reformers like T.K. Madhavan, K. Kelappan, and others, sought to challenge and dismantle these discriminatory practices. The movement aimed to establish the right of all individuals, regardless of their

caste, to access public spaces, including temple roads. The struggle at Vaikom became a symbol of the broader fight against untouchability and caste-based discrimination in India, contributing to significant social reforms in the years that followed.

The Vaikom struggle of 1924 was conducted for the permission of all, irrespective of their castes, to travel through these roads. It became a great struggle in the course of time and received much national attention. T. K. Madhavan, a young leader from the Ezhava community, had started strong attacks against untouchability in Travancore. The crusade against untouchability was carried on by T. K. Madhavan through his newspaper *Deshabhimani*. It was during this period that Congress under the leadership of Gandhiji had started a struggle against untouchability on a national level.

As the Moplah rebellion was sweeping the southern part of Malabar, the Congress Committee of Travancore could not take up the Temple entry movement. Two years later, in December 1923, at the Kakinada session of the Indian National Congress, a resolution was passed under the initiative of T.K. Madhavan to take proper steps for the eradication of untouchability in Kerala. Accordingly, Provincial Committees were enjoined to undertake the implementation of the constructive programme immediately. In January 1924 the Kerala Provincial Congress Committee (KPCC) met at Ernakulam and formed an Anti-untouchability Committee with T. K. Madhavan, Kurur Nilakantan Nambudiripad, T. R. Krishnaswami Iyer, and K. Velayudha Menon as members and K. Kelappan Nair as Convener.

Vaikom Sree Mahadeva Temple was selected as the centre of the Satyagraha because the roads around this temple

were closed to the low caste Hindus, but it was opened to the non-Hindus and it was certainly an anomaly and a negation of civic liberty that the *avaranas* like Ezhavas were denied access to them. Thus, they planned to start the satyagraha on March 30, 1924. Several organisations in Kerala lent support to the Satyagraha campaign and conducted intensive propaganda to awaken the *savarnas*.

On 30th March 1924, an enthusiastic band of volunteers led by K.P. Kesavamenon, T. K. Madhavan, A.K. Pillai, Krishnaswami Iyer, and K. Kelappan, marched towards the prohibited road. Kunjappy; a Pulaya, Bahuleyan; an Ezhava, and Govinda Panicker; a Nair, the first *satyagrahis* of the historic *satyagraha*, went forward, and as this first batch reached the prohibited line they were stopped and arrested by the police. This marked the auspicious beginning of the ritual satyagraha at Vaikom. Every day after this the *satyagrahis* submitted themselves to arrest as they approached the pollution distance. The Satyagraha put Vaikom on the map of struggle for social liberty and it proclaimed the evil of unapproachability in Travancore to the rest of India. The news of the impending Satyagraha greatly stirred the people as it was a novel method of action so far not resorted to in South India. The satyagraha got the support of the organisations of the lower castes and from the progressive people of all castes. The caste and religious organisations like the Yogakshema Sabha, Kerala Hindu Sabha, Nair Service Society, Kshatriya Sabha, etc. extended their support to the Satyagraha.

On 7th August 1924, the sad demise of Sri Mulam Tirunal Maharaja of Travancore occurred and the satyagraha was suspended for three days to mourn his death. Sri Chithira Thirunal ascended the throne on September 1st 1924, but since

he was a minor Maharani Sethu Lakshmi Bai became the Regent. To mark the occasion as the installation ceremony she ordered the release of all 19 *Satyagrahis*, who were imprisoned in April, from jail. The satyagraha at Vaikom renewed with more vigour and enthusiasm with the leaders back at the station. A different stage of *satyagraha* began with the most publicized activity. Following Gandhiji's advice, the caste Hindus decided to go on a *jatha* to meet the Maharani Regent and present a memorial. Their primary objective was to educate the people and get a public sympathy for the cause of the untouchables along the way. Two *jathas* of caste Hindus marched to Trivandrum to demonstrate support for the demands of the *satyagrahis*. A *jatha* of nearly one hundred caste Hindus was formed at the *Ashram* under the supreme command of Mannath Padmanabha Pillai. The members of the *Ashram* suspended Satyagraha for the day in honour of the *jatha* and proposed to do the same thing also on the day on which the memorial would be presented to the Maharani Regent. All along the route from Vaikom to Trivandrum, the *jatha* received a warm welcome at nearly two hundred places. As the *jatha* reached Trivandrum its number swelled to almost one thousand.

At the time the *jatha* from Vaikom was organised, a similar one was formed also at Suchihdrarn in South Travancore under the leadership of Dr. M. Emperumal Naidu. By 7th November 1924 about eighty caste Hindus including Brahmins, Vellalas, and Nairs enlisted themselves as volunteers in the *jatha* which marched in military order from Kottar to Trivandrum. The *jatha* from Vaikom was thus joined at Trivandrum by that from Kottar. A deputation consisting of twelve members waited upon the Maharani Regent on the morning of 13th November at the Palace. Changanacherry K. Parameswaran Pillai,

the leader, submitted the memorial to the Maharani. But the Maharani replied that "it is not possible to give a reply at once in this all-important matter. A resolution has come up for discussion in the Legislative Council and will be taken up in the next meeting of the Council". The government was confident that the resolution for throwing open all prohibited roads would be defeated in the Legislative Council. A resolution calling for the opening of roads around the temples was introduced in the Travancore Legislative Council in October. In February 1925, it came before the Council for a vote, and then it was defeated by a single vote, all the official members opposing it.

The Vaikom Satyagraha received support from all the like-minded people from all over India. The Akalis of Punjab arrived at Vaikom, and E. V. Rama Swami Naikar, the social reformer of Tamil Nadu came to Vaikom and offered Satyagraha. The Vaikom satyagraha got all India significance and turned to a new shift with the visit of Mahatma Gandhi in March 29, 1925. The nationwide support and the presence of Gandhiji provided new enthusiasm to the *Satyagrahis* and the struggle continued with new vigour. Gandhiji held discussions with the officials of the government and the representatives of the Devaswam of the Vaikom temple. He talked to all parties and an agreement was made with the government.

Finally, the government issued a notification on April 1925, withdrawing the prohibitory order passed in 1924. But *satyagraha* continued to be offered nominally. As a compromise settlement the Travancore government agreed to remove all the *theendal palakas* along the approach roads and declared open all the roads around Vaikom temple with the exception of two lanes leading to the eastern approach road, one from the south

and the other from the north were open to all castes without distinction. A new road was to be constructed joining the eastern approach road for the convenience of the public. On the basis of this settlement, a new approach road was constructed and finally, after twenty months of relentless fight, the *satyagraha* was called off on 23rd November 1925, when the government completed diversionary roads.

Though the Vaikom Satyagraha could not achieve the goal of getting permission for the low castes to travel by all roads adjacent to the Vaikom temple, it could open a new chapter in the history of the social and religious history of Kerala. The twenty-month long Satyagraha provided a new vigour and enthusiasm for the low-caste people and prepared them for further struggles. Great struggles were taken place at Suchindram, Tiruvarp, etc., and as a result, roads near the temples at these places were open to all castes. Finally, the government issued a proclamation in 1928 which opened all the temple roads in Travancore to the people irrespective of their caste.

3.4.2 Guru's Support to Vaikom Satyagraha

It is indeed noteworthy that Sree Narayana Guru actively supported the Vaikom Satyagraha, expressing warm sympathy and extending his support to the movement from its inception until its conclusion. His support played a crucial role in the overall context of the satyagraha, which sought to combat untouchability and caste-based discrimination, particularly concerning access to public spaces such as roads leading to the Vaikom Mahadeva temple in the kingdom of Travancore. One of the notable facts was that, as soon as the satyagraha began, Sree Narayana Guru opened his Vellur Mutt, which was near the western gate of Vaikom Mahadeva

temple, for the use of the Sathyagrahis. A camp was set up at Vellur Mutt for the volunteers who gathered from all over south India to take part in the Satyagraha. This emphasizes Sree Narayana Guru's practical and tangible support for the movement. The involvement of influential figures like Sree Narayana Guru added strength and legitimacy to the Vaikom Satyagraha, making it a pivotal moment in the broader struggle against caste-based discrimination in Kerala.

During the many months of the campaign, Narayana Guru remained consistent in his potent, loving, non-recognition of caste and caste barriers. It was given out that Sri Narayana Guru had blessed the campaign at Vaikom. The news of Sree Narayana Guru blessing the Vaikom Satyagraha and actively collecting subscriptions at his Sivagiri Ashram for the cause were widely circulated in newspapers. This public endorsement and financial support from the revered spiritual leader added significant moral and material strength to the movement. When Ezhavas came to know of the Guru's attitude towards the Satyagraha, they emerged out of their hiding with open hands to extend all possible help for the campaign. Their ladies at Mayyanad, in central Travancore, started a *pidiyari* fund (a handful-of-rice-contribution from each family every day) to feed the Sathyagrahis.

The interview with Sree Narayana Guru, published in newspapers, further served as a motivating factor. In the interview, Guru not only expressed his approval of the movement but also advised his followers to enter the temple, strictly adhering to non-violent methods, emphasizing his commitment to breaking down caste-based barriers and promoting equality. Overall, Sree Narayana Guru's unwavering support played a crucial role in mobilizing both moral and material resources for

the Vaikom Satyagraha, making it a significant chapter in the broader struggle against caste discrimination in Kerala and beyond.

The personal participation of Sree Narayana Guru in the Vaikom Satyagraha indeed marked a significant turning point in its history. His active involvement not only symbolized his unwavering support for the cause but also had a profound impact on the morale and spirit of the Satyagrahis. Wearing a *Khadar* dhoti and shawl, Sree Narayana Guru visited the satyagraha site on 27th September 1924 and blessed the movement, and volunteered to participate in it. His decision to volunteer and to actively participate in the satyagraha was a powerful message against caste discrimination and added immense strength to the campaign. The presence of the Guru had a transformative effect on the self-confidence, enthusiasm, and overall spirit of the Satyagrahis. His involvement not only provided spiritual guidance but also served as a source of inspiration for those participating in the struggle. After blessing the Satyagrahis, Sree Narayana Guru took the time to personally review all the activities taking place in the Ashram. He took part in the special prayers and rituals associated with the movement. The news of Sree Narayana Guru's visit also attracted many people from far-off places who travelled to attend the satyagraha. His presence elevated the significance of the movement and brought attention to the broader struggle against caste-based discrimination.

Sree Narayana Guru's support for the Satyagraha movement extended beyond his personal participation and blessings. During his visit to Vaikom, he made a substantial monetary contribution by donating Rs. 1000 in support of the cause. This financial support demonstrated his commitment to the movement and

helped the activities associated with the Satyagraha. Additionally, at Sivagiri, a committee was formed under the guidance of Sree Narayana Guru to gather funds for the Satyagraha. Committee members went door-to-door in the evenings, actively seeking donations from the community. The Guru not only emphasized the importance of financial contributions but also advised the gathering of materials, showcasing a holistic approach to supporting the movement. As a strong support to the Satyagraha, Sree Narayana Guru stayed at Vaikom for a few days to actively participate in the Satyagraha. During his stay, he openly meditated, dined on common food, and engaged in various activities alongside the Satyagrahis. As a symbolic gesture, Sree Narayana Guru spun two towels during his time at Vaikom. One of these towels was sent to Mahatma Gandhi. This showcases the Guru's alignment with the broader national movement for social justice. The other towel was given as a gift to the Satyagrahis, which further solidified his support for their cause. This public display of unity and equality served as a powerful statement against caste-based discrimination. Sree Narayana Guru's multifaceted support—financial, material, and personal involvement—underscored his commitment to breaking down caste barriers and advancing the principles of equality and justice in society. His actions during the Vaikom Satyagraha left a lasting impact on the movement and contributed to the broader struggle for social reform in Kerala.

It was the inspirations and interventions of Sree Narayana Guru that made this Satyagraha a popular and mass struggle against the unwanted practice of untouchability. We can see in this Satyagraha that Sree Narayana Guru has provided complete and unwavering support from the very beginning to the end.

His ideologies against caste discrimination and the notion of untouchability were highly influenced the foundation and course of the satyagraha. The chief architect of the Vaikom Satyagraha, T. K. Madhavan, was undoubtedly influenced by the Guru's philosophy in his fight against untouchability and made a remarkable change in the social fabric of Kerala. The movement and the support it received from various quarters contributed to significant social reforms and paved the way for a more inclusive and egalitarian society.

3.4.3 Panthibhojanam

Panthibhojanam or *Misrabhojanam* is a term that refers to inter-caste dining or feast, where people from various sections of society come together to share a meal. It is often associated with social and religious movements in Kerala that aimed to break down caste and communal barriers. It was a symbolic and practical way to challenge caste-based restrictions on dining and promote social harmony. It involved people from different castes and communities sitting together and partaking in a common meal, irrespective of their social or economic background. These inter-caste feasts were organized to emphasize the principles of equality, unity, and inclusivity, transcending the traditional societal divisions based on caste and religion. These events aimed to foster a sense of brotherhood, understanding, and mutual respect among individuals from diverse backgrounds.

Sahodaran Ayyappan, a prominent social reformer in Kerala, played a crucial role in challenging the caste system through his various efforts. One notable event that underscored his commitment to social equality and unity was the inter-caste *Panthibhojanam* held at Thundiparambu in Cherai on May 29, 1917. It is historically significant and is often associated with

Sree Narayana Guru's efforts to challenge and break the institution of untouchability. On 29th May 1917, a group of people gathered in Cherai to take part in an event that broke the institution of untouchability by eating food served by children from the lower caste community. They took an oath to destroy the caste system through collective action emphasizing the need for unity and equality among all members of society. The movement aimed to challenge and eradicate the rigid rituals and rules that governed people's dietary habits, particularly in the context of inter-dining restrictions based on caste. Food and eating habits in the state have come a long way and what this movement set to achieve has been successful in that it eradicated the tight grip rituals and rules had on the people's dietary habits.

In the *Panthibhojanam*, rice, along with a side dish made of jackfruit seeds and chickpeas was served. A Pulaya named Ayyar, who is from Pallipuram served the food. He was already scheduled to do so. Ayyar had come along with his son. But since the number of people participating had grown much beyond what they expected, everyone got a small amount of food. In the middle of the crowd, Ayyar's son was made to sit. When the child had mixed the rice and the curry, everyone tasted a mouthful from his plate, and that was the famous 'Misrabhojanam' (also called Panthibhojanam). At the time when the Panthibhojanam was held in a thatched house on two-and-a-half acres of land in Thundiparambu, caste restrictions in Kerala did not allow lower caste communities to even use the same wells or ponds as upper caste communities. Members of "untouchable" communities were not even allowed to walk on the same walkways as upper-caste individuals, lest they be seen by the latter. This event, which marked a symbolic rejection of untouchability and

caste-based discrimination, was a part of Sree Narayana Guru's broader social reform movements.

After the inaugural *Panthibhojanam* at Cherayi, Ayyappan followed it up with similar feasts at Srungapuram, Moothukunnam, and Chendamangalam and the movement spread all over Kerala. These subsequent feasts were part of a larger movement to break down caste barriers in Kerala. Everywhere he went, Ayyappan faced vicious opposition from the orthodoxy and even led to a social boycott of Ayyappan. The 28-year-old social reformer was able to overcome this opposition thanks to the backing he received from Sree Narayana Guru.

The movement's legacy has contributed to a more inclusive and egalitarian approach to food and eating habits in the state. Over time, the impact of such movements, including the *Panthibhojanam* (inter-dining) movement, has been successful in breaking down barriers and influencing the mindset of the general population. Sree Narayana Guru played a significant role in supporting and guiding individuals like Ayyappan who were actively working towards social change. Guru's influence, moral authority, and backing helped individuals like Ayyappan to navigate the challenges posed by conservative forces and orthodox practices, contributing to the broader efforts to dismantle caste-based discrimination in Kerala.

3.4.4 All Religions Conference at Aluva

Beyond being a spiritual teacher, Sree Narayana Guru was recognised as one of India's most significant social reformers. His teachings and actions aimed at fostering social harmony, equality, and understanding among people, transcending the barriers of creed, dress,

language, and other differences. In 1913, Sree Narayana Guru founded the Advaita Ashram at Aluva. This was an important event in his spiritual quest. This Ashram was dedicated to a great principle – *Om Sahodaryam Sarvatra* (all men are equal in the eyes of God). This ashram served as a centre for spiritual and educational activities. One notable initiative was the establishment of a Sanskrit school with the aim of restoring the sanctity of the language. The goal was to make the universal spiritual teachings accessible and understandable to dedicated disciples.

In 1921, Narayana Guru played a prominent role by presiding over the annual meeting of the All Kerala Association of Brotherhood (Sahodara Sangam) held at the Advaita Ashram. During this event, he delivered a powerful message emphasising the unity of humanity. His proclamation highlighted the idea that regardless of the differences in creed, dress, language, etc. since all individuals belong to the same kind of creation, there is no harm in sharing meals or having marital relations with one another. This message reflects his commitment to promoting inclusivity, tolerance, and unity among people, transcending societal divisions.

In 1924, Sree Narayana Guru conducted the All-Religions Conference at Aluva to proclaim the great message to the world that the essence of all religions is one and the same. This was the first All Religions Meet organized in Asia. The context of the conference was set against the backdrop of communal tensions and riots that were escalating in India during that period, including the Malabar rebellion in Kerala. The Simon Commission report indicated that there were over 112 major communal riots in India between 1922 and 1927. Despite the challenging circumstances, Guru organized the All-Religions' Conference as a means to foster peace

among the various religious communities in the country. The conference aimed to bring together representatives from different religions to promote understanding and harmony.

The message of the Conference, “Not to argue and win, but to know and to let know”, was displayed at the entrance. Different religious scholars took part in this conference. Justice T. Sadashiva Iyer of Madras High Court presided over the function. After the prayer, Satyavratha Swamy read the impressive and prolonged welcome speech which was written under the supervision of Sree Narayana Guru. The welcome speech made it clear that the main purpose of All Religions Meet was to create an opportunity for the members of all religions to know the eternal Truth. Md. Moulavi and Sri K. K. Kuruvila spoke on Islam and Christianity, respectively. Sri Rishi Ram represented the Arya Samaj. Swami Sivaprasad of Brahma Samaj and a Buddhist monk from Sri Lanka also spoke on the occasion. Prominent rationalists Manjeri Iyer and Mithavadi C Krishnan also took part in the deliberations. All the discussions took place in the presence

of Sree Narayana Guru. At the end of the two-day Conference Satyavratha Swamy read the message given by Guru that the aim of all religions is the same and there is no need of any quarrels among religions. He also conveyed the decision of Guru to establish a centre at Sivagiri to provide facilities for the study of all religions. The conference was an epoch-making one and which was helpful in the proclamation and spread of Guru’s universal message and the doctrine of ‘One Caste, One Religion and One God for Man’.

The conference was significant as it was the first of its kind in India, and it carried a message of seeking understanding rather than engaging in arguments. The displayed message at the entrance, ‘We meet here not to argue and win, but to know and be known’, reflects the spirit of the conference. This event has since become an annual tradition, organised every year at the Ashram, continuing its mission to promote inter-religious peace and understanding.

Recap

- ◆ Vaikom Satyagraha: A significant anti-untouchability movement in Travancore.
- ◆ Focused on access to roads leading to Vaikom Mahadeva temple.
- ◆ Vaikom Satyagraha: Led by T.K. Madhavan, K. Kelappan, and others.
- ◆ Challenged discriminatory practices against avarnas.
- ◆ Vaikom Satyagraha symbolised broader fight against untouchability in India.
- ◆ Initiated on March 30, 1924, at Vaikom Mahadeva temple.

- ◆ Supported by various organisations and individuals across Kerala.
- ◆ Received national attention and the support of Gandhiji.
- ◆ Sought permission for all castes to access temple roads.
- ◆ Satyagraha continued until November 1925.
- ◆ Sree Narayana Guru actively supported the Satyagraha.
- ◆ Guru Opened Vellur Mutt for Satyagrahis.
- ◆ Endorsed the movement publicly and financially.
- ◆ Provided moral guidance and inspired participants.
- ◆ Sahodaran Ayyappan organised Panthibhojanam: inter - caste dining to break caste barriers.
- ◆ Ayyappan held Panthibhojanam at Cherayi in 1917, followed by other locations.
- ◆ All Religions Conference at Aluva: Organized by Sree Narayana Guru in 1924.
- ◆ All Religions Conference aimed to promote understanding and harmony among religions.
- ◆ Universal message of Guru: 'One Caste, One Religion, One God for Man'

Objective Questions

1. What was the primary objective of the Vaikom Satyagraha movement?
2. Who were the main leaders of the Vaikom Satyagraha movement?
3. Who were the first satyagrahis of the Vaikom Satyagraha?
4. Who was the ruler of Travancore during the Vaikom Satyagraha movement?
5. What initiative did the ladies at Mayyanad, in central Travancore, undertake to support the Satyagrahis during the Vaikom Satyagraha?
6. What was the significance of the Panthibhojanam movement?

7. Who organised the first Panthibhojanam event?
8. What was the primary goal of the All Religions Conference at Aluva?
9. Who presided over the All Religions Conference at Aluva?
10. Which message was displayed at the entrance of the All Religions Conference?
11. What decision did Sree Narayana Guru convey at the end of the All Religions Conference?
12. What is the universal message given by Narayana Guru?
13. Who delivered the welcome speech in All Religions Conference?

Answers

1. To challenge untouchability and caste-based discrimination
2. T.K. Madhavan, K. Kelappan, and K.P. Kesava Menon
3. Kunjappy (Pulaya), Bahuleyan (Ezhava), and Govinda Panicker (Nair)
4. Sri Chithira Thirunal, with Maharani Sethu Lakshmi Bai as the Regent
5. Initiated a pidiyari fund
6. To challenge caste-based restrictions on dining and promote social harmony
7. Sahodaran Ayyappan
8. To promote harmony among religious communities
9. Justice T. Sadashiva Iyer of Madras High Court
10. Not to argue and win, but to know and to let know
11. To establish a Brahmavidyalaya at Sivagiri to provide facilities for the study of all religions.
12. One Caste, One Religion, One God for Man
13. Satyavratha Swamy

Assignments

1. How did Sree Narayana Guru contribute to the Vaikom Satyagraha movement?
2. Explain the concept and importance of *Panthibhajanam* in the context of social reform.
3. Describe the key events and outcomes of the All Religious Conference at Aluva.
4. How did the All Religious Conference at Aluva promote religious harmony?
5. What were the long-term impacts of Vaikom Satyagraha on Kerala's society?

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Guru's Compositions, Proclamations, Messages, Meetings with Great Personalities



Introduction to Guru's Works

UNIT

Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of this unit, the learner will be able to:

- ◆ get an acquaintance with major literary works of Sree Narayana Guru
- ◆ identify major commentators who translated Guru's literary works
- ◆ familiarise major contributions of commentators on the works of Guru

Prerequisite

If you want to deeply understand a great person, it is important to engage with their works because individuals often express their ideas through their creations, whether it be a poem, a novel, or a speech. These ideas may be the reflections of the societal environment of the time. For instance, Kumaranashan's poem 'Chandalabhikshuki' addresses caste discrimination, where he criticizes the caste system through the portrayal of a Buddhist monk purchasing water from a low-caste Chandala woman. The social, cultural, and political milieu of the era in which these great individuals lived is often reflected in their works, novels, and speeches. The Guru's ideas and thoughts are conveyed through Malayalam, Sanskrit, and Tamil languages. Reviewing the Guru's works is beneficial for common people to understand the great personality of Sree narayananaguru.

Key themes

Darsanamala, Stotra Kritikal, Darshanika Kritikal, Udbodhanatmaka Kritikal, *Thirukkural, Atmopadesa satakam*

Discussion

Sree Narayana Guru was a saint among poets and poet among the saints. Guru's works reflect his philosophy and outlook on life. Following is a list of his works written in Malayalam, Sanskrit and Tamil.

In Malayalam

1. Advaitha Deepika
2. Anukamba Dasakam
3. Arivu
4. Athma Vilasam
5. Atmopadesa Śatakam
6. Bhadrakaalyashtakam
7. Chijjanda Chintanam
8. Daiva Chinthanam – 1 & 2
9. Daiva Dasakam
10. Jathi Lakshanam
11. Jathi Nirnayam
12. Jeevakarunya Panchakam
13. Shiva Shathakam
14. Swanubavageethi

In Sanskrit

1. Asramam
2. Bhadrakaliashtakam
3. Brahmavidya Panchakam
4. Charama Slokangal
5. Chidambarashtakam
6. Darsana Mala
7. Dharmam

8. Janani Navaratnamanjari

9. Guhashtakam

10. Homa Manthram

11. Municharya Panchakam

12. Nirvruthi Panchakam

13. Slokathrayi

14. Sree Vasudeva Ashtakam

15. Vedantha Suthram

16. Vinayaka Ashtakam

In Tamil

1. Thevarappathinkangal

Translations

1. Isavasyo Upanishad
2. Ozhivil Odukkam
3. Thirukural

The sixty-one works of Sree of Narayana Guru so far restored could well be classified into categories like *Stotra Kritikal* (Prayers and Hymns), *Darshanika Kritikal* (Philosophical Works) and *Udbodhanatmaka Kritikal* (Works of Moral Value), translations, and prose works. He had written poems, prose and songs in Malayalam, Sanskrit and Tamil.

The hymns (*Stotra Kritikal*) are based on his devotion to the deities. To satisfy the devotees the Guru wrote so many *stotra kritikal*. The Guru wrote 33 *Stotras* to Gods like Ganapathi, Shiva, Subrahmanya, Devi and Vishnu. *Subrahmanya Keerthanam*, *Sivaprasada Panchakam*, *Kolatheeresastavam*, *Pindanandi*, *Vasudevashtakam*, *Janani*

Navaratnaatnamanjanji, Mannanthala Devistavam, Kundalinipattu etc. are some of the notable *Stotra* works of the Guru. Though they were prayers to God, they contain his great philosophy.

Most celebrated and significant works of Sree Narayana Guru included in the category of philosophical works. *Admopadesa Satakam, Advaita Dipika, Arivu, Brahmanavidya Panchakam, Nirvriti Panchakam, Darsanamala, Slokatrayi, Vedantasutram*, etc are the reflections of his philosophy of *Advaita*. *Prabodhanatmaka Kritikal* or *Udbodhanatmaka Kritikal* includes *Jeevakarunya Panchakam, Anukamba Dasakam, Jati Nirnayam, Jati Lakshanam, Ashramam, Municharya panchakam* and so on.

Atmopadesa satakam contains one hundred verses of self instruction. This is the text in which the Guru expounds his philosophy in its entirety. It states that there is only one reality – the ‘*atman*’, essentially the unconditioned consciousness (‘*brahman*’). In *Darsana Mala* (Garland of Visions) the Guru concisely presents *Vedanta* in a traditional scholastic style. The work visualises the one ultimate reality, the Brahman from different philosophical perspectives. Through all these philosophical works Guru tried to inculcate the moral values among the people.

The translations of Sree Narayana Guru are *Isavasyopanishad* (Sanskrit to Malayalam) and *Thirukkural* (Tamil to Malayalam). Of the ten *Upanishads*, the *Isavasyopanishad* is regarded as the most prominent. Guru has translated it in simple and enthralling Malayalam. As in Sanskrit, Guru had remarkable proficiency in Tamil too. His original creations reflect the philosophy enshrined in *Thirukkural* in all its splendor. He had translated several prominent Tamil works.

But many of these translations have been lost. The prose works of Guru like *Chijjada Chintanam, Daivachinthanam, Atmavilasam and Gadyaprarthana* are notable ones. Most of the works of the Guru translated into different languages because of its universal appeal. As a saint of the modern period, Narayana Guru deals with issues pertinent today, including how social ethics and other contemporary problems are to be treated in light of the theory of the Absolute. The works of Guru may lead one to the highest realm of non- dual wisdom, and how to pray to God in the absolutist sense.

4.1.1 Major Commentators of Guru's Works

Prof. Balarama Panikkar, Prof. G. Balakrishnan Nair, Prof. M. H. Sastrikal, Nataraja Guru, Nitya Chaitanya Yati, Guru Muni Narayana Prasad are major commentators of Sree Narayana Guru's works.

4.1.1.1 Prof K Balarama Panickar

Prof K Balarama Panickar was a great scholar and he was proficient in Malayalam, English and Sanskrit. After receiving his preliminary education, he passed Sahitya Siromani and Vedanta Siromani from Madras University and subsequently joined as a teacher in Sanskrit school at Aluva Advaitashram in 1932. Then he worked as a Sanskrit teacher at Guhanandapuram Sanskrit School and Sanskrit College at Thiruvananthapuram. He was a good orator and he did commendable works for the popularization of Sivagiri pilgrimage, formation of Dharma Meemamsa Parishad, preparation of the syllabus for the Brahmanavidyacharya course in the Brahmanavidya Mandir, and bringing M H Sastrikal as the first Acharya

there. The Dharma Sangham honored him as 'Gurudeva Bhasyakaran'. He had many books in his credit in Malayalam, English and Sanskrit languages. He penned down many books on Sree Narayana Guru of which *Sree Narayana Vijayam*, a Mahakavya in Sanskrit is the most notable one.

4.1.1.2 Prof G Balakrishnan Nair

G Balakrishnan Nair was born on 5 February 1923 in Peroorkadai in Trivandrum. He worked at Mahatma Gandhi College, Thiruvananthapuram as a Sanskrit tutor, and later became a lecturer at University College, Thiruvananthapuram in 1955. He later taught at Victoria College. Prof G Balakrishnan Nair was one of the greatest scholars who interpreted Sree Narayana Guru's works. In his *Sree Narayana Gurudeva Krithikal – Sampoorna Vyakyanam*, he tries to give most appropriate interpretation to Guru's works. He had a handful of literary works in his credit. In 1979, he received Kerala Sahitya Academy Award for his works. He was a follower of Ramanamaharshi and Vivekananda. When he was the main teacher of Sivagiri Brahmavidya Mandir, he visited all the temples consecrated by Sree Narayana Guru and wrote commentary on all the writings of Guru. He was a true follower of Sree Narayana Guru. His interpretations and commentaries have been a great service to the students and researchers of Sree Narayana Guru.

4.1.1.3 Prof M H Sastrikal

Prof M H Sastrikal was an eminent Sanskrit scholar and started his career as the lecturer of Sanskrit in Government Sanskrit College, Thiruvananthapuram. He taught at Varkala Sivagiri

Brahmavidyalaya. His contributions in Sanskrit and Malayalam literature are outstanding. He wrote many commentaries on Sanskrit and wrote commentaries named *Guruprasada* on *Darsanamala* and many other works of Sree Narayana Guru. The Commentary on *Darsanamala* shows his thorough knowledge of *Advaita vedanta* philosophy. The commentary on *Atmopadesasatakam* is also an outstanding philosophical composition. When classes started for the first batch in Sivagiri Brahmavidya Mandir in 1971, Prof Sastrikal became the first *Acharya*. Sivagiri Mutt where the Sastrikal spent the years after his retirement and taught for years, has collected all his commentaries on the works of Sree Narayana Guru and published as a single volume. He received presidential award for contribution to Sanskrit language and also received the Kerala Sahitya Academy award.

4.1.1.4 Nataraja Guru

Nataraja Guru was the founder of Narayana Gurukulam. He was one of the direct disciples of Sree Narayana Guru. He was the son of prominent Ezhava leader and household disciple of Sree Narayana Guru, Dr. Palpu. Nataraja Guru was born in 1895 as his second son. Right from his childhood Natarajan decided to dedicate his life to serve the cause of the deprived millions who were socially, culturally and economically struggling. It was Narayana Guru who ushered Natarajan to the spiritual path of pilgrimage and prompted him to be an educator and social reformer.

Nataraja Guru was academically trained in Geology, Zoology and Educational Psychology. He received his D.Litt. from the Sorbonne in Paris and began his career in 1930 as a physics teacher for five years at the International Fellowship School in Geneva, Switzerland. Later he established Narayana Gurukula, contemplative

educational centers in India, the first of which was in Fernhill, Nilgiris. He also has an ashram in Varkala. His philosophy integrates ancient wisdom with the modern scientific exactitude which became his mission of life. His renowned works published in a Sufi Quarterly, while he was in Geneva caught the attention of some of the western thinkers and philosophers of that time like Romain Rolland, Sir Francis Young husband and William Somerset Maugham.

Of all the works written by Nataraja Guru “An Integrated Science of the Absolute” is deemed as the most important. It is a two-volume book of Nataraja Guru written after 50 years of study of Science and philosophies of East and West. In that Nataraja Guru had formulated a unitive science, wherein all disciplines of human questing could find a common ground. In his own words the book is an Integrated Science of the Absolute (*Brahmavidya*), where modern science and ancient spiritual wisdom could meet and merge like two opposite poles of a magnet. *Darsana Mala*, a book of hundred Sanskrit verses composed by Sree Narayana Guru, can be rightly called as the base of this book. Nataraja Guru has drawn and developed most of his ideas from this *Darsana Mala*.

Some of his renowned works include “The Word of the Guru: Life and Teachings of Narayana Guru”, “Vedanta Revalued and Restated”, “Autobiography of an Absolutist”, “The Bhagavad Gita Translation and Commentary”, “Anthology of the Poems of Narayana Guru” and “World Education Manifesto”.

Nataraja Guru’s intellect was not restrained by the shackles of language and he published books not only in English but also in Malayalam and French that offer a great insight into some of the fundamentals of life. These works helped

people to liberate their mind from the entanglements of life. They are guides to gaining methodological efficiency in discovering the higher truth that can bring excellence in life. Nataraja Guru passed away in 1973.

4.1.1.5 Nitya Chaitanya Yati

Nitya Chaitanya Yati was born November 2, 1923, as the first son of Pandalam Raghava Panicker, a poet and professional teacher in Kerala. After his matriculation, he left home as a wandering mendicant to familiarize himself with the land and people of his country of birth. In those days, India was undivided. His wanderings took him to every nook and corner of the subcontinent, both cities and villages, of almost all parts of what is now India, Pakistan and Bangladesh. He met all the great people of the subcontinent including great leaders like Mohandas Gandhi and poets of high repute. He sat at the feet of several spiritual masters, including Sufi fakirs, Jain munis and Buddhist monks, and Hindu teachers such as Ramana Maharshi and Nityananda.

In 1947 he joined the Union Christian College, Alwaye, to continue his academic studies. After specializing in Philosophy and Psychology he taught these subjects in two Indian Universities and also at Sree Narayana College, Kollam. In 1951, he accepted Nataraja Guru as his spiritual preceptor and after Nataraja Guru left his body, Guru Nitya functioned as the continuator of Narayana Guru and Nataraja Guru as Guru and Head of Narayana Gurukula. As Narayana Gurukula is a world community, the Guru has to act as a liaison between all members of the Gurukula at an interpersonal level in the teacher-taught context and as the enunciator of programs from time to time to spur the Gurukula community to work in unison, to help everyone to understand his

or her integral value vision (*svadharma*).

Guru Nitya published over 120 books in Malayalam and 80 books in English, as well as countless articles on philosophy, psychology, social ethics and aesthetics. He also functioned as the chairperson of the East-West University of Narayana Gurukulam, as the Commissioner for World Education and as a committed sponsor of the World Government of World Citizens. He attained his *mahasamadhi* on May 14, 1999 and his legacy of love and wisdom continues in his writing and in his disciples

4.1.1.6 Swami Muni Narayana Prasad

Swami Muni Narayana Prasad is the Guru and Head of Narayana

Gurukulam, a Guru-disciple foundation open to all, irrespective of caste, creed, religion, aimed at promoting the science of the Absolute as stated by Sree Narayana Guru. He is a disciple of Nataraja Guru and Nithya Chaithanya Yati. He has travelled widely teaching Indian Philosophy, reinterpreted and has restated by Narayana Guru. He has authored about hundred books including commentaries on Kattha, Kena, Mundaka, Prasna, Taitariya, Aitareya and Chandogya Upanishads. He wrote commentaries on many of the works of Sree Narayana Guru. Commentary on Narayana Guru's complete works, "Karma and Reincarnation", "Vedanta Sutras of Narayana Guru", "Life Pilgrimage to Gita", "Basic Lessons of India's Wisdom", "Garland of Visions" etc. are some of his notable works.

Recap

- ◆ Guru's works are classified in to *Stotra Kritikal*, *Darshanika Kritikal*, and *Udbodhanatmaka Kritikal*
- ◆ Guru mainly adopted Advaita Vedanta in his works
- ◆ Prof G Balakrishnan Nair interpreted Guru's works in *Sree Narayana Gurudeva Krithikal – Sampoorna Vyakyanam*
- ◆ Prof M H Sasthrikal wrote many commentaries in Sanskrit on the works of Sreenarayanaguru.
- ◆ Nataraj Guru followed spiritual path of pilgrimage that prompted him to be an educator and social reformer
- ◆ One of the major works of Nataraja Guru Book is 'An Integrated Science of the Absolute'

- ◆ Nitya Chaitanya Yati was an eminent scholar and wrote many books
- ◆ Swami Muni Narayana Prasad - The head of Narayana Gurukulam
- ◆ Prof K Balarama Panickar was a Sanskrit teacher and worked for the development of sivagiri
- ◆ Guru translated many works in to Tamil

Objective Questions

1. The sixty-one works of Sree of Narayana Guru classified into three categories. Write their name.
2. Name the work of Guru concisely presents vedanta in traditional scholastic style?
3. Who wrote “An Integrated Science of the Absolute”
4. Who was honoured “Gurudeva Bhasyakaran” by the Dharma Sangham
5. Who interpreted Guru's works in *Sree Narayana Gurudeva Krithikal – Sampoorna Vyakyanam*?
6. Who was the author of “The Word of the Guru: Life and Teachings of Narayana Guru”

Answers

1. *Stotra Kritikal* (Prayers and Hymns), *Darshanika Kritikal* (Philosophical Works) and *Udbodhanatmaka Kritikal* (Works of Moral Value),
2. *Darsana Mala* (Garland of Visions)
3. Nataraja Guru
4. Prof K Balarama Panickar
5. G Balakrishnan Nair
6. Nataraja Guru

Assignments

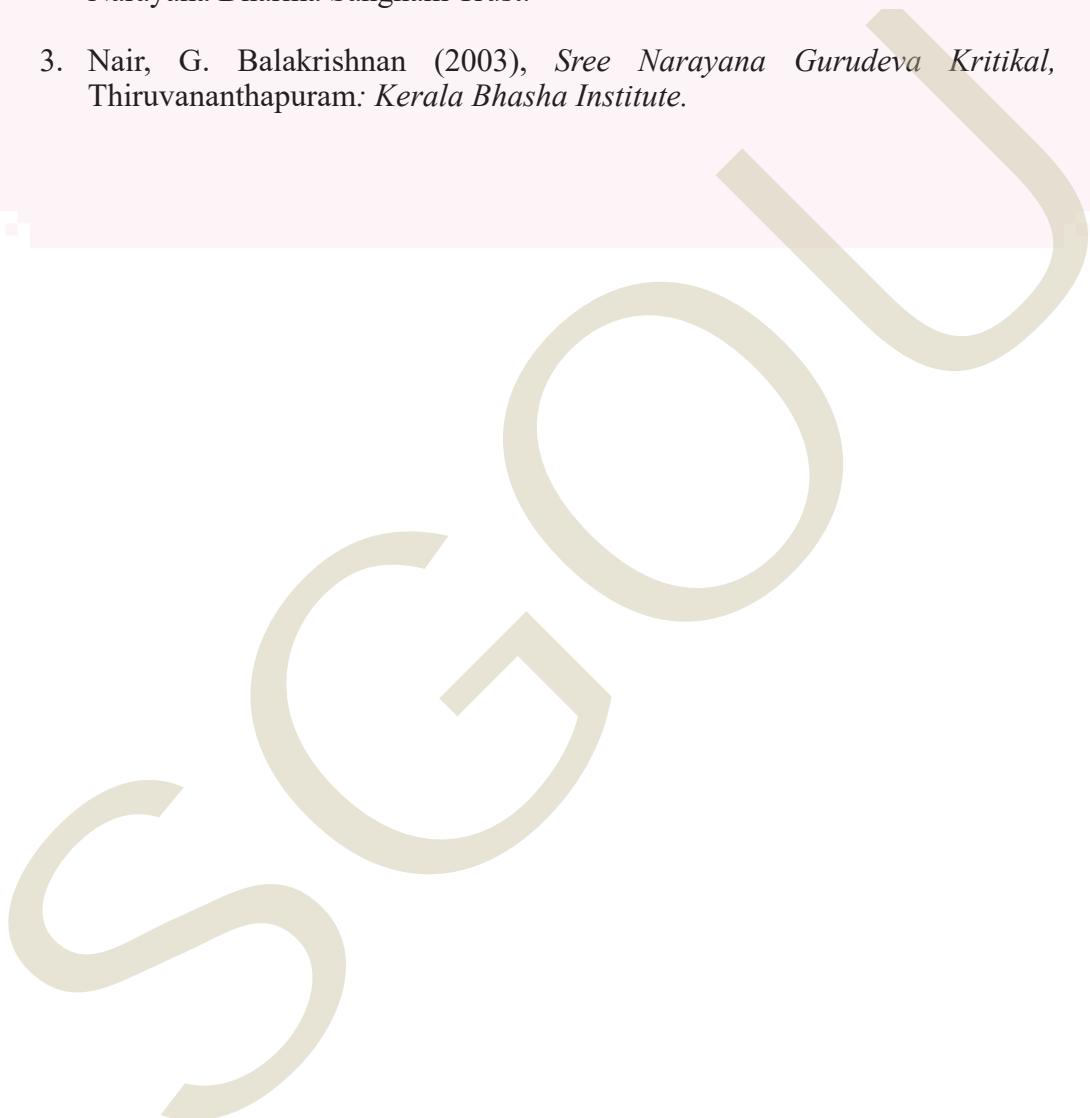
1. Name the great scholars and discuss their role as commentators on the guru's work.
2. Explain the contributions of Nataraja Guru to the understanding of Guru's teachings.
3. Explain the contributions of Nitya Chaitanya Yati and Swami Muni Narayana Prasad to the understanding of Guru's teachings.

Suggested Reading

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Proclamations and Messages of Sree Narayana Guru

UNIT

Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of this unit, the learner will be able to:

- ◆ understand the meaning of the messages of the Guru.
- ◆ learn about the social situation in which the Guru lived.
- ◆ acquire the importance of the Guru's messages and proclamations in the present scenario

Prerequisite

Each one needs to convey the message of great men that endures through time and generations. Because many of their ideas are very relevant at all times. For example, Vivekananda's message, "Arise, wake up, do not stop until the goal is achieved," resonates differently with each individual. Likewise, announcements by some well-known personalities also help to attract people. For example, 'Serve all beings as service to God' is an important teaching of Vaikunda Swamikal. This proclamation states the unity of all existence and the importance of treating every individual with dignity and respect. In this way a person's message and declaration help new generations in a positive way. From the following discussion, we get to know how important is the Guru's messages and declarations in developing the social, educational religious and political fabric of Kerala.

Key themes

Thalikettukalyanam, Thirandukuli, Pulikudi, Practical Vedanta, Humanism, Religious unity

Discussion

As Romain Rolland rightly surmised, Sree Narayana Guru was a *jnanin* of action. After his enlightenment and self-realisation, his major stress was on life ennobling action. His great treatises like *Atmopadesasatakam* and *Darsanamala* analyse his philosophical concepts with brevity as well as precision. But he did not care to preach his gospel, as the typical philosophers or God men do. Instead, he strove to put it into practice. A major means to it was his life long association with the SNDP Yogam. Simultaneously and almost parallel to it, through occasional advice and exhortation, he guided the people. And as an aid to it, he reduced his vision to easily digestible aphorisms, statements and sayings. These were meant to enthuse, strengthen and uphold especially the common people, in their moments of crisis and in their struggle for survival.

Guru's teachings are ever green, everlasting and eternal. It lasts as long as mankind survives. It is simple and at the same time highly philosophical. It requires no interpretation as he used very simple words with high contents of meaning as if they are golden pots filled with nectar. Guru's words extend beyond its normal literal or figurative meaning. These are all gems of thought filtered through logic, reason, science and sensibility. These advices are so practical that it can easily be followed by any man in his daily life.

Guru contemplated a world in which love, compassion and brotherhood reigned supreme. Caste and religious differences were stumbling blocks in the path to unity and understanding. His first sermon is on this issue. So, he inscribed the following words on the wall at Aruvippuram temple in 1888.

Jatibhedam Mathadwesham

Etumillate Sarvarum

Swataratwena Vazhunna

Maathruka Stanamanitu

(“Devoid of dividing walls

Of caste or creed

Or hatred of rival faiths

All live here

In brotherhood

Such, know this place to be!

This model foundation!”)

One of the early occasions when Sree Narayana Guru exhorted his followers about social reform was during a meeting held at Paravoor, a township south of Kollam in 1904. Paravoor Kesavan Asan, the founder of *Sujananandini* Newspaper, organised the convention. The Guru presided the meeting. In his speech, the Guru spelled out a few clear ideas regarding the reforms called for immediately among his followers. Those were related to certain ridiculous and wasteful social observances like *Thalikettu* and *Thirandukuli*. *Thalikettu* was a mock marriage, a ceremonial tying of the marriage thread around the neck of a girl even before puberty. Girls up to the age of 12 were victims of this ridiculous ritual. It was considered an index of status and of social prestige. Non-performance of it was a stigma and brought inferiority and shame for a family. Led by such false prestige, this ceremony was arranged even by poor families. Many of them had to mortgage their dwellings or borrow money at usurious rates. *Thirandukuli*

was a rite which amounted to the public announcement of a girl's puberty or adulthood. It was, as it were, invitation to eligible bridegrooms. *Pulikudi* was another primitive custom for celebrating the fact of the first pregnancy, by ritually drinking so called sacred concoction.

The Guru also suggested a simple kind of marriage ceremony. During that period, the sister of the bridegroom would go to the bride's house and give the girl bridal vestments. Marriage was often conducted by proxy. The groom was not necessarily in the picture. This method also led to fraud and impersonation. Sometimes a counterfeit bride was foisted on the young man. Such abuses led to financial loss as well as psychological complications. The Guru desired his followers to adopt a rational and dignified mode of marriage. He suggested norms which would foster a more civilised way of life. The marriage ceremony must be simple. Only a handful of people need to participate. He advised against elaborate and wasteful rituals. Presence of a priest was not a must. The bride and the groom would garland each other. Then they went hand in hand thrice round the lighted lamp. These formed the gist of the Guru's speech on this memorable occasion.

As suggested by the Guru, the SNDP Yogam engaged good speakers to talk to people about moral and spiritual issues. To them the Guru gave, through the Yogam Secretary, the following guidelines: - Speeches must be made about subjects which would be of benefit to the people. Guru suggested topics such as religion, morality, education and industry. The tone and content of this guideline show the Guru's concern for the uplift and well-being of the have-nots. Further, it reveals the humanitarian and even socialist trend in his approach. In his scheme of social change, education received top priority.

He was so convinced about its vital role that wherever possible he left instructions for starting schools.

Sree Narayana Guru was so much insistent about reform and social change. Another message to the Secretary of the SNDP Yogam also reveals this concern. Guru suggested some measures which were helpful for the reform of the religious and social observances of the people and asked the Yogam to take necessary steps for implementing them.

Religion: - In many places, genuine enthusiasm is seen for building temples. It must be ensured that those temples stood for what is expected of them. Worship of the Almighty God must be there in all homes and in all hearts. To facilitate it, arrangements may be made to make people familiar with the fundamentals of religion. Wherever possible, under the auspices of temple, arrangements be made for discourses based on mythological stories which reveal the greatness of God and also illustrate philosophical truths. In other places, arrange for competent people to talk on such topics.

Guru's suggestion of the new pattern of the marriage rites has been put into practice only by a few progressive minded people at the early stage. The celebration and the elaborateness of the arrangements may vary according to the status of the persons concerned. But the ritualistic part should be the same everywhere. Guru wanted necessary steps be taken towards that end.

Guru also recommended at the time of marriage, in addition to the couple garlanding each other, it is desirable that a *thali* symbolic of the marital relationship is tied round the neck of the bride. That ritual gave sanctity to the marriage and raised the importance of women in marital

life. In another occasion Guru opined that in certain places, a man has more than one spouse or conversely a woman has more than one husband. Steps may be taken to end such shameful relationships. Among those who follow the matrilineal system of inheritance, there should be legal provision for setting apart a portion of one's own earned assets for one's legally wedded spouse and offspring. In its absence such marital relationships become unfair. This may be given due consideration.

The Guru was concerned not only with social problems, but also with educational and economic aspects. He dealt with such issues as and when situations arose. For instance, the *Vijnana Vardhini Sabha* of Cherai, Cochin, in 1912 arranged a reception in his honour. Replying to the address, the Guru made the following observations: -

“Only few are 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. Hence if we are genuinely desirous of social progress, we have to see to it that education spreads amidst us. Those with means should help brilliant students who are poor, to go abroad for higher studies. This will be in many respects 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.

For the uplift of the community, the next important thing, after education, is industry. Our economic power is insufficient. Affluence can come only through industry and commerce. In this sphere also what is required is the involvement of the rich.

Only rich people can import appropriate machinery and start small scale industries as well as handicrafts. Individuals, or if that is difficult a few jointly, should start a company and boldly undertake such activities. Though the path of advancement is clear as well as inviting, it is not taken by members of our community. Coconut is available in plenty. Its kernel as well as coir are from here. These raw materials are processed outside and returned. We pay fancy price, buy them and consume them. This happens because we don't know how to convert them into usable products. To overcome this difficulty, we have to send our youngsters to factories abroad for learning the concerned processes. In this also the rich are to volunteer assistance. Apart from this, it is necessary that everybody has primary education at least.

Each locality should have its own literary society, library and reading room. Through and by them, the community will advance considerably in the matter of education. Each and every member of the community should strive hard to strengthen literary associations as well as libraries. It is quite unbecoming of rich men to be indifferent in such matters. Such ideas as the above crystallised into his repeated aphorisms like, “Educate to be free”, “Organise to be strong” and “Thrive through industry”.

4.2.1 The Message to Relinquish Liquor

Sree Narayana Guru released an important message in connection with his Birthday Celebrations in 1920. Guru has mentioned ‘no’ three times repeatedly in this order, as a fore-warning and as a clear and powerful warning. That is the speciality, importance and relevance of this order. The great message is: “Liquor is poison. Do not make it, do not drink it or do not give it. The body of a toddy

tapper stinks, his clothe stinks, his house stinks and whatever he touches stinks.”

Any poisonous thing is fatal to the person who consumes it. A slow poison will spoil our intelligence, corrupt our conscience and fade our memory. Years ago, Guru had revealed that liquor is poison, through this message. Because liquor is poisonous, it is certain that it will spoil the drunkards' thoughts, intelligence, conscience and actions. Such a condition will lead man to immorality, falsehood and dependence. And that will deviate man from the true objectives of life, because, liquor deranges all the faculties of man. First, Guru reminds us that it is poison, and then warns that it should not be made, drunk or given to others. By saying that the toddy tapper's body, clothes, house and everything that he touches stink, Guru means that he is the storehouse of all impurities and the root cause of all deterioration.

Once during a conversation, Guru said: “Toddy tapping is a major illness. If an organ of the body is afflicted with leprosy, the whole body will become malignant. In the same way, because of some people who are toddy tappers, the whole community is defiled. We cut off the organ that is afflicted with disease. Likewise, toddy tappers should be alienated from the community. We should not mingle with them. If they stop toddy tapping, they can be taken back after the ablutions.” When a devotee doubted about the livelihood of the toddy tapper who do not have any other means of living. Guru opined the knife for tapping is cut into four pieces, four shaving razors can be made. That is better than toddy tapping and it will get good income also. Guru again said that toddy tapping is a cardinal sin. Toddy tappers can be engaged for plucking coconuts. They have to climb a short distance only, the difficulty also will be less. But, if we

ask them to pluck coconuts, by instinct, they will climb higher. We must be very careful.

The sufferings, calamities and disasters caused by liquor is capable of endangering the safety and security of an individual, family, society and the country. If Sree Narayana Guru's order, to keep away from liquor that destroys the serenity, peace and security is followed, that will pave the way for healthy individuals, healthy families and healthy society.

One of the greatest and everlasting messages of Sree Narayana Guru was **“One caste, one religion and one God for man”**. This is Advaita philosophy in concrete, factual, identifiable terms. Here is the Practical Vedanta, a message of harmony and unitive understanding, with universal connotation and contemporary relevance. In the name of religion and God, man has been fighting and killing all along. These have given rise to the most dangerous dissensions in human history. Unless the conflict arising from them ends, man's peace and progress will be in perpetual jeopardy. By one caste, the Guru meant that man belongs to the same species, whether he is a Black, Indian or a European. In his philosophical poems, especially *Atmopadesasatakam*, he upheld the oneness and indivisibility of the Absolute. The Self and this external world which sustains us are one and same, being different manifestations of the Unitive Brahman, the One God. In the same poem he declared that “the essence of all religions is the same”. All have the same goal. Religious conflicts do not arise from the incompatibility of ideals. It is only in external details that religions differ. He declared that fight and win between religion and religion is impossible, and no religion will extinct by fighting it. It was to highlight the fact of the oneness of all religions that in 1924

he held an All Religions Conference at Advaita Asramam Aluva

It is this principle which developed into his major philosophy, “One Caste, One Religion and One God for Man” and that humanity is one caste and humanism is its religion.

“Oru Jati, Oru Matham, Oru Daivam Manushyanu”

(One Caste, One Religion, One God for Man)

“Mathamethayalum Manushyan Nannayal Mathi”

(Whatever be the religion, men should be good)

This is the most notable among Guru’s messages. Through this message he teaches his people about the equality of all human beings. It is another form of the teaching of the brotherhood of man. According to Narayana Guru, “there is no reason for caste differences among human beings. All those who possess humanity, are human beings”. He says that caste is manmade, and hence unnatural and unscientific. He elaborates this idea, when he says “humanism is for man and bovinity is for animals”.

“Manushyanaam Manushyathwam Jathir Gothwam Gavamyatha.....”

He explains that just as there are different languages and different systems, though human beings seem to be different, there can be no reason for caste differences. Humanity is common to all.” Thus, the Guru did not recognize differences of caste. Throughout his life Guru upheld this philosophy and explained the futility and foolishness of caste differences whenever he got a chance to explain its meaninglessness. Guru tried to eradicate caste and its evils through his poetic works,

like *Jathinirnayam* and *Jathilakshanam*.

How this maxim should be practiced in life was explained by the Guru through another message that **“Men may differ in their faiths, their languages and their modes of dressing; but there can be no evil in inter-dining and inter-marriage because all belong to the same kind of creation.”** He practised this in his own life. His aim was to build a society without caste distinctions. Guru says that there is no harm in inter-dining or inter-marriage, since the caste of man is one and it is immaterial of his dress or language etc., are different. Whatever be the differences in religion, dress, language etc., basically man belongs to one caste.

“Ask not, think not, speak not caste” (*Jathi chodikkaruth chinthikkaruth, Parayaruth*) was another slogan issued by the Guru against caste. Guru asked his followers not to ask about caste, reveal caste and think about caste. Caste is revealed only by talking about caste. If this is done, caste will disappear. He fought against caste in his whole life and even thought that he was born to eradicate caste, as Buddha was born to prevent Himsa. Guru himself said that he did not belong to any caste, class or group. And he appointed people from all castes and classes to the various posts in Alwaye, Sivagiri etc. His *Jatiyilla Vilambaram* (Casteless Proclamation) in 22nd September 1916 is a greatest testimony for his caste concept.

“Whichever the religion, it suffices if it makes a better man” was Guru’s another great message. He considered religion as a means for the creation of a better man or for the benefit of man. A message delivered by the Guru, on the occasion of the anniversary of Advaita Ashram, is of great value in understanding the Guru’s philosophy. It said: ‘A man’s

religion is a matter of his personal belief. This naturally depends on the growth of the man's mind. It may, therefore, be said that each man has his own religion'. He says that all religions of the world accept 'Atman' as the pith and core. All religions speak of Truth and Dharma. The aim of all is the same. Such being the truth why should people fight for their religions? This is indeed unwise.

According to Guru "One should not lose one's peace of mind just because religions are different. Do not all people try hard to get happiness? Are there not differences in the clothes that men wear? Some like to grow beards, while others may like to have a clean-shaven face. Wise men do not quarrel over these things. Do not people speak different languages? In spite of such differences, are not all men alike? Why should men, therefore, hate one another because their religions are different? If people fight one another the only possible result is destruction. All men are of one Caste. Religion is one. Their God is one."

The Guru did not desire anyone to give up his religion and accept that of another. This indeed is the universal message that Narayana Guru has left for the world

"Liberation through Education" was one of the most important messages that given by Sree Narayana Guru. He says that the conflict on caste and religion are because of ignorance of people. Once the people are given education, their ignorance can be removed and then they will think reasonably and can come to their own conclusion. So, the best way to remove ignorance and superstition of people is to give education to all men and women. Then they will not only be free from ignorance and superstition, but they will also be liberated from slavery and servitude. Hence Guru

declared "*Vidyakondu Prabudharavuka*" (liberation through education). He realized and said to his disciples that education is a means for anyone who desires progress in this world. Therefore, it has to be given to all. Like men, women also should be educated.

Sree Narayana Guru advised his followers to build temples where ever necessary. But every temple must be attached with a school, library and garden. Let people come after bath, worship in the temple, read in the library and enjoy the salubrious atmosphere in the garden. It will create a sense of hygiene which will provide them with a healthy body and mind. In temples only 'Sathwik' Gods must be worshiped and animals and birds must not be sacrificed in these temples.

In 1917 Guru declared that "Building of temples should not be encouraged hereafter. People are losing faith in temples. It could be a matter of regret that much money has been wasted in building them. Times have changed so much. However, people may not agree if they are told now that temples are not needed. If they are particular, let them have temples of small size. The school should be the main temple. Efforts should be on to start schools by public contribution. A temple helps to inculcate cleanliness. It was hoped that people, irrespective of caste, could be brought together in a common place of worship. But experience has proved otherwise. Temples underline the differences between castes. Hereafter efforts should be towards educating people. Let them have knowledge. That is the only means to make man whole".

"Strengthen through Organisation" was another important message provided by the Guru. He advised that without organization, no society can improve and march towards progress and prosperity.

So Guru exhorts, *Sanghadanakondu Saktharavuka* (“Acquire strength and power through organization”). Team work and unity will work wonders on any society. That is the lesson of human history. The result of this advice was wonderful, when a mighty organization called SNDP Yogam emerged in the State. The advice of Guru is equally applicable to the scattered and divided people all over the world for all the time.

Since man is one, his religion is also one, which ultimately leads him to one God. So, God is also one; hence his philosophy advocates a one Universal Religion. All religions are but different ways in search of Truth. They are like different rivers joining the ocean. Their paths are different but the destination is the same. Guru therefore advocated the study of all Religions by all man and accept its common underlying principle as one religion. Guru proved this in the conference of all religions at Alwaye. In the entrance of the conference, Guru wrote the great message which stated that; **“This Conference is not to argue and win, but to know and to be known.”**

Considering the causes of economic drain and bankruptcy the Guru gave the message that “Unnecessary and expensive functions in houses and social festivals should be avoided and austerity should be observed”. He considered expensive customs as one of the major means of draining the economic condition of families. By spending huge amounts for performing expensive customs like *talikettukalyanam*, *tirandukuli*, *pulikudi*, etc the families unnecessarily drained their wealth. So the Guru advised the people to stop all these customs.

Guru gave more importance to cleanliness and had given the slogan that **“Cleanliness is in the house also; it**

should start from the kitchen”.

Guru always advised the rich people to help poor for their education. If they spend money for education, it will have turned as a service. His message **“Wealth will become education; education will become service”** prove that.

Guru was primarily concerned with man's happiness on this earth, and not salvation in heaven. According to Guru, a man must observe both sacred and secular ways in his life for a happy and prosperous life. He must have faith in God and at the same time try to have money for his material happiness. To attain this, one must engage himself in agriculture, industry, commerce, business and connected avocations.

Guru was a great environmentalist. Whenever he got a chance, he planted trees and advised people to plant trees. **“Plant trees whenever possible; you will have the shade as well as the fruits”.**

Sree Narayana Guru was strongly against dowry. According to him **“to give and take dowry is like buying and selling children”**. He considered dowry as one of the most malicious systems in human society. He advised parents not to ask or give dowry for their children.

Guru evolved a new code of simple marriage and discouraged *'Kettukalyanam'*, child marriage etc. According to Guru, in a marriage, there should be only maximum ten members- the bride and the groom, their parents, the bride and bride groom's one friend each, a priest, a dignitary- thus ten members.

He practised whatever he preached. Words and deeds meant the same thing to Guru. He will not tolerate any harm even to a little ant. Guru included this idea in his famous work *Anukambasathakam*. The

most dominating factor of his character is compassion and kindness to all living beings and all his messages proved that.

The Main Teachings, Messages and Commandments of Sree Narayana Guru

1. One Caste, One Religion, One God for Man
2. There is no use of caste. It restricts the freedom of man. It destroys intelligence
3. Whatever be the differences in religion, dress, language etc., basically man belongs to one caste. Hence, there is no harm in inter dining and inter marriage.
4. Religions are only the ways that help in the search for self-realisation.
5. If one feels that his religion should be changed, he should do so immediately. One should have the freedom to do so.
6. Don't hamper the freedom of religion of anybody
7. Religious conversion is not needed for spiritual salvation
8. The goal of all religions is the same
9. Whatever be the religion, it is enough if man is virtuous
10. Let people learn, study and know all religions with equanimity and equal devotion and try to exchange the knowledge thus gained, with love. Then, they will understand that rivalry is not because of religion, but because of ego
11. Nobody should tell that his religion is only the true religion and all other religions are false
12. Erroneous knowledge creates discriminations
13. God will definitely protect those who are in the service of humanity
14. The worship of God should reach every house and every heart
15. Do not spend money on festivals and fire works
16. No need of elephants and fire works for temple festivals
17. Cleanliness is needed in the house also; it should start from the kitchen
18. Purity and cleanliness are indispensable
19. Our duties should be executed with a spirit of sacrifice
20. Liberation through education
21. School should be the main temple
22. We should try to impart education to the masses. Let them gain knowledge. That is the only medicine to better their lives
23. Wealth will become education; education will become service
24. Do not lose the knowledge that you have gained
25. Grow by reading
26. Does wisdom come by itself? No. We should try. You should read good books
27. Any activity should be totally based on non-violence
28. Prosper through industries
29. Do not spend money on luxuries
30. Inculcate the habit of thrift
31. Strengthen through organisation

32. Plant trees whenever possible; you will have the shade as well as the fruits
33. Do not argue for argument's sake; you can argue to clear your doubts and to express your ideas
34. Agriculture is the backbone of the living things- no, life of the world itself
35. Nothing is difficult to do if well practised; it will be possible to walk on embers also
36. In a marriage, there should be only maximum ten members- the bride and the groom, their parents, the bride and bridegroom's one friend each, a priest, a dignitary.
37. To give and take dowry is like buying and selling children
38. Treat a child as a God till, he reaches five years
39. Liquor is poison; do not make it, do not drink it, do not give it

Recap

- ◆ The duty of the SNDP Yogam is to advise and guide the people.
- ◆ The thoughts and words of the Gurus extend beyond excellence.
- ◆ Ceremonial functions like Thalikettu and Thirandukuli were practised.
- ◆ The Guru suggested a simple form of marriage.
- ◆ The Guru was concerned with the upliftment and well-being of the have-nots.
- ◆ The Guru believed that God exists in everyone's heart.
- ◆ Education should be provided to everyone.
- ◆ Industry helps the economic development of the community.
- ◆ The Guru was against liquor consumption.
- ◆ Liquor spoils man's abilities.
- ◆ Toddy tapping spoils the community.
- ◆ Liquor destroys peace.
- ◆ The Guru was influenced by Practical Vedanta.
- ◆ The Guru promotes religious unity.
- ◆ Unity and teamwork will develop society.
- ◆ Maintaining the health and hygiene of the mind and body is important.
- ◆ Education removes ignorance.
- ◆ Casteless proclamation.
- ◆ Caste made by man.

- ◆ Differences among religions, languages, and dress should not divide society into different castes.

Objective Questions

1. Who was the founder of Sujananandini Newspaper?
2. Why did the guru suggest a simple marriage?
3. What is considered by the Guru as the symbol of marital relationship?
4. Why is education important?
5. How can economic development occur in a community?
6. According to the Guru, what does “one caste” mean?
7. Why is the Guru against liquor?
8. What is the meaning of “Vidyakondu Prabudharavuka”?
9. When was the Jathiyilla vilambaram (caste Proclamation) announced?
10. What is the name of the Guru’s poetic work aimed at eradicating caste and its evils?

Answers

1. Paravoor Kesavan Asan
2. It will reduce financial loss as well as stop the psychological complications.
3. Thali is the symbolic of marital relationship
4. It helps society to prosper
5. Through industrial development
6. same species
7. It spoils drunkards’ thoughts, intelligence, conscience and actions
8. Through education progress the world
9. In 22nd September 1016
10. *Jathinirnayam* and *Jathilakshanam*

Assignments

1. Discuss the concept of religion according to the Guru's perspective.
2. Write about the Guru's important message and how it is relevant in the present scenario.
3. 'Liquor is poison; do not drink it or give it' - Why did the Guru say this? Discuss.

Suggested Reading

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Meeting with Mahatma Gandhi and Other Great People

UNIT

Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of this unit, the learner will be able to:

- ◆ comprehend the meanings and ideas shared between Gandhi and Guru.
- ◆ get exposed to Tagore's perspective on the guru.
- ◆ know the significance of Guru's meetings with Ramana Maharshi
- ◆ familiarise their mutual influence on social reform and spiritual discourse

Prerequisite

Imagine a time when visionaries from diverse backgrounds, each with their unique philosophies and convictions, came together. What conversations might have taken place between them? What ideas were exchanged, challenged, or embraced? Historical records show that such encounters have often shaped the course of nations, societies, and even human consciousness. Have you encountered any such meetings in your life? Or read any books documenting such conversations? Have you evaluated the impact of such meetings on present society? When we look into the life of Sree Narayana Guru, we also find historical encounters with other great people of his time. These encounters made a significant impact on society. In the following discussion, we will explore the Guru's meetings with Mahatma Gandhi, the apostle of nonviolence; Rabindranath Tagore, the poet laureate; and Ramana Maharshi, the sage of Arunachala.

Key themes

Karmayogi, Visionary, Eternal bliss, Religions unity

Discussion

4.3.1. Meeting with Mahatma Gandhi

The historical record of the impact of Sree Narayana Guru and Mahatma Gandhi on Indian society and beyond, and the gratitude with which they are regarded, provide ample evidence of their contributions. The world has undergone extensive changes since the early days of the twentieth century when Narayana Guru and Mahatma Gandhi lived and taught. We still find ourselves in a world where the human family is subject to many oppressions and injustice, racial bigotry, genocide, religious intolerance, the aggression of strong against weak, and the threat of ignorance and disease overpowering knowledge and health. Whether we are ourselves struggling or reaching out a hand to our sisters and brothers, we hope our efforts will be successful and enduring.

Whatever path of action we choose, we need to educate and purify ourselves so that we do not knowingly or inadvertently perpetuate the same evils we wish to change, or generate new ones. In that process of education, we turn to those who have gone before, seeking guidance from their words and examples. In that endeavour it behoves us to delve deep, not settling for popular answers, which could easily lead us to become trapped in a cycle of action and reaction. Knowing discrimination- in the positive sense of the clear discernment of values- to be the hallmark of a true seeker of freedom, we should not hesitate to ask penetrating questions of the Guru and the Mahatma in our quest to learn and to live out that knowledge in the arena of human emancipation.

Gandhiji gained an indelible place in the hearts of Indians not only as the leader of India's struggle for independence, but also as a Mahatma who had attained purity of the soul by inculcating spiritual and humane values in his life. He was also a *Karmayogi* who dedicated his life for the worldly freedom of Indians without any selfish motive. Gandhiji had heard many times about Sree Narayana Guru who was a spiritualist and a visionary to mitigate the sufferings of the downtrodden. He had an uncontrollable desire to meet, talk to and clear his doubts with that legendary figure who was compassionate towards the downtrodden and was also a visionary and an initiator of reforms.

Mahatma Gandhi who visited Vaikkom Sathyagraha Ashram on 9th March 1925, set out for Trivandrum and reached Sivagiri mutt on 12th March. The news of Mahatmaji's visit created a flutter in Sivagiri. From morning onwards, people started flowing to the place. Vanajakshi Mandiram which was constructed and given to Guru by a devotee called A K Govindadas, was the venue for the meeting of Guru and Gandhiji. All the preparations were ready in that building named Gandhyashram. The dignitaries like T K Madhavan, N Kumaran, C V Kunjuraman, P N Madhavan, Kesava Panicker, K Ayyappan, A K Govindadas, Dr. P N Narayanan, P C Govindan etc. waited for Gandhi after making all arrangements and expecting Gandhi at any moment.

At 4 O'clock, Gandhi reached there by car C Rajagopalachari stepped out first, followed by Gandhi. Guru and Mahatma greeted each other. The conversation centred on Vaikkom Sathyagraha, religious conversions, nonviolence,

abolition of untouchability, attainment of salvation, the uplift of the downtrodden, need of education for the social mobility of the depressed classes etc. Gandhiji's dialogues were in the form of questions. The answers given by Sree Narayana Guru, which needed clarity and explanation, were the ones that came only from a spiritualist who is a visionary of Truth. The conversation lasted for an hour. N Kumaran was the interpreter.

After this conversation, Gandhiji reached Sivagiri Mutt on foot. Gandhiji was very much impressed by Sivagiri mutt and was very much pleased to participate in the evening prayer at Sarada Mutt and to listen to the recitation of *Daivadasakam* by the inmate children of the Ashram. Gandhiji took the children to his side and blessed them and enquired about their daily routine. That day, Gandhi stayed at Vaidik Mutt in Sivagiri. Next day, on 13th March, Gandhiji reached Sarada Mutt and conducted worship and later went to swamy mutt. The Ashram and the surroundings enraptured Gandhiji very much. At Vaidika Mutt, both of them conducted discussions and a crowd assembled there. Sree Narayana Guru's meeting with Gandhiji was a very significant and historic one. When Guru and Gandhiji sitting under the shade of the mango tree in front of the Ashram, by pointing its leaves, Gandhiji opined that there are different branches and leaves on this tree, so are people different from one another. Their religions will also be different. Guru replied that though there were different leaves in the tree, the essence of all of them were same. Likewise, there are certain fundamental elements in the religion of mankind and the core of all religions are one and the same. This interview effected great changes in the religious and futuristic visions and modes of activities in Mahatma Gandhi.

After Sree Narayana Guru repaid the visit in Vaidik Mutt, both the Mahatmas went to the platform specially decorated with khadar clothes for the presentation of citations. A crowd was assembled there. The meeting started exactly at 8 O'clock. The citation written in English by SNDP Yogam was presented to Gandhiji. K Ayyappan read the Malayalam translation of it in the meeting. Afterwards, Gandhiji made a somewhat prolonged speech in English. That was translated to Malayalam by K Ayyappan. At the conclusion of the speech, Sree Narayana Guru said to the audience: "You should follow the words of Gandhiji and act accordingly."

Sree Narayana Guru garlanded Gandhiji with a chain of roses and wished him farewell and accompanied him to the car. This was a very significant and historic meeting which made history very much meaningful and enlightened. This interview effected great changes in the futuristic visions and modes of activities in Mahatma Gandhi.

4.3.2 Meetings with Rabindra Nath Tagore

Many of the national leaders of India had saintly qualities and were deeply erudite in their scholarship. But their horizon of interest was confined to the tradition of India or at best to the problems of India. Rabindranath Tagore was an exception to this. He kept both his heart and mind open to all traditions and exposed himself to the influence of all religions and races. He lived and thought and envisaged the future of man as a true citizen of the world. In thoughts, sympathies and visions, he was very close to Narayana Guru.

When Tagore's *Gitanjali* was selected for the Nobel Prize in 1913, he became the greatest pride of India. Narayana Guru wanted to know more of Tagore. His own

disciple Nataraja Guru, was an ardent admirer of Tagore, and so he brought all the available works of Tagore, and told the Guru the substance of what he read. Narayana Guru appreciated Tagore's visions even in *Gitanjali*, but he was not in favour of his own disciple imitating the style and diction of *Gitanjali*. The Guru knew that his century was meant to be an age of analysis and reason. So, he advised his disciple Nataraja Guru to be clear and precise in his presentation and substantiate his statements with evidence. Except in the matter of presenting thoughts as riddles, in all respects Narayana Guru considered Tagore as a good model for Nataraja Guru.

When Tagore visited South India, he was officially invited to be a guest of honour in the Sivagiri Mutt. Nataraja Guru was specially deputed by Narayana Guru to attend on Tagore. Rabindra Nath Tagore, the Universal poet, visited Sivagiri on 22nd November 1922. Santhikethan in Bengal which was the brain child of Rabindra Nath Tagore implemented his concepts and visions of education and had already become a great centre of attraction, not only of India but also of the world. It was the manifestation of the concept of school and education beyond all the concepts existing so far. It was during the itinerary to collect the money for the enterprise and to spread his new concept of education that Tagore reached Travancore in 1922. During this journey, the Universal poet got the chance to understand more about the surge of Guru's vision of social reformation and changes effected in the society and life style of the people.

The news of Tagore's visit to Sivagiri on 22nd November spread far and wide. As a result, large number of people gathered there on that day. In Sivagiri, arrangements were made to welcome the poet. At about 3 O' clock, Tagore and the group reached

Varkala. Dr. Palpu, welcomed the poet by garlanding him and made a short welcome speech. Deenabandhu C F Andrews - a western philosopher had accompanied the poet. Guru and the poet greeted each other. The food that was served to the guest as suggested by Guru was the tender most tip of growing coconut bunches, which was very clean, soft and tasty- a typical product of Kerala. Tagore who had never tasted such a thing relished that dish very much. Viswamahakavi praised Guru's activities which led all people irrespective of caste and creed to progress in life and spiritual well-being. When Tagore said: "You must make the people open their eyes", Guru replied: "Their eyes are open only. It is a pity that they are not able to see even then." Mahakavi Kumaranasan was the interpreter in this meeting. Tagore was greatly impressed and he understood the intensity of Guru's efforts of social reformation.

At the conclusion of the visit, he opined: "I have been travelling in many parts of the world and have met many great Seers and *Maharshis* during my journey. But I was not able to see a person who is greater than Sree Narayana Guru in Kerala, who has attained great heights in spirituality. Not only that, I haven't found anybody equal to him also. I shall never forget that radiant face illuminated by the self-effulgent light of divine glory and those yogic eyes fixing their gaze on a far remote point in the horizon. C F Andrews, who visited Guru along with Tagore also impressed by Sree Narayana Guru. He opined "I have seen God in human form. That embodiment of spirit is nobody other than Sree Narayana Guru who reveals in the glory of success in the southern tip of India". The impressions of Tagore and Andrews remain as the lamp posts to guide us to know the greatness of Sree Narayana Guru.

4.3.3. Sree Narayana Guru and Ramana Maharshi

Ramana Maharshi of Thiruvannamalai in Tamil Nadu was a great scholar and saint. Maharshi has revealed that the greatest spiritual experience that can be gained by a human being is the salvation of the soul and that soul is God himself. The Maharshi used to spend most of his time in the vow of silence and it was the same silence that was his language most of the times. He had heard about Sree Narayana Guru and Guru also had heard about him. Achuthananda Swamy who was the ascetic disciple of Guru used to visit Thiruvannamala.

In 1916, Sree Narayana Guru happened to visit some areas in Tamil Nadu. He reached Kancheepuram also during that journey. It was during his stay in the Sevashram there, that he set out to visit Ramana Maharshi. It was Achuthananda Swamy, Govindananda Swamy and Mambalam Vidyananda Swamy who were lucky to follow the Guru in that journey.

Sree Narayana Guru, who reached Skandashram along with his disciples, visited Ramana Maharshi. Both of them who had already realized Eternal Truth, stood looking at each other for some time. None of them spoke anything in particular. Both of them did not greet each other also. It was a rare meeting without the formalities of a guest and a host. Those great *sanyasins* who were the visionaries of truth had no need of any language to communicate with each other. They knew each other by the language of silence.

On the occasion of that great visit to

Thiruvannamala, Gurudev wrote a poem in Sanskrit. Ramana Maharshi's life was eternity of the enlightenment of bliss. Impressed by the expression of Eternal Bliss on the face of the Maharshi, Guru wrote the poem *Nirvruthi Panchakam*. *Nirvruthi* is the feeling of Eternal Bliss which we acquire after the extinction of all feelings of duality. Sree Narayana Guru and Ramana Maharshi were the holy sages whose experience has reached that stage and remained there continuously. They were the embodiment of great joy, is also *Sachidanandam* that is the state of ultimate salvation. The contents of *Nirvruthi Panchakam* are five stanzas about *Nirvruthi* that is gained by spiritual fulfilment. One who is freed from all differences and the one who stands firm in the belief of non-duality can only experience the great bliss continuously. In this way, Guru is clarifying the permanence of *Nirvruthi* philosophically through this composition.

In addition to them **Swamy Sradhananda** reached Sivagiri and visited Sree Narayana Guru. Swamy Sradhananda who was the chief preceptor of Arya Samaj came to participate in Vaikom Satyagraha. On that occasion, he came to Sivagiri and visited Sree Narayana Guru. He was a great man who recognized the role of Guru's activities in the upliftment of mankind. When he said Arya Samaj is thinking of working against the nuisance of caste in Kerala, Guru replied that he was happy to hear that Sradhananda's was not Arya Samaj, but Dhairy Samaj (Samaj of Courage). In the same year, the Diwan of Travancore **Mr. Watts** also reached Sivagiri and visited Guru.

Recap

- ◆ Guru and Gandhiji contributed to the well-being of the society.
- ◆ Through education, we purify ourselves.
- ◆ Gandhiji and Guru had a significant historical conversation about caste.
- ◆ Great personalities conversed for the upliftment of the depressed class.
- ◆ Gandhiji came to Kerala.
- ◆ Gandhiji followed spiritual and human values in his life.
- ◆ Tagore met the Guru.
- ◆ The Guru tried to understand more about Tagore.
- ◆ Tagore had an openness towards all traditional, religions and races
- ◆ Tagore critically viewed the social discrimination in South India.
- ◆ Tagore considered the Guru as a great spiritual figure.
- ◆ The Guru met Ramana Maharshi in silence
- ◆ *Nirvruthi Panchakam* - the feeling of eternal bliss

Objective Questions

1. What message did Sree Narayananaguru convey to Gandhi regarding the essence shared by different religions despite their differences?
2. Who came along with Gandhiji to meet Guru?
3. When Mahatma visited Vaikkom Sathyagraha Ashram?
4. How Gandhiji was a karma yogi?
5. When Tagore visited Sivagiri mutt?
6. Who was Ramana Maharshi?
7. Who was the ascetic disciple of Guru used to visit Thiruvannamala?
8. What is the name of the poem written by Guru, inspired by the eternal bliss of Ramana Maharshi?

Answers

1. Unity	5. 22nd November 1922
2. C Rajagopalachari	6. Great scholar and saint
3. on 9th March 1925	7. Achuthananda Swamy
4. Dedicated his life for freedom without selfish motive	8. <i>Nirvruthi Panchakam</i>

Assignments

1. What implication did meetings with great people hold during that period in determining social ideals and movements
2. Discuss the importance of Gandhi's meeting with the Guru.
3. What does the dialogue between Tagore and the Guru reveal about their perspectives?
4. How would you describe the relationship between the Guru and Ramana Maharshi?

Suggested Reading

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2. King, Mary Elizabeth (2015), Gandhian Non-violent Struggle and Untouchability in South India: The 1924-25 Vykom Satyagraha and the Mechanism of Change, New Delhi: Oxford University Press.
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5. Balakrishnan, K.P (2008), Aruvippuram muthal Omkareswaram vare, Kannur: Nitya Books.
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1. Shaji, S (2011), *Narayana Guruvum Gandhijiyum*, Varkala: Poorna Printing and Publishing House.
2. Kumaran, Moorkothu (2007), *Sree Narayana Guru Swamikalude Jeevacharitram*, Sivagiri Mutt: Sree Narayana Dharma Sangham Trust.
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Establishment of Ascetic Order, Sivagiri Pilgrimage, Important Disciples and Followers



UNIT

Sree Narayana Dharma Sangham and Narayana Gurukulam

Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of this unit, the learner will be able to:

- ◆ know Narayana Dharma Sangham and its objectives
- ◆ understand importance of the concept of Narayana Gurukula and Brahmavidyalam
- ◆ appreciate Guru's efforts in spreading his humanistic values through various means

Prerequisite

Sree Narayana Guru nurtured a large number of disciples, established various temples, organizations and institutions with an aim of imparting his ideals, methods and moral codes to the common people and providing his social and spiritual services to them. He wanted his principles, messages, advises, dialogues and institutions to spread across the world and to become beacons of light that guide the path for the attainment of liberation. Sree Narayana Dharma Sangham, Narayana Gurukula and Brahmavidyalayam are some of Guru's establishments towards the attainment of the goal mentioned above.

Key themes

Sree Narayana Dharma Sangham, Narayana Gurukula, Brahmavidya Mandiram

Discussion

5.1.1 Sree Narayana Dharma Sangham

Sree Narayana Guru was a great humanist who sacrificed his life, physical strength and spiritual power for the service of mankind. The Guru aimed at an ideal world where all human beings lived like spiritual brothers without any discrimination of caste and religious rivalries. Sree Narayana Guru's temples, consecration of idols, reformation of customs, charitable institutions and other activities for the uplift of mankind were the various steps leading people to the attainment of this goal. Guru's principles, messages, advise, dialogues etc. are all beacons of light that illuminate the path for the attainment of this goal. The Guru founded Sree Narayana Dharma Paripalana Yogam to uplift the people by propagating and interpreting Guru's ideals, methods and moral codes.

Sree Narayana Dharma Sangham was an organization established by Sree Narayana Guru to propagate his ideals. To fulfil his belief and thought of World Community of the human-family and train the young talents to dispose the abilities and bringing as Sanyasin's and send them all around the world to spread the humanitarian work, he started this ascetic order. Of the institutions created by Sree Narayana Guru for promoting the ideals enunciated by him, the prime of place is to Dharma Sangham. Sree Narayana Guru had in mind the spiritual and cultural regeneration of the people when constituting it. The Will of Guru which was registered on 3rd May 1926 was one which gave some very clear hints

about Sree Narayana Dharma Sangham. Guru designed an organization for ascetic disciples who offer their lives for the service of mankind by wiping out the sufferings of others, without deviating from the light and ways of Guru's ideals and principles. Sree Narayana Guru has defined the eligibilities to become the Head of such a Mutt through his small composition *Ashram*, long before.

Before forming Sree Narayana Dharma Sangham, as a preliminary step, certain rough rules were framed, printed and sent to the legal experts and dignitaries like M Govindan Judge, Raman Thamby Judge, K Ayyakutty Judge, Advocate C Krishnan, Changanassery Parameswaran Pillai, Murkkoth Kumaran etc. for their expert opinion. Sree Narayana Dharma Sangham, the organization for the ascetic disciples of Guru was formed on 9th January, 1928 and officially registered on 11th January 1928.

Brahmavidyalayam or the centre for the teaching of religion was its nucleus. Sivagiri was its headquarters. Sree Narayana Guru had the intention of spiritual and cultural regeneration of the people and to create a world community of humanity. Guru wrote his will in the name of Dharma Sangham in 1926 and registered in 1928 in the name of Swami Bodhananda who is the successor of Sree Narayana Guru. Sree Narayana Dharma Sangham was started with 12 members; Swami Bodhananda as the first president and Swami Dharma Theertha as the Secretary. There are many Ashramas and other organizations within Kerala and outside working under the Dharma Sangham.

5.1.1.1 Aims and Objectives

The main objective of Dharma Sangham is to unify the society and lead it to a single world culture, where caste discriminations and religious rivalries are given up and everyone recognizes oneself as a microcosm of the great Advaitic truth. Another objective was to propagate Guru's universal messages, his philosophy and writings, establish and maintain ashrams, temples, model schools, cultural centres, industries, charitable institutions, etc. for the spiritual and temporal growth and progress of the people. To initiate Guru Dharma Pracharanam with Sivagiri Mutt as the Centre, throughout the world, to translate and publish Guru's writings into other languages, prepare studies and interpretations regarding Guru's life and vision and publish them in all languages, establish hospitals, continue the organization of ascetics by finding out eligible people, teach them in Brahmavidyalaya and train them and make them members in the continuity of Guru's disciples etc. are the main objectives of Sree Narayana Dharma Sangham. The ultimate aim is to establish a model world devoid of caste discriminations and religious rivalries and one in which all people live like spiritual brothers.

In 1958, during Madathipati Swamy Shankarananda's regime, the Dharma Sangham was converted into a Public Charitable Trust and started working under the name Sree Narayana Dharma Sangham Trust. The Head Office of the Trust is Sivagiri Mutt. The first president of the Trust was Swamy Ananda Theerthar, who had the good fortune to be the last disciple of the Guru. The administration is run by a Board of Trustees consisting of, not more than 11 members elected by the members of the Trust. The period of administration is five years.

The Guru had ordered that every year on Chaitra Pournami day, all the members of the Dharma Sangham should join together to celebrate the anniversary of Dharma Sangham. Conducting the famous Annual Pilgrimage to Sivagiri is the responsibility of Dharma Sangham Trust. Two great events managed by the Dharma Sangham are Maha Samadhi Mandira Prathishta (installation of the Guru's statue in the Mahasamadhi Mandiram) during 1968 and the celebration of the international year of the Guru in 1977. Dharma Sangham is the dynamic force behind the growth of organizations in the name of the Guru into great spiritual centers. The great disciples of the Guru had dedicated themselves to spread the spiritual contributions of the Guru in the common man's consciousness. The Dharma Sangham, through its periodicals, disseminated the ideas and ideals of the Guru. The first periodical published to carry the voice of Sivagiri was *Navajivan* monthly magazine with Swamy Satyavrathan as the Chief Editor. The second one was *Dharmam* weekly with Swamy Dharma Theerthar as Chief Editor. *Sivagiri*, a monthly magazine with Swamy Nijananda as Editor in Chief, continues as the manifesto of Sivagiri Mutt. A number of schools, Ashramas and hospitals function under Sivagiri Mutt.

Most important among its institutions is Brahma Vidyalayam (the great school for all religions). Any child of any caste or religion who has passed 10th class can join at Brahmavidyalaya. The expenses will be borne by Sivagiri Mutt. The course extends for seven years, and includes the syllabus of MA in Sanskrit of Kerala University and the philosophy of all religions. It is worth mentioning that this course is purely based on the philosophic vision of Sree Narayana Guru. The lineage of ascetic disciples emerges mainly through this Brahma Vidyalayam. Guru Dharma Pracharana

Sabha is a tributary organization, working under Sree Narayana Dharma Sangham. The main functions of Guru Dharma Pracharana Sabha are studying Guru's compositions, publishing them and doing anti-liquor activities, etc. There are more than thousand units of this organisation in and around Kerala. Devotees can contact Sivagiri Mutt, and register new units.

The important institutions under the administrative control of the Sivagiri Dharma Sangham are Sivagiri Mutt, Sree Narayana Gurukulam at Chempazhanthy, Aruvippuram Temple, Aluva Advaitasramam, Kunnumpara Subrahmanya Temple and Mutt, Brahma Vidyalaya Sivagiri Mutt, and so on. In addition to the institutions listed above, there are numerous schools, hospitals and other institutions functioning under the protective wings of the Trust.

5.1.2 Narayana Gurukula

During the culminating phase of the evolution of his philosophical and educational ideology, Sree Narayana Guru realised that it is essential to nourish and advance 'One world' concept, the cornerstone of which would be the realisation of humanity as one ultimate species of creation in spite of all superficial divergences. Reminiscing that the entire world should become a 'gurukula', a noble knowledge nest in the *guru sishya paramara*, the Guru showered his blessings on one of the noblest of his disciples, Dr.P Natarajan (later Nataraja Guru), to enunciate a novel type of educational web—the Narayana Gurukula. This concept embodied within itself an epistemological combination of elements of knowledge palatable to the noblest Indian ideals of Gurukula as well as introducing a model to meet the educational needs of the present and future. Nataraja was selected and initiated under the spiritual and material

guidance of the Guru to the realisation of the Sree Narayana educational and social philosophy.

Sree Narayana organisations, by and large, look at Narayana Guru only through the frame of the Kerala history of yesterdays. In a way it is the frame through which the society views Narayana Guru. Contrary to this narrow perspective, Nataraja Guru observed Narayana Guru through a global frame. Gurukula is the name of an institution conforming to what is well known in the traditional life of India from the most ancient times which is also sometimes referred to as Mutt or Ashram. It consists of a *Guru* (spiritual preceptor) and *Kula* (family consisting of his disciples who together constitute a spiritual family) headed by the teacher of wisdom.

The primary objective of the Narayana Gurukula Foundation is that of promoting or propagating the body of exact knowledge known as Advaita Vedanta in its various forms to the people at large irrespective of race, caste, nationality, sex or creed. Preserving the way of life of Sree Narayana Guru in its purest form for successive generations also is specified as an aim of Gurukula. As corollaries to the primary aim, adding the principles of ahimsa and the open universal and unitive outlook in life as implied in the motto, 'One Kind, One faith, One God' completes the ideals and aims of Narayana Gurukula.

Nataraja Guru established Narayana Gurukula, contemplative educational centers in India, the first of which was in Coonoor in Fernhill, Nilgiris in 1923. A second one arose in Kaggalipuram near Bangalore. The spiritual magazine *Value* was published from there under the supervision of John Spiers. Eight kilometer away from Kaggali is Somanhalli where a Gurukulam was established in 1950.

In Kerala, Gurukulams were built in Wayanad. The first *Gurukula* outside India came into existence in Singapore. In Belgium, Nataraja Guru established a Gurukulam in 1950. Today Gurukulams are found all over the world. Nataraja Guru also has an ashram in Varkala. Now its headquarters is in Sreenivasapuram, Varkala.

Nataraja Guru's philosophy integrates ancient wisdom with the modern scientific exactitude which became his mission of life. In 1951, Nitya Chaitanya Yati accepted Nataraja Guru as his spiritual preceptor and after Nataraja Guru attained Maha Samadhi in 1973, Guru Nitya functioned as the continuator of Narayana Guru and Nataraja Guru as Guru and Head of Narayana Gurukula. As Narayana Gurukula is a world community, the Guru has to act as a liaison between all members of the Gurukula at an interpersonal level in the teacher-taught context and as the enunciator of programs from time to time to spur the Gurukula community to work in unison, to help everyone to understand his or her integral value vision (*svadharma*). At present Swami Muni Narayana Prasad is the Guru and Head of Narayana Gurukulam, a Guru-disciple foundation open to all, irrespective of caste, creed, religion, aimed at promoting the science of the Absolute as stated by Sree Narayana Guru. He is a disciple of Nataraja Guru and Nithya Chaithanya Yati. He has travelled widely teaching Indian Philosophy and the philosophy of Sree Narayana Guru.

The chief aims of this movement are to educate young children in the Gurukula tradition and to interpret and propagate the philosophical teachings of Sree Narayana Guru. Nataraja Guru and his chief disciple, Nitya Chaitanya Yati, were engaged in the translation and interpretation of Sree Narayana Guru's complete works in the light of advaita philosophy as taught by

Narayana Guru. The mouthpiece of the movement is *Gurukulam* in Malayalam and *The Values* in English. The annual Gurukula convention was started in Varkala in the early fifties in order to provide a regular opportunity for seekers and followers of Narayana Guru to gather, make studies and share.

5.1.3 Brahmavidya Mandiram

During the confluence of All Religions, the Guru also shared his vision of an institution for the study of the 'Absolute'. Such a university would have as its aim of studying the spiritual, philosophical, religious, scientific, cultural, and aesthetic traditions of East and West. In the light of that vision, the Guru had arranged his fully dedicated young disciple, Nataraja Guru, to pursue a doctorate in education at the Sorbonne University in Paris. His study and travel in Europe and later travels in the United States and other countries, combined with his thorough education in Indian philosophy and guru-disciple dialectics, fully prepared Nataraja Guru to carry on Narayana Guru's vision. In 1963 he laid the foundation of the Brahmavidya Mandiram at Guru Narayana Giri. At that time, he prophesied that it would grow into a worldwide university. That vision was imparted to his own dedicated disciple and successor, Guru Nitya Chaitanya Yati. Since his inauguration of the East – West University in South India in 1974 and East West University in Washington State of the United States, it has been steadily growing as a research library with numerous publications, classes, conventions and the then undreamt of possibilities of the internet to foster worldwide study and absorption in the unitive vision that integrates "all ways of life and study, whether physical or metaphysical, and all ideologies and value systems, both personal and collective".

Recap

- ◆ Sree Narayana Dharma Paripalana Yogam was established to uplift the people by propagating and interpreting Guru's ideals, methods and moral codes.
- ◆ Dharma Sangham and its aim of unifying the society and leading it to a single world culture
- ◆ Brahma Vidyalayam (the great school for all religions)
- ◆ Narayana Gurukula Foundation's aim is to propagate the body of knowledge known as Advaita Vedanta
- ◆ Nataraja Guru's philosophy integrates ancient wisdom with the modern scientific exactitude
- ◆ Brahmavidya Mandiram, an institution for the study of the 'Absolute'
- ◆ "All ways of life and study, whether physical or metaphysical, and all ideologies and value systems, both personal and collective"

Objective Questions

1. Of the institutions created by Sree Narayana Guru for promoting the ideals enunciated by Him, which is having the prime significance?
2. Sree Narayana Dharma Sangham is an organization for the ascetic disciples of Guru. Is it true or false?
3. Name some important institutions under the administrative control of the Sivagiri Dharma Sangham.
4. Who established Narayana Gurukula?

Answers

1. Sree Narayana Dharma Sangham.
2. True
3. Sivagiri Mutt, Sree Narayana Gurukulam at Chempazhanthy,

Aruvippuram Temple, Aluva Advaitasramam, Kunnumpara Subrahmanyam Temple and Mutt, Brahma Vidyalaya Sivagiri Mutt

4. Nataraja Guru

Assignments

1. Explain the idea of Brahmavidya Mandiram.
2. Explain Dharma Sangham and its aim of unifying the society.
3. What is behind the idea of Narayana Gurukula?

Suggested Reading

1. Sanoo, M.K. (1998). *Narayana Guru*, Bharatiya Vidyabhavan, Bombay.
2. Yielding, Nancy. (2019). *Narayana Guru A Life of Liberating Love*, DK Printworld, New Delhi.
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UNIT

Sivagiri Pilgrimage and Mahasamadhi of Guru

Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of this unit, the learner will be able to:

- ◆ understand the essence and relevance of Sivagiri pilgrimage
- ◆ recognize how Guru envisioned the pilgrimage beyond a ritualistic practice
- ◆ understand the historical context of Sivagiri pilgrimage as the lower castes were denied entry to temples and holy places
- ◆ appreciate and value the pilgrimage as a means of social and spiritual uplift of Kerala

Prerequisite

Sree Narayana Guru's teachings aimed purity of body and mind and stressed the ideals of simplicity, humbleness, and self-dedication and other spiritual and ethical principles. His messages spread the ideals of social equality, education, and spiritual enlightenment. The disciples and followers of Sree Narayana Guru reinstate their commitment to Guru's vision and mission through the Sivagiri pilgrimage at Varkala where Guru attained Maha Samadhi. The Sivagiri Mutt has been playing a key role in the spiritual uplift of people of Kerala

Key themes

Physical and spiritual purification, Pilgrimage, Simplicity and Unity, Humility, Dedication

Discussion

5.2.1 Commencement and Essence of Sivagiri Pilgrimage

Pilgrimage is a spiritual exercise of people individually or jointly visiting a holy space with sanctity and enough purity by forgetting all their materialistic pleasures and dedicating their mind. The Hindus, the Christians, the Muslims, the Buddhists, the Jains etc., have their own pilgrimages from time immemorial. The Muslim pilgrimages to Mecca, the Christian pilgrimages to Jerusalem and Rome, the Buddhist pilgrimages to Gaya and Saranath, the Hindu pilgrimages to Kumbhamela and their pilgrim centres attracted the attention of the world. The main aim of all pilgrimages was the physical and spiritual purification so as to elevate the people from the sins of materialistic life. Pilgrimages lead the people to a new horizon of life from all physical bondages. This is an austereistic deed for unity and emotional integrity.

The Sivagiri Pilgrimage is one of the significant pilgrimages in Kerala. It is associated with the social reformer and philosopher Sree Narayana Guru. Sivagiri is a hilltop in Varkala, where the *Samadhi* (mausoleum) of Sree Narayana Guru is located. The abode of the eternal rest of Sree Narayana Guru became a beacon of religious tolerance and universal brotherhood in an age of strife, bigotry and racism. Sivagiri emerged itself as an important pilgrim centre for the rich as well as the poor and for the ignorant and the wise. The term ‘Sivagiri’ brings to the minds a mixed feelings of awe and wonder to both lovers of beauty and

seekers of truth. It is a place from where Sree Narayana Guru steered his relentless battle against the bastion of superstitions, hatred and social injustice. He selected it as the nerve centre of his activities. Today Sivagiri has achieved universal fame due to its association with the life of a great saint who launched an uncompromising struggle against the caste disabilities and restrictions like untouchability and unseeability.

Like other pilgrimages in India, Sivagiri pilgrimage has been playing a vital role in the spiritual uplift of people of Kerala. The pilgrimage to Sivagiri is an annual event known as the Sivagiri Pilgrimage, and it takes place between December 30th and January 1st. Devotees and followers of Sree Narayana Guru, as well as people from various walks of life, participate in this pilgrimage. During the pilgrimage, various programs and events are organized to propagate the teachings and ideals of Sree Narayana Guru, which include messages of social equality, education, and spiritual enlightenment. The pilgrimage attracts people from different parts of India and serves as a platform for discussions on social issues and the promotion of harmony and brotherhood. The Sivagiri Pilgrimage is not just a religious event but also a cultural and social gathering, fostering the principles of unity, equality, and justice that Sree Narayana Guru advocated throughout his life. It continues to be an important annual event that celebrates the legacy of this revered social reformer in the region.

The concept of Sivagiri pilgrimage had its origin in 1928. It is important to acknowledge the key figures like

Vallabhasseri Govindan Vaidyar and T.K. Kittan Writer who played instrumental roles in conceptualizing and proposing the idea of the pilgrimage to Sree Narayana Guru. The fact that people from lower castes and marginalized communities faced restrictions and discrimination in other pilgrimage centers prompted the need for a dedicated place where they could practice their faith without prejudice. On 18th January 1928 Narayana Guru was camping at Nagampadam (Nagampadam temple), Kottayam on his way to Vaikom. Vallabhasseri Govindan Vaidyar and T.K. Kittan Writer approached the Guru and proposed the subject of Sivagiri pilgrimage and requested the Guru's permission for it. Vaidyar advanced the reason that while higher caste Hindus, and Christians and Muslims had their own pilgrim centres, those who are categorised as avarnas (Ezhavas and several others) had nowhere to go as pilgrims. They pointed out that in other's holy places the Ezhavas and other low castes are not being permitted. If the lower castes managed to enter somehow, they had to suffer manifold ill-treatment both physical and mental. The result is loss of money and self-respect. Hence, they requested Sree Narayana Guru to declare Sivagiri as a holy place and pilgrim centre for these sections of the population.

Narayana Guru enthusiastically approved the suggestion then and there and suggested certain norms as well as some modalities to be observed. He fixed the pilgrimage to be once in a year and on the first of January when one could take stock of their lives during the departing year and go back home with new resolve and fresh horizons before them. They should be draped in simple yellow clothes and should have a simple and brief ten days' austerity with panchasuddhi (five purities). He insisted that the pilgrimage should be least ostentatious and should involve absolute minimum expense and

observe strict economy in everything they did. At last, he explained the eight-fold aims of the pilgrimage. He emphasized the educational, cultural and moral purposes of this yearly meet. His closing words had a prophetic and visionary ring. There should be a chain of speeches on these subjects by experts and people should listen attentively to the speeches and put what is heard into practice so that they as well as the nation would march towards prosperity.

Even though the idea of Sivagiri Pilgrimage got the consent of Narayana Guru in 1928, the first pilgrimage took place only in 1932. As per the orders of Guru it was decided to commence the pilgrimage on 1st January 1929. But just 101 days before that, Swami attained mahasamadhi on 20 September 1928.

The first pilgrimage, as envisaged by Guru, reached Sivagiri on 28 December 1932, four years after the mahasamadhi of Guru. The person who took the initiative in it was Muloor S. Padmanabha Panickar, the poet. The first batch pilgrims consisted of Muloor's son P.K. Divakaran, P.V. Raghavan of Melepurathottu Veetil, Elavuthitta, Kesavan Muthalali of Plavu Nilkunnathil, Elavumthitta, Edayathil Kizhakathil and M.K. Raghavan and Sankunni of Kamalalayam Banglow.

But the pioneer pilgrims were not a token with just five persons. Three days after the arrival of the first group of pilgrims a four-member group from Nagampadam, including Vallabhasseri and Kittan Writer, reached at Sivagiri on January 1st 1933, as envisaged by Guru. These nine pilgrims from Elavumthitta and Nagampadam (both in Kottayam) together started the Sivagiri pilgrimage. It was these pilgrims who inaugurated the first historic pilgrimage which has become one of the most popular and important

pilgrimage in the state.

5.2.2 Message of the Guru on Sivagiri Pilgrimage

Of all the messages of Narayana Guru, the one that related to Sivagiri Theerthadanam is the last. It is known as the *Sree Narayana Gitopadesha*. It was given in response to a request jointly made by Vallabhassery Govindan Vaidyar and T.K.Kittan writer.

It includes;

1. Everyone must observe *vradha* (celibacy) of ten days.
2. It must not be a function to waste money or to exhibit pomp and show.
3. The pilgrim must also observe '*panchasuddhi*' - viz; purity of body, food, mind, word and deed.
4. Regarding the dress of pilgrim's swami said; "white is for the household, saffron is for Sanyasins, Black is for the Sabarimala pilgrims, Yellow for the pilgrims to Sivagiri- the colour of Sri Krishna and Sri Buddha. Yellow garment does not mean yellow silk. No new cloth is necessary. The normal white clothes can be made yellow with turmeric and then used".
5. Money should not be wasted and so there must not be any exorbitant expenses for the purpose.
6. The pilgrims must observe simplicity and humility.
7. Reciting devotional songs are good but there must not be much sound and rush.
8. There must be a subtle aim for the pilgrimage.

The conversation that followed between Guru and Vallabhasseri and Kittan Writer exemplifies the far sightedness and sense of purpose of the Guru. His suggestion to conduct the pilgrimage on the New Year Day, 1st January, itself is a deviation from the traditional belief. He was prepared to accept anything good from anywhere, whether it is local or foreign. His opinion on vows for the pilgrims is noteworthy. He was against keeping hard or long observances for the pilgrims. He was very particular to see people do what is simple and easy. He suggested "ten days vows with the five purities of Sri Buddha would be sufficient". His suggestion of the colour of garments of the pilgrims too was revolutionary. Here also he deviated from tradition. His words "White is for the house holder, saffron is for the sanyasins, black is for the Sabari Pilgrims. Let it be yellow for the pilgrims of Sivagiri" are thought provoking and enlightening. His final explanation of the nature of garment is an eye-opener for all. He says "Yellow garment does not mean yellow silk. Even new clothes are not required. The normal white clothes can be made yellow with turmeric and then used. They can be washed white and used on other days." The movement should not be vitiated by making a lot of noise and show. The pilgrimage should be without pomp and should be undertaken in humbleness". It would be right if these prophetic words echo in the minds of the pilgrims.

5.2.3 Philosophy of Sivagiri Pilgrimage

The Sivagiri Pilgrimage, according to the vision of Sree Narayana Guru, goes beyond mere ritualistic practices. He emphasized the pilgrimage as a knowledge-seeking exercise and a platform for the dissemination of education and spiritual wisdom. The emphasis on the purity of

both body and mind, along with the ideals of simplicity, humility, and self-dedication, aligns with the broader spiritual and ethical principles advocated by Sree Narayana Guru. Sree Narayana Guru stressed the importance of maintaining purity, not only in physical practices but also in thoughts and intentions. The pilgrimage, therefore, is not just a physical journey but a spiritual one that involves internal purification and self-reflection. Simplicity is a recurring theme in the teachings of Sree Narayana Guru. The pilgrimage encourages participants to adopt a simple way of life, devoid of ostentation and extravagance. This simplicity is seen as a means to connect with one's inner self and to foster a sense of equality among participants. The pilgrimage underscores the value of humility, emphasizing that all individuals, regardless of their background, are equal in the eyes of the Supreme Being. Humility fosters a sense of unity and harmony among the pilgrims, reinforcing the Guru's vision of a society based on mutual respect and understanding. The concept of self-dedication implies a commitment to a higher purpose or a spiritual goal. Participants are encouraged to dedicate themselves to the principles of righteousness, social justice, and the betterment of oneself and society. In essence, the Sivagiri Pilgrimage, as envisioned by Sree Narayana Guru, is not just a physical journey to a sacred place but a transformative experience that integrates spiritual principles into the daily lives of the participants, promoting values that contribute to the overall well-being of individuals and society. These values are integral to the philosophy of the Sivagiri Pilgrimage and are reflective of the Guru's teachings on leading a righteous and purposeful life.

5.2.4 Aims and Objectives of Sivagiri Pilgrimage

When Vallabhasseri and Kittan writer met Narayana Guru at Sivagiri, Guru suggested that there must be a subtle aim for the pilgrimage. He enumerated the aims for the Sivagiri pilgrimage, by folding his fingers one by one. They are;

1. Education
2. Cleanliness (hygiene)
3. Devotion to God
4. Organisation
5. Agriculture
6. Trade
7. Handicrafts
8. Technological Training

The emphasis on education underscores the Guru's commitment to enlightenment and intellectual growth. Education is viewed as a fundamental tool for empowerment and societal progress. The inclusion of hygiene as an aim suggests a holistic approach to well-being, encompassing both physical and spiritual aspects. Cleanliness is not only a physical aspect but also a symbol of purity and discipline. The spiritual dimension is highlighted through the aim of fostering devotion to God. This reflects the Guru's teachings on the importance of spiritual values and a connection with the divine. Organization suggests the need for structured and well-coordinated efforts in various aspects of life. It reflects the importance of systematic planning and collective action for the betterment of society. The inclusion of technological training reflects the Guru's forward-

looking vision. It acknowledges the role of technology in modern life and the need for individuals to be equipped with relevant skills. In essence, these aims encapsulate a well-rounded vision for the pilgrimage, emphasizing the integration of spiritual, educational, economic, and cultural aspects in the pursuit of holistic development for individuals and society at large.

Narayana Guru said that there should be a chain of speeches on these subjects. Experts in the subjects should be invited to deliver lectures on them. The pilgrims should listen to these lectures with discipline and attention. They should try to practice what they heard or what they learnt. They should achieve success. That will bring prosperity for the people and the country.

Sivagiri pilgrimage is now being considered as the pilgrimage of knowledge. This indicates the difference of Sivagiri pilgrimage with other pilgrimages. About the aims of the pilgrimage, he was categorical. He emphasized the educational, cultural and moral purposes of this yearly meet. His message and aims to the pilgrimage were a combination of both spiritual and material aspects. Education, cleanliness and devotion to God are basically necessary for the spiritual development of a society. Like that organisation is necessary for physical and material prosperity. Agriculture is necessary for the existence and progress of the people as well as for the state. As a small-scale industry, handicrafts are more valid for common people and for economic progress, trade and commerce are very important. Through technical training only, he affirmed that, people can make progress in every field.

5.2.5 Sree Narayana Guru's Sojourn in Sri Lanka

The influence of Guru was not only limited to Kerala, but it spread all over the world. Definitely its echoes reached Sri Lanka too. When the Sri Lankan Malayalis visited Kerala, they were attracted by the novel ideas and activities of Sree Narayana Guru. They tried their level best to take Guru to Sri Lanka and spread his ideas there. With their great initiatives Sree Narayana Guru reached Sri Lanka on 16th September 1918. Along with Bodhananda, Amritananda, Satyavrata, Sankarananda, Ramananda and Cheruvuri Govindan. Sree Narayana Guru reached the Maradana railway station Colombo. Sri Lanka was the only foreign country that Guru visited. Sree Narayana Guru got hearty welcome there. All sections of the society gathered there including Hindus, Christians, Muslims, Buddhists, members of Brahmavidya Sangham etc. Malayalis, Tamils and Sinhalas welcomed Guru with great respect. It was during his first Sri Lankan visit that the Guru first wore saffron cloth.

Guru visited many pilgrim centers like Mukhadwaram, Sivapada, Kataragama, Anuradhapura, etc. Though there were many rich people among the Malayalis, majority were illiterate. The Guru understood that without proper education, no one can liberate themselves from their defects. Guru gave the message "liberation through education" to induce the people to get educated in order to free themselves from the prevailing disabilities and to infuse self-confidence and self-respect. As a response, Sri Lankan Malayalis without any caste restrictions started many schools, libraries, night schools, etc. With the advice of the Guru, Swamy Satyavrata started Sri

Vijnanodaya Yogam, an association for the wellbeing and unity of the believers of the Guru at Colombo and neighboring areas. Under its guidance Sri Narayana Dharma Night schools, libraries, prayer halls, etc. were started. Sri Narayana Dharma Night School at Medanalons College, Divyasree Vijnanodaya Yogam, Malayali Vijnanodaya Yogam etc. were prominent among the other institutions which were started under the influence of Sri Vijnanodaya Yogam. Sri Vijnanodaya Yogam conducted discussions on various subjects, provided financial assistance to canteens for poor people shelter given to poor Malayali workers etc. All these created a new encouragement and unity among the Malayalis. The works and activities of Vijnanodaya Yogam was similar to the activities of SNDP Yogam. After twelve days of stay the Guru returned to Kerala on October 5th, 1918. Guru appointed Swami Satyavrata to work for the well-being of Malayalis at Sri Lanka. Even after the return of the Guru, Satyavrata Swamikal spent three years at Sri Lanka for the purpose and it was a very fruitful time. Guru's first visit helped greatly for the socio-economic and educational development of the people of Sri Lanka.

5.2.6 Second Visit

In 21st October, 1926, Sri Narayana Guru reached Rameswaram and decided to spend two months there. But the caste discrimination in Rameswaram disturbed the Guru and he decided to go to Sri Lanka. On 30th October 1926, Guru once again reached Sri Lanka along with Swami Vidyananda, Sugunanandagiri, Hanumangiri, Kumaran Master, etc. Large number of people including all categories reached there to welcome the Guru. Famous personalities like H.L. Demel, C.M. Chellappan, Impichi Koya Sahib, Satya Vagreswaram Nalla

Velu Pillai, Arunachalam Chettiar, Sadaratna Muttukrishnan etc. reached there and welcomed Guru. Guru stayed at Kateresan Kovil and thousands of people reached there to see him. The members of the Sri Vijnanodayam Yogam visited and decided to request the 'will' of Sri Narayanaapuram with name of the Guru. Guru opposed it and advised them to utilise the land for the well-being of the society. It started building works in 1932, but ended only in 1950. Later Sri Vijnanodayam Yogam transformed itself as Colombo Sri Narayana Society.

Guru decided to spend his last days either at Nuvareyeliya or Tringomali, in Sri Lanka. He sent back to Kerala some of his disciples. It took the persuasion of several devotees to make him finally return to India.

Sree Narayana Guru's visits and messages induced the people to get educated in order to free themselves from the prevailing disabilities and to infuse consciousness and self-respect among them. Education provided intellectual development in them. It could create social consciousness and awareness about their rights and also helped them to develop self-respect and self-confidence. Sree Narayana Guru's Sri Lankan visits had led to the spread of ideas like "Be enlightened through education", "be strengthened through organisation" and "economic independence through industries". These dictums of the Guru had a strong impact on the people and helped them to strengthen themselves. Majority of the Malayalis of Sri Lanka returned to Kerala with stable intellectual and financial background and became the backbone of many flourishing Malayali families.

Guru's message helped the Sinhalas and Tamils greatly for creating awareness about cleanliness and sanitation, education

and development through the notions of the ideas of liberty, equality and fraternity. Following the Vijnanodaya Yogam, many associations formed at Sri Lanka like Sree Narayana Guru Smaraka Samajam, Vadanapalli Vidya Poshini Sangham etc. All these helped greatly for the progress of the people.

Sree Narayana Guru's visits created a glorious chapter in Indo-SriLankan relations. Government of Sri Lanka had released a five-rupee postal stamp in commemoration of the Guru on Guru Jayanthi Day of the year 2009. Ceylon government declared Narayana Guru Jayanthi as one of its religious holidays. There had been continuous exchanges between Sivagiri mutt and the Sri Lankan associations. Sri Lankan minister Sri Manoganesan visited Sivagiri mutt on 30th December 2015 and a delegation from Sivagiri mutt visited Sri Lanka in May 2016. Sri Narayana Guru Society, one of the Sri Lankan Malayali Associations hosted the centenary celebrations of Gurudevan's Sri Lankan visit in 2018. A global convention on Universal brotherhood has been opened to commemorate the visit of Sree Narayana Guru to Sri Lanka and to deliberate on his vision of an egalitarians and just society.

5.2.7 Mahasamadhi of Sree Narayana Guru

Sree Narayana Guru's health declined in 1927, and his illness became a transformative experience for his followers. Even in sickness, the Guru imparted valuable lessons through his inner light, turning his physical condition into spiritual teachings. As the illness took its course, Narayana Guru gradually withdrew from worldly affairs, and he became increasingly absorbed in silence, which was described as his joy and the culmination of his life. The *mahasamadhi*

of Sree Narayana Guru occurred on September 20, 1928, at 3:30 pm. He was attended by a number of Ayurvedic physicians, a surgeon, and thirteen swamis of the Dharma Sangham. News of Narayana Guru's *mahasamadhi* quickly spread like wild fire. Hundreds of people poured into Varkala within a couple of hours, by train and on foot, starting a steady influx that continued for days. Thousands came in person or sent telegrams in homage to the Guru whose simple life and quiet words had transformed their live and the whole society.

Narayana Guru's body was washed, coated with sandal paste and adorned with garlands, and the body was buried at 7 pm next evening, on the highest point of the Sivagiri Hill, with special *samadhi* rituals performed by Tamil Sanyasins from Madurai and Karikudi. It was thus with great devotion and ceremony that the Guru's body was laid to rest at the highest point of the Sivagiri Hill, at the spot the Guru had indicated he should be buried. An elaborate Samadhi Mandir has since been erected on the site and a perpetual flame burns over it. It is visited by thousands of devotees each year. The people of Kerala, as well as outside, including those of Tamil Nadu and Sri Lanka, mourned the irretrievable loss. All the leading newspapers and periodicals paid rich tributes to his life and mission. They highlighted the nature of his services to the nation. Irrespective of caste, community or religion, everybody bowed their head before this great soul. In the closing words of his *Atmopadesasatakam*, Narayana Guru offers us a final understanding of the vibrant silence that is the culmination of that path.

The *Samadhi Mandir* of Sree Narayana Guru, located on the Sivagiri hill is not only the final resting place of Sree Narayana Guru but also an important pilgrimage

center and a spiritual hub. The *samadhi* is a revered site for his followers and devotees who visit to pay their respects and seek spiritual inspiration. The Sivagiri Mutt has grown to become a significant institution that continues to promote the Guru's teachings and ideals. The annual Sivagiri Pilgrimage, as discussed earlier, attracts a large number of people, and the teachings of Sree Narayana Guru remain

a guiding force for those who seek spiritual enlightenment and social harmony. Visitors to Sivagiri Mutt can witness the serene surroundings, visit the *samadhi*, and partake in the spiritual atmosphere that characterizes this sacred place. The legacy of Sree Narayana Guru lives on through the activities and initiatives undertaken by the Sivagiri Mutt, perpetuating his teachings for the benefit of future generations.

Recap

- ◆ Vallabhasseri Govindan Vaidyar and T.K. Kittan Writer's instrumental roles in conceptualizing the idea of the pilgrimage to Sree Narayana Guru.
- ◆ The fact that marginalized communities and lower castes faced discrimination in other pilgrimage centers prompted an urgent need for a dedicated place where they could practice their faith without prejudice
- ◆ “White is for the house holder, saffron is for the sanyasins, black is for the Sabari Pilgrims. Let it be yellow for the pilgrims of Sivagiri”
- ◆ Educational, cultural and moral purposes of the pilgrimage.
- ◆ Sivagiri pilgrimage had a combination of spiritual and material aspects
- ◆ “Liberation through education” spread a message of self-confidence and self-respect and eventual liberation through education

Objective Questions

1. What are the main aims and objectives of Sivagiri Pilgrimage?
2. What is the core message of Sivagiri Pilgrimage, according to Guru?
3. In which year did the the first pilgrimage take place?
4. What was Narayana Guru's messages related to Sivagiri Theerthadanam are known as?
5. Where is the final resting place of Sreenarayananaguru?

Answers

1. Education, Cleanliness (hygiene), Devotion to God, Organisation, Agriculture, Trade, Handicrafts, Technological Training
2. Knowledge-seeking exercise and a platform for the dissemination of education and spiritual wisdom.
3. 1932
4. Sree Narayana Gitopadesha
5. Sivagiri hill

Assignments

1. What are the aims and objectives of Sivagiri Pilgrimage?
2. What is Guru's message on Sivagiri Pilgrimage?
3. What are the educational, cultural and moral purposes of Sivagiri Pilgrimage?
4. Write on the essence of Sivagiri pilgrimage in comparison to other pilgrimages

Suggested Reading

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3. Balachandran, Mangad (2019), *Sree Narayana Guru: The Mystical Life and Teachings*, Thrissur: Kerala Sahitya Academy.
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Important Sanyasin Disciples of Guru

UNIT

Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of this unit, the learner will be able to:

- ◆ know special disciples of Guru
- ◆ understand their efforts and relevance in spreading Guru's ideals
- ◆ appreciate the place of Guru and his ideals in the minds of the disciples

Prerequisite

Sree Narayana Guru had a large number of disciples who were committed and dedicated in spreading Guru's messages and ideals to the common people. After Guru's Maha Samadhi, it is through the disciples and their activities, the spiritual light of Guru remained. Almost all of Sree Narayana Guru's ascetic or *sanyasi* disciples have secured unforgettable positions in the history of Kerala. Among those great men who dedicated their lives in the path of Sree Narayana Guru's futuristic, social and moral objectives, some disciples occupy a very special place.

Key themes

Disciples, Swamis, ideals

Discussion

5.3.1 Sivalingadasa Swami

Sivalingadasa Swamikal was one of the first and prominent disciples of Sree Narayana Guru. He was born in Vambaranthala house at Marayamuttam near Aruvippuram on 31st July 1867 in an orthodox Nair family. His early name was Kochappi Pillai. His father was Marthanda Pillai and mother was Ummini Amma. He met Guru at a cave near the Neyyar river in 1886. He accompanied Guru in his sojourns to places including Chidambaranath temple in Tamil Nadu. He was ostracised from his family as he used to eat the leftover food of the Guru. He had formal education up to sixth class only, but later he was taught by Sree Narayana Guru, Perunnelli Krishnan Vaidyar and Venkatesa Sasthrikal. Guru taught him Sanskrit and later sent him to Perunelli Krishnan Vaidyar for further study. He was the one who arranged the provisions for the Aruvippuram Siva installation in 1888. He became the first ascetic disciple of Guru. In 1905, Ayyappan Pillai accepted the ascetic way of life from Guru and became Sivalingadasa Swami. When Guru went to Varkala, he accompanied Guru and helped to build an *ashram* for Guru at Sivagiri. After Sarada installation in 1912, he wrote *Saradashtakam* praising Goddess Sarada. His work *Gurustakom* is nick named *Gurvopanishad*. He was a prolific writer and wrote thirty-four books in Malayalam, Sanskrit and Tamil. He installed Siva at Peringottukara Somasekhara temple. He stayed at Peringottukara Ashram fourteen years and started a Sanskrit school there. He had many disciples there including Swami Asangananda who later became famous as Malayala Swamikal. At the

end of his life on 15th January 1918, he shifted to Viswanatha temple, Chavakad which was made by him and where he attained Samadhi on 8th January 1919. Kumaranasan wrote the poem *Parannupoya Hamsam* in memory of the Sivalingadasa Swami.

5.3.2 Swami Bodhananda

Swami Bodhananda was born in a middle-class family at Chirakkal in Thrissur district. His early name was Velayudhan who renounced all family connections and took the path of great sacrifice and became Bodhananda Swamy. He travelled to many places in Karnataka and North India and became a Sanyasin at Jyothir mutt in Banaras. The Swamiji who wandered as an ascetic in different parts of the Himalayas for a long time, returned to his own place and established Avadhutha Mutt. After staying there for some period, the Swamiji again set out for a tour of the country. During this journey, he stayed with noble altruist ascetics and gained deep knowledge in Sanskrit and the Scriptures. He was well versed in Malayalam, Sanskrit and Ayurveda. After prolonged stay in North India, the Swamiji again returned to Thrissur and started agitations against caste discriminations.

Bodhananda Swami who initiated several action plans against caste discriminations met Sree Narayana Guru at the time of the installation of Jagannath temple in Thalassery. Sree Narayana Guru's messages about religion and caste hit his heart. His stance on caste was like "Caste should be destroyed. Nobody should be kept away in the name of caste and do not give way to anybody in the

name of caste.” He believed that even where the great words of Guru could not mitigate the onslaught of caste, one would have even to resort to a bit of force to eradicate it and release society from its brutal clutches. He held himself firmly to the view that Kerala writhing in the pain inflicted by caste, can seek deliverance from it through force only, although it is in total contravention of Guru’s method.

The scheme evolved by Bodhananda for the attainment of this goal came to be known as Bodhananda March. He also formed Dharma Bhata Sanghom for the destruction of caste. The sworn soldiers toured places where caste was at its extreme, with directions to have recourse to violence to clip its wings. The method paid rich dividends. It paved the way for far reaching changes in the so official set up. The avarnas suffered untold disabilities like untouchability, restrictions on right of passage and freedom of dress. These had started disappearing with the commencement of the Bodhananda March. Travancore and Cochin had earlier vied with each other in implementing the caste anomalies. In both areas Bodhananda’s new policy yielded revolutionary results. It was evident that a new social order in which caste could not play any more decisive roles as in the past, was emerging even though caste could not be driven out of peoples’ minds for a long time to come.

He was an opponent of temple installations and idol worship system. When he heard about Sree Narayana Guru’s idol installation at Thalasseri Jagannatha temple, he went there and asked natives to stay away from it. But the brief interaction with the Guru and his explanations about the need of temples and idols changed his mentality. Later he was a member of Sree Narayana Guru Statue Committee at Jagannatha temple and unveiled the statue of the Guru.

During the installation of Sarada idol in Sivagiri, he was there along with Guru. He became the treasurer of Sarada idol installation committee at Varkala. Sree Narayana Guru accepted Bodhananda as his Sanyasi disciple in 1912, on the third day of Sarada idol installation.

Bodhananda Swamy established Advaita Ashram in Kurkanchery in Thrissur with the permission of Sree Narayana Guru. He started working for the welfare of the people by staying there. He also started Sree Narayana Bhakthi Paripalana Yogam for propagating the ideals of Guru among the people and to effect reformation in society, and continued serving the public tirelessly.

He helped Nataraja Guru to set up the Narayana Gurukula in Nilgiris in 1923. He spent a major part of his life for the upliftment of the downtrodden sections of the society. Bodhananda Swamy established the financial institution called Cochin National Bank to improve the economic progress of the depressed classes. Cochin Ezhava Samajam which was started by the Swamiji for the uplift of the community, later became a part of SNDP Yogam. When Sree Narayana Guru reached Sri Lanka in 1918, Bodhananda Swamy was also there with him. Where he established Sree Vijnanodaya Sabha for the practical implementation of Sree Narayana Guru’s ideologies. For the upliftment of workers, he also started night schools and other organisations in Sri Lanka.

In organising the All Religions Meet in Aluva also, Swamiji played the main role. Swamiji’s ambition in life was to propagate Guru’s philosophic principles, messages and directives among the people and implement them in practical life. For that purpose, he had also started a newspaper called *Snehithan* from

Vadakanchery. Because, Bodhananda Swamy worked uncompromisingly to propagate and implement Guru's ideals, Guru appointed him as his successor on 27th September 1925 and registered his will in Bodhananda's name. He was a founder member of the Dharma Sangham and immediate successor after Sree Narayana Guru. But unfortunately, he attained Samadhi two days after Sree Narayana Guru's Samadhi.

5.3.3 Swami Satyavritha

Satyavritha Swami alias Ayyappan Pillai was born on 8th March 1983 in a middle-class Nair family at Mambuzhakkari near Changanasseri. Despite his birth in an upper-class family, he was attracted to the principles of Sree Narayana Guru. In 1916, he joined as an inmate at the Advaita Ashram at Aluva. Guru appointed him as the Malayalam teacher in the Sanskrit school and made arrangements for him to learn Sanskrit. Guru accepted Ayyappan Pillai as his sanyasi disciple and named him Satyavritha for his honesty and straight forwardness. Sree Narayana Guru asked him to wear white clothes and commented that Satyavritha does not need saffron, his saffron is inside his body.

Satyavritha Swami was a scholar, administrator and a good orator. In 1918, he got an opportunity to accompany the Guru to Sri Lanka. He stayed back for three years for the work of establishing thirty night schools and many Sree Narayana organizations there. He again visited Sri Lanka in 1921 and stayed there for about three months. He became the secretary of Advaita Ashram in 1922 and helped Sri Vadappuram Bava to form the first Labour Union in 1922. He was one of the true proponents of Guru's principles. Not many people in Kerala worked like Satyavritha against the caste system. The Guru once proclaimed, "Satyavritha

has no caste feelings at all...he even excels Buddha in forgetting caste". He along with Sahodaran Ayyappan and C V Kunhiraman, were entrusted to coordinate the All-Religious Conference at Aluva in 1924. His hard work was one of the reasons for the huge success of the Conference. He delivered the much talked about welcome speech at the Conference. He helped the procession of the caste Hindus in all possible ways during Vaikom Satyagraha. He was the first organizer of the boat races in Kerala. He was known as the "Vivekananda of Gurudevan". He attained Samadhi on 1st September 1926 at the age of 33 at Changanasseri Anandashram. Hearing his premature death, Guru went overwhelming with sorrow and lamented Guru greatly.

5.3.4 Swami Vidyananda

Swami Vidyananda was born in a family of Ayurvedic physicians in Kuttanad. His early name was Ramankutty. His parents were Sri Kochukutty and Smt Kunjamma. After passing school final from Sanadhana Dharma High School, Alappuzha with higher marks, he could not continue his studies due to family problems. He left his family and led a wandering life and visited many religious centres. Finally, he reached Aluva Advaita Ashram while Sree Narayana Guru was staying there. Guru gave him a job in the Sanskrit school where he could improve his Sanskrit and English, and he also studied Tamil, Kannada and Telugu. His stay at the Ashram blessed him with an opportunity to prove his potentials and enlarged his mastery over Sanskrit language. The Guru initiated him as a monk and gave him the name Vidyananda. When the Guru dictated the verses of *Darsanamala*, Vidyananda Swami acted as his scribe. He was with Guru reading *Yogavasishtham* at the time of Mahasamadhi.

After Sree Narayana Guru's Samadhi, Vidyananda Swami moved to Sree Narayana Seva Ashram at Kanchipuram and later moved to Mambalam. At Mambalam he founded Sree Narayana Mission and a hospital adjacent to it. Poor people of that area were greatly benefited from that one. He wrote many articles on Sree Narayana Guru's philosophy and an interpretation for *Darsanamala* titled *Dheedhidi* (ray). This book became an important means of reference to many scholars. He spent his last days at Changanassery and attained Samadhi in 1964.

5.3.5 Swami John Dharma Theerthar

Among the disciples of Sree Narayana Guru, John Dharma Theerthar has an important place. Original name of John Dharma Theerthar was Parameswara Menon. He was born at Guruvayur in 1892. His father was Adv. Karunakara Menon and mother Smt Parvathy Amma. After his graduation from Presidency College Madras he worked under the Kochi Government for a brief period before joining Bombay University for LLB. After receiving his law degree, he started his practice in Thrissur and became a famous lawyer. His activities against untouchability and other orthodox practices made him very popular among the people. He worked as the editor of a magazine *Snehithan* published from Thrissur. He was a very good orator, so he became a regular speaker at the meetings of Bodhananda Swamikal from whom he heard about Sree Narayana Guru and later he stopped his legal practice and moved to Sivagiri Mutt. The Guru accepted him as his disciple, named him as Dharma Theerthar. He was Guru's first sanyasi disciple with a college degree. His proficiency in different languages as

well as in Law enabled him to assist the Guru as a translator during his journeys. It was he who systematized the accounts and records of Sivagiri Mutt. The Guru sought his legal advice before registering the Sree Narayana Dharma Sangham. He took the initiative to publish the weekly *Dharmam* from Sivagiri in 1927 and he collected Guru's literary works for publication. He wrote many books about Sree Narayana Guru and his book *The Prophet of Peace* was the first English book about the Guru. This work helped to popularise the Guru in North India.

After the Samadhi of Sree Narayana Guru, he was the one who followed up the case filed by the SNDP Yogam, yet he was shifted to Chempazhanthy Mutt. He cleared the *Otti* (loan on security) of the land and installed the idol of the Guru at Gurukulam. During the *Jayanthi* in 1935, swami arranged music of drum by the Dalits at Chempazhanthy. The internal politics made him leave Sivagiri Mutt to Chempazhanthy Mutt and then to Andhra Pradesh and North India. He published the book *Menace to Hindu Imperialism* in Lahore in 1941 republished as *History of Hindu Imperialism* in Kerala in 1969.

In 1947, he returned and joined Christianity and became Srimad John Dharma Theerthar. Till the end of his life, he believed in Sree Narayana Guru's philosophy. His mortal remains were buried at CSI Church, Palayam, Thiruvananthapuram. Sexton Samuel built a church after his name at Mayiladumpara in Trivandrum district in 1991. He was the architect and the Charter Secretary of the Sree Narayana Dharma Sangham and was close to Dr Ambedkar, Jinna and C R Kesavan Vaidyar.

5.3.6 Swami Athmananda

Rama Panickar was born in a family

of astrologers in the Ganaka community in Vadakara Taluk on 27th July 1870. His parents were Sri Karunakara Panickar and Smt Kunjimmakavu. Swami Athmananda was a great scholar in Sanskrit, Astrology, Philosophy and Ayurveda. While working as a Sanskrit teacher in Vidhyarthi Chinthamani Sanskrit School at Thalasseri, he chanced to meet Sree Narayana Guru. Guru invited him to be a teacher in Advaithashram Sanskrit School. He joined as the Head Master of the Advaithashram Sanskrit School and he was called *Valiya Gurukkal*. Later he was initiated as a *Sanyasin* by Sree Narayana Guru and received the name Athmananda. He wrote and published many poems about Sree Narayana Guru. *Sree Narayana Dharmam* was one of the best books that gives a true insight into the thoughts and philosophies of the Guru. Atmananda Swami attained Samadhi at Kanchipuram on 12th November 1969 at the age of 100. He was a founder member of the Dharma Sangham. His samadhi Mandir stands as a monument at Kancheepuram.

5.3.7 Swami Ananda Theertha

Ananda Theertha Swami was born in a rich Gowda Saraswath Brahmin family of Thalasseri. He graduated from the Madras University where Moorkoth Kunjappa was his classmate. Though he had a degree from Madras University, he overlooked his high prospects for his passion for public service. He was interested in social service and fight against caste system and social injustices. Likewise, he was drawn to the national movement and wished to join in the Sabarmati Ashram. But later he became a member of Sabari Ashram, Palakad in 1926. He was a champion of the poor and downtrodden and he was beaten up by the caste Hindus when he led a group of Dalits to a temple there.

He reached Sivagiri on 31st July 1928 and he received vows as the last disciple of Sree Narayana Guru on 3rd August 1928 and became Ananda Teertha. He had to face a lot of opposition and harassment of the caste Hindus in Madurai. He participated in Guruvayur Satyagraha and he was assaulted for having entered the dining hall of the Brahmins there without wearing the sacred thread and successively such separate dining halls were abolished.

His area of work extended to Tamil Nadu and Karnataka. He chose Payyanur as his sphere of activities where he started Sree Narayana School and Anandashram for the depressed classes. Gandhiji had visited there in 1934 and planted a mango sapling. He established Jati Nasini Sabha in 1933, promoted inter caste marriages and formed the slogan "Harijana Seva Yuga Dharmam". Despite encountering continuous threats from the upper class people, he spends his entire life for the welfare of lower class people. He attained Samadhi at Payyannur on 21st November 1987.

5.3.8 Swami Chaithanya

Swami Chaithanya was born at Thottakkad near Varkala on 27th March 1879 as Narayana Pillai. His parents were Sri Sankara Narayana Pillai and Smt Kalyani. As directed by Chattambi Swamy, he met Narayana Guru and changed his name as Narayana Chaitanya. The Guru then expressed his wish that Chaitanya did not need to wear saffron clothes. Chaitanya became Guru's third ascetic disciple and he was known as Sree Narayana Chaitanya. He had an outstanding administrative capacity and high talent to adapt with others which prompted the Guru to confer him the duty of looking after his institutions. Sree Narayana Guru sent Chaitanya to Palani and he had to start Satyagraha there.

to get the measurements of the temple. He was deputed by Guru to supervise the construction, develop and look after his temples in Malabar. He had some expertise in architecture, Ayurveda and sculpture. He supervised the construction of Thalassery Jagannatha temple, Kozhikode Sreekandeswara temple, Kannur Sundareswara temple and many other monasteries. He established the Sree Narayana Ashram at Kozhikode. He served as the secretary of Aluva Advaitashram and also as the manager of the Sanskrit school there. The Guru's famous composition, *Athmopadesa Sathakam* was probably copied down safely by him. He penned down "Gurupushpanjali" in 1917 and had written on Guru's views of marriage, obsequies etc. He attained Samadhi at Thalasseri on the 2nd December 1953. Till his demise, Chaithanya Swami continued his humanitarian activities and spread the gospel of Sree Narayana Guru.

5.3.9 Nataraja Guru

Nataraja Guru was the leading disciple of Sree Narayana Guru. He was born on 18th February 1895 in Bengaluru. His father was Dr Palpu and mother Smt. Bhagavati. He had his schooling in a *kudipallikudam* in Thiruvananthapuram and later in Bengaluru. At the age of four Nataraja Guru accompanied his father to meet Guru at Aruvippuram. Nataraja Guru was an ardent worshipper of nature from his childhood. He read the Upanishad and the Bhagavat Gita and he was attracted by Swami Vivekananda, Tagore and Gandhiji. He was a great scholar and well versed in Kannada, Tamil, Malayalam, English and French.

He used to visit the Dalit colonies in Bengaluru and Chennai to teach them alphabets and lessons in personal hygiene and cleanliness. He studied in Trinity College, Kandy, Sri Lanka and passed

MA and LT from Madras Presidency College. When Natarajan passed his MA and Lt in 1922, Sree Narayana Guru asked Natarajan whether he was willing to join him. Natarajan agreed and became an inmate in Advaitashram, Aluva in August, 1922. For some time, he taught English there. Sree Narayana Guru affectionately called him Thampi.

During the culminating phase of the evolution of his philosophical and educational ideology, Sree Narayana Guru realised that it is essential to nourish and advance a 'one world' concept and its cornerstone would be the realisation of humanity as one creation inspite of all superficial divergences. Reminiscing that the entire world should become a 'gurukula', a noble knowledge nest in the *guru sishya parampara* the Guru showered his blessings on one of the noblest of his disciples- Nataraja, to enunciate a novel type of educational web- the Narayana Gurukula. This concept embodied within itself an epistemological combination of elements of knowledge palatable to the noblest Indian ideals of Gurukula as well as introducing a model to meet the educational needs of the present and future. Nataraja was selected and instructed under the spiritual and material guidance of the Guru to the realisation of the Sree Narayana educational and social philosophy.

In 1924, he founded the Narayana Gurukulam Movement and University for the Science of the Absolute. He developed a desire for higher studies in Europe and when he expressed this to Guru, he relieved off his job at Sivagiri Model School and with the financial support and blessings of Guru, Nataraja Guru went to Geneva and joined as a teacher there. While teaching at Quaker International School in Geneva, he obtained Doctor of Letters from Sorbonne University

Paris with triple honours. Subsequent years saw Nataraja as reverently known as Natarajaguru, metamorphosing into a great scholar.

Natarajan and Ernest Kerk were entrusted with the establishment of Sivagiri Free Industrial and Agricultural Gurukula by Sree Narayana Guru. After returning to India in 1932, he travelled widely around the world and in 1963, established the Brahmavidya Mandir at Sivagiri. He gave global exposure to the teachings and messages of Sree Narayana Guru. He translated some of the most outstanding poems of Sree Narayana Guru into English. The profound and thought exciting philosophies embodied in them are brought out in all its splendour and spiritual magnitude in these translations. He translated Sree Narayana Guru's works into English and wrote commentaries on all the major works of Guru. *Life and Teachings of Sree Narayana Guru, The Word of the Guru, One Hundred Verses of Self Instruction, An Integrated Science of the Absolute, An Anthology of the Poems of Narayana Guru, The Philosophy of Guru, World Government Memorandum, World Education Manifesto, towards a World Economics, The Dialectical Methodology, Man- Woman Dialectics, An Autobiography of an Absolute* etc. are some of the notable works of Nataraja Guru. When Sree Narayana Guru was alive, Nataraja Guru had taken steps to establish Narayana Gurukulam at different parts of the world. He founded 15 Gurukula in India and outside including the USA, Belgium, and Singapore. It was because of him Narayana Guru's teachings got global unveiling. One of his greatest disciples was Nithya Chaithanya Yati.

5.3.10 Ernest Kirk

Ernest Kirk was the first European disciple of Sree Narayana Guru who

was ordained as a *sanyasin* by the Guru. He came to India as a member of the Theosophical society. After associating with Sree Rama Krishna Mission, Arya Samaj and Brahmo Samaj in Kolkata Varanasi and Gaya, Kirk reached Ramanashramam at Thiruvannamalai. Later Kirk had reached Chennai where he became the manager of Southern railway for some time. He heard about Sree Narayana Guru and reached Sivagiri Mutt. When the first *Misravivaham* between Western educated Karunakaran and a German woman, Margarat John Marlet, was conducted by Sree Narayana Guru at Sarada Mutt, Kirk blessed the couple representing the bride's party.

Sree Narayana Guru appointed a committee with Ernest Kirk as the convener to prepare a project report for the proper use of the assets of Sivagiri for the benefit of the people. Kirk was a visionary who presented Guru a device to utilise the 150 acres of land for the benefit of humanity. It was a project to connect agriculture and industry to education. The scheme was to establish a network of institutions in which training in at least one craft or industry, could be given to be qualified to earn a livelihood. The prospectus states: "Every effort will be made to secure employment for all those who successfully complete the five year course and suitable industries will be started for women with special emphasis for widows. Training will be given in weaving, carpentry, smithy, gardening, agriculture and dairy farming, short hand and typing, dyeing, pottery, tailoring, lace making and embroidery etc. The first centre will be at Varkala, from where qualified workers will be selected for the branches to be opened later. Each batch will have 100 boarders, aged not less than 10 years, irrespective of caste, sex or creed. The expenses of about one lakh will be collected by donation". Briefly stated, the scheme was to establish

a network of institutions in which young would be trained at least in one craft or industry up to a point where they will be qualified to earn a decent livelihood. The Guru had schemed in a well planned manner the magnificent project, but in the next year he entered his samadhi and in the ensuing conditions, the project could not be materialised. If it was realised, it would have created wonders and would have provided the blue print for a model educational plan for free India.

When Kirk was given the vows of asceticism as the 22nd member of the Dharma Sangham, he was permitted to have his scalp hair, European dress including tie

and shoes, and he was given a packet of his dress including the tie and shoes instead of saffron. He continued this dress throughout his life. He was allowed to continue his name also. He was a founder member of the Dharma Sangham and the Secretary of the Model School at Sivagiri and the chief inspiration behind Swami Dharma Theertha's book *The Prophet of Peace*. After Sree Narayana Guru's Samadhi, Kirk left Sivagiri and moved to Coimbatore and founded Sree Narayana Ashram there and published a periodical by name *Life* to spread the gospel of Sree Narayana Guru which gave importance to Guru's philosophy. He attained Samadhi in Coimbatore at the age of 80.

Recap

- ◆ Swami Bodhananda evolved a scheme known as Bodhananda March.
- ◆ Swami Satyavritha was known as the “Vivekananda of Gurudevan”
- ◆ Swami John Dharma Theertha published *The Prophet of Peace*, the first English book about Guru
- ◆ Swami Ananda Theertha established Jati Nasini Sabha in 1933 which promoted inter caste marriages and formed the slogan “Harijana Seva Yuga Dharmam”.
- ◆ Nataraja Guru enunciated the novel type of educational web - the Narayana Gurukula

Objective Questions

1. Who is the first ascetic disciple of Guru?
2. Who believed that one would have even to resort to force to eradicate

the caste evils and release society from its brutal clutches?

3. Who published the book *History of Hindu Imperialism* in Kerala in 1969?
4. Who was the first European disciple of Sree Narayana Guru?
5. Who founded the Narayana Gurukulam Movement ?

Answers

1. Sivalingadasa Swami
2. Swami Bodhananda
3. Swami John Dharma Theerthar
4. Ernest Kirk
5. Nataraja Guru

Assignments

1. Write on important disciples of Sreenarayanguru.
2. Write on two significant disciples of Guru in detail.
3. What is Nataraja Guru's significance in spreading Guru's message?

Suggested Reading

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Important Grihastha (House Holder) Disciples and Followers of Guru

UNIT

Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of this unit, the learner will be able to:

- ◆ familiarize the Grihastha (house holder) disciples and followers of Guru
- ◆ understand their significance in spreading Guru's messages and ideals
- ◆ appreciate the influence of Guru on the disciples

Prerequisite

Sree Narayana Guru had a group of grihastha disciples just like the ascetic disciples. These disciples are those who have made notable contributions in Guru's social reformative fields and in other areas of activities of Sree Narayana Guru.

Key themes

Grihastha disciples, followers, Guru's messages

Discussion

5.4.1 Dr. P. Palpu

Dr. Padmanabhan Palpu, commonly known as Dr. P. Palpu, was a prominent social reformer and physician in the Indian state of Kerala during the late

19th and early 20th centuries. He played a significant role in the social upliftment of the Ezhava community, which was a historically marginalized community in Kerala. Dr. P. Palpu actively participated in social reform movements, particularly

those aimed at addressing the social and educational backwardness of the Ezhava community. He had a close association with Sree Narayana Guru, and together, they worked towards breaking down social barriers and improving the conditions of the oppressed communities in Kerala. His contributions to the social and educational upliftment of the Ezhava community, as well as his collaboration with Sree Narayana Guru, have left a lasting impact on the history and development of Kerala. His efforts paved the way for positive changes in the social fabric of the region. He became one of his greatest grihastha disciples.

In the modern age, organisations are significant, says Sree Narayana Guru. The one man of action who fully agreed with this opinion of Sree Narayana Guru was Dr Palpu. He was born in Thoppil house in Petta, Thiruvananthapuram on 2nd November 1863. He established himself in spite of being a victim of the cruelties of caste discrimination. After completing matriculation in 1883, Palpu appeared in a test, organised by the Travancore government for selecting ten matriculate students for medical education, in which he stood second. But the government rejected his application by saying that he was of over age. But the real fact behind the denial of admission was that he was an Ezhava. In 1885 Palpu joined the Madras Medical College and in 1889 he was awarded with the Licentiate Degree in Medicine and Surgery (LMS). After that, he again tried to get a job in Travancore service, but his application was rejected as it was from an untouchable. He joined the Medical Department of Madras from where he shifted to the Mysore Medical Service in 1891. The moral affront he suffered filled him with such righteous indignation that he resolved then and there to fight for the restoration of legitimate rights to his brethren and to break the stagnancy in

their condition.

The popular protest, in which Dr. Palpu involved was the “Travancore Memorial”, popularly known as the “Malayali Memorial”. The ten thousand and thirty-eight (10038) people signed the gigantic memorial and was submitted to the Maharaja on 11th January, 1891. Though the Memorial included Ezhava grievances, the Government of Travancore did not give any importance to it. The benefits of the Malayali Memorial reached only the Nairs and Christians and failed to reach the Ezhavas. Palpu made hectic efforts to assert the claims of the Ezhava community by organising the Ezhavas to a mass movement. He made a number of memorandums and reminders to the government. By the middle of 1896, he founded an organisation called ‘Travancore Ezhava Mahajana Sabha’ as a part of his social protest against the discriminations against the Ezhavas. Deeming memorial as a weapon of protest, Palpu collected the signature of 13176 Ezhavas and submitted a new petition of rights, called Ezhava Memorial, to the Maharaja of Travancore. Ezhava Memorial was submitted to the Maharaja on 3 September 1896.

Imbibing Guru’s advices and spirit, he grew in self-confidence and worked day and night for the uplift of the downtrodden. He played a crucial role in establishing the great movement called SNDP Yogam on the spiritual foundation of Guru. The formation of the Sree Narayana Dharma Paripalana Yogam (SNDP Yogam), with the combined visualisations and mobilisations of the great spiritual leader and scholar Sree Narayana Guru and the fireball of protest and actions of Doctor Palpu, was a great turning point in the history of Kerala. It was he who gave the name Sree Narayana Dharma Paripalana Yogam to the earlier Vavoottuyogam, which functioned at Aruvippuram during the closing

years of the 19th century. Stimulated by the advice of Swamy Vivekananda that “only a spiritual enumeration could make changes in the mentality of the people and would lead to the success of any institution and awakening of a society like Kerala,” Palpu visited Narayana Guru at Aruvippuram and consulted on the subject. In 1901, Narayana Guru, Dr. Palpu and Kumaran Asan met together and planned to expand the *Vavoottu Yogam* into a wide - spread one and took the decision to register the ‘Yogam’ into a Joint Stock Company. Thus, the *Aruvippuram Vavoottu Yogam* was renamed and registered as Aruvippuram Sree Narayana Dharma Paripalana Yogam, popularly known as SNDPYogam. With the licence issued by the Dewan of Travancore, Krishnaswamy Rayar, on 28 March 1903 the Yogam was officially registered under Company’s Act on 15 May 1903, with Sree Narayana Guru as its life time President and Kumaran Asan as General Secretary. Palpu became its first vice-president. To say that Dr Palpu was the heart and soul of the Sree Narayana Dharma Paripalana Yogam was not an exaggeration. He laboured as the right hand man of Sree Narayana Guru in his efforts to bring about a savarna avarna harmonisation in Kerala.

SNDP Yogam during its early existence was hard pressed for the money needed to carry on its propaganda work. It was amply provided from his pocket. Similarly, the voice of the suffering classes was heard in centres of authority through his efforts and with the aid of his money. He led the Malayali Memorial and the Ezhava memorial and secured representation for the oppressed in government service and the Legislative Assembly. He also worked as the president of Sarada Installation Committee in Sivagiri. He was the father of Sree Narayana Guru’s ascetic disciple Nataraja Guru. He died on 25th January 1950. The collaborative efforts of

Dr. P. Palpu and Sree Narayana Guru left a lasting impact on Kerala society. Their initiatives laid the foundation for social equality, education, and empowerment, shaping the trajectory of the state’s history and contributing to its progressive social fabric.

5.4.2 N. Kumaran Asan

Kumaran Asan was a celebrated poet, philosopher, and one of the prominent disciples of Sree Narayana Guru. He played a vital role in advocating for the socio-political and educational rights of the low castes of Kerala. Asan was born on April 12, 1873, in Kayikkara, a village near Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala, in a modest Ezhava family. He met Narayana Guru in 1891 and became his ardent disciple. The impact of the ideals and far-sighted ideologies of the Guru gave him the spiritual and moral stability to fight against the disparities and social injustice. His association with Sree Narayana Guru appeared to have been preordained. It blossomed into a spiritual attachment and paved the way for the emergence of a great poet. It all started with his journey with Guru to Aruvippuram and later he became an inmate there. Kumaran who had extraordinary talent in writing poetry came to be known as Chinna Swamy.

Guru sent Kumaran to Mysore with Doctor Palpu for advanced studies in Sanskrit. When the studies there were completed, Dr. Palpu decided to send him to the Sanskrit University at Calcutta for further education. Kumaran could identify himself very soon with the intellectual renaissance which moulded the literary firmament of Bengal during that time. That was the genesis of his victorious march into poetic world of revolutionary dimensions. Years later when Kumaran returned to Guru, he had already acquired mastery in the English language as well.

Kumaran who came back after completing his studies started seriously working in the path of Sree Narayana Guru. SNDP Yogam was founded in 1903 and he was elected as the first General Secretary. He continued in that position for 16 years. He straight away plunged himself into his task and at the same time master minded the plan of action designed to cement Guru's teachings in the public consciousness.

It was the formation of the Sree Mulam Popular Assembly in Travancore in 1904 that intensified the growth of socio-political consciousness of the Ezhavas and their attempts to social mobility. Kumaran Asan became member of Sri Mulam Popular Assembly in 1905 as a representative of the SNDP Yogam and Ezhavas. Membership in the Assembly at that time, by an untouchable Ezhava, was considered a great achievement of the community and it became a platform for demanding or bargaining to get the rights of education, freedom of movement, employment and so on. It gave him the opportunity to raise his voice against the unjust treatment meted out to the downtrodden communities. In the Travancore Legislative Council that started in 1808, N. Kumaran Asan became the first nominated Ezhava only in 1920.

Kumaran Asan was a prolific poet and writer, contributing significantly to Malayalam literature. His works include both poetry and prose, and he is particularly known for his philosophical and socially relevant poems. With the motive to implement the project effectively, he opened up a new poetic genre as the medium through such works as *Veena Poovu*, *Nalini* and *Chintavishtayaya Sita*. The ornaments he presented to Malayalam literature giving importance in them to the new tendencies which sprouted both in oriental and occidental poetry are continuing to shine even today with undiminished brilliance, acquiring fuller elegance with the pas-

sage of time. The reverberations echoing across *Duravastha* and *Chandala Bikshuki* are nothing but the reflections of Guru's aphorisms. The power of Asan's pen to penetrate deep into the minds of his readers was amazing and unmatched.

Asan rendered yeomen service to the cause of the community in his capacity as a member of the Travancore Legislative Council and Popular Assembly. Simultaneously he travelled the length and breadth of the state and engaged himself in organisational matters of the Yogam. In the midst of this busy schedule, poems of classic proportions flowed out of his pen. During his stint as the editor of the magazine *Vivekodayam*, Asan's faculty as a fine writer of prose was also manifested.

Every line of poetry he wrote highlighted his aim to culturally uplift society and reflected the spiritual impact of Guru's teachings. These lines carry the messages of eternal love, sacrifice and kindness. A short biography of the Guru titled *Sree Narayana Guru* written by Asan is the basis of all the biographies of Sree Narayana Guru today. Asan's hymns like *Gurusthavam*, *Gurupadadasakam* etc. are recited daily by the devotees of Guru. He was one among the triumvirates of Malayalam poetry who made Malayalam poetry immortal with many *Mahakavyas*. He died in the boat tragedy at Pallana on 16th January 1924.

5.4.3 Sahodaran Ayyappan

K. Ayyappan was born in Kumbalathuparambil house in Cherai situated in Vypin Island in Ernakulam district. He was born in a cultured family of physicians in Cherai. He was the younger brother of Achutan Vaidyan, a devotee of Sree Narayana Guru and Sree Chatambi Swamikal. After acquiring degree from Maharaja's College,

Thiruvananthapuram, he became famous as Ayyappan B A. He was attracted by Sree Narayana Guru's social reformations that made great ripples in society. He was progressive in outlook and at the same time a rationalist in thought. He stayed and worked in Aluva Advaithashram for some time. When he met Guru at Aluva Advaithashram, Guru entrusted him with a letter to be delivered to Kumaranasan. It was with that letter that Ayyappan first came to Thiruvananthapuram. The assistance rendered by Asan in promoting Ayyappan's education was inestimable. Only after taking his B A Degree, he had returned to Cherai.

In 1917, he formed inter-dining Movement. The Misrabhojanam which took place at Cherai was a decisive stage in his social life. In its name he was awarded the nick title of Pulayan Ayyappan. After sometime he could have taken up journalism as a profession. But he dedicated his life to remain in the social scene and work of the elimination of inhuman customs and superstitions and make the attempt victorious through the ideals of Guru. He had no ambition of political power. Consequently, he had once thrown off his ministership in the State on other considerations.

If Guru's services to social cause were accomplished through a silent revolution, Ayyappan's were rendered through writing, speech and action. Guru and *sisya* thus traversed along two paths and worked for the human progress. He founded the Sahodara Sangham in 1917. His aim was the eradication of caste. He ran a newspaper called *Sahodaran* and afterwards a magazine called *Yukthivadi*. His paper *Sahodaran*, published his progressive thoughts in the form of touching poems. Besides, his editorials and articles in the *Sahodaran* captivated even the ordinary people. It was long

before the birth of progressive literature that Ayyappan had composed popular and appealing poems on a large scale.

He adored the sciences as the leading lights of modern age. The style witnessed in Ayyappan's poetic creations is the language of the ordinary man himself. His services are multifaceted. By awakening the good giving power that lies slumberous in the human mind, was he not creating a turbulent sea in the human mind and thus in a sense, administering a shock to human consciousness. Many of his articles and speeches are historic. He was a member of Cochin and Travancore Assembly. He was also Minister in Cochin and Travancore State. The present MG Road in Ernakulam was constructed during his tenure and also the Goshree Bridge project connecting Islands of Kochi was his idea. He died on 6th March 1968.

5.4.4 T K Madhavan

T. K. Madhavan was a prominent figure in the social reform movements inspired by Sree Narayana Guru in Kerala. He was born in the famous Alummoottil family in 1886. Being a member of an Ezhava family he faced the harsh realities of caste-based discrimination during his childhood. Despite being a member of an aristocratic and wealthy family, the societal prejudices and restrictions based on caste were burdensome. During that time, individuals from the lower castes, referred to as avarnas, were denied basic rights such as the freedom to travel on public pathways. T. K. Madhavan, along with others, took it upon himself to challenge these injustices. His commitment to the teachings of Sree Narayana Guru motivated him to actively engage in the fight against caste discrimination and work towards creating social awareness. One of the foremost grihastha disciples of Sree Narayana Guru, his activities were fully inspired by Guru's

messages

Due to unexpected causes, Madhavan could not complete High School education. Yet by dint of his own effort, he acquired extraordinary faculty to write and speak the English language. His speech in English in the State Assembly kept everyone spell bound. The speech centred round the grievances of the *avarnas*. Mahatma Gandhi's *ahimsa* concept and Sree Narayana Guru's spiritual vision exerted tremendous influence upon him. He had from his very youth launched an uncompromising war against social inequalities and the high-handed laws of the foreign rulers. And he could fan out his struggle to a wider field with his assumption of the editorship of the paper *Desabhimani*. When his heroic and powerful voice echoed into the social midst, and thundered against the administrative injustices, the rulers' rejoinder to it was unconscionable.

It was at that time that he embarked on a valiant conflict for the establishment of equal rights for the *avarnas* and non-Hindus. In that struggle, he achieved the active participation of the *savarnas* to reflect his diplomatic approach in no mean measure. He endeavoured to secure the rights of the backward classes, maintain at the same time absolute cordiality between the various communities. His reputation rose to all India level. He asserted beyond a shadow of doubt that freedom of passage was human's birth right. With these achievements T K Madhavan earned the esteem of even Mahatma Gandhi. Along with that, the right of the *avarnas* for admission to temples was got recognised by the authorities through the columns of the *Desabhimani*. Soon the waves of his agitation reached the State Assembly. Nair leaders like Changanacherry Parameswaran Pillain and T K Velu Pillai spoke out that the arguments of T K

Madhavan should be accepted. Pursuing his efforts, he went to Tirunelveli and met Mahatma Gandhi and got signed by him a message enjoining his goal of achieving Temple entry and declared that fact at a press conference. T K could also succeed in getting top priority for the extermination of untouchability from the constructive programmes of the Congress.

T K Madhavan was a leading disciple of Sree Narayana Guru who strengthened and extended the activities of SNDP Yogam. As its secretary, he toured throughout Kerala and admitted members into it. He had considerable love and esteem for Kumaranasan. Yet he could not agree with Asan's moderate views. Nor could the latter endorse T K's extreme canvas. But the services of T K to the community will ever be remembered as those of Asan. The owner of an extraordinary individuality, he gave political colouring to social problems for the first time. He was the touring Secretary of SNDP Yogam and spread the activities of the Yogam. He was the foremost leader of the historic Vaikkom Sathyagraha in 1924. It was T K Madhavan who was instrumental in making Mahatma Gandhi's visit to Vaikkom Sathyagraha. He was a very good organizer and activist. He died on 28th April 1930.

5.4.5 C V Kunjuraman

C V Kunjuraman was a significant figure in the social and reformation movements in Kerala. As a follower of Sree Narayana Guru, Kunjuraman's contributions to literature, journalism, and social reform were extensive. He was born in Paattathil house in Mayyanad in Kollam district. He was very much interested in social reformations. He was instrumental in starting the *Kerala Kaumudi* newspaper in 1911, which became a significant platform for spreading the teachings

of Sree Narayana Guru and promoting social transformation. The newspaper has played a significant role in shaping public opinion and promoting social and political awareness in Kerala. He was the proprietor - editor, printer, publisher and even the proof-reader. Started in 1911, in Mayyanad, it had grown over the years as one of the most influential dailies in Malayalam.

It is noteworthy that Kunjuraman faced the challenges of discontinuing his formal education but later resumed his studies while working in the Forest department. His journey included teaching at various schools, a brief stint as a lawyer, and his pivotal role in founding the *Kerala Kaumudi* daily. Kunjuraman's speeches, articles, and editorials aimed to inspire people to follow the ideals of the Guru. His diverse literary contributions, encompassing novels, short stories, poetry, biographies, and essays, highlight his multifaceted approach to addressing social issues and bringing about positive transformations in society. Additionally, his association with the *Sujananadini* (of Paravur Kesavan Asan) publication demonstrate his early involvement in journalism and his commitment to social issues.

C. V. Kunjuraman was not only a close associate of Sree Narayana Guru but also an active participant in the intellectual and social activities of Sivagiri Mutt, a spiritual and cultural center founded by the Guru. On several occasions, he had extensive discussions with Sree Narayana Guru on various aspects of caste and religion, seeking interpretations and definitions of the Guru's ideas. He played a prominent role as one of the leaders in the Vaikom Satyagraha, a social protest against untouchability centered around the Shiva temple at Vaikom during 1924–25. His role in the Vaikom Satyagraha, a move-

ment advocating for temple entry rights and social equality, particularly in the context of caste discrimination, played a crucial part in the broader reformation movement in Kerala. C. V. Kunjuraman served as the General Secretary of the SNDP (Sree Narayana Dharma Paripalana Yogam) in 1928, further contributing to the propagation of social reform initiatives. He served as the general secretary of the Sree Narayana Dharma Paripalana Yogam (SNDP Yogam) during two separate periods, 1928–29 and 1931–32.

C. V. Kunjuraman started a school for low-caste Hindus at Vellamanal, Mayyanad, Quilon, and assumed the role of its headmaster. This reflects his commitment to providing educational opportunities to marginalized communities. He also served as a member of the Sree Moolam Popular Assembly, contributing to the socio-political landscape during that time. C. V. Kunjuraman's multifaceted contributions, ranging from social activism and leadership in reform movements to educational initiatives, highlight his holistic approach to social change and his commitment to Sree Narayana Guru's principles. He passed away in 1948, leaving behind a legacy of impactful articles and books that continue to be revered. His passing marked the end of a significant chapter in Kerala's history, leaving behind a legacy of social reform, journalism, and literary contributions.

5.4.6 Moorkoth Kumaran

Moorkoth Kumaran was a devoted follower of Sree Narayana Guru, and his life and contributions reflect a deep commitment to the Guru's teachings and the promotion of social reform in the Malabar region of Kerala. Moorkoth Kumaran was born on 9th June 1874 in Thalassery. Kumaran became closely associated with Sree Narayana Guru during the founding

of the Jagannatha Temple in Thalassery. He became a permanent traveller in the path of Sree Narayana Guru and accompanied him on many trips. He played a pivotal role in implementing Guru's order to allow Harijans (lower caste individuals) into the Jagannath Temple. This was part of the broader Temple Entry Movement initiated by Sree Narayana Guru. He played a significant role in installing Sree Narayana Guru's statue in Thalassery while the Guru was alive. It was Moorkkoth who entrusted the Italian sculptor Prof. Thavarali, to make Sree Narayana Guru's statue.

Moorkkoth Kumaran was actively involved in spreading Sree Narayana Guru's messages in the Malabar region. He authored a biography of Sree Narayana Guru titled "*The Biography of Sree Narayana Guruswamy*," which remains one of the most popular biographies of the Guru even today. He wrote articles, books, and translated Guru's *Darshanamala* into the form of slokas. He died on 25th June 1941. His life and work and dedication to Sree Narayana Guru's ideals continue to be remembered, and his contributions played a crucial role in the social and religious reforms in Kerala.

5.4.7 C Krishnan (Mithavadi Krishnan)

Mithavadi C. Krishnan (1885–1949) was an influential social reformer, journalist, and political activist of Kerala. He played a significant role in the socio-political landscape of Kerala during the early to mid-20th century. He was born in Changaramkumarathu family in Mullalessery, Kannur on 11th June 1867. Krishnan became famous as an advocate. Using his legal expertise he contributed much to social reform movements. He played a significant role in establishing the Malabar Thiyya Yogam, showcasing his

commitment to the welfare of the Thiyya community. Krishnan was a prominent journalist and the founder of the "*Mithavadi*", which he started in 1911. He was the editor of the magazine. It was because of this magazine he is known as Mithavadi Krishnan. Through this *Mithavadi*, he addressed social issues, advocated for the rights of the marginalized, and played a crucial role in promoting social justice. Kumaranasan's poem *Veena Poovu* was first published in *Mithavadi*.

Krishnan was a model in both embracing and promoting the messages of Sree Narayana Guru. His actions reflected a dedication to the Guru's principles of social equality and justice. Krishnan served as the legal advisor of the SNDP Yogam, a prominent organization founded by Sree Narayana Guru for the upliftment of the Ezhava community and other backward classes. He actively worked towards strengthening the activities of the SNDP Yogam, contributing to its organizational and social goals. Krishnan presided over many meetings of the SNDP Yogam, including the Annual Meeting associated with the installation of Sarada Devi at Sivagiri. His involvement in these gatherings showcased his leadership within the organization. His declaration on that day, "this institution is going to be the Sringeri for our future developments and the Holy Hill which will be sought after by our own people from here and everywhere" has become historic.

C. Krishnan actively participated in social reform movements, including those initiated by Sree Narayana Guru. He was committed to challenging caste-based discrimination and promoting the ideals of social equality. He also played a role in the Vaikom Satyagraha. He died in 1938, at the age of 71. His contributions to journalism, social reforms, and political activism made Mithavadi Krishnan a respected

figure in Kerala's history. His efforts were aligned with the broader movements for social justice, education, and political rights in the region during a crucial period in India's history. Mitavadi Krishnan's multifaceted contributions, encompassing legal advocacy, social reforms, and leadership roles in organizations like the SNDP Yogam, mark him as a key figure in the history of social and cultural movements in Kerala.

5.4.8 Kottukoikkal Velayudhan

He was born in Thazhava in Kollam district on 4th August 1896. He had the luck to meet and pay obeisance to Guru at the age of 12. He also got a chance to visit Sivagiri frequently and also to enjoy the affection of Guru. He took special care to keep Guru's messages and advices on record. He was a teacher in Aluva Advaita Ashram. He took part in the Vaikkom Sathyagraha in 1924 with the permission of Guru. He participated in the organization of the All Religions Meet in Aluva and also attended the meetings. He wrote the biography of Guru under the title *Sree Narayana Guru* and published it in 1975. He died on 1st April 1986. His life's journey, involvement in social movements, and dedication in preserving and spreading the teachings of Sree Narayana Guru through a biography contribute to the historical and cultural narrative of Kerala.

5.4.9 C Ketsavan

C. Kesavan is another historical figure who was involved in the political and social life of Kerala. C Kesavan was born at the time when social injustice was tearing humanity. Hence, he could not help reacting to the situation and thus convert his life into a weapon of struggle against injustice. The social discriminations he

had to face during childhood paved the way for the vigorous struggle for equality and social justice of his later life. The teachings of Sree Narayana Guru fuelled his plan of action. He was convinced that those teachings were indispensable for peace and harmony of the world, and therefore his attention was turned towards converting them into practice. In the process he was turned as a leader of the Nivarthana Agitation led by the marginalised people of Kerala for compelling the authorities to release those rights from their unjust and unauthorised hold. What he did was to let loose a social and political storm.

He was born in an ordinary family at Mayyand, near Kollam. He had enough financial and social hurdles to his education. For some time he occupied himself as a teacher and then a lawyer. The administration was actually vested in a handful of savarnas in whose grip the power of the king was a mere vestige. Tax was levied on property held. So the right to vote was confined to the landholders who were chiefly savarnas. Thus, the *avarnas* were deprived of votes. The historic struggle against this gross injustice, launched by the Christian Muslim Ezhava communities, is the Nivarthana Agitation. It swept across the State like a fierce tornado. The Government legally prohibited the agitation. C Keasvan ignored the prohibitory order and delivered his famous and masterly speech at Kozhancherry which elevated him to prime leadership status. The speech was severely critical of the administration and with that the Nivarthana Agitation crowned itself with success. The government was compelled to bow before the onrush of people's commotion. It had to concede their demands. As a result, communal representation and reservation of seats were recognised. With the institution of a Public Service Commission, the *avarnas*

were given increased representation in government services.

C. Kesavan was imprisoned because of his part in the Nivarthana agitation. On his release which created a sensation all over the state, a meeting was organised by the citizens of Alleppey to honour him. For having welcomed the gathering, T M Varghese, a top-ranking leader of the State Congress, who was Deputy Speaker of the Assembly then, was dismissed from that position. C Kesavan continued with his successful work at the Nivarthana with more work for the reclamation of the avarnas. The task was facilitated by his position as Secretary to SNDP Yogam. He was also a staunch champion of Sree Narayana Guru's testimonials. He had acquired name and reputation as the Chief Minister of Travancore – Cochin State. His work *Jeevitha Samaram* constitutes a throbbing chapter in Kerala's history.

5.4.10 Muloor S Padmanabha Panicker

He was born in Edanad, near Chengannur in 1869. He became famous in the field of Malayalam Literature as *Sarasakavi*. Muloor who was notable among the messengers of Guru's mission, founded many organizations and many educational institutions in central Travancore. He played the main role in establishing Anandabhuteswara temple in Mezhuveli. He had written

almost fifty poems like *Kaviramayanam*, *Sthreedharmam* etc. Muloor's hymns on Guru are famous. He was the first Editor of the publication Kerala Kaumudi. He was a member of Srimulam Praja Sabha for 14 years. He also worked as the Vice President of SNDP Yogam. Guru had visited Kerala Varma Soudham, Muloor's house in Elavaumthitta. It was from this house that the first Sivagiri Pilgrims started their pilgrimage to Sivagiri in 1932. He died in 1931.

5.4.11 Kuttipuzha Krishna Pillai

Kuttippuzha Krishna Pillai (1900-1971) a close follower of Sree Narayana Guru, was a scholar, critic, journalist, philosopher and atheist. He is considered to be one of the prominent literary critics of the Malayalam language and literature. He wrote a number of books related to literary criticism and philosophy. that include *Granthavalokanam*, *Vicharaviplavam*, *Vimarsanavum Veeckshavum*, *Sahithyam*, etc. He was the head of the department of Malayalam in U.C College, Aluva. He also held the position of president of Kerala Sahithya Academy and was the convenor of the text book committee. He was the recipient of the prestigious Soviet land Nehru Award. He was a crusader against blind faith and superstitions and brought about tremendous change in its outlook of the people in the Kerala society.

Recap

- ◆ “Only a spiritual enumeration could make changes in the mentality of the people and would lead to the success of any institution and awakening of a society like Kerala,”
- ◆ Dr. Palpu was behind the “Travancore Memorial”, popularly known as the “Malayali Memorial”.
- ◆ Palpu’s efforts to assert the claims of the Ezhava community by organising the Ezhavas to a mass movement
- ◆ Formation of a Legislative Assembly - the Sree Mulam Popular Assembly in Travancore and the growth of socio-political consciousness of the Ezhavas and their attempts to social mobility and equality
- ◆ If Guru’s services to social cause were accomplished through a silent revolution, Ayyappan’s were rendered through writing, speech and action.
- ◆ Kumaran Asan’s most famous works *Duravastha* and *Chandala Bikshuki* are nothing but the reflections of Guru’s aphorisms.
- ◆ Mahatma Gandhi’s ahimsa concept and Sree Narayana Guru’s spiritual vision exerted tremendous influence on TK Madhavan

Objective Questions

1. Who formed inter-dining movement (Misrabhojanam) in 1917?
2. In which year Sahodaran Ayyapan founded the Sahodara Sangham?
3. In which year the historic Vaikkom Satyagraha was held?
4. Whose biography of Sreenarayananaguru became the basis of all biographies?

Answers

1. Sahodaran Ayyapan	3. 1924
2. 1917	4. Kumaran Asan’s

Assignments

1. What does Grihastha mean?
2. Write on Kumaran Asan's relationship with Guru
3. Write on Dr. Palpu and Sahodaran Ayyappan.

Suggested Reading

1. *Sree Narayana Guru, Sampoorna Kritikal*, (2018), Sivagiri Mutt: Sree Sadasivan T D. (2013). *Sree Narayana Gurudevanum Grihastha Sishyanmarum*, SPSS, Kottayam.
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1. *Sree Narayana Guru, Sampoorna Kritikal*, (2018), Sivagiri Mutt: Sree Narayana Dharma Sangham Trust.
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3. Kumaran, Moorkothu (2007), *Sree Narayana Guru Swamikalude Jeevacharitram*, Sivagiri Mutt: Sree Narayana Dharma Sangham Trust.



Influence of Guru on Development of Modernity in Kerala



Sreenarayana Guru's Influence on Demography, Society, Economics, Politics and Environment

Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of this unit, the learner will be able to:

- ◆ describe the concept of modernization
- ◆ learn the Guru's philosophy and the methods he adopted to modernize the society of Kerala
- ◆ understand the demography of the period
- ◆ comprehend how the Guru transformed the economic and political relations
- ◆ get exposed to the Guru's views on environment

Prerequisite

Lessons from history which carry stories of great leaders will be a source of strength and motivation to a living generation. The neglect of the lessons of the past will weaken the institutions values and ideals achieved. Compared to the rest of India, Kerala appears to be years ahead in terms of achieving peaceful qualitative changes. The Guru gave a new life to society, a dynamic fervor to history and kindled peaceful revolutionary spirit among the people, bringing out a qualitative transformation.

Key themes

Modernization, Traditional society, Social mobility, Demographic transition

Discussion

According to Lucian W. Pye, “modernization embraces the spirit of enlightenment, acknowledgement of human values, and the acceptance of rational legal norms for government behaviour and mass involvement in political activities (Lucian W Pye 19-20). Modernity is an opening up of the creative powers of ordinary people. It involves an appreciation of the rights and potentialities of individuals of their capacities for expression for happiness and for knowledge.

In most Asian and African societies, modernization has begun during the colonial period. Colonial masters failed to address the problems in a stratified and discriminated society. The nature of traditionalism is different. In India it is caste hierarchy and caste discrimination that prevented modernity and human

rights.

In the traditional Kerala society, social position was decided by caste. Untouchability and unapproachability applied to all except the Nambudiri Brahmins. The pollution laws (Theendal) limited the natural freedom of movement of individuals belonging to all communities. Pulayas, Parayas, Velars and Kusavas were at the bottom of the caste hierarchy in Kerala. They were to keep a distance of 50-60 yards from Savarna Hindus, and 16 yards from Ezhavas (Avarna Hindu). While a Paraya polluted a Pulayan only by a touch, a Vettuvan polluted him by approach. The Avarnas were kept away from Hindu temples owned by caste – Hindus, the Ezhavas in their turn kept Pulayas and other slave castes away from their own.

Article 17 of Indian Constitution “Untouchability is abolished and its practice in any form is forbidden. The enforcement of any disability arising out of ‘Untouchability’ shall be an offence punishable in accordance with law

The taboos on inter-dining and inter-marriages acted as strong bases of caste system. Ignorance and superstitious stabilized caste hierarchy.

Caste rules prevented occupational mobility of individuals belonging to various caste and sub caste groups.

The institution of family in the traditional society was neither free nor rational. The caste and religious consciousness prevented each family from acquiring higher values and rational-ethical social behaviour.

The caste rules, traditional customs and usages put enough restrictions upon the human rights and hindered the social, religious, cultural and political achievement of the people. The Avranas were completely subordinated to the Savarnas who enjoyed economic, cultural and political powers. The land relations, education, language, religion and occupation favoured the Savarna casts, especially the Nambudiris.

The colonial powers whose aim was exploitation, did not want to destabilize the basic social and economic structure

for a long period. Later the missionaries persuaded the authorities to issue orders to eliminate several evil practices of the period. The abolition of poll tax since 1815 in Travancore, the proclamation of granting Nadar women the right to wear jackets or upper clothes in 1859, and in 1865 for all Avarna women, abolition of slavery in 1855, abolition of oozhiyam or forced labour in 1855 were masterminded by the missionaries with the help of British administrators.

However, many declarations and orders remained in paper, the benefits never reached the people. The Savarna masters and bureaucracy joined to deny the benefits to the Avarnas. Thus the colonial period witnessed the twin aspects of traditionalism and modernism existing side by side, leaving majority of human rights issues unsolved.

6.1.1 The Demography of Travancore

Modern Kerala is formed by the unification of native states of Travancore, Cochin and Malabar district of Madras Presidency. The major religious communities were Hindus, Christians and Muslims. The Hindus were in a hierarchical caste order. They were divided into Savarnas and Avarnas based on 'Chaturvarnya system'. They were also known as caste -Hindus and non-caste - Hindus.

The caste-Hindu or Savarnas were Brahmins including Malayali Nambutdiris, Kshatriyas, Ambalavasis and Nairs. Nairs formed the majority caste. They were placed at the bottom of the Savarna castes in terms of status and caste rules. Below Nairs formed Avarna castes who were kept out of the Chaturvarnya system. Avarnas formed the majority of population. Ezhavas formed the majority among

the Avarna caste groups. They enjoyed better status than the other Avarna castes. Pulayas, Vallon, Cheraman, Kurava, Panan, Mannan, Ulladan, Kurichiyan, Malakkuravan, Mala Arayan etc were the other caste and sub caste groups in the Avarna castes. The Avarnas were later listed as backward castes, scheduled castes and scheduled Tribes.

The caste and religious disabilities that existed for centuries made the majority marginalised and were denied education, land and social status. Their conditions reflected in the Demographic of the period.

Physiography

Kerala can be divided into three geographical regions. 1) High lands, 2) Mid land and 3) low lands. The high lands slope down from the Western Ghats which rise to an average height of 900 m, with a number of peaks well over 1,800m in height. This is the area of major plantations like tea, coffee, rubber, cardamom etc. The Mid lands lying between the mountains and the low lands is made up of undulating hills and valleys. This is an area of intensive cultivations, Cashews, rice, ginger and pepper are grown in this area. The low lands or the coastal area, which is made up of the river deltas, back water and shore of Arabian sea, is essentially a land of coconuts and rice. Fisheries and coir industry constitute the major industries of this area.

Kerala is a land of rivers and backwaters, forty-four rivers, forty-one west flowing and three east flowing, cut across Kerala with their innumerable tributaries and branches.

Political profile of Travancore 1901

The kingdom of Travancore also known

as the kingdom of Thiruvithamkoor from 1729 to 1949 became a princely state of British Empire. Travancore covered most of the south of modern Kerala such as Idukki, Kottayam, Alappuzha, Pattanamthitta, Kollam and Thiruvananthapuram districts, major portion of Eranakulam district, puthenchira village of Thrissur district and the southernmost part of modern day Tamil Nadu (Kanyakumari district and some part of Tenkasi district) with the Thachudeya Kaimali enclave of irinjalakuda koodal manikyam temple in the neighbouring kingdom of Cochin. However, Tangasseri area of Kollam city and Achuthengu near Attingal in Thiruvananthapuram were parts of British India.

As per the 1911 Census of India, Travancore was divided into five: Padmanabhapuram, Trivandrum, Quilon, Kottayam and Devikulam of which the first and last were predominantly Tamil-speaking areas.

Demographics

In 1901 Census the population of Travancore was 2,952,157. Hindus formed majority ie 69.91% (2,063,798) Christians 697387 (23.62% and Muslims were 190566(6.46%). In the population 81.98 percent used Malayalam language, 16.17 percent Tamil and 1.35 percent other languages. There were 1,490,165 males and 1,461992 females. Travancore has a density of 416 persons per square mile in 1901. In 2011 Census density showed 859 persons per km, its land is three time as densely settled as compared to the rest of India. Among the population age distribution of 10,000; 0-5 was 1320, 5-15 was 3816, 15-40 -4220 Age 40-60 was 1541 and 60 and Over 423.

According to the first Census taken

in 1875, there were in the state 1,010 females for every 1000 males. In 1881 the proportion was reduced to 1,006 females and in 1891 there was a further fall to 982. In 1901 it was 981 females to 1,000 males. The 2011 Census shows 1,084 females to 1,000 males. With regard to literacy, out of the total Population of 2,952,157 no less than 2,587347 or 87.6 percent were illiterate in 1901. Literacy by sex showed 21.5 percent for males and 3.1 percent for females.

192 Hindu castes tabulated and of these Nayar was the largely represented aggregating 520,941 or 25.6 percent. The next most numerous castes were Ezhavas 191,774 (24.23 percent), the pulaya 206503 (10.1%) Channan 155864 (7.7%)

Modern Kerala, as per 2011 Census has highest literacy rate in India of 93.91%. Life expectancy at birth is 78. Infant mortality 12 per 1000 in 2011, 07 per 1000 in 2018. The UNICEF and World health organization designates Kerala as the world's first baby friendly state via its 'Baby friendly Hospital Initiative'.

As on 2011 a total of 2,280000 Keralites reside outside India. There are more than 25,00,000 migrants living in Kerala from Assam, West Bengal, Bihar, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, Orissa and the North East.

The notable achievement made by the state in the demographic variables have raised concerns also. The change in fertility and mortality rate has brought significant change in the age composition of the population. The demographic trend shows that Kerala is currently passing through the most critical stage of demographic transition result of fertility and mortality change. One of the important consequences of the demographic transition is population aging.

6.1.2 For a Humanistic Society; His philosophy

Sree Narayana Guru's paradigm for the creation of a humanistic society carried the twin aspects of 'Advaita' and 'Humanism'. Advaita formed the spiritual part of his knowledge revolution and humanness the temporal part. By the unique blend of Humanistic Advaita, the Guru repudiated the world of ignorance, inequality prejudice and intolerance.

Human Equality based on Advaita: The Guru expounds the truth of oneness achieved by the realisation of unitiveness between the individual self and the Absolute or Universal self. He says, "That man, this man—thus all that is known in this world if contemplated, is the being of the one primordial Self (Guru, Atmopadesa Satakam, verse 24). Thus, human beings are equal in their self (worth) sharing. This worth in every individual is expressed as dignity in inter-personal relations. Dignity is not the vanity or pride or honour that one may claim due to caste, religion or sex.

Human Equality; emphasised on biological reasons: Equality of mankind is again proved through the biological commonalities found in human beings. The Guru says, "human beings are of one womb, of one form; difference herein none" (Guru, 'Jathi Nirnayam'). He argues that the appearances of Brahmin and other castes are false creations of ignorance and are really the negation of the true nature of humanity. To him human beings belong to the same Species called homosapiens.

He said,

"Man's humanness marks out the human kind

Even as bovinity proclaims a cow

Brahmin hood and such are not thuswise;

None do see this truth, alas (Guru, Jathi Nirnayam)

Human Equality; justified on common human needs: The Guru expounds the truth that the basic desires of human beings such as desire for food, clothing, housing, health and education are the same for all. He wants every individual to acknowledge the truth that "what is dear to you is dear to another also because desires (wants) are of one kind (Guru, Atmo, Verse 21, 22)

Human Equality; Right to happiness of all: The Guru considers happiness as the goal of all human endeavors. He wants everyone to accept this truth and to abstain from any action or words that hurt others. He said, 'what is good for one person and brings misery to another, such actions are opposed to the self, remember (Guru, Atmo, Verse 25)

Awareness campaigns; to instill life skills of a modern society: The aim of social interventions by the Guru was to instill capabilities among the people so as to make them fit for a better life, a life of knowledge, love and kindness. The Guru moved among the people to change their attitudes and to make them confident in facing new challenges of modern society.

Public speakers were selected by the Sree Narayana Dharma Paripalana Yogam (SNDP Yogam) and were given adequate training on selected topics based on the Guru's instructions. Guru mainly gave thrust to four topics: religion, ethics, education and industry. He directed those speakers to use every opportunity to educate people. Strict guidelines were given to avoid derogatory language and tone that would seem offensive to the people belonging to other religions.

The Guru asked the speakers to give “special attention to inspire the people on uplifting the poor members of the lower echelons of society in the hierarchy. Under the guidance of the Guru, SNDP Yogam selected qualified volunteers that included Sannyasins, Ayurvedic doctors and teachers. They were asked to deliver speeches at temples, market places, at family functions and also to the invited listeners wherever possible. Public speakers gave talks on avoiding superstitions and evil practices, on moral and ethical life, lessons on unity and importance of education and hard work.

For creating a Rationalist Society: The Guru knew that social mobility and modern civic life was badly hindered by superstitions and bad customs. Peacefully he removed superstitions and bad customary practices from the mindset of the people. The Guru prohibited the traditional form of worship that involved animal sacrifices, cock sacrifice, giving blood and animal flesh to please the Gods. He stopped fetishism, exorcism and witchcraft which were done to propitiate God.

Edgar Thurston recorded in 1909 that

Article 25 of the Indian Constitution gives every person the right to freedom of conscience and the right to freely profess, practice and propagate religion subject to public order, morality and health.

The Guru established temples across the length and breadth of Kerala. The temples of Narayana Guru were centers of life skills development. The Guru installed ‘Jyothi’ a lamp at Karamukku near Thrissur and Murukkumpuzha near Thiruvananthapuram with metal plaque inscribing the life skills ‘Sathyam’, ‘Dharma’, ‘Daya’ and ‘Prema’ (Truth, Duties, Compassion and Love). To him temples should enrich the people culturally

because of the efforts of the Vedic scholar and religious reformer Nanu Asan (The Guru) devil worship is disappearing in Travancore (Thurston, “Caste and Tribes of Southern India. Vol.11.400)

Elimination of bad customs and practices: The Guru stopped certain meaningless, but expensive social ceremonies, like Talikettu (Child Marriage), thirandukuli (public announcement of a girl attaining puberty) and pulikudi (a primitive custom of drinking concoction during the seventh month of the first pregnancy). Poor families were compelled to observe such customs that drained their savings and put them in debt trap. The Guru continuously made announcements, and speeches to prevent such customs. As a result all communities gradually stopped such practices.

For freedom of worship in a modern society: The consecration of Siva idol at Aruvippuram in the year 1888 was a peaceful assertion of the universal claim on freedom of worship. He asserted the right of every Indian irrespective of the station of his birth, caste and creed not only to worship God but also to raise religious institutions.

and spiritually through their attached libraries, lecture halls, educational institutions and industries. He insisted that everyone irrespective of caste or religion should enter temples and worship.

The Guru’s reforms regarding temples gave a new meaning to social life. People became conscious of their folly of action, the ignorance and irrationalism they carried along with their religious practices.

Social Progress through Organizations: Sree Narayana Guru encouraged forming of voluntary organisations for human progress at the beginning of the twentieth century Kerala. For the people who were ignorant about 'togetherness', collective endeavours and communication due to caste restrictions, voluntary organisations called 'Yogam', 'Samajam', 'Sabha' and 'Sangham' became a development paradigm.

The SNDP Yogam established in 1903 provided the Guru an effective platform to disseminate his ideas and to rouse popular opinion against social, religious and economic evils. He always asked the people to 'organise and achieve strength' to empower themselves, to fight against injustices and to gain what is due to them.

Apart from SNDP Yogam, Guru's followers started hundreds of samajams, sabha and sanghams throughout Kerala. The sabhas played an important role in mobilising people and to take collective actions for social and economic changes. Establishment of schools, temples and industrial centres were the main functions of the samajams, apart from disseminating the philosophy and messages of the Guru.

6.1.3 The Guru for Economic Equality

Economic empowerment of the marginalised became a major concern of the Guru. He found that the traditional feudal system of production with its limited output was hardly sufficient for the society and the majority had to struggle for their survival. Moreover, the increase in population, rise in literacy and the growing expectation of the people demanded more production, occupational mobility, capital, skilled labour and new technology. Quite naturally, the Guru's attention was concentrated on these.

The guru advocated industrialization, modernization of cottage industries, capital formation especially through chitties, entrepreneurship through joint stock companies and savings for ensuring economic freedom to the deprived. His ideas of collective self-reliance through self-help groups (samajams) became important in transforming the society.

The guru inspired his followers to organize agro-industrial exhibitions to enable people, especially the Avarnas to learn the technological progress and its impact on production. The first such exhibition was held along with the second annual general meeting of the SNDP yogam in January 1905 at Quilon and the second exhibition along with the fourth annual general meeting of the SNDP yogam in March 1907 at Cannanore (Kannur). Finished products, tools of production, machinery for modernizing cottage industries etc., from all parts of India, Burma and Ceylon were exhibited. Such exhibitions made the people aware of the changes taking place in other areas and need for modernization.

The Guru declared at Cherai in 1912, "after education next is industry which is required for wealth and prosperity of a society. The resources of our society are low and financial advance or progress is impossible without industries. The rich people also have to concentrate on this affair and if one person alone cannot purchase the machinery, a company may be registered. We export raw materials like iron ore, clay, and coconut fibre and import the processed products at high prices because we do not have access to technology, but it would have been better if the above material has been processed here. The remedy is to send our children for training to these factories abroad. This is the duty of the rich".

He said "plant sapling in available

places, teach scientific methods in industry and hold separate meetings on industry in the annuals of the Yogam. It is better to have more entrepreneurs in a society than to have government employees." When people had approached him at Irinjalakkuda to install an idol, he asked them to establish an industry. He encouraged his followers to start a weaving center at Aruvippuram where he wanted to implement modern weaving.

The Indian Review, an English journal published from Madras (1900-1982) reported in October 1906 that "an organization is being started recently by thiyyas for their social and economic progress. Its leaders are giving primary importance to industry. Organizations are formed to create aptitude for industry among community members. Brilliant students are sent to Japan for industrial training. Already many factories are started by Thiyyas in Travancore and Cochin to produce coir products."

T.K. Madhavan gave special attention to form self-help groups to improve the living conditions of the poor. Sixty societies were organized and twenty of them were registered under the Co-operative department. He himself took initiative to form the 'Kumarakom Kakkavavasya Sahakarana Sangam in 1928 for the betterment of the marginalized laborers.

Initially coir exporting companies were monopolized by foreigners. With the expansion of coir industry individuals from different communities entered in this field. Ezhavas mainly formed the entrepreneurs and skilled labourers in this industry. Many Ezhava families began coir startups which gave employment for thousands of people. In 1921 total coir labourers were 1,02,634 and coir factory labourers were only 5101. In 1930 out of 51 coir factories in Travancore 44

belonged to Ezhavas. In 1930 the number of workers in production and trade was 11,65,196. 7,20,887 labourers worked in industrial Sector. The Guru also gave special attention to the introduction of new technology in the weaving sector. The weavers were encouraged to trade their finished products to other parts of state. Weaving factories rose to 33 in 1930.

In 1930 Total number of joint-stock companies in Travancore was 372, registered chitties in 1929 was 10,735 and co-operative societies rose to 1738 in 1930. As a result of Gurus messages and interventions entrepreneurs began to sprout from all communities that led to the 'capacity building of the people especially of the marginalised. These economic activities enhanced peoples choices, occupational mobility, literacy and health care and later became the basis of Kerala Model Development.

6.1.4 Guru's influence on Environment

The term Environment traces its origin from the French word 'environ' which means surroundings. The environment comprises of the surroundings including the air, the water and the earth. It refers to the surrounding (both living and non-living) of the living species. The human-beings, plants, animals and other living beings operate in the environment.

Environment is also sometimes referred to as habitat. Living things such as animals and plants interact with both other living and non-living things. Similarly, non-living things such as soil, water, climate, temperature, sunlight and air interact with other non-living and living things. There is an intimate and harmonious relationship between living organisms and environment. Ecology is the branch of science that studies the

interaction between organisms and their environment. The interaction of living beings, including human-beings, brings changes in the environment. Similarly, living beings also display changes within them with the change in the environment.

Sree Narayana Guru gave much importance to environment. His principle about environment was, “live and let others live.” Guru says that, “Man is worse than the rest of the animals in his desires. Because of his unbridled desires, he cut down trees and destroys the beauty of nature for the sake of plantations, smoky towns and factories. Man, trots about the earth as a veritable demon of destruction. As he marches, he carries behind him a trail of devastation. Not satisfied with this destruction, he tampers with the crust of the earth, making it weaker and weaker day by day.” He suggested that the Ashrams and temples should be planned, without destroying nature.

Environment is used mainly for conditions in which organism live and thus consists of air, water, food and sunlight which are based on the needs of all living beings and plants to carry out their life functions. The environment includes other living organisms, temperature, wind, rainfall, etc. It is also called an ecosystem of the natural unit consisting of all plants, animals and micro-organisms (biotic factors) in an area functioning together with all the non-living physical (abiotic) factors of the environment. Thus, environment refers to everything that is around us. It can be living or non-living things. It includes physical, chemical and other natural forces live in their environment. They constantly interact with it and change in response to conditions in their environment. In the environment there are interactions between animals, plants, soil, water, and other living and non-living things.

Kerala represents one of gorgeous fractions in the world profusely blessed by the nature. The environmental elements played an important role in deciding the destiny of the mankind. The Western Ghats and the three oceans encompassed the land and it acted as a natural safeguard. It resulted in the creation of a separate cultural and political entity. Moderate climate, fertility of soil, rivers, seashore and mountain ranges with valuable spices are the benedictions of nature. It is said that history as a coin, environment and chronology formed the two sides of the same coin almost like the right and left eyes of an individual.

The geographical position has its own uniqueness and its landscape has its own beauty. In the poetic language of Mahakavi Vallathol Narayana Menon, it “Sleeps with head on the lap of the Sahyadri clad in green” and her feet pillow on the Lord Gokarna on the other.” This geographical position as a narrow strip of land hemmed in between the Western Ghats on the one side and the Arabian Sea on the other has considerably influenced the course of its history. The climatic conditions decided the temperaments of the people largely. The climate although very hot and seldom.

Narayana Guru had holistic perspective on environment. To him all animate living things and inanimate objects compose a unitive phenomenon created by the Absolute. “Oh! Mother! You are the one who appears as fish, as deer, as snake, as mountain and as birds, everything is seen, your own transformed form, you are the earth, the river.” (Janani Navaratna Manjari). He was a lover of nature. To him human beings, one among the species, have no right to encroach and destroy nature. They have no right to steal what is due to other animals and birds. Since our life is sustained by mountains, rivers, forests etc., any attempt to pollute

or destroy nature and the living things is irrational, immoral and unethical.

From childhood onwards the Guru had the habit of retreating in the forests for meditation. As a wanderer after his thapas in Maruthwamala the Guru spent much time by seaside with fishermen. The places the Guru chose for Thapas, meditation and social work and ashrams and several temples he established were marked by beauty and greenery. For instance, Maruthwamala where he did his tapes was in Western Ghats. Aruvippuram where he installed Siva idol in 1888 is a unique place of hill, forest and river. 'Sivagirikunnu', he selected for his Ashram is a beautiful place at Varkala and now it is an international tourist destination. 'Advaitasramom' at Aluva is also marked by its natural beauty; river, fresh air and serenity.

The Guru knew the 'flora and fauna' of the land of Kerala. He knew the medicinal value of plants very well. He recommended medicines using plants for the ailment of the devotees. The Guru wanted to conserve the flora and fauna. He wanted to protect environment for sustainable development. He asked the people to keep surroundings clean and pollution free.

6.1.5 The Guru's influence on demand for political equality

The struggle for political equality is a continuous process in a differentiated and discriminated society. Political equality, the most important tenet of Democracy, is based on the right of the citizen's direct access to the sources of authority.

On Religion and Politics: Sree Narayana Guru always wanted to separate religion from politics. To him on religious matters modern governments should be secular following neutral stand. He presented this idea in the All Religions

Conference held at Aluva in 1924 in the introductory remarks presented by Swami Satyavrata as per the directives from the Guru.

The Guru knew that the sufferings of the marginalised social groups in the twentieth century were due to the obnoxious Savarna-Government nexus and the Government's policy of appeasement of the orthodox Savarnas in public policy decisions on freedom of movement, access to educational institutions and temples, representation in bureaucracy and legislature.

He never wanted to interfere directly with Travancore politics. But he persuaded and supported the Avarna communities to fight peacefully against political injustices. The establishment of Sree Narayana Dharma Paripalana Yogam in 1903 gave opportunities to raise the grievances of the marginalised collectively wherever possible.

The Legislative reforms and the Avarna participation: The legislative reforms in Travancore in 1888 and in 1904 and in Cochin in 1925 were, no doubt improvements on the traditional monarchial form of government. The Sri Mulam Assembly of 1904 was predominantly an assembly of the representatives of the caste-Hindus, land lords and merchants. The Avarna castes could send their representatives to the Assembly only under the provision of the Regulation of 1904 allowing public bodies and associations to send a member. N. Kumaran Asan the first SNDP Yogam General Secretary was the first Avarna to become a member in such a way to the Popular Assembly in 1905. It was only in 1920 an Ezhava (N Kumaran Asan) was nominated to the Legislative Council constituted under the Regulation I of ME 1095 (AD 1919).

The members representing the SNDP Yogam raised the issues such as access to schools, freedom of movement, temple entry, more participation in Legislature and access to bureaucracy. Sahodaran K Ayyappan demanded universal adult franchise from 1918 onwards.

Civic Right League

The struggle of the deprived sections to redress their grievances assumed a concrete shape when Ezhavas, Nadars, Pulayas, Parayas, Kammalas, Muslims, Christians and similar others formed the Paura Sabha-Civic Right League in August 1918. One of the major demands of the Civic Right League was the bifurcation of the Revenue-Devaswom Departments so as to enable the deprived to get due appointments in the Revenue Department. In 1922 Revenue-Devaswom Departments were bifurcated in Travancore and Cochin. The bifurcation led to the recruitment of Avarnas and non-Hindus to the Revenue Department.

Temple entry and Vaikom Satyagraha

An important development of the period AD 1921-25 was that the Avarna assertion of human rights including temple entry had earned the solid support of a large number of liberal minded Savarna leaders. Vaikom Satyagraha (30 March 1924 – Nov 1925), the historic agitation for freedom of movement was conceived and implemented mainly by T K Madhavan with the blessings and directives of the Guru.

T K Madhavan started the agitation first proclaiming the right of all Hindus to enter temples, but later he agreed with Mahatma Gandhi and Congress to limit his agitation to the demand of the use of public roads around the temples. (T K Ravindran, Vaikom 52), Government of Travancore

in November 1925 opened the prohibited roads on three sides of the Vaikom Temple keeping the one on the eastern side closed to non-caste Hindus and non-Hindus. The Guru visited the Satyagrahis and gave full support to their non-violent agitation. His Ashram at vaikkom was given to the volunteers for their daily use. He also donated a sum of rupees thousand and one to the movement.

The Guru and the Labour Union

The Guru and several close associates of him such as Sahodaran K Ayyappan and P K Bhava championed the cause of the exploited working class. P K Bhava a humanist once informed the Guru about the sufferings of the labour class. The Guru said, “Make an organization of the working class, they shall achieve strength and freedom through it”. After getting the blessings of the Guru P K Bhava together with P C Muhammed, Vap Vaidyan, T C Kesavan and N Krishnan organized Travancore Labour Union in 1922. In the inaugural meeting of the Labour Union, Guru’s message was read by Swami Satya Vrathan. “Don’t be afraid, the age of the working class will come soon. Be courageous and get the support of all and move forward”

Sahodaran K Ayyappan, the beloved follower of the Guru established labour associations. Early attempts in this regard were the Vypin Adi Thozhilali Sangham of the coir workers, Coconut climbers, boatmen and agricultural workers, and the Oacham thuruthu Thozhilali Union. Both these labour unions were organized in 1921. The Magazines ‘Sahodaran’ Velakkaran (labourers) and Sthree (Women) run by Ayyappan highlighted the problems of the labours. It was he who used the word ‘Sakhavu’ (Comrade) for the first time in his poem.

Recap

- ◆ Hindu society structured into Savarnas (caste-Hindus) and Avarnas (non-caste-Hindus).
- ◆ Savarnas included Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Ambalavasis, and Nairs (majority caste).
- ◆ Avarnas, majority population, excluded from the Savarna caste system, later listed as backward castes, scheduled castes, and scheduled tribes.
- ◆ Caste and religious disabilities led to marginalisation, denial of education, land, and social status
- ◆ Divided into high lands, mid lands, and low lands.
- ◆ High lands: Major plantations like tea, coffee, rubber, and cardamom.
- ◆ Mid lands: Intensive cultivation of cashews, rice, ginger, and pepper.
- ◆ Low lands: Coastal areas with coconuts, rice, fisheries, and coir industries.
- ◆ Language diversity with Malayalam predominantly spoken.
- ◆ Gender ratio and literacy rates gradually improving over time.
- ◆ Humanistic Advaita formed the Guru's philosophy
- ◆ Emphasis on realisation of oneness between individual and universal self.
- ◆ Dignity in interpersonal relations not based on caste, religion, or sex.
- ◆ Assertion of biological commonalities, negating caste-based distinctions.
- ◆ Humans belong to the same species, Homo sapiens.
- ◆ Focus on uplifting the marginalised and avoiding superstitions.
- ◆ Establishment of schools, temples, and industrial centers for social and economic changes.
- ◆ Organised exhibitions to showcase technological progress.
- ◆ Raised awareness about modernization needs and opportunities
- ◆ Emphasised the importance of industry for societal wealth and prosperity.

- ◆ Encouraged establishment of industries and provided guidance on technology adoption.
- ◆ Formed self-help groups to improve living conditions, especially for the poor.
- ◆ Encouraged entrepreneurship in the coir industry, leading to employment opportunities.
- ◆ Promoted principles of 'live and let live'.
- ◆ Established ashrams and temples amidst beauty and greenery.
- ◆ Promoted spirituality and environmental consciousness.
- ◆ The Guru's awareness campaign for social changes
- ◆ The Guru eliminated superstitions and bad customs
- ◆ He implemented novel ideas for economic change
- ◆ Social organisations for human progress
- ◆ Separation of religion and politics

Objective Questions

1. Which article of the Indian Constitution prohibits untouchability?
2. In which year slavery was abolished in Travancore
3. The year of establishment of SNDP Yogam
4. In which year the first complete census was taken in India
5. The literacy rate of Kerala, according to 2011 census
6. What is the life expectancy at birth (2011 Census)
7. When was the Sree Mulam Assembly formed?
8. Who was the first representative from SNDP Yogam to Sree Mulam Assembly?
9. What philosophy formed the basis of Sree Narayana Guru's teachings?
10. What did the Guru emphasise regarding caste-based distinctions?

Answers

1. Article 17	6. 78
2. 1955	7. 1904
3. 1903	8. N. Kumaran Aan
4. 1881	9. Advaita Vedanta
5. 93.91 percent	10. Assertion of biological commonalities

Assignments

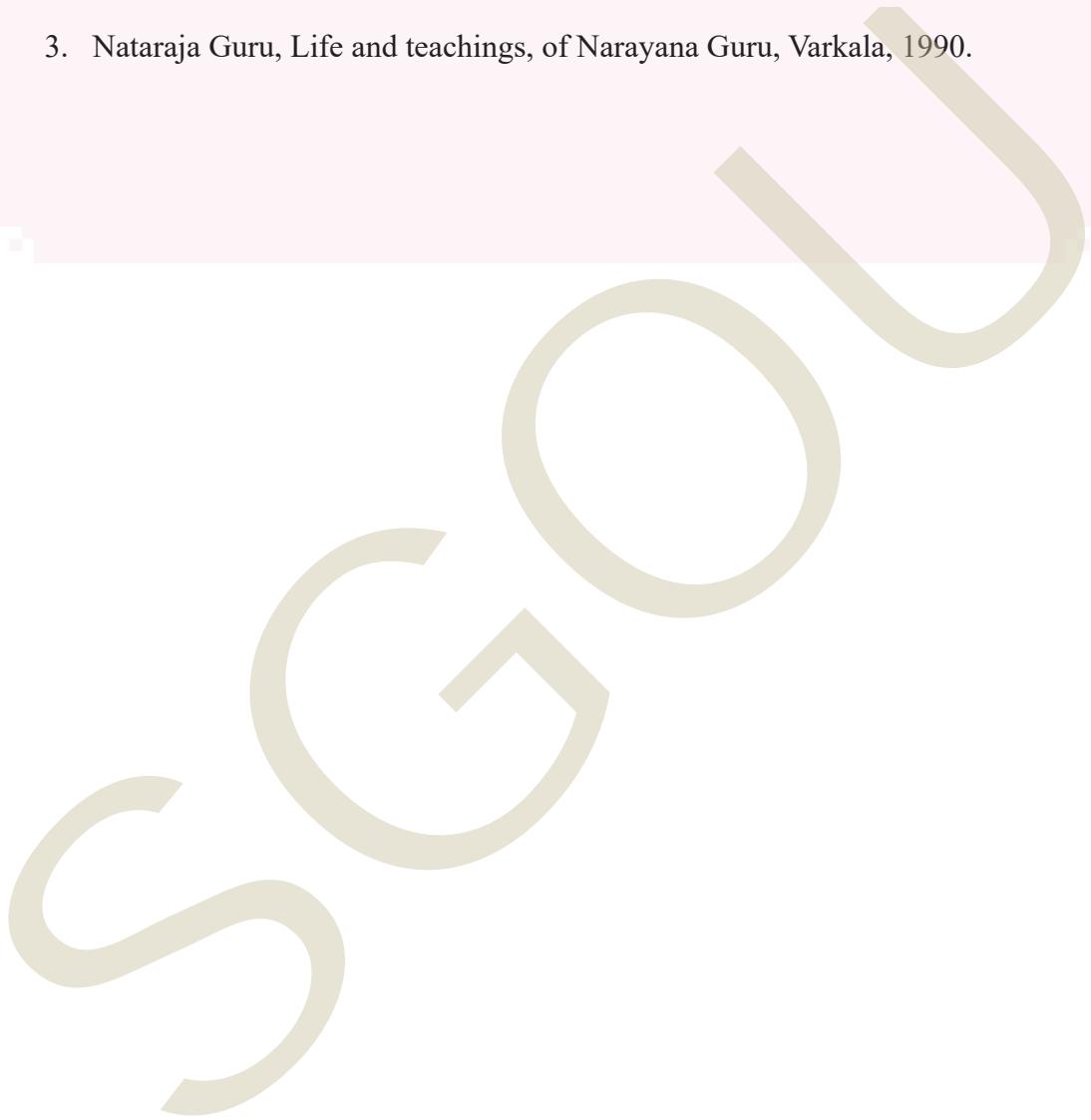
1. Analyse the role of Sree Narayana Guru in promoting social change and modernisation in Kerala.
2. How did caste-based discrimination contributed to the marginalisation of certain communities and affect their access to education, land, and social status?
3. Evaluate the impact of the Guru's initiatives, such as establishing schools, temples, industrial centers, and self-help groups, on Kerala's socio-economic landscape.
4. Write on Guru's influence on environment and on demand for political equality

Suggested Reading

1. Jerald. J. Pereira, Narayana Guru a Social Educator, Thiruvananthapuram, 1989.
2. Muni Narayana Prasad, Philosophy of Narayana Guru, D. C. Print World, New Delhi, 2003.
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5. Nataraja Guru, Life and teachings, of Narayana Guru, Varkala, 1990.

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1. Narayana Prasad, Muni (2006), *Narayana Guru, Complete Works*. New Delhi: National Book Trust.
2. Jerald. J. Pereira, Narayana Guru a Social Educator, Thiruvananthapuram, 1989
3. Nataraja Guru, Life and teachings, of Narayana Guru, Varkala, 1990.





Guru's Influence on Kerala Model Development

UNIT

Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of this unit, the learner will be able to:

- ◆ get exposed to the concept of development and human development
- ◆ get acquainted with the dynamics of Kerala model development
- ◆ get to know the guru's influence on women empowerment
- ◆ familiarise the Guru's views on health care, another criterion of development

Prerequisite

The modern state of Kerala is highly lauded for its remarkable achievements in the fields of social mobility, human development, and economic wellbeing. Kerala's success in achieving harmonious relations among various religious and caste groups may also be instructive to other parts of the world, where routine violence is meted out to social groups at the bottom of the society, even where no caste system exists.

The gains in modern Kerala are achieved challenging a traditional caste ridden society. The qualitative transformation is the result of various endeavours undertaken by social reformers, labour associations, programmes of political parties and policies and reforms of the erstwhile governments of Travancore and Cochin.

Key themes

Development, Human development index, Gender equality, Sustainable development

Discussion

The previous unit discussed about the Guru's influence on demography, society, economics, environment and politics. The development achieved during the pre-independence period became the basis for further development after independence. Though caste system was an Indian phenomenon, Kerala had unique experience of caste discrimination and suppression which made Swami Vivekananda to call Kerala a "lunatic asylum".

The Guru's philosophy and actions enhanced the capabilities of the people, especially that of the marginalised sections. The Savarna caste groups gradually abandoned their rigid caste prejudices and took human approach or social and political issues.

The spread of communist ideology and the rise of working-class spirit gave an impetus to the fight for social and political justice. The emergence and growth of political parties gave opportunities for all irrespective of caste and religion to work for freedom and responsible government.

After independence the states of Indian Union began to function under the Indian Constitution and depending on common economic and financial institutions. But access to opportunities and benefits of growth began to reach slowly to the down trodden people due to caste and religious

discriminations in majority parts of India.

Kerala's unique experience of social transformation and modernization carried out during the pre-independence period enhanced the capabilities of the people of all castes and religious on issues of equality and social justice. Moreover, the conviction of the marginalised in socialist ideas that rejected any form of discrimination and suppression made the democracy in Kerala more dynamic.

The demands for better wages, land reforms, access education and health care became strong among the people. Political parties could not neglect the demands. Public policies of all the successive governments in Kerala became sensitive to the demands of the people that paved the way to the Kerala Model Development.

Development does not just involve the biological and physical aspects of growth, but also the cognitive and social aspects associated with development throughout life. It refers to transforming the people's ways of living /doing things for the better. Development means "the movement upward of the entire system. This social system encloses, besides the so called economic factors, all non-economic factors, including all sorts of consumption by various groups of people; provided collectively; educational and health facilities and levels; the

distribution of power in the society; and more generally economic, social, and political stratification; broadly speaking institutions and attitudes to which we must add..." (Gunnar Myrdal).

6.2.1 Human Development

In a broader sense the notion of human development incorporates all aspects of individuals' well-being, from their health status to their economic and political freedom. According to United Nations 'Human Development Report 1996, human development is the end, economic growth a means.'

The relationship between human development and economic development can be explained in three ways.

- 1. Capacity expansion through Economic Growth:** increase in average income leads to improvement in health and nutrition
- 2. Capacity Expansion through Poverty Reduction:** it is believed that social outcomes can only be improved by reducing income poverty.
- 3. Capacity Expansion through Social Services:** Social outcomes can also be improved with essential services such as education health care and clean drinking water (Anand and Ravallion)

Indices of Human Development: The Human Development Index (HDI) is a composite statistic used to rank countries by level of "human development" and separate very high human development, high human development, medium human development, and low human development countries. The HDI was created by UNDP in 1990.

The HDI is a comparative measure

of life expectancy, literary education and standards of living for countries worldwide. It is a standard means of measuring people' well-being. This index, which has become one of the most influential and widely used indices to compare human development gave the Kerala Model Development international recognition since Kerala has consistently had scores comparable to developed countries. In 2021 Kerala tops the HDI among the Indian states with a score of 0.752 (UNDP method).

Kerala Model Development: The Kerala Model of development refers to the economic practices adopted by the state of Kerala. It is characterised by results showing strong social indication when compared to the rest of the country such as high literacy and life expectancy rates, highly improved access to health care and low infant mortality and birth rates. Despite having a lower per capita income, the state is sometimes, compared to developed countries. These achievements along with the factors responsible for such achievements have been considered characteristic results of the Kerala Model.

The basis of Kerala Model Development can be traced from Sree Narayana Guru's teachings and actions. Dr. K. N. Raj former director of the Centre for Development Studies and the well reputed economist once wrote, "I think that most of the things that welfare economists talk about are those that are obvious to all of us, especially the common people. In fact, even a pure philosopher and religious thinker like Sree Narayana Guru, who achieved a social transformation in Kerala, spoke about, the very same things that welfare economists speak about today; education, health care facilities, even small-scale industries".

Education: The state of Kerala has many achievements in the field of

education, health care, habitat, land reforms etc., generally constitutes what is widely known as Kerala Model of Development. Much of the uniqueness of the Kerala Model of Development is contributed by the Pre-eminent achievements of Kerala in the education and health sectors.

Education accounts for more than one third of the total revenue expenditure of the state. Universalisation of primary education was the result of prioritisation of education by successive governments. The total literacy campaign started by the Government of Kerala in 1988 had a major role in it. The Government propagated the slogan 'Education for all Education for ever.'

The state Governments succeeded in providing equity, access and excellence in education. Government initiatives guarantee education to the marginalised in every Village. Government is also keen to provide nutritious food as noon meals free of cost to the students in government and aided schools. The expenditure on the noon meal scheme is shared by the Centre and State on a 60:40 ratio. The noon meal is provided over 30 lakh students up to class 8.

According to the 2011 census, Kerala has a 93.9% literacy compared to the national literacy rate of 74.0%. In January 2016, Kerala became the first Indian State to achieve 100 percent primary education through its 'Athulyam' Literacy Programmes. Kerala also stands out as the first Indian state to implement ICT-enabled education, featuring hi-tech classrooms in all public schools. Notably, Kerala ranked first in the School Education Quality Index published by NITI Aayog in 2019. Now the state addresses the learning needs up to the 12th class of nearly 50,00,000 students by accommodating them in 12961 schools with the support of more than 1,80,000

teachers (Planning board).

Social intervention in education has been quite prominent in Kerala. It has its own historical background. There seems continuity in these efforts. The 'Poduvidyabyasa Samrakshana Yajanam (Public Education Rejuvenation Campaign) provide evidence of social involvement. Nobel Laureate Amartya Sen has widely written on the 'Kerala Model' of education and attributes Kerala economic and social success to the consistency with which school educations expanded.

Health Care: Improvement in health status of the people is one of the major areas in human development. This can be achieved by increasing the access to health care services, especially for the underprivileged. Kerala has made significant gains in health indices such as high life expectancy, low infant mortality rate, birth rate and death rate, etc. Easy accessibility and coverage of medical care facilities, apart from other social factors such as a high literacy rate well-functioning public distribution system, less exploitation of the workers due to the presence of workers organisations etc. have played a leading role in influencing the health system in Kerala.

The basis for the state's health standards is the state-wide infrastructure of primary health centers. Under the current system, the primary health centers and sub centers were brought under the jurisdiction of local self-governments to respond to local health needs.

The state is also facing problems of Life Style Diseases (Non-Communicable Diseases) like Diabetics, Hypertension, Coronary Heart Diseases, Cancer and geriatric problems. Increasing incidence of communicable diseases like Chikungunya, Dengue, Leptospirosis, Swine Flu etc. are

also major concerns. Substance abuse and alcoholism are increasing threats to health care.

Kerala having a total population of 3.34 crores as per 2011 census. Decade population growth is 4.90 percent compared to 17.7 percent at an India level. Sex ratio shows 1084 women for 1000 men, whereas all India sex ratio is 943 women for 1000 men. Birth rate 14.3 for the state as against 20.4 for India. Death rate stands 7.6% and infant mortality rate is 10 percent when all India rate is 34. Death rate children (0-4) 2.9%, children (5-14) 0.3%, Children (15-49) 2.60%. Life expectancy 74.9 years (Male 72, female 77.8, Source, Planning Board)

The Guru on Health care: Sree Narayana Guru's awareness programmes on 'hygiene' had deep impact on the people who were suffering from infectious diseases and epidemics. Dr. Ross, the Durbar Physician in his report in 1870 had noted that the recurrence of infectious disease is due to an almost total absence of all sanitary precautions and observations. The major cause of death in those days were infectious diseases such as cholera, small pox, worm infestation. Poor nutrition, lack of personal hygiene, lack of education and unhygienic surroundings contributed much of the diseases and for the spreads of epidemics.

Prior to the entry of western medicine people depended Ayurveda. But the ignorant and superstitious families among the people depended exorcism and witchcraft to get relief from diseases. Western style of medicine services was initiated in Travancore in 1811. Vaccination against small pox was introduced in 1813. Christian missionaries made a significant contribution to the development of medicine facilities. Though several health initiatives were started by the Government,

caste restriction put constraints on Avarnas to avail those facilities.

The Guru advocated education, hygiene and healthy food for health care. His concept of hygiene involved personal hygiene and changes in attitude to keep the surroundings clean. Once he said, "If you get educated, money and hygiene will follow". The Guru instructed "Bathing is important, everyone should brush the teeth and nails must be cleaned. If there is body hygiene, from it will arise food hygiene and home hygiene". "Cleanliness should begin from kitchen and our houses and premises should be kept unsoiled".

The Guru wanted sanitation to be a topic for speech done by the speakers whom he sent to different parts of the state since 1904. It was also one of the topics of speeches in Sivagiri pilgrimage for which he gave permission in 1928. Once the people imbibed the lesson on hygiene imparted to them by the Guru, they became self-esteemed, well dressed and able to mingle with the people without fear and shame. The Guru's Ashrams had nutritious food served every day to people belonging to different castes and religions. The inter-dining conducted by the 'Sahodara Sangham' of K. Ayyappan removed the restrictions in inter personal relations and inculcated the desire for healthy food.

Alcoholism: a menace to health care: Sree Narayana Guru is considered the pioneering critique of alcoholism. While travelling widely throughout Kerala, Guru witnessed the negative impact of the abuse of alcohol on the lives of numerous families, especially the working class. As a solution to the dire nature of the problem, Guru issued a statement to discourage the use of alcohol in society in 1920. "Liquor is poison! Don't make it, don't distribute it and don't drink it".

He said, "Everybody abhor the foul odour emanating from the toddy maker. Close family members prefer to disassociate from a drunkard and even God will be indifferent towards such a filthy person. Swayed by Guru's words, many Ezhavas gradually turned to other trades and profession. The Guru's conclusion was that the evil effect of drink, such as drunkenness, violence, losing work, and money and impoverishment of society would lead to an increase in crime and also ruin the health of those addicted to it.

The Guru's lessons and activities on health care and hygiene and the social mobility achieved before independence together with the public policies on health care by the native states of Travancore and Cochin made a solid foundation of health care, on which the Kerala model development achieved. Today, Kerala stands top among the states of India regarding Health Care.

Gender Equality: The guru was always for equal 'dignity', 'recognition' and 'rights' of women along with men and believed in the capability of every woman for rational self-realisation. Women in the traditional society were most vulnerable to exploitation and deprivation of the worst kind. In the traditional family culture, everything was designed to protect the dominant interest of the males. The ignominious life of women was the result of the chains of caste, evil customs, superstitions and male chauvinism.

The Guru started his reforms on family culture. He wanted each family to get rid of superstitions, caste and religious prejudices and to accept knowledge, love and mercy as the cardinal principles of intra-family and inter-family relations.

The Guru stopped certain meaningless and inhuman ceremonies like Talikettu, Tirandukuli and Pulakuli. The guru

formulated new and simple way of marriage ceremony which was less expensive with simple affordable rituals so that even the poorest could observe it. In 1905 and again in 1914 he insisted simple forms of marriage ceremony attended by ten close associates of the bride and bride groom. He had also made arrangements to register marriages at Yogam branches.

The Guru discouraged matrilineal inheritance. He encouraged families to guarantee women in family property, (equal share) compulsory education for women, widow marriage and monogamy. His messages had tremendous impact on all communities.

The first women meeting was held at Aruvippuram in 1904 along with the first annual meeting of the SNDP yogam. It became a practice to organise separate meetings of women in every annual meeting of the Yogam. The Guru in order to support women education and employment persuaded community members to start hostels. SNV Sadanam, Chittoor Road Kochi was started in 1921, and SNV Sadanam at Bakery junction in Thiruvananthapuram was started in 1924.

The Guru knew that messages and awareness campaigns were not sufficient to uplift the status of women in society. In order to introduce a new family culture sensitive to women rights, reforms in the laws existing in Travancore and Cochin became urgent. The state required rational civil laws to protect the values and norms expounded by the Guru. Accordingly, many leaders, including K Ayyappan endeavoured for social legislation in Travancore and Cochin.

The first such legislation in Travancore was the Nair Act of 1912 following the Marumakkathayam Committee Report of 1908. Following the Nairs, other communities also got passed similar

legislation to reform their family system. The Travancore Ezhava Act of 1925, the Cochin Makkathayam Thiyya Act of 1940, the Travancore Kshatriya Act of 1932, the Malayala Brahmin Act of 1930 and the Cochin Nambudiri Act of 1939 reformed the respective laws of inheritance and polygamy.

As a member of the Cochin legislative Council, Ayyappan moved Cochin Civil marriage Bill in 1932. The bill gave validation to inter –marriages. The Civil Marriage Act recognised the freedom of marriage, gave legal validity for inter-marriage, prevented child marriage,

polygamy and polyandry and allowed widow marriage.

Like Aristotle, the guru considered state as family writ large and he tried to reform the sectarian culture of the family in to a civic culture. As a result of modernization of Kerala society carried out by the Guru, and the Kerala model development the status, role, and power of women irrespective of caste and religion is high in Kerala. However, discrimination in the labour markets ‘dowry’, gender-based violence and less political participation are yet to be resolved.

Recap

- ◆ The Guru’s philosophy and actions empowered marginalised sections.
- ◆ Savarna caste groups shifted from rigid caste prejudices to a more human approach
- ◆ Socialist ideas among the marginalised made Kerala’s democracy dynamic.
- ◆ Demands for better wages, land reforms, education, and healthcare became prominent.
- ◆ Education is a key component of the Kerala Model of Development.
- ◆ Concepts of ‘development ‘and human development defined.
- ◆ Guru on human development.
- ◆ Kerala’s achievements in education, health care and welfare after independence.
- ◆ Equity, access, and excellence in education are ensured.
- ◆ Universalisation of primary education

- ◆ Kerala model development compared with other parts.
- ◆ Demographic transition.
- ◆ Kerala faces challenges such as lifestyle diseases and increasing incidences of communicable disease.
- ◆ Guru's teachings promoted self-esteem, cleanliness, and healthy interpersonal relations.
- ◆ Sree Narayana Guru emphasised hygiene, education, and healthy food for healthcare.
- ◆ Guru advocated for equal dignity, recognition, and rights for women alongside men.
- ◆ Pioneering critic of alcoholism in Kerala.
- ◆ Liquor is poison and advocated against its production, distribution, and consumption.
- ◆ Adverse effects of alcohol, including violence, unemployment, and societal impoverishment.
- ◆ Simplified marriage ceremonies and encouraged equal participation of women.
- ◆ Ensured women's rights to family property, compulsory education, widow remarriage, and monogamy

Objective Questions

1. In which year HDI was created by UNDP
2. In 2021 Kerala tops the HDI among the Indian states with a score of
3. The book written by Gunnar Myrdal
4. A renowned economist accepted the role of the Guru in the process of Kerala model development. Who was he?
5. Which Government started Total Literacy Programme in Kerala in 1988?
6. What is the Literacy in Kerala as per 2011 census?

7. What is the birth rate of Kerala as per 2011 census?
8. What is the life expectancy in Kerala as per 2011 census?
9. The Travancore Nair Act was passed in which year
10. Who introduced the first Civil Marriage Bill in Kerala and the year
11. In which year vaccination against small pox introduced in Travancore
12. In which year the Guru gave message on Alcoholism

Answers

1. 1990
2. 0.752(UNDP Method)
3. Asian Drama: An Inquiry into the Poverty of Nations
4. Dr K. N. Raj
5. LDF Government
6. 93.9 percent
7. 14.3%
8. 78.9 years
9. 1912
10. K. Ayyappan, 1932
11. 1813
12. 1920

Assignments

1. Write an essay on achievements of Kerala in Health care and the emerging challenges.
2. Write one assignment on violence against women in Kerala. Do you think that existing laws are sufficient to protect their rights?
3. Explain the problems in higher education sector. Assess the role of correspondence courses for more access and equity.
4. Assess the contribution of the Guru in the process of Kerala Model Development

Suggested Reading

1. Development, Democracy and the State Critiquing the Kerala Model Development. (id) K. Ravi Raman.
2. Jerald. J. Pereira, Narayana Guru a Social Educator, Thiruvananthapuram, 1989.
3. Muni Narayana Prasad, Philosophy of Narayana Guru, D. C. Print World, New Delhi, 2003.
4. Muni Narayana Prasad, Sree Narayana Guru, World Educational Manifesto(trans), Narayana Gurukulam Varkala, 1993.
5. Limits of Kerala Model Development 2010 (1999) K. K. George
6. Demographic Transition in Kerala in the 1980s. (1999) K. C. Zachariah etc, CDS
7. Health, Inequality and welfare economics (1996) Amartya Sen, CDS

Reference

1. Yielding, Nancy (2019), *Narayana Guru: A Life of Liberating Love*, New Delhi: DK Print World Pvt Ltd.
2. Development, Democracy and the State Critiquing the Kerala Model Development. (id) K. Ravi Raman
3. Jerald. J. Pereira, Narayana Guru a Social Educator, Thiruvananthapuram, 1989.
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6. Health, Inequality and welfare economics (1996) Amartya Sen, CDS



Guru's Influence on Culture, Education, Arts and Literature

UNIT

Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of this unit, the learner will be able to:

- ◆ get acquaint with the creation of new culture based on the Guru's concept of Humanistic Advaita
- ◆ get exposed to Guru's views on religious harmony and free social; inter-relations
- ◆ comprehend his ideas on Values
- ◆ familiarise Guru's work on educational progress
- ◆ get exposed to the Guru's influence on democratising art and literature

Prerequisite

Kerala, situated in southern India, have a rich cultural diversity, where individuals from various religious, community, and ethnic backgrounds coexist harmoniously. This blend of different traditions and customs creates a social fabric that is unique to the region. It reflects Kerala's long history of peaceful cohabitation and tolerance towards diverse identities. Central to Kerala's cultural landscape are its ancient tribal communities, such as the Irulas, Kurichiyars, and Paniyas, whose presence in the region precedes recorded history. These tribes have nurtured their distinct cultural practices, languages, and social structures over centuries. Despite modernization and changes in societal dynamics, these tribal cultures remain integral to Kerala's identity, contributing to its cultural richness.

One of Kerala's distinguishing features is its dedication to preserving its age-old traditions. This commitment is showcased through its performing arts, particularly traditional dance forms like Theyyam, Kathakali, and Mohiniyattam. These art forms serve not only as forms of entertainment but also as sources of Kerala's cultural heritage. They capture the essence of Kerala's mythology, folklore, and spiritual beliefs, providing a window into the region's cultural ethos.

Key themes

Culture, Cultural divide, Values, Universal Brotherhood

Discussion

6.3.1 Guru's influence on Culture

Culture is something that we acquire socially and plays a huge role in shaping who we are. It is "that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, laws, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society" (Edward Taylor). In hierarchical society culture assumes discriminatory character both as to its ideological content and its practical aims. In the caste ridden feudal society of traditional Kerala, the Savarna culture was the dominant culture. Through their inhuman culture, the marginalised Avarnas were discriminated and exploited. They were denied knowledge, art and literature which the Savarnas enjoyed exclusively. The Avarnas were compelled to experience poverty, slavery and ignorance.

It was against this cultural divide Sree Narayana Guru advocated a humanistic secular culture with the following tenets

1. A culture based on Humanistic

Advaita

2. A culture that promotes universal brotherhood
3. A culture sensitive to gender equality
4. A culture that creates social harmony and free inter personal relations

Humanistic Advaita – the basis of new culture: Vedanta literally means 'the finality' (anta) of knowledge (Veda). The body of wisdom contained in the Upanishads, the concluding section of Vedas called Vedanta. Advaita Vedanta means non-dualistic Vedanta. "Narayana Guru exemplified how non-dualism as an applied wisdom enhances the values of human life and human dignity in both the individual and social dimensions" (Swami Muni Narayana Prasad, the Philosophy of Narayana Guru 5).

The Guru made use of his Advaita philosophy to make every individual self-esteem, happy and other regarding. To him all human being shares the same

Brahman and hence with equal dignity. Since all are ‘atma sahodarar’ no one can hurt another, intimidate others, exploit or suppress others for the cause of caste, religion, ethnicity and sex. The guru’s words and actions were to spread his concept of humanistic Advaita to evolve a new culture in Kerala

Universal brotherhood: On the wall of the temple at Aruvippuram, Guru wrote in bold letters the following words of universal brotherhood

“Devoid of dividing walls of caste or race or

Hatred of rival faith

We all live here in brotherhood such,

Know the place to be thus model foundation”

(“Jaatibhetham matha-dwesham ethu - millathe sarvarum sothara-thwena vaazhunna mathruka sthana-mamithu”)

The Guru’s vision of brotherhood is explained through this motto. His mission was to create a culture devoid of any form of discrimination, hatred, prejudice and exclusion. He confirms the commonality of human race and universal brotherhood thus:

“Oru Jathi-Oru Matham – Oru Daivam Manushyanu
Oru Yoni- Orakaram- Oru Bethavum Illathil”

“The human race is one in kind, one in faith, and one in God. They take birth through the same biological process. In physical features as well, not at all any difference”.

On many occasions, Guru declared his strong disapproval of any attempt to confine him to a specific caste or religion. A message was issued by the Guru on May 28, 1916 “Years have passed since I relinquished all differentiations based on caste and religion. I do not belong to any specific caste or religion”

For guru religion is a matter of personal conviction. There shall be no interference in anybody’s religious freedom. A single religion that is acceptable to all categories of people seems to be a hard reality. Nobody shall say that my religion is true and the rest are false. All religions represent values of truth or duty. The goal is common. Why should men fight for his faith? One should not be swayed by the conflicts among religious groups. “The

many faiths have but one essence, not seeing this, in this world, like the blind men and the elephant, many kinds of reasoning are used by the unenlightened who become distressed.” (Guru, Atmopadesa Satakam verses 44-49) Once, he said, “I have not established any religion”.

These words of guru had powerful impact on people contributing to a culture of brotherhood in Kerala. To spread his ideas on universal brotherhood, the guru convened the all-religions conference at Aluva in March 1924. The meet was well represented by various sects of Hindu, Christian, Islam, Buddhist and Jain religious scholars.

Inter-dining and inter-marriage for modern culture

Several outstanding sociologists and anthropologists have opined that the check on social mobility has maintained basically through two contrivances, prohibition on

inter marriage and inter-dining. Prof. G S Ghurye found restrictions on feeding and on marriage as two of the six characteristic features of Indian caste system. Max Weber enumerated the Hindu dietary rules as: "what may be eaten; who may eat at the same table; out of whose hand may one take food of a certain kind; who is to be prevented from glancing at the food."

The caste and religious rules strictly prohibited any sort of marriage alliance between persons belonging to different religious groups. Those who violated these rules were subjected to violence, and ostracism and were denied the right to inherit family property.

The Guru advocated inter-caste dining and inter-caste marriages to annihilate caste and religious differences. To him "whatever may be the difference in creed, dress, person's language etc, because they all belongs to the same kind of creation: there is no harm at all in their dining together or having marital relations with one another." He took initiatives to conduct inter-marriages and inter-dining that became common in all the institutions and temples established by him. Sahodaran K Ayyappan (1889-1968), a close associate of Guru pioneered a movement called 'Sahodra Sangham' in 1917 for inter-dining and inter-marriages.

The Guru's ideas on inter-marriage and inter-caste dining had a great impact on the social fabric of the Kerala State. Violent clashes and honour killings due to caste and religion prejudices became absent in Kerala

Values and Skills

Sree Narayana Guru had imparted a set of values and interpersonal skills to mould a new culture sensitive to harmony, peace and human rights. He was an embodiment of compassion and kindness.

To him, knowledge, love and kindness are the cardinal principles of life. All strive for happiness and hence one must abstain from doing evil things to hurt the happiness of others.

Individuals should be other regarding. A compassionate person gives up all his self-centered interest and perform good deeds day and night for others. The selfish man does everything for himself without considering the social needs. The Guru insisted the following skills for personal development:

Purity of body: Demands both external and internal purity of the body. Through five senses we see, hear, touch, smell and taste the external objects that may give purity or impurity to the body. Bathing, brushing the teeth, cleaning the nails, washing hands, keeping our home and surroundings clean will keep external purity of the body. But polluted water and air, unhealthy food, alcohol, excessive sex indulgence, drug abuse, accumulated waste affect different internal organs of the body, cause life style diseases and other health issues. It is only through knowledge and self-control one can keep purity of body.

Purity of mind: Purity of mind will be developed when we fill our mind with knowledge, love and kindness. Purity of mind will be corrupted by casteism, religious fundamentalism, hatred and greediness, superstitions make our mind impure and disgusting.

Purity of food: In the contemporary world we face the menaces such impure contaminated and adulterated food, excessive consumerism and waste. Unethical food habits destroy human life and environment

Purity of words: Purity of words is very important in inter personal relations.

The words of guru were to change human behaviour. His words were very soft and gentle. He said that words must be polite, clear, soft and decent. In today's world words are misused to create hatred and violence. Hate speech destroys peace and harmony.

Purity of Action: When selfishness and hatred fill our mind, behaviour will change. Our action should be for the welfare of the people. The Guru asked the people to avoid laziness and work hard for the prosperity of the country.

Inter personal values for social goodness

Non-violence or Ahimsa: Ahimsa was the way of life for the Guru. He asked everyone to be merciful so that even an ant is not hurt. He said, "Ahimsa is the greatest of all virtues. One who observes the dharma of ahimsa is the true manifestation of goodness. One who possess all virtues except 'ahimsa' is none other than a brute".

Truth: Be truthful in words and deeds. Always tell truth. Truthfulness is the foundation of all the virtues of mankind.

Non-Stealing (Asteya): The practice of Asteya demands that one must not steal nor have the intent to steal another's property through action, speech and thoughts. For instance, hoarding is a kind of stealing. Corruption is also stealing public money.

Adultery: The Guru said that adultery will destroy one's status, honour, knowledge and life. Excessive sex indulgence will lead to diseases and ruin of family.

Abstinence from alcohol and drugs: The evil effects of alcohol and drugs abuse are violence, diseases, loss of work and money, impoverishment of society,

increase in crime. These values and skills are most relevant today to uphold a culture, conducive to development, peace and harmony.

6.3.2 Education for all and Empowerment of the Marginalised

The guru believed that only though education people could imbibe the right perspective about good life. He stated that 'a man must educate himself to be free. A study of his concept of education reveals that it was aimed at the realisation of certain objectives, like freedom of the individuals, occupational mobility, equality of status and of opportunity and general social progress reflecting an appreciable degree of material and spiritual development of people.

He said "Education leads any community to higher standards and therefore, if we are interested in the welfare of our people, we have to encourage it. This would benefit the society as a whole." In 1917 he advised his followers to stop building of temples and to concentrate on setting up educational institutions. He established schools attached to his temples and ashrams.

The Guru's scheme of education demanded

1. Universal education at least primary education for all
2. Gender equality in education facility
3. Development of language skills in English, Sanskrit and Malayalam
4. Science and Technology, integral part of education
5. Enhancement of industrial skills

6. Value education.
7. Night schools for aged and working people.

The Guru's clarion calls for 'achieve freedom through education' lead to a mass movement in education sector. The introduction of Western System of education began as a result of the effort of the missionaries in the early decades of 19th century. This was an opportunity for the children of the marginalised groups to get education. At the beginning, education facilities opened by the Government of Travancore and Cochin restricted to the Savarnas and Christians. When the government failed to guarantee equality of opportunity in education the Avarnas started bargaining for it. The Guru did not wait for a change in the public policy in education. He instead inspired and directed the Avarnas to start their own schools to empower their children including girls.

Individually and collectively hundreds of schools, especially primary schools were started by the Avarnas. Efforts by Avarna leaders led to public policy on education gradually and finally led to equal access for all in education. As a result, the literacy that stood 5.75 percent in 1875 in Travancore rose to 23.90 percent in 1931 and 47.20 in 1941. Women literacy also began to change from 0.46 percent in 1875 to 13.90 in 1931 and to 36.13 percent in 1941. Achievements in literacy during the period 1875 to 1941 led to further increase under democratic rule in Kerala and to colourful 100 percent literacy in the paradigm of Kerala model development.

6.3.3 The Guru's influence on Art and Literature

The classical performing art forms such as Kathakali, Kudiyattam, Chakyar Koothu, Krishnattam and the other

dance forms such as Mohiniyattam, Thiruvathirakali and Ottamthullal were exclusively preserved for the Savarna enjoyment. These art forms were performed inside the temples, Illams and the houses of Savarna feudal lords. The Avarnas did not have any access to these places to enjoy these art forms. They were also restricted from learning and performing them.

There were many Sanskrit scholars among the Avarnas. The Guru insisted the learning of English, Sanskrit and Malayalam languages.

The Guru's philosophical and devotional writings gave the people new spiritual insights and perspectives on social life. People were able to understand Vedanta in simple form, humanism, secularism, human values, dharma, true form of worship from the writings and messages of the Guru.

People began to assert their rights intellectually and socially. The intellectuals inspired by the Guru began to expose plight of the marginalised and women, the inhuman conditions of life, rationalism and science in their writings.

There were several literary figures sprouted during the period who (1900-1930) wrote on human issues. Mooloor S Padmanabha Panicker, N Kumaran Asan, Sahodaran Ayyappan, Vakkom Mohammed Abdul Khader Moulevi, Pandit K P Karuppan, Poykayil Appachan, Pallathu Raman moorkoth kumaran, K P Vallon, Nataraja Guru and Kuttipuzha Krishna Pillai were few among them.

Mooloor S Padmanabha Panicker (1869-1931) was a poet and prominent social reform activist. He was a nominated member of Sree Mulam Praja Sabha and was also Vice President of S N D P Yogam. He wrote 'Dharma padam',

Theendel Gadha, Kuchelavrutham (Kathakali literature) etc. He wrote 'Kavi Ramayanam as a protest against Kavi Bharatham of Kunjikuttam Thampuran in which the names of Avarna literary figures were not included.

N.Kumaran Asan (1873-1924) has composed a number of fine poems on a variety of subjects. Asan's poetry started to capture the contemporary experience of bondage. He wrote repeatedly about the dehumanizing experience of the individual who has been deprived of fundamental human dignity.

Asan's poetry rendered for the first time the essence of the low caste individual who possessed a higher moral authority than the oppressors. He also brought into culture a plea for a revolution of the heart. In his 'Duravastha' he exhorted, 'Remove the bonds of your effete tradition or it will ruin you within your own selves'.

Sahodaran Ayyappan (1889-1968), a leading cultural activist, editor and poet in early and mid-20th century in Kerala revolutionised the aesthetic and politics of the Malayalam language and poetry in an unprecedented way. His poetry and prose have shaped Kerala's literary and journalistic sensibilities. He composed verses about the October Revolution in the early 20th century and wrote about French Revolution. His poem first introduced the word 'Comrades' into the linguistic culture of Kerala. He used the word Sagakkale' to mean Comrade.

Pandit K P Karuppan (1885-1938) was a crusader against untouchability and other social evils. He is considered as an accomplished poet and dramatist. The ruler of Cochin honoured him with the title 'Kavitilakam'

K.PVallon(1900-1940)made significant contributions to the Dalit upliftment. His monthly journal 'Adhakritan' projected the miseries of the Dalits.

Poykayil Appachan also known as Kumara Gurudevan (1879-1939) was a revolutionary Dalit leader, who was an inspired orator, an instant poet and a learned organiser. Appachan's speeches and songs created a subaltern space of ethical enquiry in Kerala.

Moorkoth Kumaran (1875-1941) was a social reformer, a teacher and a writer in Malayalam. He wrote short stories, seven novels and extensively wrote on science. He wrote the story Vasumathi which depicted the cultural history of the Thiyya Community. He prepared the biography of Sree Narayana Guru which is very authentic.

Vakkom Mohammed Abdul Khader Moulavi (1873-1932) was a social reformer, freedom fighter, prolific writer and journalist. He was the founder and publisher of the newspaper 'Swadeshabhimani' in 1905 to expose the injustices met by people in any form.

The performing art forms once confined in Savarna citadels started performing in the temples established by the Guru. In all the annual conferences of SNDP Yogam, separate meetings for Sahitya Sammelanam were held. People began to enjoy all these once denied to them.

Kathaprasangam also contributed to the social transformation of the period. Sathya Devan the pioneer of Kathaprasangam presented 'Markendeya Charitam' in 1920. The story contained a lot of slokams penned by Kumaran Asan. "Chandalabhishuki" and 'Karuna' became themes of Kathaprasangam.

Today Guru's works are taken extensively for performing arts and musical forms. Artists perform Kathakali, Bharathanatyam, Mohiniyattom, Ottamthullal, solo and group music based on Guru's life and works. T.M.Krishna, the Ramson Magsaysay Award winner composes and renders Guru's philosophical verses and Daivadasakam in Carnatic concerts.

Recap

- ◆ The Guru tried to develop a culture based on Humanistic Advaita.
- ◆ A culture that promoted Universal Brotherhood.
- ◆ Advocated tolerance, acceptance of diverse faiths, and mutual respect for all religions.
- ◆ Inter-marriage and inter-dining for progressive human relations
- ◆ Guru imparted values like compassion, kindness, and altruism.
- ◆ Values and skills for Civic culture and social harmony.
- ◆ Education of the marginalised.
- ◆ Education as a pathway to freedom and social progress
- ◆ Prioritised educational institutions over temple construction.
- ◆ Democratization of arts and literature.
- ◆ Guru advocated for learning English, Sanskrit, and Malayalam languages.
- ◆ Stressed purity of body, mind, food, and words.
- ◆ Avarnas were deprived of access to art forms and were restricted from learning or performing them

Objective Questions

1. Who said, 'Kerala is a lunatic asylum?'
2. In which year the Guru convened All Religions Conference and where?

3. Who started a movement for inter-dining in 1917?
4. “Achieve freedom through education” who said?
5. ‘The many faiths have but one essence who said?
6. How many skills the Guru suggested for personal development?
7. Ahimsa, Truth, Non-Stealing, Avoidance of Adultery were the four out of five inter personal values. Which was the fifth one?
8. In which year, the Guru advised his followers to stop building temples and to concentrate on building schools
9. Who wrote ‘Duravastha’?
10. Who wrote ‘Kavi Ramayanam’?
11. Who introduced the word Comrades’(Sagakkale)?
12. Who was titled ‘Kavithilakam’?
13. ‘Adhakritan’ a monthly journal published by whom?
14. Who was the founder and publisher of “Swadesabhimani”?
15. Who performed ‘Kathaprasangam for first time in Kerala?

Answers

1. Swami Vivekananda	9. N.Kumaranasan
2. 1924, Aluva	10. Muloor S Padmanabha Panicker
3. Sahodaran K Ayyappan	11. Sahodaran K Ayyappan
4. Sree Narayana Guru	12. K.P Karuppan
5. Sree Narayana Guru	13. K.P. Vallon
6. Sree Narayana Guru	14. Vakkom Muhammed Abdul Khader Moulavi
7. Abstinence	15. Satyadevan
8. 1917	

Assignments

1. Explain the Guru's views on Universal Brotherhood
2. Discuss the importance of values in our life.
3. 'In many faiths have one essence' Discuss
4. Evaluate the Guru's emphasis on inter-marriage and inter-dining as means for progressive human relations.
5. Investigate the Guru's initiatives for educating the marginalised in Kerala. What strategies did he employ to ensure access to education for underprivileged communities?

Suggested Reading

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2. K Balarama Panicker (2008) 'Sree Narayana Guru Prabhenthangalilude' Sivagiri Madom.
3. S.N.Sadasivan, (2000) *A social History of India* APH Publisher, New Delhi

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1. Guru, Nataraja (2003). *The Word of the Guru, The Life and Teachings of Guru Narayana*. New Delhi: DK Print World Pvt Ltd.
2. Yielding, Nancy (2019), *Narayana Guru: A Life of Liberating Love*, New Delhi: DK Print World Pvt Ltd.
3. Balakrishnan, P.K (2000), *Narayana Guru Anthology*, Thrissur: Kerala Sahitya Academy.



Important Literary works based on the Guru's Life and Teachings

UNIT

Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of this unit, the learner will be able to:

- ◆ get exposed the important biographies written on Sree Narayana Guru
- ◆ familiarise important commentaries on the Guru's literature
- ◆ understand other literary works on the Guru's writings and life
- ◆ get exposed to the important films on the Guru

Prerequisite

The Guru's works reflect his philosophy and outlook on life. The Guru who found the greatness of Advaita accepted it as the leading light of his social philosophy. The works that he wrote in Sanskrit and Malayalam languages are broadly divided into 1) philosophical works (10), 2) devotional or sthothra kritikal (32), 3) moral and ethical works (12), 4) Prose (5), 5) translations (03). His way of self-realisation through Advaita philosophy, and ethical way of life provide different ways for people to find one's true self, to search happiness and good life and ultimately to the unitive experience of the Absolute. He became the greatest source of inspiration and creativity. People belonging to different religions, castes and nations through their intellectual and creative works keep an everlasting connection between the Guru and the world.

Key themes

Biographies, Sree Narayana Sahithyam, Commentaries, Khandakavyas, Novel, Poems

Discussion

6.4.1 Important literary works based on the Guru's life and teachings

We cannot find any other Rishi in Kerala whose life, philosophy, poems and community works are subjected to study, research and publications as extensively as those of Sree Narayana Guru. The volume of literary works based on the Guru is amazing. Today the term 'Sree Narayana Sahithyam' (Sree Narayana Literature) itself got a place as a branch in Malayalam Literature.

The life moments of the Guru, His golden words and every line of what he wrote in his sixty-four literary works are subject to hypothesis, deduction, theory formation and new findings. The writers range from common man with minimum education to persons with high academic and intellectual profiles. Those who study about the Guru consist of persons of different castes and religions. Sanyasins, theists and atheists approached the Guru with dedication and wrote about him. Among them some of the scholars were from different states of India and others were from foreign countries.

Biographies: The biographies written about Sree Narayana Guru began with the one by N. Kumaranasan followed by Mayyanad K. Damodaran (Sree Narayananaguruswamy Jeeva charithram). Moorkoth Kumaran, a close associate of

the Guru wrote a biography (Sree Narayana Guru Swamikalude Jeevacharitram) which give a detailed account of Guru's life and teachings.

Kottukoyikkal Velayudhan who travelled with the Guru to various places wrote two books (Sree Narayana Guru Jeevitha charithram, Sree Narayana Guruvum Sisyanmarum). 'Narayana Guru Swami' the work written by M. K. Sanoo is widely acclaimed all over India. 'Sree Narayana Guru, the Prophet of Renaissance' by P. Parameswaran, Sree Narayana Guru: Saint Philosopher Humanist by K. Sreenivasan 'Guruvinte Dukham' by Sukumar Azhikkodu, 'Charitrathe Agathamakkiya Guru' by K. P. Appan, 'Narayana Guru-Anthology by P. K. Balakrishnan, Maharsi Sree Narayana Guru by T. Bhaskaran are few other analytical studies widely accepted.

Interpretations or Commentaries: The deep interpretations on Sree Narayana Philosophy started with Nataraja Guru, The first research work leadings to D. Litt was done by Nataraja Guru at Sorbonne University, Paris in 1932. It was Nataraja Guru who made the Guru known to the Western World. His in-dept analysis of Guru Darsana appealed foreign scholars and several of them gradually started spreading the Guru's philosophy His major works are "The word of the Guru", "An Integrated Science of the Absolute" and "One Hundred Verses of Self Instruction".

John Spiers born in Scotland became the first disciple of Nataraja Guru. He started the magazine 'Values' based on the wisdom of Narayana Guru. He had authored 'Warrior R

ishi' (Narayana Guru). Guru Nitya Chaitanya Yathi, disciple of Nataraja Guru made aesthetic and beautiful interpretation of the Guru's philosophy. He authored about 25 books in English and over 100 in Malayalam. A few important works are, "Neither this Nor that But Aum", "Love and Devotion", "The Psychology of Darsanamala".

The disciple of Nitya Chaitanya Yati, Nancy Yeilding wrote, "What Narayana is Not", Narayana Guru; A Life Liberating Love". Muni Narayana Prasad, the disciple of Nitya Chaitanya Yati is a prolific writer on Sree Narayana Philosophy. 'Sree Narayana Gurudev' is an English book written by Swami Dharma Theerthar. 'Shri Narayana Guru' is a book written in Hindi by Devendra Kumar Baisantry. 'Brahmarshi Shri Narayana Guru' by Mehar Mansoor, written in Urdu, is another book about the Guru in a different Indian language.

"Sree Narayana Gurudeva Krithikal Sampoorna Vyakhyanam" written by G. Balakrishnan Nair became the first comprehensive interpretation, a source book for further studies. "Narayana Gurudeva Kritikal (Guruprasadam Vyakhyanam) by M.H. Sastrikal is also a great work.

Khandakavyas: There are so many khandakavyas such as 'Ampalappattu' by Moorkoth Kumaran, 'Gurudeva Karnamritam' by Kilimanoor N. Kesavan, "Gurupadham" by Kilimanoor Remakantan.

Poems: Many poems are also written about the Guru and his teaching. Guru

Pournami (Anthology of poems) by S. Remesan Nair and "Sree Narayana Gurudeva Kavyanjali" the collection of 101 poems most of them written by great poets of Malayalam. The poems written by S. K. Pottakkatt, Vallathol Narayana Menon, Vayalar Ramavarma, Akkitham and G. Sankara Kurup are included in the collection. 'Sree Narayana Parama Hamsasthava kusumanjali' is collection of poems written by great poets at the 60th birthday celebration of the Guru

Novels: There is "Narayananam" novel written by Perumbadavam Sreedharan and "Guru" novel written by K. Surendran (Vayalar Award).

Ph. D theses on Sree Narayana Guru: There are 3 D-litts and 52 Ph.Ds as on June 2021 (P. R. Sreekumar). The Ph.Ds are on different subjects like Philosophy, Sociology, History, Political Science, Malayalam, Hindi, Sanskrit, Tamil, Russian etc. Few topics of research are 'Effects of Sree Narayana Guru in Malayalam Literature', 'The Philosophy of Sree Narayana Guru', Sree Narayana Guru - A Social Educator', Sree Sankara and Sree Narayana Guru', 'Sthothras of Sree Narayana Guru' - A Study, 'Darsanamala', 'Rationalist Elements in the works of Kabir and Sree Narayana Guru', 'The Mother (Janani) Concept in Sree Narayana Philosophy' etc.

Books written in foreign languages on Sree Narayana Guru

1. Narayana Guru dzieła wybrane, by Hanna Urbanska (Polish)
2. Vie et œuvre de (Life and Literature of) Sree Narayana Guru by Bernad Renaud (French)
3. A book by Abdul Latheef Al Umari (Arabic - UAE)

6.4.2 Films, documentaries and screen plays on the life and works of Sree Narayana Guru

Among the mass medias that play the most significant role in educating the masses, the movies occupy a predominant place. The life and career of Sree Narayana Guru is being conveyed through a number of films. Special mention should be made about 'Sree Narayana Guru' released in 1986, directed by P.A. Backer and produced by Kollam Jaffer. The film stars Kanakalatha as the mother of Sree Narayana Guru, Master Vaisakh and Sree Kumar in the lead roles. The film has musical score by G Devarajan.

It won the Nargis Dutt Award for Best Feature on National Integration. This award is one among several presented for feature films and is accompanied by the Rajat Kamal (Silver Lotus). Instituted in 1965, it is annually awarded to films produced across the country in all Indian languages.

Karakulam Chandran who played the role of Guru's father is a television serial, film actor and drama director. Actor Ajith Kumar released a documentary cum video album 'Mahapurushan' that depicts the life of Sree Narayana Guru (2009). "Brahmashree Narayana Guru Swamy" (2014) was a Tulu film that revolves around the life and teachings of the eminent social reformer, Jagath Guru Sree Narayana Guru.

'Yugapurushan', movie on the life and times of Gurudevan, the great man who proposed the ideology of equality and brotherhood, the man who fought against the ruthless caste system that was deep rooted in Kerala society, the pure soul who declared 'One caste, one religion, one God

for man'. The story of this human lover is brought to reel life by R. Sukumaran, the director who gave the indelible hits like Padamudra and Rajashilpi. Fifteen years of extensive study about Gurudevan's life has made this film enthusiastic to sketch the incredible life of Sree Narayana guru into reel.

When caste system was reigning in Kerala society, when low caste people were subjected to hardcore injustice, The Guru decided to fight against it and also pledged the upliftment of lower caste people. He gave away all worldly pleasures and wandered, searching the truth and meaning of life. Portraying the life of such an ideal man, was a relatively hard task. The task of the director was to get the message of Gurudevan to people and to illustrate the hardships undergone by Gurudevan for attaining his goal of equality an upliftment.

A. V. Anoop, Chairman of Cholayil group, the makers of Medimix soap, produced this epic under the banner of A.V.A Productions, Tamil actor, Thalaivasal Vijayan portrays the character of Sree Narayana Guru in the film, there is a big star caste in the movie including Mammootty, Navya Nair, Kalabhavan Mani, Siddique, Babu Antony, Jagathy Sreekumar, Sukumari etc. The historical figures such as Mahatma Gandhi, Tagore, Swami Vivekananda, Kumaran Asan, Dr. Palpu and Ayyankali make an appearance in the movie. The lyrics for the movie were written by Kaithapuram Damodaran Namboothiri and music is given by Mohan Sithara.

Elaborating on the movie, director Sukumaran, said, "Yugapurushan is neither a documentary nor a biography of the Guru, but it is an entertaining film that tells how Guru's teachings revolutionised Kerala society. "Great research has gone

into its making, and in the process we have learnt more about the saint than perhaps many are aware of. For instance, Guru had a great sense of humour, was a poet and had a thorough knowledge about medicine as well. We are narrating certain incidents from his life which happened during the period of his stint as a sage in Maruthuamala to the famous 'Kannadiprathishta' at Kalavancode."

Kaalpaadukal (1962): The film was produced by R. Nambiath for Sree Narayana Guru Cine Production and directed by K.S. Antony. The Film was produced as a part of the 108th birth anniversary celebration of Sree Narayana Guru. The story and dialogues written by the director himself focused on the teachings of Sree Narayana Guru. Prem Nazir, Prem Nawaz, P. J. Antony, Shanti and Aranmula Ponnamma were the main actors. M. B. Sreenivasan composed the music for the lyrics penned by P. Bhaskaran and Nambiath. K. J. Yesudas started his playback singing career rendering the lines 'Jathi betham mathadwesham ethumillathe sarvarum ...'. The film won national award, Second best feature film in the regional film category.

Swamy Sree Narayana Guru (1986): Malayalam film directed by Krishnaswamy. Its story and screenplay done by Dr. L. Salim. The actors were Adoor Bhavani, K.P.A.C Azeez, Bavyashree and KPAC Sunny. The music of the film by Mohammed Subair and three songs were composed from Gurudeva Kritikal and sung by K. P. Brahmanandan.

The docufiction on Sree Narayana Guru: The theme of this docufiction was the time he spent at Maruthvamala. It was released by Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan in 2016. The 28-minute docufiction portrays the life of Guru at the hills and the days he spent meditations inside a cave there before attaining enlightenment. The docufiction is directed by S. Mahesh and written by Sajeev Krishnan.

YouTube: It is one of the major medium to disseminate the Guru's life and Philosophy. Today there are hundreds of YouTube channels on Sree Narayana Guru to propagate his ideas, poems, life history and about the temples the Guru established. YouTube has become a major platform for artists and scholars to communicate with the people all over the world on Sree Narayana Guru.

Websites: There are several websites that are managed locally, nationally and internationally on Sree Narayana Guru. Knowledge on any aspect of the Guru, kritikal, the organisations related to the Guru are there in these websites.

Print Media: Print Media, especially weeklies and magazines always play a major role to disseminate the ideas of the Guru. The earliest magazines included 'Vivekodayam', 'Dharmam', 'Sujana Nandini', 'Sahodaran', Mitavadi, 'Values.' All these had the Guru's philosophy and messages. They also carried out news and reports on social and political issues. Today there are many journals and weeklies on Sree Narayana Guru published from Kerala, different parts of India and from foreign countries.

Recap

- ◆ The Guru's life, philosophy, poems and social works are subjected to literary works.
- ◆ Biographies on the Guru give us insight to the Guru's life, messages and activities.
- ◆ Commentaries give us deep understanding of the Guru's works
- ◆ The term 'Sree Narayana Sahithyam' has become a recognised branch in Malayalam Literature.
- ◆ Scholars of different castes, religions, and nationalities, including Sanyasins, theists, and atheists, contribute to the literature on the Guru.
- ◆ Interpretations of Sree Narayana Guru's philosophy began with Nataraja Guru
- ◆ Several books on Sree Narayana Guru are written in foreign languages that reflects the global interest in his teachings.
- ◆ Khanda kavyas, Poems and novels are aesthetic works on the Guru
- ◆ Films and documentaries express creativity
- ◆ YouTube and website, the contemporary popular medium of communication widely spread the Guru's life and ideas

Objective Questions

1. The first biography of the guru was written by whom.
2. Who wrote the book Guruvinte Dukham
3. The first D.Lilt on the Guru's work was achieved by whom.
4. Who wrote the book, 'Neither this Nor that But Aum'
5. Who started the English magazine Values.
6. Who wrote the book Charithrathhe Agathamakkiya Guru

7. Who wrote 'Sree Narayana Gurudeva Krithikal Sampoorna Vyakhyanam,
8. Who wrote the novel Narayananam
9. Who was the director of 'Kalpadukal' (1962)
10. Who directed Yugapurushan

Answers

1. N. Kumaran Asan.	6. K. P. Appan
2. Sukumar Azhikkodu	7. G. Balakrishnan Nair
3. Nataraja Guru	8. Perumbadavam Sreedharan
4. Guru Nitya Chaitanya Yathi	9. K.S. Antony
5. John Spiers	10. R. Sukumaran.

Assignments

1. Write a review on any of the biographies, on Sree Narayana Guru
2. Prepare a screenplay based on an episode in Guru's life or on Guru's idea on religion
3. Write a review on any film on the Guru

Suggested Reading

1. K. Sreenivasan. Sree Narayana Guru: Saint Philosopher Humanist. Trivandrum (1989) Jayasree Shubhechha.
2. M.K.Sanoo, (2013) Sree Narayana Darsanam (M).
3. K-P. Appan, (2005) Charitrathe the Agathamakkiya Guru (M) D.C. Rooks, Kottayam

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1. Narayana Prasad, Muni (2006), *Narayana Guru, Complete Works*. New Delhi: National Book Trust.
2. Balakrishnan, P .K (2000), *Narayana Guru Anthology*, Thrissur: Kerala Sahitya Academy.
3. K P. Appan, (2005) Charitrathe Agathamakkiya Guru (M) D.C. Rooks, Kottayam



സർവ്വകലാശാലാഗീതം

വിദ്യയാൽ സ്വത്രന്തരാകണം
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ഗ്രഹപ്രസാദമായ് വിളങ്ങണം
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കൂദിരുട്ടിൽ നിന്നു തെങ്ങങ്ങളെ
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