

# Sreenarayanaguru and Sustainable Development

**COURSE CODE: B21PHO2DE**

Undergraduate Programme in Philosophy

Discipline Specific Elective Course

Self Learning Material



**SREENARAYANAGURU OPEN UNIVERSITY**

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

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Access and Quality define Equity.

# **Sreenarayanaguru and Sustainable Development**

**Course Code: B21PH02DE**  
**Semester - IV**

**Discipline Specific Elective Course  
Undergraduate Programme in Philosophy  
Self Learning Material  
(Model Question Paper Sets)**



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



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## SREENARAYANAGURU AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Course Code: B21PH02DE

Semester- IV

Discipline Specific Elective Course  
Undergraduate Programme in Philosophy

### Academic Committee

Dr. Muraleedharan Pillai  
Dr. M.A. Siddique  
Dr. M. Chandra Babu  
Dr. P.K. Sabu  
Swamy Rithambharananda  
Swamy Sukshmananda  
Swamy Saradananda  
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Dr. Lakshmi  
Rajendra Babu G.  
Suvarna Kumar S.  
Dr. Sirajull Muneer  
Dr. Sairam R.  
Dr. Soumyar V.

### Development of the Content

Arun P.R.

### Review and Edit

Dr. B. Sugeetha

### Linguistics

Dr. N. Krishnankutty

### Scrutiny

Dr. Vijay Francis, Dr. Nisar A.C.,  
Feleena C.L., Dr. Deepa P.,  
Dr. Robin Luke Varghese

### Design Control

Azeem Babu T.A.

### Cover Design

Jobin J.

### Co-ordination

Director, MDDC :

Dr. I.G. Shibi

Asst. Director, MDDC :

Dr. Sajeevkumar G.

Coordinator, Development:

Dr. Anfal M.

Coordinator, Distribution:

Dr. Sanitha K.K.



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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.

01-01-2025

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# Introduction to Sustainable Development

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# The Concept of Sustainable Development and United Nations' Vision on Sustainable Development

## UNIT

### Learning Outcomes

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

- ◆ understand the meaning and significance of sustainable development.
- ◆ identify the effects of electronic waste on the environment.
- ◆ analyse the significance of the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).
- ◆ explain the ten critical threats to humanity.
- ◆ know the Global Initiatives for Sustainable Development.

### Prerequisites

A teacher once posed a thought-provoking exercise to students when they asked “What is nature?” She instructed them: “Close your eyes and, in your imagination, remove everything human-made - buildings, roads, vehicles and all other artificial structures. What remains is nature in its purest form. You will see vast rivers, towering trees that provide shade, birds chirping and animals thriving in their natural habitats. Now, place yourself within this scene. That untouched environment, where all living beings coexist harmoniously, is what we call nature.” This exercise reveals a fundamental truth: nature is the foundation of all life, but human activities have drastically reshaped its balance. Recognising this connection between nature and human beings is essential when striving for sustainable development and working toward a future in harmony with the natural world, as envisioned by the United Nations.

## Key themes

Sustainable Development, Climate Change, Industrialisation, Deforestation, Responsible Consumption, Social Equity, Brundtland Report, Rio de Janeiro Summit (1992), E-waste Management, Human Future Commission.

## Discussion

Nature provides essential resources such as clean air, water and fertile soil, which support all forms of life. But how are we treating our environment? Our selfishness and inability to foresee have threatened the healthy existence of humans and other living beings. Rapid industrialisation, deforestation, pollution, climate change etc., threaten the delicate balance of ecosystems. Thus, sustainable development is vital for ensuring the long-term health of our planet and the well-being of future generations. By adopting sustainable practices such as renewable energy, responsible consumption and conservation efforts, we can minimise environmental degradation while meeting human needs. A sustainable approach prioritises harmony between economic growth, social equity and ecological preservation, ensuring that progress today does not come at the cost of tomorrow's survival.

The Industrial Revolution marked a significant leap in human progress. Today, machines have greatly reduced the burden of human labour, making life more convenient. Computers and mobile phones are prime examples of this technological advancement. Now, consider the number of electronic devices in your home. Are you still using the same devices from five years ago? What happened to your old gadgets? Were they appropriately recycled or were they simply discarded as waste? The production of electronic

devices requires numerous rare elements. For instance, manufacturing a smartphone involves around 30 different elements. Copper, gold and silver are used in circuits, lithium and cobalt are used in batteries and yttrium, terbium and dysprosium are used in displays. However, extracting these rare elements leads to large scale air pollution and environmental degradation, posing a significant threat to our planet.

What the world needs at this point is a farsighted process of development that gives equal consideration to the individual, nature, and society. In short, all factors which need consideration should be included. A commission was appointed in 1983 aimed at the implementation of sustainable development. Gro Harlem Brundtland, the former president of Norway, was the chairperson of that commission. In 1987, the committee submitted the report to the U. N. It is known as the Brundtland report. The report influenced the proceedings of the 1992 Rio de Janeiro summit. Brundtland Commission was the agency that gave a widely accepted definition of sustainable development.

Years ago, bottled drinking water came to our market and most of us were very amused and some even considered the whole idea very silly. But now, it has become an essential commodity and most urban people and even some rural people rely heavily on systems like that for drinking water. Similarly,

## BLOCK - 1

while the concept of canned oxygen may seem unbelievable now, the increasing levels of air pollution could make it a necessity. Despite our claims of progress and development, our natural habitat continues to be destroyed. We celebrate advancements while ignoring that the very foundation of our existence – nature - is being destroyed. Unscientific and short-sighted development has created threats to our ecosystem. On the other hand, population growth and poverty are threats to the limited natural resources. Recognising these challenges, in the 2015 U. N. General Assembly, 17 sustainable development goals (SDGs) and 169 targets were set to address global environmental, social and economic concerns. All 189 member nations are aiming at achieving those goals and targets to ensure a more sustainable future.

According to the Global E-waste Monitor Report, 2020, 53.6 million metric tons of e-waste was produced worldwide. In this, China's share is 10.1 million, while the U. S. is behind with 6.9 million. The last six years saw an increase of 21% in the case of electronic waste. According to a U.N. report, it is estimated that the growth rate will reach 39% in 2030 and 110% by 2050. Noticing the threat caused by e-waste, in October 2019, the European Union made a decision. According to that, from 2021 onwards, every manufacturer should ensure the availability of spare parts for the devices, at least for the next 10 years. This can encourage people not to throw away the devices fast. Instead, a culture of repairing and reusing can be cultivated whenever possible. This can limit the uncontrolled exploitation of natural resources that are used for the production of these devices. So far, we have examined only the threats caused by the electronic sector.

In 2020, the Australian National University appointed a commission (Arangretta Hunter & John Hewson) called the Commission for Human Future. They identified ten critical threats to the survival of humanity. These threats are deeply interconnected and require urgent global action to prevent large- scale crises that could threaten human civilisation. The list is given below:

1. Decline of natural resources, particularly water
2. Collapse of ecosystems and loss of biodiversity
3. Human population growth beyond Earth's carrying capacity
4. Global warming and human -induced climate change
5. Chemical pollution of the Earth system, including the atmosphere and oceans
6. Rising food insecurity and failing nutritional quality
7. Nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction
8. Pandemics of new and untreatable disease
9. The advent of powerful, uncontrolled new technology
10. National and global failure to understand and act preventatively on these risks.

The Commission for the Human Future stresses that addressing these ten threats requires global cooperation, scientific innovation and long-term policy planning. Governments, organisations and individuals must work together to create a

sustainable, equitable and resilient future for all. While these threats may appear distinct, a closer examination reveals their deep interconnection, with each issue strengthening the others. Ultimately, they all stem from human actions, underscoring the urgent need for responsible decision making and collective efforts to safeguard future generations.

These issues threaten our existence. The uncontrolled exploitation of nature is what caused all these. Where have we gone wrong? We can point out many reasons, such as problems in our social system, poverty, illiteracy, lack of proper development etc. There is no point in feeling desperate about the past. We need a sustainable model of development here.

### 1.1.1. Relevance of Sustainable Development

The greatest challenge we face today concerns our very existence. While survival is a fundamental aspect of life, satisfactory experience requires more than mere existence, it demands mental and physical well-being. A meaningful and satisfying life is possible only when individuals access a supportive and nurturing environment that fosters well-being. For this, we should live in a world that supports such a life. Does the world around us provide that environment for all at present? The reality suggests otherwise. Numerous problems prevent the possibility of such a world. These problems can be environmental, economic, political, etc. For example, the environmental problems are coming up on many fronts. We are changing the Earth's climate, the availability of fresh water, air, soil, ocean chemistry, the habitats of other species, etc. We do not yet know the exact extent of the impact of all these. But we do know enough to understand that the situation can harm us.

On the other hand, the problems on the economic front are that the poor are struggling to meet their basic needs, such as food, safe water, health care and shelter. Other economic classes are also facing different struggles caused by the imbalanced economy. We can see that almost all these problems are made by man in the name of progress or development. So, it is very clear that our notion of conventional development is flawed and short-sighted. Hence, we need the all-inclusive and far-sighted notion of development. That is where the concept of sustainable development becomes relevant.

### 1.1.2. Definition of Sustainable Development

The concept of sustainable development formed the basis of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development held in Rio de Janeiro in 1992. Sustainable development is "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs." (Gro Harlem Brundtland). We have seen that the aim of sustainable development is to preserve the current generation's right to have a fulfilled life without sacrificing the same rights of future generations. The human race relies on various resources for progress or development. The sustenance of such resources is a key aspect to consider in the context of sustainable development. So, using these resources in an intelligent and judicious way is very important. Then, it follows that it is essential to ensure the development of the sources of the above-mentioned resources. Only this can fulfil the needs of the future.

So, we have to take special care in providing enough security to the sources of resources. The U. N. urges all countries to implement sustainable development by

participating in activities to alleviate poverty, preserve natural ecosystems etc. The U. N. hopes to achieve this state by 2030. For this the U. N. has designed a collection of 17 global goals. They have a clear plan of action to achieve these goals. Among these goals, the U. N. gives priority to the eradication of poverty. These goals were set in 2015 by the U. N. General Assembly. At that time, all 189 countries supported this announcement and pledged to do everything possible to alleviate poverty. Given below are the 17 sustainable development goals:

## United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals

**Goal 1.** Alleviate poverty in all its forms everywhere.

**Goal 2.** End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture.

**Goal 3.** Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages.

**Goal 4.** Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.

**Goal 5.** Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.

**Goal 6.** Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all.

**Goal 7.** Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all.

**Goal 8.** Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all.

**Goal 9.** Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable

industrialization and foster innovation.

**Goal 10.** Reduce inequality within and among countries.

**Goal 11.** Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable.

**Goal 12.** Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns.

**Goal 13.** Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts.

**Goal 14.** Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development.

**Goal 15.** Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss.

**Goal 16.** Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels.

**Goal 17.** Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalise the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development.

At the Millennium Summit in September 2000, 189 countries jointly adopted the Millennium Declaration, pledging to “spare no effort to free our fellow men, women and children from the abject and dehumanizing conditions of extreme poverty.” But several years down, global extreme poverty was expected to rise in 2020 for the first time in almost 20 years due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Conflicts and climate change were already slowing the progress in poverty reduction.

Around 132 million global poor live in areas with a high probability of flooding. Also, many people who had just escaped from extreme poverty could be brought back into it by a combination of COVID-19, conflict and climate change. A pre-

liminary estimate for 2020, considering the COVID -19 pandemic, is that an additional 88 million to 115 million people may go into extreme poverty, bringing the total to between 703 and 729 million.

## Recap

- ◆ Nature is the basis of all life, but human actions have disturbed it.
- ◆ Sustainable development balances present needs with future generations.
- ◆ The Brundtland Report (1987) defined sustainable development.
- ◆ The 1992 Rio Summit promoted environmental responsibility.
- ◆ Industrialisation and deforestation harm ecosystems.
- ◆ Climate change is a major threat to human survival.
- ◆ Responsible consumption helps protect natural resources.
- ◆ E-waste is rising due to rapid technological growth.
- ◆ Electronic devices require rare elements, impacting the environment.
- ◆ Recycling and reusing electronic devices reduce e-waste.
- ◆ The U. N. introduced 17 Sustainable Development Goals in 2015.
- ◆ Poverty and inequality hinder sustainable progress.
- ◆ Unscientific development threatens ecosystems.
- ◆ Freshwater resources are declining globally.
- ◆ Loss of biodiversity affects ecological balance.
- ◆ Population growth puts pressure on natural resources.
- ◆ Chemical pollution damages air, water and soil.
- ◆ Nuclear weapons pose risks to global peace.
- ◆ Pandemics threaten human health and stability.
- ◆ Uncontrolled technology can create unforeseen dangers.



- ◆ Long-term policies are essential for sustainability.
- ◆ Environmental awareness leads to better decision-making.
- ◆ Sustainable development ensures a better future for all.

## Objective Questions

1. Who defined sustainable development as “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs?”
2. Which report introduced the concept of sustainable development in 1987?
3. Which country generated the highest amount of e-waste in 2020?
4. What is the main goal of sustainable development?
5. Which international organisation promotes sustainable development goals (SDGs)?
6. Which is a key factor contributing to climate change?
7. What is a major cause of biodiversity loss?
8. What is the best way to manage electronic waste?
9. What does the ‘Reduce’ principle of sustainability focus on?
10. Which process helps prevent land degradation?
11. What is a key challenge to achieving sustainable development?
12. Which sector is the most significant contributor to greenhouse gas emissions?

## Answers

1. Gro Harlem Brundtland	3. China
2. Brundtland Report	4. Preserving natural resources

for future generations	components
5. United Nations	9. Decreasing waste production
6. Burning fossil fuels	10. Reforestation
7. Industrialization and deforestation	11. Overpopulation
8. Recycling and reusing	12. Energy production

## Assignments

1. Many philosophical traditions emphasise the interconnectedness of humans and nature. How does this exercise align with the idea that humans are not separate from nature but a part of it?
2. Does technological and industrial progress always come at the cost of nature? Can you think of examples where development has successfully coexisted with environmental conservation?
3. Do humans have a moral responsibility to protect nature, or is it simply a matter of survival? Support your answer with philosophical or ethical arguments.

## Suggested Reading

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# Indian Tradition and Philosophical Foundation of Sustainable Development

## UNIT

### Learning Outcomes

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

- ◆ get to know the historical and philosophical significance of India's cultural heritage on sustainable development
- ◆ explain "Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam" and its role in fostering ecological harmony and global unity
- ◆ distinguish between sukha and ananda in Vedantic and yogic traditions, linking them to sustainable and ethical living
- ◆ understand the principles of Vrikshayurveda and their relevance in sustainable farming and ecological conservation
- ◆ know how Ahimsa, Dharma, and minimalism in Indian philosophy support sustainable development

### Prerequisites

Sustainable development is one of the most demanding concerns of the modern world. As societies strive for advancement, the challenge is to achieve economic and social development while preserving ecological balance. Interestingly, the concept of sustainable development is not a new phenomenon. Indian philosophy, deeply rooted in the Vedic tradition, has always emphasised living in harmony with nature. From ancient texts like the Vedas and Upanishads to traditional systems like Ayurveda and Vrikshayurveda, the Indian way of life has consistently advocated a balanced, nature-centric existence. This philosophical foundation of sustainable development in Indian tradition is evident in the concepts of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam and Ananda.

## Key themes

Vasudhaivakutumbakam, Vrikshayurveda, Ananda, Harmonious lifestyle, Vedic Culture, Interconnectedness, Sat-Chit-Ananda, Pancha Mahabhuta, Sustainable Agriculture, Minimalism, Ecological Responsibility.

## Discussion

Indian cultural heritage is thousands of years old. According to the newest estimates by historians, the Indus Valley Civilization is almost 8000 years old. Following this, Vedic culture emerged, bringing with it reflective philosophical insights. Ancient Indian texts serve as guiding lights to those times, offering wisdom that remains relevant even today. The Advaita philosophy asserted that everything is part of one fundamental reality. At the same time, the Charvaka school emphasised sense perception as the only valid source of knowledge, insisting that everything must be experienced in this world. Despite their differences, both perspectives contributed to an all-inclusive worldview that valued both the living and non-living, as well as the physical and spiritual development of individuals. This holistic approach to life remains significant, particularly in discussions on sustainability and harmonious coexistence with nature.

Humans are just one among the countless species inhabiting Earth. From an ecological perspective, no species holds a privileged position over another. Indian philosophy recognises this interconnectedness and teaches that all life forms are part of a unified whole. This understanding is reflected in the concept of “Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam,” meaning “the world is one family.” This idea, originating

from the Maha upanishad (VI:71-73), emphasises the interconnectedness of all living beings, advocating a worldview where humanity, animals, plants and nature coexist harmoniously, transcending all barriers. The idea of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam, deeply embedded in Indian philosophy and ethics, aligns with the broader vision of Advaita Vedanta, which emphasises the oneness of all existence. In this view, diversity is not seen as separation but as different manifestations of the same underlying reality: Brahman. This perspective encourages a universal, non-dualistic approach to life, fostering compassion, mutual respect, and ecological responsibility.

Another core principle of Indian philosophy is the pursuit of Ananda. Ananda in Indian philosophy signifies bliss, joy, inner fulfilment and spiritual contentment. Unlike momentary pleasures (sukha) derived from material or sensory experiences, Ananda is a sustained, transcendental state that arises when one aligns with the ultimate reality (Brahman) or attains self-realisation. In the Vedantic tradition, particularly in Advaita Vedanta, Ananda is considered an essential attribute of existence (Sat-Chit-Ananda- Existence, Consciousness, and Bliss), emphasising that true happiness is inherent in the self (Atman) and not dependent on external circumstances. The Taittiriya Upanishad

describes Ananda as the highest state of human experience, surpassing physical and mental well-being. Similarly, the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali emphasise that Ananda can be realised through disciplined meditation and detachment from worldly distractions, leading to deep inner peace.

Beyond individual experience, Ananda is also seen as a collective ideal that extends to all living beings, reinforcing the interconnectedness of existence. Indian ethical and spiritual traditions advocate that true development should not merely focus on economic growth but enhance holistic well-being - physical, mental and spiritual. In this sense, the pursuit of Ananda aligns with the broader philosophical framework of Dharma (righteousness) and Ahimsa (non-violence), ensuring that personal joy does not come at the expense of others. This perspective promotes a balanced life that values minimalism, contentment (Santosha) and harmony with nature. In contemporary discussions on sustainability and ethical living, the Indian philosophical understanding of Ananda serves as a reminder that true happiness is found not in unchecked consumption or competition but in inner peace, social harmony and a meaningful connection with the world.

The ethical foundation of Indian tradition is deeply rooted in the principle of interconnectedness between all living and non-living entities. Central to this philosophy is the concept of Pancha Mahabhuta - the Five Great Elements: Earth (*Prithvi*), Water (*Apas*), Fire (*Tejas*), Air (*Vayu*) and Space (*Akasha*). These elements are considered the fundamental building blocks of life and exist in a delicate balance within the human body, the environment, and the cosmos. Indian philosophical and medical traditions emphasise that any disruption in this equilibrium leads to disharmony, whether

in human health or ecological systems. This perspective fosters a holistic view of sustainability, where human actions must align with natural laws to maintain ecological stability. Unlike modern industrial approaches that exploit nature, Indian wisdom advocates a respectful and reciprocal relationship with the environment, ensuring that natural resources are used responsibly and restocked whenever possible.

Ayurveda, one of the oldest systems of holistic medicine, is a direct application of the Pancha Mahabhuta concept, integrating it into the Tridosha theory - Vata, Pitta, and Kapha. This theory explains that health is maintained when these three doshas are balanced, and diseases arise when there is an imbalance. The Tridosha theory applied not only to human health but also to plant health, recognising that a balance of elements was essential for a thriving ecosystem. The people of ancient India lived in deep harmony with nature, seeing it as a divine presence. Their religious and spiritual practices often revolved around nature worship - rivers were considered sacred, trees were venerated, and animals were treated with respect. The concept of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam extended beyond human society to include all beings, reinforcing the idea that humanity's survival depends on the well-being of the entire ecosystem.

The same principle extends to plants and agriculture, as explained in *Vrikshayurveda*, an ancient treatise attributed to Surapala. The text provides insights into plant immunity, organic farming, water conservation, and sustainable agricultural practices, advocating methods that enhance soil fertility and crop health without harming the environment. Following these principles, traditional Indian agricultural systems ensured long-term sustainability,

preventing soil degradation, water depletion and loss of biodiversity. Today, as the world grapples with the consequences of industrial farming, climate change and deforestation, these ancient insights offer valuable guidance for adopting sustainable agricultural and environmental policies that promote harmony between humans and nature.

The Industrial Revolution in Europe led to a materialistic worldview, separating the mind from the body and humans from nature. This shift resulted in environmental degradation, social inequality, and cultural erosion. The modern world, built on excessive industrialisation and consumerism, has led to multifaceted global crises — economic, social, political, and ecological. In contrast to this, ancient Indian traditions offer a holistic perspective. Unlike the exploitative development models of today, the Vedic way of life encouraged reverence for nature. People did not view the environment as a resource to be consumed but as a sacred entity to be respected and preserved. Sustainable development, as per Indian philosophy, involves minimising harm to the environment while ensuring economic and social progress. This holistic approach aligns with Mahatma Gandhi's famous statement: "The earth has enough for everyone's need, but not for anyone's greed."

Indian philosophical traditions advocate a socio-economic system that does not exploit nature for material gains. This approach can offer valuable insights into creating a development model that prioritises ecological balance, social justice, and economic well-being. Some key principles that modern societies can adopt from Indian philosophy include:

- ◆ Minimalism: Living with what is necessary rather than indulging in excessive consumption.
- ◆ Self-Sufficiency: Encouraging sustainable local economies rather than dependence on industrialised global markets.
- ◆ Non-violence (Ahimsa): Extending compassion to all living beings, reducing harm to animals and ecosystems.
- ◆ Holistic Well-Being: Viewing development beyond economic growth to include physical, mental and spiritual well-being.

## Conclusion

In the face of modern environmental and social crises, it is essential to rethink development holistically. The wisdom of ancient Indian traditions offers a blueprint for sustainable living. The principles of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam and Ananda emphasise interconnectedness and the pursuit of happiness in a way that benefits all beings. By redefining our relationship with nature and integrating these traditional values into contemporary development models, humanity can work towards a future that is both progressive and sustainable. To achieve this, individuals, communities, and policymakers must embrace an ethical, environmentally conscious approach to life. Sustainable development should not be about economic growth at the cost of nature but about fostering a way of life where human progress aligns with ecological well-being. By reviving the values of the Indian tradition, we can move towards a world that survives and thrives in harmony with nature.

## Recap

- ◆ Indian philosophy emphasises living in harmony with nature.
- ◆ Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam means “the world is one family;” it promotes global unity.
- ◆ Nature and humans have equal space in Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam.
- ◆ Apart from temporary pleasure, Ananda is true bliss.
- ◆ Sustainable development aligns with Indian traditions of minimalism and self-sufficiency.
- ◆ Pancha Mahabhuta (Five Great Elements) highlights human-nature interconnectedness.
- ◆ Ayurveda and Vrikshayurveda advocate ecological balance and holistic well-being.
- ◆ Advaita Vedanta sees all existence as one, fostering universal responsibility.
- ◆ Tridosha theory in Ayurveda links health with elemental balance.
- ◆ Traditional Indian agriculture prioritized sustainability.
- ◆ Ahimsa extends to all living beings and the environment.
- ◆ Dharma ensures ethical, balanced living in harmony with nature.
- ◆ The Vedic worldview opposes industrial exploitation of nature.
- ◆ Simplicity and contentment lead to a sustainable way of life.
- ◆ Indian ethics emphasize collective well-being.
- ◆ Gandhi’s philosophy warns against greed and promotes need-based consumption.
- ◆ Holistic well-being includes physical, mental and spiritual development.
- ◆ Reverence for nature in Indian tradition fosters responsible resource use.
- ◆ Sustainable policies today can draw inspiration from ancient Indian wisdom.
- ◆ Nature-centric living ensures harmony between humans and the environment.

## Objective Questions

1. What is the meaning of the term Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam?
2. From which ancient text is the phrase Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam taken?
3. What does the concept of Ananda describe in Indian philosophy?
4. Which philosophical school emphasises sense perception as the only valid source of knowledge?
5. What is Pancha Mahabhuta in Indian Philosophy?
6. What are the three doshas in the Tridosha theory of Ayurveda?
7. Who stated, “The earth has enough for everyone’s need, but not for anyone’s greed?”
8. What does the ancient Indian text *Vrikshayurveda* primarily deal with?
9. What is the primary goal of sustainable development according to Indian philosophy?
10. What does “Dharma” primarily refer to in Indian philosophy?
11. Which Indian philosophical system emphasises non-duality and the oneness of all existence?
12. What does minimalism in Indian philosophy advocate?
13. Who is the author of the book *Vrikshayurveda*?

## Answers

1. The world is one family	of nature
2. Mahopanishad	6. Vata, Pitta, Kapha
3. A state of true bliss and spiritual fulfilment	7. Mahatma Gandhi
4. Charvaka	8. Sustainable agriculture and plant health
5. Five fundamental elements	9. The balance between

human needs and ecological harmony	11. Advaita Vedanta
10. Righteous duty and moral responsibility	12. Living with essential needs and avoiding excess
	13. Surapala

## Assignments

1. Discuss how the concept of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam can be practically applied to address contemporary environmental challenges. Provide relevant examples to support your analysis.
2. Illustrate how the teachings of Vrikshayurveda can contribute to organic farming and sustainable agricultural practices today.
3. Evaluate Mahatma Gandhi's statement, "The earth has enough for everyone's need, but not for anyone's greed." Discuss its relevance and implications for sustainable resource management.
4. Analyse the principles of Advaita Vedanta in understanding the interconnectedness of humanity and nature. Suggest practical strategies to incorporate this perspective into modern environmental policies for sustainable development.

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## Changes in Parameters of Measuring Development

# UNIT

### Learning Outcomes

After the completion of the unit, the learner will be able to:

- ◆ know the significance of economic indicators in assessing the development of a nation
- ◆ differentiate between the key economic indicators such as GDP, GNP, and GNH
- ◆ critically evaluate the limitations of GDP and GNP
- ◆ analyse how the four pillars of GNP contribute to national well-being
- ◆ learn the necessity of integrating economic progress with social and environmental well-being

### Prerequisites

What constitutes development? What indicators are used to measure development? On what basis are nations classified as developed, underdeveloped, and developing? Development is a multidimensional concept beyond mere economic growth and resource accumulation. It encompasses social, political, environmental, and psychological aspects that contribute to the overall well-being of individuals and societies. Measuring development is not a simple task. While the physical growth and material possessions of an individual can be easily quantified, assessing the spiritual growth of a person is far more challenging. Similarly, determining whether a nation is wealthy or poor is straightforward, but evaluating the mental health and overall happiness of its people is much more complex.

## Key themes

Economic Indicators, Gross Domestic Product (GDP), Gross National Product (GNP), Gross National Happiness (GNH), Income Inequality, Non-Market Activities, Holistic Development, Happiness Index, Sustainability.

## Discussion

Economic and social progress are often measured using various indicators that provide insight into the overall development of a nation. Among these, Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and Gross National Product (GNP) are widely used to measure economic performance. At the same time, Gross National Happiness (GNH) offers a broader perspective by incorporating well-being and quality of life. GNH is a metric that prioritises holistic development. These indicators present different perspectives on development, highlighting the need for a balanced approach, considering economic progress and human well-being.

### 1.3.1 Gross Domestic Product (GDP)

Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per person is widely used to calculate the overall economic development of a country. It represents the total market value of all goods and services produced within the borders of a country over a specific period, typically one financial year. GDP per person, or per capita GDP, is calculated by dividing the total GDP by the population of a country. However, this measure assumes that wealth is evenly distributed, which is rarely the case, as it does not account for economic disparities between the wealthy and the poor. Despite this limitation, GDP per person is often correlated with other indicators of national well-being, such as better healthcare,

education and living standards.

One drawback of GDP is that it measures production within a country's borders, but it does not necessarily reflect the income earned by its residents. In other words, it accounts for all economic activity within a country, regardless of who ultimately benefits from the generated income. GDP includes the value of goods and services produced domestically, whether the profits remain with the country's citizens or go to foreign entities. For example, if a foreign company establishes a factory in a country and produces goods there, the value of those goods is included in that country's GDP. However, if the company sends its profits to its home country, that income does not contribute to the local economy.

Another limitation of GDP is that it only calculates goods and services exchanged in the formal market. Economic activities that take place outside of the market, such as unpaid household work, caregiving or subsistence farming, are not accounted for. As a result, GDP underestimates contributions made through non-market activities that significantly impact the well-being of the people. While GDP measures economic output, it does not account for the negative environmental and social consequences of production. Environmental damage, such as industrial pollution, deforestation and resource depletion, is not subtracted from GDP. Similarly, the costs of war, natural disasters

and social issues such as increasing stress levels or mental health crises are not reflected in GDP figures. Even in high-income countries, citizens may experience economic and social challenges that GDP alone cannot capture. While GDP remains a valuable economic indicator, relying solely on it can provide an incomplete and sometimes misleading picture of a nation's progress.

### 1.3.2. Gross National Product (GNP)

Gross National Product (GNP) is another important measure of a country's economic development. It represents the total market value of all goods and services produced by the residents of a country during a specific financial year, regardless of where they are located. In other words, GNP measures the income earned by a country's citizens both within and outside its borders. Unlike Gross Domestic Product (GDP), which accounts for all economic activity within a country's borders, GNP focuses only on the income earned by the country's citizens. It excludes the income earned by foreign nationals residing and working within the country while including the earnings of citizens working abroad.

Like GDP, GNP also has certain limitations. GNP gives an overall picture of national income but does not show how wealth is distributed among citizens. It does not highlight income inequality between the rich and the poor. And like GDP, GNP does not include unpaid labour, such as household work, caregiving or subsistence farming, even though these activities contribute significantly to well-being. GNP does not consider the negative effects of economic activity, such as pollution, deforestation and depletion of natural resources. It also does not reflect issues like social unrest

or declining mental health. A high GNP does not necessarily mean that people in a country have a high quality of life. Factors like healthcare, education, happiness and access to necessities are not considered in GNP calculations.

While GNP is useful in measuring a country's economic performance, it has several limitations, just like GDP. It does not fully capture the well-being of a nation's people or the sustainability of economic growth. For a more comprehensive understanding of development, other measures, such as Gross National Happiness, should be considered alongside GNP.

### 1.3.3. Gross National Happiness (GNH)

Happiness is the ultimate aspiration of human beings and nations should strive to ensure the well-being of their populations. A country with a happy population can develop more rapidly, as happy individuals tend to contribute more effectively than those who are unhappy. Moreover, as discussed earlier, all development programmes aim to enhance human happiness. Therefore, happiness should be considered a fundamental parameter of development. The term Gross National Happiness (GNH) was introduced in 1972 by the 4<sup>th</sup> King of Bhutan, Jigme Singye Wangchuck. He emphasised that Gross National Happiness (GNH) was more important than Gross Domestic Product (GDP). This concept highlights the need for a holistic approach to development, ensuring that progress is not measured solely by economic growth but also by the overall well-being of people.

On April 2, 2012, the United Nations held its first High-Level Meeting on "Happiness and Well-Being: Defining a New Economic Paradigm" at its



headquarters. The meeting was chaired by Bhutan's Prime Minister, Jigme Thinley. This event marked a significant step in global discussions about redefining progress beyond traditional economic measures. Bhutan stands out as the first and so far, the only, country to formally adopt Gross National Happiness (GNH) as its primary indicator of development instead of Gross Domestic Product (GDP). This unique approach reflects Bhutan's commitment to a more holistic development model that prioritises the well-being of its people over mere economic expansion.

### 1.3.3.1 Four Pillars of GNH

The concept of Gross National Happiness is based on four fundamental pillars. The four foundational pillars of Gross National Happiness (GNH) are Sustainable Socio-Economic Development, Good Governance, Cultural Preservation and Promotion and Environmental Conservation.

**a. Sustainable Socio-Economic Development** means promoting economic growth while ensuring social equity and enhancing overall quality of life. A developing GNH based economy values not only financial prosperity but also the social and economic contributions of households and families. Additionally, it recognises the importance of free time and leisure, as these factors play a crucial role in overall happiness.

**b. Good Governance** is about ensuring transparency, accountability and effective leadership to build a just and fair society. Good governance is considered a key pillar of happiness, as it shapes the conditions in which people can be successful. In Bhutan, policies and programmes are generally aligned with the values of GNH. Additionally, various tools and processes ensure

these values are effectively embedded in social policies.

**c. Preservation and Promotion of Culture** - Happiness is believed to be closely linked to the preservation of culture. Developing cultural flexibility - the ability to maintain and strengthen cultural identity - helps societies overcome challenges posed by external influences and differing norms. Preserving traditional values, heritage and identity while embracing modern advancements is essential for ensuring cultural continuity and fostering a strong sense of belonging.

**d. Environmental Conservation** - Environmental conservation plays a vital role in Gross National Happiness (GNH) as it not only provides essential resources such as water and energy but also enhances overall well-being. A clean and healthy environment contributes to physical and mental well-being by offering aesthetic beauty, fresh air and the calming effects of nature. The sight of vibrant landscapes, the feel of an unpolluted breeze and the soothing sounds of nature have a direct positive impact on human health and happiness. Therefore, protecting natural resources and promoting sustainable practices are crucial for maintaining ecological balance and ensuring long term environmental sustainability.

These pillars serve as the foundation for Bhutan's development policies, emphasising that true progress should integrate economic, social, cultural and environmental well-being rather than focusing solely on financial wealth. Later these four pillars have been further divided into nine domains to have a deeper understanding of GNH and to reflect the holistic range of GNH values. The nine domains are psychological well-being, health, education, time use, cultural diversity and resilience, good governance, community vitality, ecological diversity and resilience and

living standards. The domains represent each of the components of the well-being of the Bhutanese people and the term well-being here indicates the fulfilling con-

ditions of a “good life” as per the values and principles laid down by the concept of Gross National Happiness.

## Recap

- ◆ Economic growth is considered the prime indicator of a nation’s development.
- ◆ GDP - Gross domestic product
- ◆ GNP -Gross National product
- ◆ GNH - Gross national happiness
- ◆ Economic indicators like GDP, GNP and GNH measure national progress.
- ◆ GDP measures the total economic output within a country’s borders.
- ◆ GNP measures income earned by a country’s citizens, regardless of location.
- ◆ GNH provides a holistic measure of progress, focusing on well-being.
- ◆ Bhutan pioneered GNH, prioritizing happiness over economic growth.
- ◆ Sustainable Socio-Economic Development balances financial prosperity and quality of life.
- ◆ Good Governance ensures transparency, fairness and accountability.
- ◆ Cultural Preservation maintains traditional values while embracing modernity.
- ◆ Environmental Conservation protects nature for long-term well-being.
- ◆ GNH recognises happiness as a key goal of development.
- ◆ Bhutan’s GNH model has influenced global discussions on well-being.
- ◆ True development should combine material prosperity with social and environmental harmony.

## Objective Questions

1. Which is the most commonly used measure of a country's economic performance?
2. What does GDP measure?
3. What does Gross National Product (GNP) include?
4. What is excluded from GNP calculations?
5. Which country introduced the concept of Gross National Happiness (GNH)?
6. Who introduced the concept of Gross National Happiness?
7. What is the main focus of Gross National Happiness (GNH)?
8. What is a major drawback of using GDP as the sole measure of development?
9. What is the key difference between GDP and GNP?
10. How many domains does Gross National Happiness (GNH) include?
11. What is a key focus of the environmental conservation pillar of GNH?
12. How does cultural preservation contribute to Gross National Happiness?

## Answers

1. Gross Domestic Product (GDP)
2. The total market value of goods and services produced within a country
3. GNP includes income earned by a country's citizens both inside and outside the country
4. Profits earned by foreign companies within a country
5. Bhutan
6. Jigme Singye Wangchuck
7. Holistic well-being of citizens
8. It does not account for well-being and quality of life

- 9. GDP considers all production within a country's borders, while GNP considers income earned by its citizens worldwide
- 10. 4
- 11. Sustainable use of natural resources
- 12. By maintaining traditional values and a sense of identity

## Assignments

- 1. Analyse the differences between GDP, GNP, and GNH. How do these indicators influence national policies and development strategies?
- 2. Discuss the limitations of GDP and GNP as measures of national progress. How does GNH address these shortcomings?
- 3. GDP and GNP do not account for unpaid labour, such as household work and caregiving. How does this omission affect the accuracy of economic assessments? Suggest ways to include such contributions in national progress indicators.
- 4. Conduct an interview with people from different socio-economic backgrounds in your community. Ask about their perceptions of happiness and economic well-being. Analyse the responses in relation to GNH principles. Examine the potential challenges and benefits if any country adopts GNH as a measure of progress.

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# The Concepts of "Samsara Sagara" and "Samvid Sagara" in Vedanta

## UNIT

### Learning Outcomes

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

- ◆ analyse sustainable development beyond material and economic aspects, integrating existential and philosophical perspectives
- ◆ differentiate between the ocean of suffering and the ocean of consciousness
- ◆ recognise the unity of existence and its implications for sustainable living
- ◆ know how excessive dependence on material wealth and technological advancements contributes to human suffering and existential crises
- ◆ develop a deeper understanding of human potential, fostering a way of life that leads to true and lasting Ananda

### Prerequisites

Imagine standing by the shore, watching the waves rise and fall endlessly. Some waves are gentle, while others crash with great force. Life, too, moves in a similar rhythm, the moments of joy followed by struggles, success followed by uncertainty. Often we try to resist these changes, clinging to happiness and fearing sorrow. But what if, instead of fighting the waves, we learn to move with them, understanding that they are all part of the same vast ocean? Since ancient times, people have searched for true happiness, believing it lies in wealth, success, or material comfort. Yet, even those who achieve everything they desire often feel something is missing. Indian philosophy suggests that this restlessness comes from a misunderstanding of our nature. By broadening our perspective on life and its ever-changing nature, we can move beyond fleeting material concerns and cultivate a deeper awareness of our true potential, ultimately embracing a life of wisdom, harmony, and everlasting Ananda.

## Key themes

Ananda, Misery, Upanishads, Samvit Sagara, Samsara Sagara, Samsara Chakra, Maya, Atman, Bondage, Avidya, Kama, Moksha, Bhaja Govindam, Daiva Dasakam.

## Discussion

Sustainable development is often discussed in terms of environmental conservation, economic growth and social equity. However, beyond these physical dimensions, it is essential to understand the deeper philosophical and existential aspects of development. A fundamental question in this regard is how humans perceive themselves in relation to the world. Do we see ourselves as integral parts of the world, or do we experience ourselves as separate from it? This question leads to a broader inquiry into human identity, consciousness and the quest for happiness. Modern discussions on development frequently assume a dualistic approach, treating human beings as separate from nature, shaping and controlling the world rather than being intrinsically connected to it. From an Indian philosophical perspective, this division is problematic. The Upanishadic vision of existence does not differentiate between the individual self and the universal self but instead asserts an inherent unity in existence.

Indian culture traces human lineage to Manu, whose name is derived from the Sanskrit root man, meaning “the one who thinks.” This etymology signifies that human beings are not merely biological entities but are defined by their capacity for thought and self-reflection. If humans are essentially thinking beings, their conceptualisation of reality determines their life experience. At a fundamental level, all human beings seek happiness

(Ananda). However, the means and expressions of this search vary among individuals and cultures. While people work towards personal and collective goals, the crucial question remains: Does this pursuit ultimately lead to true bliss? If the answer is “no,” there is a misalignment in how happiness is defined and pursued. The dissatisfaction and suffering prevalent in the modern world suggest a disconnection between our values and the deeper meaning of life. This disconnect can be understood through the Vedantic concepts of Samvit Sagara (the ocean of consciousness) and Samsara Sagara (the ocean of worldly suffering).

The word sagara means ocean and samsara refers to the ever-changing nature of existence. Just as the ocean is never still, constantly shifting with rising and falling waves, so is life in continuous motion. Birth and death, growth and decline, creation and destruction - these cycles continue endlessly, shaping existence. Without movement, there would be no contrast, no experiences and ultimately, no life itself. Life flourishes on transformation and renewal. Recognising this, ancient Indian philosophers described this ceaseless cycle of existence as Samsara Chakra, the ever-revolving wheel of life.

Vedantic philosophy describes this transient and ever-changing nature of worldly existence as Samsara Sagara or Bhava Sagara, meaning the ocean of suffering. Life, with its unavoidable

difficulties - natural calamities, diseases, conflicts and relationship struggles - often appears as an endless cycle of misery. This perception arises because human beings identify themselves with the impermanent aspects of existence - body, emotions, material possessions and social roles - rather than with their eternal consciousness (Atman). The concept of Samsara Sagara is deeply tied to the idea of bondage (Bandhana). When people mistake impermanent pleasures for everlasting happiness, they remain entangled in the cycle of birth and rebirth (Samsara), driven by Avidya (ignorance) and Kama (desire), which lead to suffering. The Bhagavad Gita and the Upanishads emphasise that true liberation (Moksha) comes from recognising one's true nature as pure consciousness beyond physical and psychological limitations.

While Samsara Sagara represents suffering and bondage, Samvit Sagara, the ocean of consciousness, offers liberation and self-realisation. Samvit means awareness or knowledge, signifying the ultimate reality where distinctions between self and world dissolve. In this state, happiness is not attained externally but is realized as the inherent nature of existence. Vedantic traditions, particularly Advaita Vedanta, teach that suffering arises from the illusion of separateness (Maya). When one transcends this illusion and experiences the unity of Brahman (the absolute reality), one attains Ananda, not as a fleeting emotion but as an eternal state of being. This realization allows an individual to navigate the world without being trapped in its sufferings.

In his renowned work Bhaja Govindam, Sri Sankaracharya describes Samsara as an ocean of suffering bound by the relentless cycle of birth and death. This metaphor highlights the turbulence and uncertainty of worldly life, where individuals are

constantly caught in the waves of desires, disappointments, and impermanence. A similar sentiment can be observed in the words of Jesus in the Gospel of Luke: "Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done." The first part of this statement, "Take this cup from me," echoes the human desire to be free from suffering, much like the desire to escape the painful cycle of Samsara. However, the second part- "yet not my will, but yours be done" - introduces a deeper philosophical perspective. It suggests surrender, acceptance, and an understanding of a higher divine order, aligning with the Vedantic ideas of renunciation, self-surrender (Bhakti), and realising a greater truth beyond individual suffering.

Understanding the contrast between Samsara Sagara and Samvit Sagara can help redefine how we approach development. Sustainable development should not only address economic and environmental concerns but also focus on the well-being of consciousness. The modern world often equates progress with material growth, technological advancement, and resource accumulation. However, as long as development remains centered on external factors, suffering will persist.

One perceives the world as Samsara Sagara when they see themselves as separate from it. This sense of alienation creates the illusion of struggle. However, if one views oneself as an integral part of the world, one begins to recognise that the changes in one's own life are in harmony with the natural transformations occurring in the world. Instead of resisting these fluctuations, they learn to appreciate the peaks and valleys of life, embracing them as essential aspects of existence. Such a perspective leads to a life filled with Ananda- a state of deep joy and

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contentment. Essentially, life and the world are not different; they are one and the same. The difference lies in perception: one individual sees the world as full of suffering, while another experiences it as a manifestation of Ananda. The foundation of this enlightened view of life is awareness, Samvit, which means true knowledge or the right understanding of reality. When people attain Samvit, they no longer perceive the world as Samsara Sagara but instead experience it as Samvit Sagara- an ocean of wisdom and bliss.

The concepts of these two Sagaras - the ocean of suffering and the ocean of knowledge - are further explored in Daiva Dasakam, a devotional composition by Sree Narayana Guru, where he presents a vision of the world that transcends suffering through divine awareness. A more holistic approach to development would integrate Vedantic insights with contemporary models by:

- ◆ Shifting from Materialism to Consciousness-Based Development: Moving beyond the notion that happiness is a product of economic growth and emphasizing self-awareness, mindfulness and inner fulfilment.
- ◆ Recognising Interconnectedness: Promoting sustainable living that reflects the unity of existence and harmony with nature.
- ◆ Reevaluating Human Values: Prioritising mental and spiritual well-being alongside physical and economic progress.

By broadening our understanding of development, we can move beyond material concerns to a more profound realisation of human potential, ultimately leading to a world that fosters true and lasting Ananda.

## Recap

- ◆ True development is not just material growth.
- ◆ Human beings are not separate from nature.
- ◆ Samsara represents the ocean of suffering.
- ◆ Samvit symbolises the ocean of wisdom.
- ◆ Ignorance leads to bondage.
- ◆ Awareness leads to liberation.
- ◆ Life is a cycle of constant change.
- ◆ Real happiness (Ananda) comes from within.
- ◆ Samsara Chakra represents the endless cycle of life.
- ◆ Self-realisation leads to true freedom.

- ◆ Vedanta teaches the unity of existence.
- ◆ Development must include mental and spiritual well-being.
- ◆ The illusion of separateness (Maya) causes suffering.
- ◆ True wisdom is seeing beyond material illusions.
- ◆ Sree Narayana Guru teaches transcendence of suffering.
- ◆ Realising one's true nature leads to liberation (Moksha).
- ◆ Harmony with nature brings sustainable happiness.
- ◆ A holistic approach to development is essential.
- ◆ Living with awareness leads to true happiness.
- ◆ Development should include spiritual progress.
- ◆ Self-reflection leads to deeper wisdom.
- ◆ The key to happiness is in understanding oneself.
- ◆ Sustainable living aligns with Vedantic wisdom.

## Objective Questions

1. What does the root word “man” in Sanskrit mean?
2. What does Samsara Sagara represent in Vedantic philosophy?
3. What is the meaning of Samvit Sagara?
4. Which Sanskrit term refers to the illusion of separateness?
5. What is the ultimate goal of human life, according to Vedanta?
6. Ananda in Indian philosophy refers to.....
7. What is the key cause of suffering, according to Vedanta?
8. What does ‘samsara’ signify in Vedantic thought?
9. Bhava Sagara is another term for?

10. Which philosophical school teaches the unity of Atman and Brahman?
11. What leads to bondage in Samsara?
12. According to Vedanta, true liberation (Moksha) is achieved through.....
13. What does Bhaja Govindam describe Samsara as?

## Answers

1. The one who thinks
2. Ocean of suffering
3. Ocean of wisdom
4. Maya
5. Attaining Ananda and Moksha
6. Eternal bliss
7. Ignorance (Avidya)
8. The ever-changing nature of existence and the cycle of birth and rebirth
9. The ocean of suffering
10. Advaita Vedanta
11. Ignorance and desire
12. Realisation of one's true nature
13. An ocean of suffering bound by the cycle of birth and death

## Assignments

- ◆ Analyse the relevance of the concepts of Samsara Sagara and Samvit Sagara in contemporary discussions on sustainable development. How can these Vedantic ideas contribute to redefining human progress beyond material growth?
- ◆ Discuss the implications of Advaita Vedanta's notion of Maya on environmental ethics. How can recognising the unity of existence influence human interactions with nature?

- ◆ Critically examine the modern pursuit of happiness in light of Vedantic insights on Ananda. How can individuals and societies shift from materialistic definitions of happiness to a more consciousness-centred approach?

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**Sree Narayana Guru's  
Philosophy Applied in  
the field of Sustainable  
Development**



# The Sustainable Development Goals of the U.N and Narayana Guru's Unitive Vision of Happiness

## UNIT

### Learning Outcomes

By studying this unit, the learner will be able to know:

- ◆ guru's concept of endearment
- ◆ guru's unitive vision of happiness
- ◆ his anticipation of U. N.'s sustainable development goals

### Prerequisites

When we approach Narayana Guru's sphere of activities from the point of view of sustainable development, we can see its wholesomeness. United Nations aims at Sustainable development through achieving seventeen goals. Narayana Guru's vision on development was without any divisions, it included all. In his time, society was filled with all sorts of inequalities and injustices. Guru understood that without removing this rotten social system, achieving human fraternity and equality would not be easy. The most effective way to bring up the downtrodden people to the main stream of society was to provide universal education. Guru's message "become liberated through education" powerfully reveals this attitude.

Due to the caste discrimination, even clean food and decent clothing were beyond the reach of the downtrodden. They could not maintain even proper personal hygiene. Through systematic processes, guru raised them up and thus paved way for good education and decent jobs. That provided them with healthy food and healthy life style. To implement this, Guru established or motivated others to establish schools, enterprises and vocational training centres. Guru established public schools and vocational training centres at Aruvippuram,

Sivagiri Mutt, Aluva Advaita Ashram etc. At Aruvippuram a weaving training centre functioned associated with the school. At Sivagiri, training for Ayurveda and weaving was available. Through all these Guru aimed at the economic progress of the downtrodden.

A night school functioned associated with Aluva Advaita Ashram. It was for the people from Pulaya community. Children from the downtrodden communities could stay and learn for free at Sivagiri and Advaita Ashram. In schools founded by Narayana guru, Sanskrit was taught to transfer the rich cultural heritage of India, English was taught as the medium of modernity and Malayalam was taught because it was the mother tongue. All these languages were given equal importance.

Narayana Guru delivered a speech at a meeting held in January 1912. In the speech he talked about proper education, decent jobs, vocational training centres, industrial centres etc. This shows his awareness about the important role of these ventures in establishing social and economic progress in society.

## Key themes

Priyam (fondness), Humanism, Athmasukha (Self happiness), Other.

## Discussion

According to historians, Indian philosophy is around 5000 years old. From the beginning, Advaita Vedanta had a prominent position in the philosophical tradition of India. For Buddha, this Advaita Vedanta theory was *sanathana dharma* whereas for Sri Sankara it was *Sruti*. What Narayana Guru did was to revalue the same Advaita Vedanta theory in accordance with the modern scientific temper. If we examine history, we can find that many world renowned masters were not given enough acceptance during their own time. To put it another way, most of them were ahead of their times. Hence, the thoughts of many great minds faded into oblivion. It is mostly due to the impracticable nature of their lofty ideals. But certain other philosophical visions have survived the test of time. They are

both universal and locally grounded at the same time. The words of Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Lao-tzu, Jesus Christ, Prophet Mohammed, Buddha, Sankaracharya etc. are examples for this kind of vision. Narayana Guru is such a visionary from this modern era.

If we closely examine the works of Narayana guru, the clarity and depth of its philosophical vision can be seen. Until Narayana Guru, most other Gurus wrote commentaries for “Prasthanathrayas” (Upanishads, Bhagavat Gita, Brahmasutras) in order to strengthen the philosophical basis. But Narayana Guru deviated from this path of his predecessors by not writing commentaries. Instead, he came up with his own works, in his unique style. Narayana Guru’s field of work was not restricted to the philosophical sphere

of Advaita Vedanta alone. Of course, he was an Advaitin and it reflected in all his activities. The universal vision presented by Guru was firmly rooted in the broadness of Advaita itself.

The word “Advaita” means non dual. When the Advaita vision is embodied, one gets the broad-mindedness to embrace everything; the hierarchies become irrelevant. Qualities like empathy, compassion and mercy fill the inner space of such people. This very inclusive vision of life can be seen not only in Guru’s philosophical works like Atmopadesa Satakam, but also in his inspirational works like Anukamba Dasakam and Jeevakarunyapanchakam.

To study Guru’s philosophical vision, which gives space to both living and non-living entities, we must first examine Atmopadesa Sathakam - widely considered as one of the most important philosophical works of Guru. Atmopadesa Satakam shows us an all-embracing vision of life. The way ideas are presented in this work is very rational. If one carefully studies and puts these ideas into practice, a life filled with ananda can be expected. Not everyone is a Vedantin. Not everyone is interested in studying Vedas. But still, anyone can lead a fulfilled life without harming the other. Atmopade Sasathakam helps one in that regard. Let us now examine some of the philosophical aspects of Atmopadesasathakam.

### 2.1.1 Priyam (Endearment)

We have already seen that the wish for ananda propels human life. We have also seen that the nature of this wish can vary according to one’s character and environment. Irrespective of all these factors, one’s ultimate aim is ananda alone. But do we think of others when we are in this pursuit of ananda? Have you

ever thought about the wishes of others? Or have you ever considered the fact that others are also pursuing ananda? In this vast cosmos, we are all pursuing a life filled with ananda. But, can we live an ananda filled life without being a hindrance to the wishes of the other? Sustainable development also implies such a lifestyle.

What constitutes such a lifestyle? How does that lifestyle pan out? In his philosophical work Athmopadesasathka, Narayana Guru has given clear instructions regarding this. We can briefly examine that vision of life. Guru explains these clearly on verses 21 to 25. On the 21st verse Guru says:

*Endearment is one kind; this is dear to me;*

*Your preference is for something else;*

*Thus, many objects of endearment are differentiated and confusion comes;*

*What is dear to you is dear to another also; this should be known*

Endearment is one kind. Those objects which give us pleasure are dear to us and can be called as objects of endearment. Many objects of endearment are there. Due to the presence of many objects of endearment, we may feel that endearment is of many types. But guru asserts that there are not many types of endearment.

In a debate between Yajnavalkya and Maitreyi in Brihadaranyaka Upanishad, there is a part where Yajnavalkya tells Maitreyi:

*It is not for the sake of the husband, that the husband is dear, but for the sake of the Self.*

*It is not for the sake of the wife, that the wife is dear, but for the sake of the Self.*

*It is not for the sake of the children, that*

*the children are dear, but for the sake of the Self.*

Why does a person wish for money, power etc.? Is it because he is very fond of those objects? Or is it because he is fond of himself? It is because he is fond of himself. What will happen if one becomes disinterested in all these objects? What if he dislikes all these? Definitely, all these objects of endearment will be relinquished. Then what does one love the most? Obviously, it is one's own self. One loves herself / himself the most. We can call this self as the "atma vasthu" (The primordial self). The word atma denotes the state of being as experienced as the self, which is the foundation to all thoughts and actions of the person. We have discussed Ananda previously. That ananda is experienced in this atma. This atma vasthu or the space where we experience Ananda, is common to all. Thus, it is not many, it is one.

If this Atma vasthu is the most loved, we should remain as close to it as possible. What will happen to all the other objects of endearment then? Will those become irrelevant? Can this change in the inner value hierarchy cause a shift in world's pursuit for pleasures found in these objects? If that shift can help each to fulfil one's own inner calling in this world, will not that be a noble shift?

One great ideal this land has contributed to the world is contained in the saying "*lokasamasta sukhinobhavantu*," which means "may all the beings in the world become happy." This indicates that ancient India followed a life style in which the wish for happiness to all was the central tenet. This attitude was based on the previously discussed oneness of 'atma vasthu' - that is, seeing the same 'atma vasthu' in everyone and everything. So, love, honesty, empathy and willingness to suffer for the greater good came naturally

to them.

Narayanan Guru was a rare personality because he not only had the knowledge of the 'atma vasthu' but also embodied that knowledge and became a model to this whole world. In the next verse of the Athmopadesasathakam, Guru says:

*The happiness of another - that is my happiness;*

*One's own joy is another's joy- this is the guiding principle;*

*That action which is good for one person*

*Should bring happiness to another*

Another person's happiness is one's own happiness. "That is what makes him happy. Thus that makes me happy too," Guru said. By following an attitude like this, the actions one does for one's own well-being, will bring happiness to the other too. We have seen that there is only one 'atma vasthu'. We have also seen that this primordial self is the one which experiences all sorts of happiness. It also follows that even when all the objects of endearment change, the primordial self or 'atma vasthu' remains changeless. That means the primordial self is changeless, the need for happiness or the need to have something to be fond of is changeless.

## 2.1.2 Sustainable Development Goals and Guru's Teaching

We have seen the 17 sustainable development goals presented by the U. N. What is the final goal envisioned through that? Let us examine the first sustainable development goal, that is, poverty alleviation. What do we achieve when we alleviate poverty? Or what does one achieve when his hunger is satisfied? Obviously, he gets

happiness or ananda. Let us examine the 5th sustainable development goal. There gender justice, women empowerment, child empowerment etc. are aimed.

Achieving those goals can result in the liberation and prosperity of the population concerned. In short, the U. N. aims at filling the present and future with ananda. That is the purpose behind these sustainable development goals.

Almost a century before the U. N. formed these sustainable development goals, Narayana Guru, the visionary had put into practice many of these ideals. Guru did his level best to bring the down trodden masses to the mainstream of society. He loudly proclaimed: "This is a model space in which all live in kinship and where differences based on caste and animosity based on religion do not exist."

Guru's temple consecrations helped in improving hygiene and established a

sense of equality. This resulted in making the people healthier. The industrial training centres and schools helped to establish universal education and economic growth among poor people. The speakers from Sree Narayana Dharma Paripalana Yogam, disciples of guru and guru himself delivered speeches to create awareness about the possibilities related to agriculture, industries, business etc.

These speeches also stressed on the importance of cooperation among people to achieve the common goals. Guru had numerous disciples from various backgrounds. Through them, he was able to enter all walks of society. The cornerstones of all these activities were the non-dual vision (Advaita) of Guru, which proclaims that all are various forms of one fundamental principle. In short, Guru had a universal vision which viewed all as one. Let us examine Guru's activities in the coming lessons.

## Recap

- ◆ Philosophy is the search for true knowledge
- ◆ Narayana Guru tried to give a proper vision of life
- ◆ Philosophy consists of many secrets of life discovered by humans for humans.
- ◆ SDG of the U. N. are similar to Guru's vision on development
- ◆ Guru's vision is based on fraternity, equality and humanism
- ◆ Education is the fundamental stepping stone towards development
- ◆ For industrial development, people can join together to start ventures
- ◆ Priyam (endearment) is uniting with the one
- ◆ *Athmopadesathakam* reveals a clear vision of life

- ◆ All are equal in athma
- ◆ Priyam cannot be measured with a norm
- ◆ The quest for priyam ends in Ananda
- ◆ All lives are a quest for ananda
- ◆ Guru's temple consecration movement inspired thoughts about social equality

## Objective Questions

1. What is philosophy?
2. On which philosophy is Guru's vision based on?
3. What is the meaning of the word 'Adwaita'?
4. State a saying which reveals the ancient Indian's vision of life.
5. Where is ananda experienced?
6. Is atma vastu or the space where we experience ananda common to all?
7. What is Guru's vision of endearment?
8. "What does one do for the happiness of oneself should also be the happiness for others." Whose statement is this?

## Answers

1. Love of wisdom / search for true knowledge
2. Advaita,
3. Non-dual,
4. Unitive vision of happiness.
5. atma
6. Yes
7. it is one kind
8. Guru's

## Assignments

1. Explain how Narayana Guru reinterpreted Advaita Vedanta to suit the modern scientific spirit. In what way did his approach differ from that of earlier Advaita philosophers like Sri Sankara?
2. Discuss the idea of 'atma vasthu' and 'ananda' as explained in Atmopadesa Satakam. How does Narayana Guru relate these concepts to universal well-being and sustainable living?
3. Evaluate how Narayana Guru's vision aligns with the goals of sustainable development. Give examples from his life and work that show his commitment to social equality and collective happiness.

## Suggested Reading

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# Guru's Teachings on Clearliness and Well-Being with Reference to "Pancha sudhi" and Kulisangham"

## UNIT

### Learning Outcomes

By studying this unit, the learner will be able to:

- ◆ understand Guru's concept of cleanliness in general
- ◆ understand Guru's concept of panchasudhi
- ◆ appreciate Guru's efforts to create a culture of hygiene

### Prerequisites

“Cleanliness is next to Godliness” is a famous proverb. This shares with us the concept that the ones with cleanliness and health are near the divine. Cleanliness consists of moral and individual cleanliness. The aim of cleanliness is health.

When the evil system of cast gripped Kerala, the issue of hygiene among people acted like an inspiration for Guru. Hygiene or cleanliness is the major aspect of our daily routine. Clean surroundings can save us from many deadly diseases. Lack of hygiene can cast people away from the mainstream of society. If we examine history, we can see that hygiene issues have caused a divide among people.

Lack of hygiene was a factor behind the Savarna -Avarna divide. Savarnas have tried to practise untouchability in the name of hygiene. This realisation was one of the reasons behind Guru's temple consecration movement.

Devotion is a basic quality of humans. With his temple consecration movement, he used the devotion of the downtrodden to make them more aware of cleanliness and led them to a path of progress and liberation, without even themselves knowing it.

## Key themes

Narayana smriti, Cleanliness, Sarirasudhi, Vaksudhi, Manasudhi, Indriyasudhi, Gruhasudhi, Kulisangham.

## Discussion

Before discussing guru's vision on cleanliness and wellbeing we need to get a clear idea about two fields of knowledge. Those two fields are *sruti* and *smriti*. *Srutis* are the words of seers regarding the ultimate truth which is the foundation of this world, us and our lives. *Upanishads* are examples of *Srutis*. The aim of a *Sruti* is to initiate the process of contemplation on the sustainable development teachings of Guru's, to sow the seeds of sustainable development in the minds of the seeker. The word *Sruti* means that which is heard. When one becomes a person of sustainable development by contemplating on the *Srutis*, he will be aware of the actions he should commit and the actions he should not commit while living in the world. The field of knowledge which elaborates on such dos and don'ts is called the *smriti*. *Manu smriti* and *Yajnavalkya smriti* are examples for this.

*Smritis* should be corrected as times and places change. These corrections have been done by the Gurus from time to time. On the other hand, *Srutis*, the source of timeless sustainable development, never change. As far as *smritis* are concerned, we have to look into *Narayana smriti* or *Sreenarayana dharma*, a book written by Swami Atmananda, a close disciple of *Narayana Guru*. Some of the factors we have seen earlier, like different aspects of cleanliness, are being discussed in this *smriti*. Later we will discuss it in detail.

We have seen that *smritis* are works which discuss the essential duties one has

to carry out to lead a righteous life. As we have seen earlier, *Sreenarayana dharma* or *Narayana smriti* is such a *smriti* written in modern times. The book was written under the insistence of *Narayana Guru* himself.

### 2.2.1 Five Types of Cleanliness

*Sudhipanchaka* is a portion of *Narayana smriti* in which five types of cleanliness or purity are elaborated. Given below are those five types of cleanliness:

1. **Cleanliness of body** (*sarirasudhi*): using pure water to take bath every day, keeping teeth and nails clean, wearing clean clothes, intake of clean air, water, food and keeping the whole surface of the body clean etc.
2. **Purity of words** (*Vaksudhi*): The clear and attractive pronunciation of letters, the clarity while uttering words, using words that are suitable for the context, styles of talking that do not invoke anxiety in listeners, talking honestly etc. are included in this section.
3. **Purity of mind** (*Manasudhi*): Mercy, friendliness, sensitivity, courage, vulnerability, not having anger issues, meditation etc. can keep the mind pure.
4. **Purity of the senses** (*Indriyasudhi*): Try not to indulge in acts that are not genuinely interesting, not to pamper or strain sense organs, not to praise those which are not praise

worthy. Following these principles can keep the senses clean.

**5. Keeping the house clean (Gruhasudhi):** Enough sunlight should enter the house, dispose unclean objects, clean all areas of the house, do not excrete on open places and burn aromatic substances in mornings and evenings. Following these instructions can keep the house clean and pure.

In Narayana smriti, it is said that those who follow this “Suddhi panchaka” can lead a long life with a healthy body and clear mind. Hygiene is imperative for a healthy system of life, be it on an individual or collective level. Narayana Guru made sure that this aspect got taken care of not only in his life but also in the lives of those who were around him.

One of the worst social evils of those times was the practice of untouchability. Guru considered hygiene issues and this practice as intrinsically connected. Guru once said: “Cleanliness should be maintained strictly. Untouchability will disappear eventually. Making unnecessary issues should be avoided. Can anyone order a very clean person to move away? Even if someone says so, does the one who hear it feel like moving? Hygiene should not be a practice for external validation. Homes should be clean. Hygiene practices should start from one’s own kitchen.”

Cultivating a culture of hygiene was one of the things Guru achieved through the consecration of temples. He used the deity concept to tell people to take bath before coming to the temple. By all these, hygiene becomes a habit of many who were not on the mainstream of the society. Making hygiene a habit was instrumental in removing the concept of untouchability from many minds. This can be considered as a battle against caste system. Hence,

Guru had the idea that personal hygiene creates confidence and improves the creativity and ultimately economic progress.

## 2.2.2 Kulisangham

Kulisangam was a fellowship initiated under Guru's direction. Its objective was to spread awareness on the importance of bathing and other aspects of cleanliness. Guru initiated this collective movement through his disciple Sreenarayana Theertha Swamikal.

Guru said this about the usefulness of this movement: “There is no expense to start this movement. Dirt will be removed. Purity will be attained. Healing will happen.” If body becomes pure, purity of food, home etc. will follow. If one gets used to such a life style, everything will be possible. Questions and thoughts regarding cast can be irrelevant then.

## 2.2.3 Messages and Conversations of Guru on Cleanliness

India is a land where religions have a deep-rooted presence. In such a land, places of worship can speak a lot about the social and cultural progress. If we examine the general nature of Guru's temple consecrations, we can observe a process of ascension. In short, it was an ascend from rock to mirror, which reflects oneself.

Through the temple consecration processes guru tried to use devotion as a stepping stone for the social upliftment of common people. Guru envisioned temples as centres of education. Guru did not want temples to have dark interiors where bats flew around; instead he insisted on temples with well-lit interiors.

He also insisted on keeping the temple and premises as clean as possible. Personal hygiene was also important when one visits a temple. In a way, temples were a means for cultivating hygiene and devotion in people. In Guru's words "when someone enters the temple after purifying himself, he doesn't see the idol, he sees the God. One can breathe good air when the atmosphere is pure. Some fast at temples and those results in mental and physical healing. For some healing happens due to belief. Some gets wish fulfilment. It all depends on one's belief. "

"Every temple should have a library attached to it. All religious books should be there and should be taught. If a place is beautiful and clean, people will obviously come, will have good thoughts and thus health will get better. If one gets clean

and can breathe fresh air along with contemplation of God, healing can happen by itself. "

"Associated with every temple, there should be an educational institution. Educational institutions should be the main place of worship. There should be arrangements for teaching industrial skills to kids. It is not ideal to have bathing ponds attached to temples. Because it is not very easy to keep them clean. Thus, it is better to have bathrooms with overhead water pipes near temples. "

According to Guru, temples should be a place where people can gather and share knowledge. In short, for him, temples were a means to cultivate devotion, hygiene, knowledge etc. in people. All these factors can contribute to economic progress.

## Recap

- ◆ Hygiene is an important factor in social progress and life
- ◆ Not being hygienic can cause social isolation
- ◆ Unhygienic ways have solidified cast discrimination
- ◆ Guru used devotion as a way to improve personal hygiene.
- ◆ In India religion has an important position in society
- ◆ Libraries and schools were founded attached to temples
- ◆ Temples were gathering space for common people
- ◆ Panchasuddhis are essential for life
- ◆ Smritis detail on righteous ways
- ◆ Sudhipanchaka is an alternate name of Panchasuddhi
- ◆ Personal hygiene can eradicate untouchability

## Objective Questions

1. What did guru aim by creating a culture of personal hygiene?
2. What was the objective of Kulisangam?
3. How many types of cleanliness are there for Guru?
4. What are the five types of cleanliness ('Panchasuddhis')?
5. In which portion of Narayana smriti are five types of cleanliness mentioned?
6. Which disciple of guru started 'Kulisangha'?

## Answers

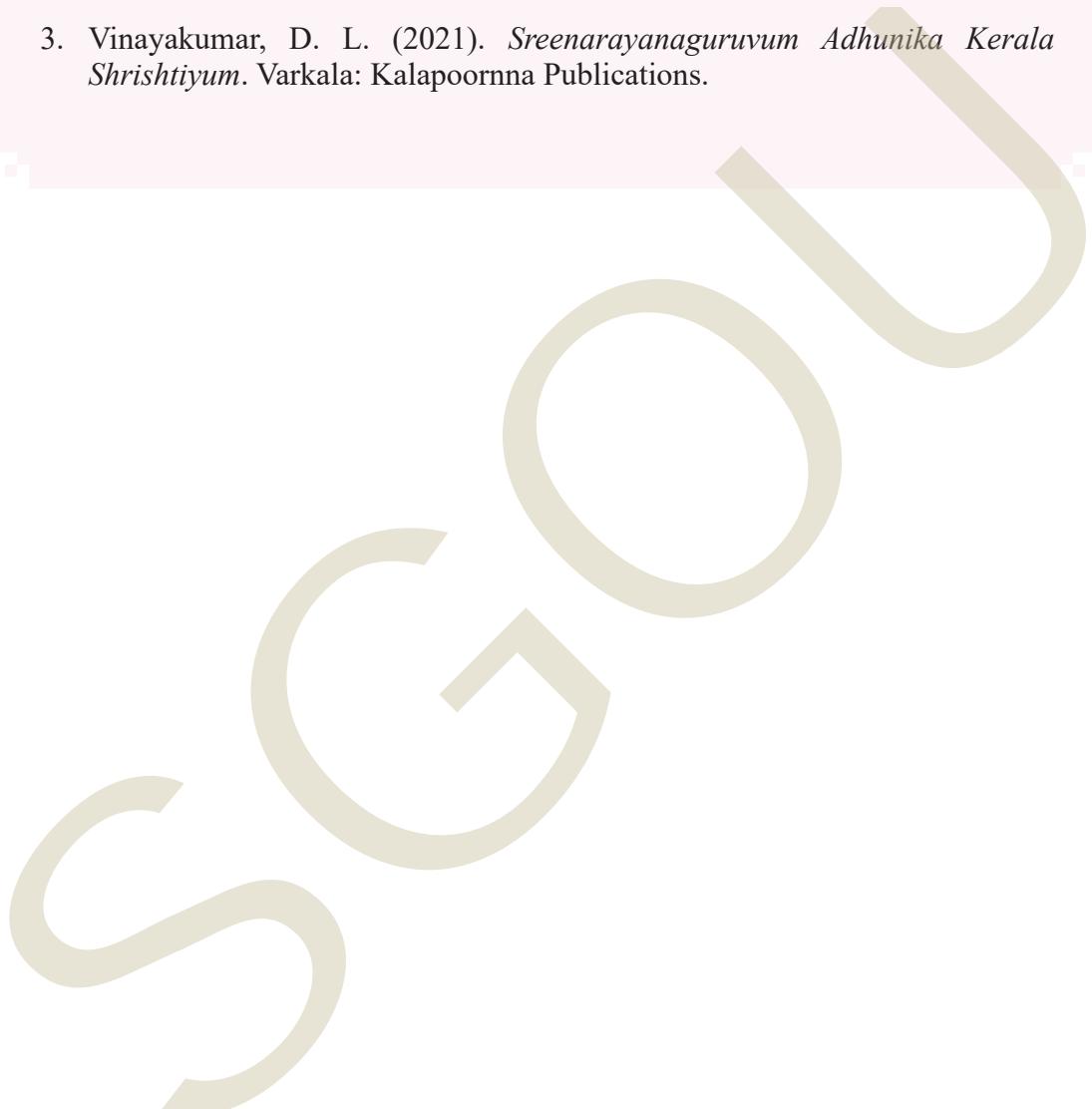
1. To eradicate caste untouchability
2. Its objective was to spread awareness on the importance of bathing and other aspects of cleanliness.
3. five.
4. Sarirasudhi, Vaksudhi, Manasudhi, Indriyasudhi, Gruhasudhi.
5. Sudhipanchaka
6. SreenarayanaTheertha Swamikal.

## Assignments

1. Explain the significance of Sruti and Smriti in relation to cleanliness and sustainable living as envisioned by Narayana Guru.
2. What are the five types of cleanliness (Sudhipanchaka) mentioned in the Narayana Smriti? How does each type contribute to personal and social wellbeing?
3. How did Narayana Guru use temples and movements like Kulisangham to promote cleanliness and social reform?

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## Grassroot Level Literacy Through Volunteers

### UNIT

#### Learning Outcomes

By studying this unit, the learner will be able to:

- ◆ understand Guru's efforts for grassroot level literacy mission
- ◆ recognise Guru's action plans for spreading literacy
- ◆ appreciate Guru's vision for educating the society

#### Prerequisites

Imagine that you are walking on the public road. Some well-dressed people are coming from the opposite direction. On seeing you, they declare that you do not have the right to walk along that road. Imagine that they then start throwing stones at you and chase you away. What will be your state of mind? You may want to react but what if the society does not give you the right to even react? How depressing such a situation could be! Almost hundred years ago, such a depressing scenario existed in Indian society. People even believed that maintaining such a social system was their duty.

To uplift people into the mainstream of society, awareness about education, hygiene etc. had to be cultivated. Guru knew one could not wage a lone battle to change the existing system of education. So, he promoted a culture of team work to extend the scope of activities related to that.

#### Key themes

Religion, Morality, Education, Industry.

## Discussion

Here we are examining Guru's efforts to awaken the masses and bring them to the mainstream. They were trapped in a state of enslavement, blind belief and harmful customs. He knew that extensive awareness building programmes were needed. For that guru gathered together a bunch of skilled public speakers. The instructions Guru gave to them are given below:

- a. The speech can be delivered at one's own locality or at any other appropriate place. This can be done by either by organising an event or by going to places where people obviously gather.
- b. The subjects should be of use to the common people, for example, ethics, education, religion, business etc.
- c. One can be a public speaker for this arrangement if one is knowledgeable in one or more of the above-mentioned topics
- d. Speakers should not talk about topics in which they do not have proper understanding.
- e. If there are any doubts regarding traditions or philosophy, the speaker can clarify it with Guru through the SNDP Yogam secretary.
- f. Speeches should not offend members of any caste, but should be carefully designed so that it should encourage the listeners to carry out acts that can be good for the progress of people who are considered as belonging to lower castes.

We have seen that Guru gave importance to topics like religion, ethics education etc. Guru's elaborations on those topics can be concluded like this:

### 2.3.1 Topics for the speeches

#### 1. Religion

Talk against the worshipping of negative deities demanding blind belief, animal sacrifice and such customs. Speak about the greatness of the pure Hindu religion and its 'saguna' and 'nirguna' principles. If needed, talk about temples and Mutts (Monasteries). Try to change the minds of the people intelligently and do not criticise other religions.

#### 2. Moralities

Inspire people to practice principles like hygiene, obedience to the words of Gurus, faith, unity, fear of immorality, honesty etc. in their lives. Also prepare them to give up unwanted traditional practises .

#### 3. Education

Spread awareness about the extraordinary advantages of having education and the ill effects of being illiterate. Make people proud about being educated. Inspire people to build public libraries, schools etc.

#### 4. Industrial sector

Spread awareness among people about industries, businesses, agriculture handi-craft etc. Try to change the lazy lifestyle of people by promoting a culture of hard work.

Inspire people to establish industrial centres wherever feasible. Learn about this sector scientifically and create awareness among people. In this way, Guru envisioned a plan of action touching all areas of social life.

## Recap

- ◆ Social system of guru's era
- ◆ The need for universal education
- ◆ Education should reach the grass root level
- ◆ Progress of society is through education
- ◆ Volunteers of SNDP Yogam and their activities
- ◆ A society in which slavery and marginalisation were considered normal for the downtrodden
- ◆ Awareness programmes conducted at social gatherings
- ◆ Spreading of awareness and encouragement on fields like ethics, education, religion, industries etc.
- ◆ SNDP Yogam's supervision on the activities of the volunteers
- ◆ Convincing about the absurdity of blind beliefs and customs
- ◆ Awareness about the nobility of hard work

## Objective Questions

1. Which were the topics prescribed by Guru for the SNDP Yogam speakers?
2. What was Guru's aim behind the assigning of Yogam Speakers?
3. What kind of attitude should Yogam speakers have maintained towards the public?
4. What were the speakers supposed to do when doubtful about their topics?

## Answers

1. Religion, Education, morality, industrial sector.
2. Spreading grassroot level literacy
3. gentle and educating
4. The speaker can clarify it with Guru through the SNDP Yogam secretary

## Assignments

1. Describe the six specific instructions given by Narayana Guru to public speakers for conducting awareness programmes. How did these instructions help speakers address the needs of oppressed and excluded communities?
2. Explain how Narayana Guru used four specific themes such as religion, morality, education, and the industrial sector in public speeches to reform harmful customs and promote self-reliance among the marginalized.

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# UNIT

## Ayurveda and Guru

### Learning Outcomes

By studying this unit, the learner will be able to:

- ◆ understand Guru's relation with Ayurveda
- ◆ get an introduction to the basic books of Ayurveda
- ◆ understand the ways in which Guru motivated his disciples to study ayurveda

### Prerequisites

Ayurveda is an almost 5000 years old field of medicine. It is an Upaveda (a category of knowledge considered as supplementary to the Vedas) of Atharvaveda. The word Ayurveda means knowledge of life and longevity. The fundamental textbooks of Ayurveda are the "Brihatrayi" (this trio of books include Charaka Samhita, written by Charaka around 900 BCE, Susrutha Samhitha, written by Susrutha around BCE 700 and Ashtanga Hridaya written by Vaghbhada around BCE 400). Ayurveda is one of the most invaluable contributions of ancient India.

Narayana Guru had in depth knowledge in Ayurveda. Guru has written nothing on Ayurveda. But many testimonials prove Guru's mastery of Ayurveda. Ayurveda was the most practiced medical field during Guru's time.

### Key themes

Ayurveda, medicine, Ashtangahrdaya.

## Discussion

No official document tells us about the years in which Guru studied Ayurveda. One can guess that he may have studied Ayurveda during his early adulthood. According to biographers, when Guru was learning Sanskrit from Varanappally, a young man belonging to the pulaya cast got leprosy. He obviously got isolated. Then Guru came to know this, visited the sick person's hut and gave him some leaves and oil and prescribed the treatment procedure. In a book about Cholayil Kunjumami Vaidyar (an Ayurveda doctor and a disciple of Guru), it is said that Narayana Guru became an expert after getting educated in Ayurveda from Kadachira Chembakasserry Potti.

Sree Pazhampalli Achuthan has stated that Guru had in depth knowledge in Ayurveda: "Swami had the deep knowledge in Ayurveda. He knew the whole Ashtangahridaya by heart. Sometimes he quotes Charaka and Susrutha." Ashtangahridaya has thousands of verses and it shows the level of knowledge Guru had in Ayurveda .

Guru had many ayurveda practitioners among his disciples. Cholayil Kunjumami Vaidyar, Thinavila Kunjiraman Vaidyar, Chavarkodu Kochucherukkan vaidyar etc. are examples for this. Guru considered Ayurveda very important. Sending his disciple Bhargavan to Ayurveda College for formal education was an example for this. Guru told him while sending him to college: "In the coming era, professional education will be needed for life, so you have to go and study Ayurveda from the college. You have talent in the field and you are from a lineage of doctors."

Many anecdotes show Guru's mastery of Ayurveda. Guru had knowledge about

the changes that can occur to medicinal plants according to the locality, time etc. In Guru's own words: "Medicinal plants can undergo many changes according to changes in season, locality etc. The age of the plant also should be considered. The effect of the plant is not the same when it is a sapling and when it bears fruit. Many unknown variations are there in human body too. The patient's body condition and the condition of the disease vary very much. All these factors have to be considered carefully. One medicine won't necessarily cure the same disease all the time. Otherwise, different medicines would not have been necessary for the same disease. "

Once Guru even corrected a treatment prescribed in "Ashtanga Hridaya" with a prescription from Charaka Samhitha. Many who imitated Guru's methods did not get the results Guru got. The reason can be seen in the above-mentioned words of Guru.

Guru has even prescribed treatment for rabies. That particular combination of medicines is still with the family which used it then. It is noted by biographers that Guru has treated and cured diseases like epilepsy, malaria, leprosy, small pox etc.

One aspect of Guru's life that did not get enough exposure is his contributions to Ayurveda. T. K. Narayanan, chief editor of a newspaper, stated that Guru wished to establish an Ayurveda college at Sivagiri. Guru's contributions to Ayurveda are an often neglected aspect. In his time, Guru revived Ayurveda and gave clarity to many practitioners on various aspects. More studies are needed in this field.

## Recap

- ◆ Ayurveda is an upaveda of Atharvaveda
- ◆ The three prominent masters- Charaka, Susruta, Vaghbhada
- ◆ Guru's In-depth Understanding of Ayurveda
- ◆ Situational quotes from 'Brihatrayi'
- ◆ Almost all famous Ayurveda practitioners were guru's disciples
- ◆ Encouraged scientific study of Ayurveda
- ◆ The ability to recognise even subtle difference in medicinal plants and expertise in healing
- ◆ Even chronic diseases were cured by medicine

## Objective Questions

1. Who were the practitioners of ayurveda from Guru's disciples?
2. What is Brihatrayi?
3. Who wrote Ashtanga Hridaya?
4. Name some of the Ayurveda practitioners among guru's disciple.
5. Who was sent to Ayurveda College for higher education by guru's suggestion?

## Answers

1. Cholayil Kunjumami Vaidyar, Thinavila Kunjiraman Vaidyar, Chavarkodu Kochucherukkan Vaidyar
2. The fundamental textbooks of Ayurveda (Charaka Samhita, Susrutha Samhitha and Ashtanga Hridaya).
3. Vaghbhada
4. Cholayil Kunjumami Vaidyar, Thinavila Kunjiraman Vaidyar, Chavarkodu Kochucherukkan vaidyar.
5. Bhargavan

## Assignments

1. Discuss the evidences from biographies and anecdotes that show Narayana Guru's deep knowledge and practice of Ayurveda. How did Guru demonstrate his understanding of medicinal plants and treatment methods?
2. Evaluate Narayana Guru's efforts to promote Ayurveda among his disciples and the public. How did he contribute to the revival and practical application of Ayurveda in his time?

## Suggested Reading

1. Prasad, M. N. (2006). *Narayana Guru: Complete Works*. New Delhi: National Book Trust.
2. Sanoo, M.K (1998), *Narayana Guru*, Bombay: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan.
3. Kumaran, Moorkothu (2007), *Sree Narayana Guru Swamikalude Jeevacharitram*, Sivagiri Mutt: Sree Narayana Dharma Sangham Trust.





# Guru's Vision in Education





# Gurus's Message on Education

## UNIT

### Learning Outcomes

By the end of this unit, the learners will:

- ◆ gain knowledge about how educational institutions gained primacy over temples
- ◆ understand how educational institutions became prominent places of worship
- ◆ get familiar with the idea that man's progress depends on education
- ◆ gain knowledge about different strategies for raising funds to support education
- ◆ understand Guru's teachings and his religion, including the concept of "Athmasukha" (happiness of the self)

### Prerequisites

Many issues overwhelmed the educational systems of Kerala and India during Narayana Guru's lifetime, particularly those about socio-economic and cultural disparities. People from lower castes were frequently denied the opportunity to receive an education, as it was mostly reserved for those from higher castes. Due to caste-based prejudice, many individuals lacked access to adequate education and schools, particularly in rural areas. Most schools did not teach modern subjects like science or practical skills; instead, they concentrated on religious instruction or the fundamentals of reading and writing. Seeing these issues, Guru put much effort to ensure that everyone, regardless of caste or socio economic background, could access education. He thought that standard education and vocational training were

crucial to improving society. In a society where education was primarily reserved for a select few affluent individuals, he aimed to establish equitable educational possibilities for everyone.

## Key themes

Education, Liberation, Temple consecration, Atmasukha, Pilgrimage.

## Discussion

Public education has many goals. Achieving broad-mindedness through acquiring knowledge is one such goal. The education system should also be universally relevant and universally acceptable. Another important goal of education is cultivating in the students a way of life that enables them to face all life situations comprehensively. If one goes through such a system of education, eventually, that person will discover the potential within. Then, it will be easier for that person to paint the picture he chooses on this world's broad canvas. The colours of that painting are his grand contribution to the whole of humanity.

Jean Jacques Rousseau was an 18th-century thinker, widely considered the father of modern education. He has expressed many views on education in his famous work *Emilie*. There are two sides to the education process. One is a man finding his own space in the ever-changing flow of nature - that means being a human. The second aspect concerns becoming a responsible citizen in institutions like family and nation. Rousseau introduces the idea of negative education, through which the dialectical approach to both sides of education is demonstrated. It is from this perspective that Narayana Guru's vision

of education should be understood

Just as in the case of many other fields, Guru did not write any specific text on education. However, we can find his educational views from many sources, such as anecdotes and other works. Any vision becomes comprehensive when it can equally include the transactional (vyavaharika) aspects and the absolute (paramarthika) in its scope. For example, the food we eat denotes vyavaharika while the ananda we get from it denotes the paramarthika. Narayana Guru's vision of education is also dialectical to this.

Now we know that Guru's temple consecration process was not only for spiritual reasons but also for bringing the downtrodden masses to mainstream society. Guru gave more importance to institutes of education. Let us look at an example: in 1915, natives of Mezhuveli wished to have a temple. They even made an idol before approaching Guru. But Guru insisted that a school is the need of the place. He showed them a spot and told them to build a school there. That is how Mezhuveli Pathmanabhadayam School was founded. In 1917, Guru delivered a message. This can be summarised as follows: "People are less interested in temples now. Temples should be made

only when people strongly wish for it. Educational institutions should be the central holy place. The process of raising funds to fund schools should be encouraged. We should try to give education to people. Let there be knowledge, which is the best way to improve people.”

### 3.1.1. Education Should be Universal

Guru had a clear vision of universal education. Guru raised this issue in all possible venues. In an article on 1920, Guru says: “All sorts of human development are dependent on education. Even spiritual development is not possible without the right kind of education. Education improves humans in all worldly matters. Without education, awareness about independence and progress will not be properly cultivated. So, people should be educated. All sorts of help should be done for this cause.”

Guru assigned T. K. Madhavan the job of recruiting new members to the S. N. D. P. Yogam. T. K. Madhavan said a message by Guru is needed for this mission. Then T. K. Madhavan himself came up with a message: “Become liberated through education.” Guru liked it and congratulated him. Guru allowed him to use the message even in Guru’s name. That is how we got that great saying. He also coined the message “Strengthen through organisation” and these two sayings are usually used together.

In 1912, Guru delivered a speech at VijnanaVardhini Sabha. Education was the main topic there. Guru expressed his happiness at the improved enthusiasm people were showing regarding education. Guru also told the good-minded rich to help the poor students. Guru used to say that “wealth becomes knowledge, knowledge becomes service.”

While attending a meeting conducted by people from the “pulaya” caste, Guru made it clear that education has a significant role in uplifting down trodden people. Many students were experiencing economic problems. Wealth and hygiene come with education. Guru stated, “Shortage of money should not be an excuse; you are all wealth. Unwanted expenditure like buying liquor should be excluded. Some money can be saved monthly and stored in some common storage space. It can be used for the education of kids.” In this way, he tried teaching society the basics of saving money and methodical approaches to reaching goals.

Guru also instructed that those considered to belong to the lower castes do not have to go to the temples where untouchability was practised. He also advised against submitting offerings at such temples. Instead, he told them to submit offerings to their temples and use that money to educate the kids. For example, Guru told the “Ezhava” community not to participate in the “ilaneerabhisheka” of Kottiyur temple. Instead, they were instructed to submit their offerings to the Jaganatha temple. Then, the guru told them to spend that money on providing education and industrial training to the poor children. Whenever Guru met a kid, he talked about education. Guru instructed parents to provide quality education to children. Guru’s views on education in his statement is: Become liberated through education. Liberation is not only a worldly affair.

### 3.1.2 Education as an Objective of Sivagiri Pilgrimage

You may have gone on study tours during school days, haven’t you? What were the aims of such trips? The basic

aim was to gain knowledge by visiting historically essential places or scientific institutions. All journeys are similar to this. In one way or another, those travels increase or have to increase our knowledge. Trips in which devotion plays a significant role are called pilgrimages. Makka, Madina, Jerusalem, Kashi, and Haridwar are all pilgrim centers.

Guru's disciples wished to carry out such a pilgrimage to Sivagiri, and Guru agreed to that request. But unlike many other pilgrimages, the Sivagiri pilgrimage is not attached to a particular religion. The reason was that Guru did not follow any particular religion. Guru's religion was "Atma sukha" (Happiness of the self). Later, we can learn more about Guru's concept of religion. Guru envisioned the Sivagiri pilgrimage as an opportunity to acquire and share knowledge. Guru had put forward eight goals for the Sivagiri pilgrimage. Those goals were promoting education, cleanliness, devotion to God, organisation, trade, agriculture, handi-crafts, science and technology.

Guru never wasted any opportunity to spread awareness about the need for universal education. When the disciples came to Guru with the idea about the Sivagiri pilgrimage, Guru might have seen that too as an opportunity to promote universal education because the progress of society through economic growth and knowledge was that important to Guru. Vallabhasery Govindan was the first to express the wish to make Sivagiri a pilgrim centre. Guru told him about the goals to be achieved

through that pilgrimage. In Guru's words: "Nothing can be achieved if people roam around, bathe, eat, spend some money in Sivagiri, and go home." For Guru, a pilgrimage just for the sake of it did not make any sense. He did not want people to go home without gaining anything. He said: "Experts of all the eight domains should be invited, and when they deliver speeches in this pilgrim center, people must sit and listen attentively. They should be able to acquire knowledge in these fields and put that into practice, too. Then, the people and the nation will progress. This should be the main aim of the Sivagiri pilgrimage."

Education was one of the eight main goals of the Sivagiri pilgrimage. Formal education is what is meant by education here. But if we consider Guru's activities as a whole, we can see that Guru's vision of education was not restricted to formal education. With all this, Guru aimed at creating awareness about all those eight fields. In short, the pilgrimage center was a space to share knowledge from different fields. Thus, Guru has emphasised universal education for comprehensive economic development.

Today, more than 2 million people visit Sivagiri during the pilgrimage season. If the knowledge related to all eight fields can be appropriately shared and implemented, the progress of people and the nation will not be a distant dream. However, each pilgrim should introspect to see whether the sincere effort to implement these ideas is being carried out.

## Recap

- ◆ Educational institutions got primacy over temples.
- ◆ Educational institutions became the main place of worship.
- ◆ At Mezhuveli, instead of consecrating a temple, a school was founded.
- ◆ Knowledge is the medicine for human welfare.
- ◆ Man's progress is dependent on education.
- ◆ Become liberated through education: T. K. Madhavan.
- ◆ Wealth becomes knowledge, knowledge becomes service.
- ◆ The speech at Muttathara: "It is not right to say that you don't have wealth. You are all the wealth"
- ◆ Ways to raise funds for education.
- ◆ "Become liberated through education". Liberation is not only a worldly affair.
- ◆ Guru's religion was "Athmasukha" (happiness of the self).
- ◆ Devotion is the important aspect of pilgrimage.
- ◆ Sivagiri pilgrimage has eight goals.
- ◆ Pilgrimage should not be a means for spending money. It should be an opportunity to gain knowledge.
- ◆ People's progress will lead to Nation's progress.

## Objective Questions

According to Guru,

1. Which institution should be considered as the principal place of worship?
2. What are the goals of the Sivagiri Pilgrimage?
3. Who is considered the father of modern education?

4. What was Guru's message related to education (delivered in 1917)
5. Who along with the Guru delivered the message: "Become liberated through education?"
6. What did Guru request of the wealthy during a Cherayi Vijnana Vardhini Sabha speech?
7. What was Guru's famous message in the Muttathara speech?
8. Who was the first person to discuss the idea of the Sivagiri pilgrimage with Guru?

## Answers

1. Educational institution
2. The goals of the Sivagiri pilgrimage include promoting education, cleanliness, devotion to God, organization, trade, agriculture, handicrafts, science and technology
3. Jean Jacques Rousseau
4. Educational institutions should be the central holy place
5. T. K. Madhavan
6. To help poor students
7. Wealth becomes knowledge, knowledge becomes service
8. Vallabhasery Govindan

## Assignments

1. Describe Narayana Guru's perspective on the value of education in uplifting under privileged groups, especially in relation to caste prejudice.
2. Why did Guru stress education as one of the eight objectives of the Sivagiri pilgrimage?
3. In Narayana Guru's view, what distinguishes the absolute (paramarthika) and transactional (vyavaharika) facets of education?
4. Explain how education shapes a person's life in light of the passage. In what ways does it support self-discovery and a broader perspective?

5. Describe the idea of “negative education” as proposed by Jean Jacques Rousseau and how it relates to Narayana Guru’s educational philosophy.

## Suggested Reading

1. Prasad, M. N. (2006). *Narayana Guru: Complete Works*. New Delhi: National Book Trust.
2. S., Omana. (2018). *The Philosophy of Sree Narayana Guru*. Varkala: Narayana Gurukulam.
3. Sanoo, M. (1998). *Narayana Guru*. Bombay: BharatiyaVidyaBhavan.
4. Sasidharan, G. (2020). *Not Many, But One: Sree Narayana Guru's Philosophy of Universal Oneness* (Vol. Vol. 1 & Vol. 2). New Delhi: Penguin Viking.





# Educational Institutions Established as a Result of Guru's Vision

## UNIT

### Learning Outcomes

After completing this unit, learners will :

- ◆ understand Guru's inclusive approach to education, emphasizing equality and accessibility for all
- ◆ identify the introduction and significance of the three-language system in the education framework and its historical impact
- ◆ critically assess how the destruction of one's mother tongue can lead to the erosion of cultural identity
- ◆ examine the contributions of various Sree Narayana organizations in advancing social, educational, and cultural reforms

### Prerequisites

Guru advocated constructing schools and libraries, particularly in areas where people lacked resources. He had a clever approach to language learning, believing that teaching three languages, Malayalam, Sanskrit and English, was essential for sustainable development, meaning we should care for our bodies and minds. This was before the official three-language teaching policy of the Indian government. Guru encouraged establishing schools and libraries, frequently close to temples, since he understood the transformative power of libraries for education and social development. Many of his disciples, including Muloor S. Padmanabha Panicker and Thennoor Govindan Channan, established schools and other establishments that eventually expanded into high schools and colleges as a result of the teachings of the Guru. Due mainly to Guru's efforts, Kerala is one of the best educational states, with schools accepting students from all castes and creeds.

## Key themes

Three-language policy, Night schools, Libraries.

## Discussion

We have seen that Guru's views regarding education were very inclusive. He also foresaw many future trends. His system of education made one capable of bringing together seemingly opposite sides. Do you understand which those two sides are? First: The side of "Anna" (the side on physical existence and development). Second: the side of "Ananda" (the side about spiritual existence and development). In the context of sustainable development, both these sides have a special place. Only one who views both these extremes in a balanced manner can embrace a universal development model. Guru has understood this principle. His literary works and activities are testimonials to this. One of the essential activities regarding this was the movement that founded many educational institutions.

A hundred years ago, establishing an educational institution was difficult for people at the lower levels. Even founding a lower primary school was tough. There are many reasons for this. The primary reason was the cost itself. It was beyond the reach of ordinary men who struggled to meet their daily needs. It was the situation of the downtrodden. But things were easy for Christian Missionaries and upper caste people since they had enough land. Even the Government came forward to found schools for them. People from the lower castes had to find their ways to build educational institutions. Guru told them to build schools and libraries attached

to temples and other associations. Many rich people from the Ezhava community came forward to do that. As a result of this call, many educational institutions were founded. This resulted in a revolution in the academic sector.

Guru's vision of education included the goodness of ancient times and the benefits of modernity. People from all walks of society were included in his system of education. All classes of society have experienced his compassion. Those people from the lower castes got accommodation in Sivagiri. They were also provided facilities for education. Guru even organized night time classes for older people. Many schools were founded then, inspired by Guru's vision and compassion. English and Malayalam model schools founded at Sivagiri, the Sanskrit school of Aluva etc. are examples of this. As we have seen, Guru promoted universal education. He was ready to give everything he had to this cause. For example, Guru once gave away his land in Cherthala to the government when Cherthala Middle School could not upgrade itself to a high school due to insufficient space.

Do you know about the trilingual policy of the Indian Government? This policy advocates the practice of three languages (a mother tongue, a national language and a global language). For Keralites, these languages are Malayalam, the mother tongue; Hindi, the national language and English, the international language. This policy was established in 1968 as part of

the national education policy. Smt. Indira Gandhi was the prime minister then. But Guru had put this approach into practice a long time ago.

Guru promoted Sanskrit language because he wanted everyone to know the greatness and uniqueness of ancient Indian culture. Most writings related to Indian culture were in Sanskrit. Guru founded many Sanskrit study centres. He also knew that progress in this modern world could not be achieved through tradition alone. So, he founded institutions to teach English. The model English school established in Sivagiri is an example.

The best way to destroy one's culture is to kill the mother tongue. That culture is as nurturing to one as a mother's breast milk. The mother tongue is considered one's foster mother. So, people should have enough knowledge and skills in their mother tongue. Guru knew this and stood firmly for the cause of the mother tongue. Thus, Malayalam was mandatory in the schools he founded. It means that Malayalam, Sanskrit and English were taught in those schools. This enabled students to root firmly on their heritage while confidently exploring the possibilities the modern world offers.

### 3.2.1. Establishment of Libraries

We now know about Guru's keen interest in education. Guru knew the importance of libraries and he acted accordingly. Let us examine an incident showing this. Once, Guru was resting near Kolathukara temple. Some prominent figures of that area, including Sasthamvilakathu Kesavan Vaidyar, Narayanan Asan and KunjanVadhyar, came near Guru and conveyed their interest in founding a library there. Guru congratulated them

and said: "Humans should grow through reading. Reading can change lives. There are many books containing great ideas. We should encourage children to develop through reading".

Thus, in 1920, the library started functioning in a thatched building built by Edison. Initially, the library had over 300 books. Guru revisited the library at another time and said that institutions like this are needed instead of more temples. He also blessed them by saying that institutions like this will develop with the help of noble people. Now, the library functions as one of the best libraries in Kerala. A library can inspire a society and lead people to enlightened knowledge. Guru's awareness of this principle is evident from the above mentioned incidents. As we can see, Guru wanted to build libraries attached to the temples he consecrated.

### 3.2.2. Schools and Other Institutions

Muloor S. Padmanbha Panicker was the person who contributed most to Guru's reform activities in the field of education. In those times, he founded nine L. P. schools (1. Thalachira Balachandra Vilasam, 2. Kumbazha Sree Narayana Vijayam, 3. Vaikkom Sree Narayana Tharaka, 4. Puthusserimala Sree Narayana Vilasam. 5, Valiyakulam Pathmavilasam, 6. Mezhuveli Gangadhara Vidyasala 7, Pathanamthitta Shanmukha Vilasam 8, Kuriyannoor Sanmarga Dayini, 9 Naranganam Padma Vilasam) and an English middle school (Pathmanobhoyam). Later many of these schools were upgraded to High schools and higher secondary schools. Inspired by Guru's vision, Thennoor Govindan Channan also established five schools between 1894 and 1918. In 1898 Govindan Channan established a girl's school at Palode.

In 1904, he started a lower primary school for children from the Pulaya community. These schools were a relief in that era when girls from lower castes could not even go to Government schools. The school founded at Minagapalli in 1907, the Muslim school at Venga, Karthikavilasam School of Palakkuzhi, Ochira, Thevalakkara Boys' High school (established in 1918) etc. are testimonials to his work in this field. Once when a group of people came to Guru with an idol for a temple consecration, he pointed out that they needed a school more. Then Guru showed them a nearby "Kaavu" (sacred grove) and told them to establish a school in the compound. So, a school was founded there. That was the Moolur Memorial Padmanabhadayam English High School.

In 1922, the first Malayalam school, Sree Narayana Primary School, was founded at Manrothuruthu. As per Guru's direction, Narayanan (nephew of Krishnan Muthalali, who was a disciple of Guru) initiated constructing the school. Later this school was handed over to the government. The school still functions. Moothakunnam Hindu Dharma Paripalana Sabha was an organization that fully accepted Guru's instruction on building schools adjacent to temples. From 1922 the Sabha started establishing schools. Sabha runs an L. P. school, High school, Training College, Arts College, Engineering College, T. T. C and an I. T. C.

As instructed by Guru, Kulathoor School was founded by his disciple Sivalinga Swamikal. It started as an institution that taught Sanskrit. Then its responsibility was given to a man named Nanu. Gradually it became a school. By that time, the government was making creative contributions in the field. After a while, the school got government grant. Later, Guru made arrangements for the school to be funded by the government. Now it runs as a Higher Secondary School.

S. N. D. P. Yogam, S. N. Trust and Sivagiri Dharma Sangham Trust have contributed concretely to implementing Guru's vision of education. These organizations are still on the same path. Institutions like L. P, U. P. and Higher Secondary Schools, Arts & Science colleges, engineering colleges, nursing colleges, B. Ed. Colleges, etc. run under the above mentioned organizations. S. N. Trust's activities in the field flourished under the leadership of R. Sankar. He founded S. N. College, Kollam in 1948.

Guru initiated a revolution in the education system. That revolution has propelled Kerala's education progress and now modern Kerala is one of the best states when it comes to education facilities and standards. We are all enjoying the fruits of that revolution. We encourage children to study together, irrespective of caste or creed. Narayana Guru's vision played an important part in shaping our collective mindset into such a state.

## Recap

- ◆ The concept of sustainable development will ensure the spiritual and physical development of the individual.
- ◆ Guru's vision of education was all-inclusive.

- ◆ Students from downtrodden communities could stay at Sivagiri.
- ◆ Night schools for the elderly.
- ◆ English, Malayalam and Sanskrit schools at Sivagiri and Aluva.
- ◆ Land donation for Cherthala school.
- ◆ Three language system for the first time.
- ◆ Action plans considering the importance and usefulness of different languages.
- ◆ The destruction of mother tongue can destroy one's own culture.
- ◆ Schools all across Kerala, inspired by Guru.
- ◆ Muthakunnam Hindumatha Dharma Paripalana Sabha
- ◆ Sivalinga Swami.
- ◆ Govindan Channar.
- ◆ Different Sree Narayana organisations.
- ◆ Today all come together for education irrespective of cast and religion.
- ◆ Many schools were established during a time when even an L. P. School was an economic burden.

## Objective Questions

1. Where did Guru establish English and Malayalam Model Schools?
2. Where did Guru establish Sanskrit school?
3. Did Guru give enough importance to Western education?
4. Why did Guru encourage Sanskrit education?
5. Why did Guru encourage English education?
6. Who contributed most to Guru's reforms in the education sector?
7. How many schools did Muloor establish inspired by Guru?
8. Who founded the first Malayalam school of ManroThurut?

9. Who established the first Sree Narayana College?
10. When did the Indian Government pass the language policy?

## Answers

1. Sivagiri
2. Aluva
3. Yes
4. To make people aware of the greatness and uniqueness of ancient Indian culture
5. Because he understood that knowledge of English was important to connect with the modern world and to progress in the global context
6. Muloor S. Padmanabhanicker
7. Nine
8. Narayanan
9. R. Sankar
10. In 1968

## Assignments

1. In what ways did Guru's educational philosophy support diversity and serve individuals from all backgrounds?
2. Discuss the importance of Guru's plan to construct libraries and schools connected to temples. What role did this play in the revolution in education?
3. How did Guru support the creation of libraries in local communities and what part did libraries play in his educational philosophy?
4. Explain the contributions that Guru-inspired educators Muloor S. Padmanabha Panicker and Thennoor Govindan Channan made to education.
5. Examine how Guru's educational reforms will affect Kerala's next generation. In what ways do his achievements still influence the current educational landscape?

## Suggested Reading

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## Establishment of Institutions for Vocational Education and Skill Development

# UNIT

### Learning Outcomes

After the completion of this unit, learners will:

- ◆ understand that education has two distinct but interconnected dimensions: material and spiritual
- ◆ recognize the significance of balancing and focusing on both dialectical counterparts in the educational process
- ◆ appreciate the importance of vocational education in shaping practical skills and career readiness
- ◆ identify that the real issue in society is economic disparity rather than caste differences

### Prerequisites

A significant turning point was the creation of vocational education and skill development institutions during the time of Sree Narayana Guru, particularly for the impoverished and disenfranchised of Kerala. According to Sree Narayana Guru, education ought to contribute to social transformation. He knew that ordinary education was insufficient to help individuals, particularly those from the lower castes, improve their lives. To make a living, they required employable talents. The caste system at the time kept a lot of people in poverty with no opportunity to get out of it. Sree Narayana Guru did not just want people to make money; he wanted them to gain self-respect, confidence and a sense of equality. By creating these educational opportunities, Guru worked to erase the idea that certain castes were inferior. His focus on practical skills was a new and powerful idea because

traditional education mostly left out lower castes and did not teach practical skills needed for jobs. These new institutions offered people a way out by teaching them skills for various jobs, allowing them to earn money with respect and break free from the old system of dependence on others. Regardless of caste, he wanted everyone to believe that they were valuable members of society. People were able to overcome the restrictions of caste and discrimination thanks to this emphasis on vocational education. People were recognised for their skills and abilities rather than their caste or social background, resulting in a significant social shift.

## Key themes

Vocational education, Self-employment, Skill development.

## Discussion

When he observed individuals wasting their time due to a lethargic attitude, Guru became highly concerned. In his opinion, time was valuable and should always be spent carefully. Guru was annoyed by those who wasted their time and did nothing. As a result, he advised the S. N. D. P. Yogam speakers to be efficient with their time and be productive. According to Guru, maintaining an active mental and physical lifestyle is crucial for individual development and social advancement. He wanted people to realise that the best way to better themselves and their communities was to work hard and be productive.

Guru made wise use of his fortune to benefit humanity. He saw money as a tool to improve people's lives, not as something to be saved for himself. His primary objective was to encourage learning, diligence and independence. He founded the Sivagiri Free Industrial and Agricultural Gurukulam for this reason. His conviction that hard labour and education were necessary led to the foundation of the Gurukulam. It was designed to impart academic information

as well as practical skills. Guru thought that by doing this, people would be motivated to work hard, maintain an active lifestyle and see the value of education and community building.

Russo and Narayana Guru were visionaries who felt that education should encompass more than just book knowledge. Real education, they believed, should help people develop their inner potential, including the skills, abilities and qualities each individual possesses. For people to better themselves and contribute to society, they wanted education to be centred on assisting them in reaching their most significant potential. Guru and Russo envisioned an educational system enabling students to recognize and capitalize on their skills to contribute to their communities significantly.

Vocational education, which focuses on teaching real-world skills that help students get jobs and advance in their careers, is a significant component of this educational system. It helps students become more proficient in their vocations and highlights the importance of hard effort. The aim is

to assist people to become more skilled and improve their quality of life. Training in fields including agriculture, industry, commerce and technology can be a part of vocational education. Vocational education helps students become skilled workers who can make valuable and constructive contributions to the economy and society by giving them specific training and practical experience.

Intending to produce qualified workers who may aid India in its advancement in industrial and technological fields, the Indian government founded 50 Industrial Training Institutes (ITIs) throughout the nation in 1950. These establishments sought to prepare people for employment in various industries by offering hands on training. In 1967, however, the Kothari Commission report was released and only then did the number of these institutions significantly rise. According to the report, more vocational education is required to keep up with the expanding demands of technology and industry. The Kothari Commission had a significant impact on the development of Indian educational policy, especially concerning vocational training and it contributed to the expansion of ITIs throughout the nation.

Both conventional and vocational education were given equal weight in Guru's educational philosophy. He realised that although academic knowledge was vital, real-world experience and practical skills were equally critical for assisting people in achieving success in life. According to Guru, education should equip people for every facet of life, including the workplace. He sought to combine academic knowledge with practical skills in his educational system to make people self-sufficient and contribute significantly to society. Guru's efforts in this area established the groundwork for a more realistic and balanced

approach to education, where theory and practice collaborate to support students' development.

A significant factor in economic development is the way people make a living. People are more likely to make a successful living if they have acquired a skill or career that offers a wide range of employment options. Guru was aware of this and thought that one of the main ways to raise one's financial standing was to have access to a respectable career. He frequently underlined that caste distinctions were less significant than economic ones. Guru argued that assisting those disadvantaged by a lack of employment prospects and skills would help reduce the financial gap.

Mahatma Gandhi asked the Guru on his visit to Sivagiri what more could be done to help the oppressed than ending untouchability. Guru's answer was straightforward but profound: "They should be given equal opportunities to improve, in addition to education and financial support." In addition to eliminating social prejudice, Guru emphasised the importance of giving the oppressed access to quality education and economic opportunity. Guru noted that people may enhance their financial status and get greater control over their lives by offering employment options and skill development. To help people overcome poverty and inequality, he established an atmosphere where everyone, regardless of background, could obtain education and employment.

Guru recognized the value of cultural education and modern science in a well-rounded education. He acknowledged the growing significance of comprehending contemporary science and technology, even as he cherished old knowledge. According to Guru, children should be encouraged to pursue academic subjects

and practical skills, such as vocational studies. He realised that education should include practical experiences that help pupils to face the real world situations not only reading books. Guru sought to give students the skills and information they would need to thrive in a world that was changing quickly by emphasising cultural education and real-world application.

To realise his vision, Guru insisted on establishing industrial training centres close to temples and schools, believing that these locations could serve as centres for both spiritual and practical learning. Sivagiri School, where Guru's ideas were implemented, became a model for other schools. Students at Sivagiri learned traditional subjects, but they also received training in Ayurveda (conventional medicine) and weaving, which gave them valuable skills for making a living. These centres helped students gain knowledge and experience that would help them in their daily lives. Guru's approach demonstrated that education should balance theory and practical skills, enabling students to become well rounded individuals who could make meaningful contributions to society.

Guru recognised the value of vocational training in equipping people with the abilities necessary to thrive in life.

With the assistance of his Tamil disciples, he assigned an expert to mentor the pupils to guarantee that they received high quality instruction. Guru was so dedicated to providing practical hands-on teaching that he also ensured all the required equipment and agricultural tools were bought. His endeavors showed that he believed vocational training was a vital component of education, allowing students to acquire skills that would benefit them in the workplace and advance society.

An exposition on new technological developments in 1904 further showed Guru's dedication to vocational education. As part of the second anniversary of the S. N. D. P. Yogam, Dr. Palpu, a disciple of the Guru, organised this exhibition. The display demonstrated the value of vocational training and contemporary technology in a world growing more industrialised. Vocational education is essential for expanding employment prospects, which can result in economic growth in a populous nation like India. Vocational training lowers poverty and raises living standards by equipping individuals with the skills required for various businesses. This is in line with the Sustainable Development Goals of the U. N., which are to foster sustainable growth, lessen inequality and generate economic opportunity.

## Recap

- ◆ Education should nurture the individual's inner potential and lead to creativity.
- ◆ Money improves quality of life.
- ◆ The vision of education of Russo and Narayana Guru.

- ◆ Vocational education helps real world skills that help students to get jobs and advance in their careers.
- ◆ Importance of skill development institutions.
- ◆ Guru: education should equip people for every facet of life, including the workplace.
- ◆ People have skills, they have a broad career option.
- ◆ Guru's opinion about untouchability.
- ◆ Cultural education and contemporary science's value in a well-rounded education.
- ◆ Vocational education is necessary for economic progress.
- ◆ As a model, vocational education was provided at Sivagiri School.
- ◆ Agricultural and industrial exhibition.
- ◆ Importance of vocational education.
- ◆ Job opportunities should be available for economic growth.

## Objective Questions

1. In the education process, which factor is the most important?
2. Which are the two important aspects to be considered in the process of education?
3. What is the importance of vocational education?
4. What is the distinctive feature of Narayana Guru's vision of education?
5. Why did Guru establish vocational training centres attached to temples?
6. Who organised the agricultural and industrial exhibition?
7. Which vocational training centres were established at Sivagiri?

## Answers

1. Awakening the inner potential of an individual and leading them to creativity.
2. Material and spiritual education
3. It increases one's capacity to do work, promotes a better standard of living and values labour
4. Blending of traditional and vocational education
5. To integrate practical education with cultural and spiritual learning
6. Dr. Palpu
7. Ayurveda study centre and a weaving centre

## Assignments

1. Describe the role that education plays in advancing society. What effect does it have on a person's creativity?
2. What role does vocational training play in economic growth? Give examples from the text to back up your response.
3. What was Narayana Guru's goal for vocational education and how did he influence the educational system?

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## Sivagiri: Free Industrial and Agriculture Gurukulam

# UNIT

### Learning Outcomes

After completing this unit, learners will be able to:

- ◆ understand and identify future opportunities in education, recognizing emerging trends and areas for innovation
- ◆ analyse and exhibit a commitment to high ideals, applying these principles effectively
- ◆ gain knowledge of how to creatively utilize land and resources to benefit the public and the environment
- ◆ understand and apply ethical wealth management principles to ensure resources are used responsibly for the greater good

### Prerequisites

Before exploring the specifics of Narayana Guru's educational theory, it is critical to comprehend the social climate of his era. The upper castes were primarily provided access to Kerala's extremely elite educational system in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, depriving marginalised groups, significantly lower castes, of adequate educational chances. This imbalance exacerbated social disintegration and oppression. This injustice gave rise to Guru's educational philosophy, which sought to educate everyone, irrespective of caste, gender or social standing. His method was based on a comprehensive view of education that included practical, moral and spiritual learning and academic knowledge. Guru's vision of social transformation was based on his belief that education should foster intellectual advancement, social justice, equality and personal development. To fully appreciate the importance of Guru's educational reforms and their long-term effects, it is imperative to comprehend this background.



## Key Words

Education, Self-realization, Ananda, Social Equality

## Discussion

Guru's way of teaching was based on a big-picture and progressive approach. He created a system that focussed on the technical side of learning and included values and life goals. His education system respected cultural traditions while also preparing students for the future. Guru understood the importance of balancing both. His approach was flexible and ready to adapt, but it always ensured that students were ready to face the challenges of a constantly changing world. The system focussed on the future but kept a strong foundation in cultural values, helping students grow in knowledge and character.

When we think about our basic needs, we are often taught that food, clothing and shelter are the most important. These things are essential for survival, but Guru's teachings suggest that we need something more profound. The search for ananda is at the heart of every human desire. This search for spiritual fulfilment motivates people beyond just the need for physical things. Even though food, clothing and shelter care for the body, the quest for ananda truly nourishes the soul. Guru's education system aims to meet physical and spiritual needs, guiding people toward inner peace and self-realization, which are key to overall growth and happiness.

Kerala's social and educational systems saw significant transformation in the 19th and 20th centuries, primarily due to initiatives aimed at universal access to education. Efforts to educate everyone, regardless of caste, religion or social background, were increasingly important

during this time. Christian missionaries and Narayana Guru greatly influenced this change. A significant factor in this change was the thoughts and deeds of the Guru. In addition to thinking about how education ought to change, he put much effort into bringing about those changes. He thought that everyone should be able to grow and learn, regardless of their background.

Narayana Guru's influence on education came from his deeds and thoughts. He battled against caste based discrimination that prevented many people from receiving an education, established schools and advocated equitable opportunity for all. His commitment to inclusivity set his work apart. He believed that everyone should have the chance to study. Every action Guru took represented his belief that all people were created equal. He was an actual role model because of his generosity and commitment to bettering society. Through his efforts, Guru contributed to developing an educational system that prioritised equality, justice and respect for all people in addition to studying.

After relocating to India, Ernest Kirk, an Englishman, joined the Theosophical Society. He travelled to several sacred sites in India before reaching Sivagiri, the home of Narayana Guru. Ernest Kirk was greeted by Guru and permitted to remain at Sivagiri. At this time, Guru had purchased 150 acres of land close to Sivagiri and he was searching for innovative ways to use it for the public good. Guru started debating ideas with the residents of Sivagiri to

determine the best way to use this area for the benefit of everybody since he thought that aiding people and enhancing society was essential.

The Sivagiri Free Industrial and Agricultural Gurukulam, a project designed to enhance the quality of life for the local population, was established due to these talks. Ernest Kirk organised several parts of this project and was instrumental in its development. Farming, milk production, wood working, handloom weaving and pottery were among the many enterprises in the project. Along with vocational instruction in short hand and typewriting, it also had English and Sanskrit schools. The goal of this Gurukulam was to help individuals become self-sufficient and teach them new skills, which would benefit society as a whole by generating employment and educational opportunities. It was a progressive programme that enhanced many people's lives by fusing education with valuable skills.

The Sivagiri Free Industrial and Agricultural Gurukulam was an ambitious initiative that integrated industrial and

agricultural operations to better the community. One of Guru's followers, P. Natarajan, who later known as Nataraja Guru, was responsible for the project's educational component. To provide the local population with education and valuable skills, this programme was started in 1927. However, the initiative encountered several issues following Guru's passing in 1928. The activities of the Gurukulam were halted due to legal conflicts between the monks and the S. N. D. P. Yogam, the organization with which the Guru was affiliated.

Ernest Kirk left Sivagiri and relocated to Coimbatore, where he began work on a new project known as the Sreenarayana Ashram. He also started a magazine called *Life*, which was intended to educate people about the teachings and vision of Narayana Guru. Kirk wanted to reach a larger audience through this magazine, with Guru's beliefs about education, self-improvement and social equality. Ernest Kirk persisted in disseminating the Guru's teachings and ensuring that his concepts persisted in India and beyond, despite the suspension of the Gurukulam project.

## Recap

- ◆ Guru's vision helped students to grow in knowledge and character.
- ◆ Food, clothing and shelter are basic needs of human beings.
- ◆ Humans have a deep yearning for Aananda
- ◆ Guru's system of education leads to inner peace and self-realization.
- ◆ Influences of Ernest Kirck.
- ◆ The Sivagiri Free Industrial and Agricultural Gurukulam a project designed to enhance the quality of life.
- ◆ Ernest Kirk left Sivagiri and relocated to Coimbatore.

## Objective Questions

1. Who was the foreign disciple of Guru contributed to the Sivagiri free industrial and agricultural Gurukulam?
2. Who was responsible for educational components at supervising the Sivagiri-free industrial and agricultural Gurukulam?
3. Where was Ernest Kirck's native place?
4. What was the aim of Sivagiri-free industrial and agricultural Gurukulam?
5. What was the name of the magazine started by Ernest Kirk?
6. What was the aim of Life magazine?

## Answers

1. Ernest Kirk
2. P. Natarajan
3. England.
4. help individuals become self-sufficient
5. Life.
6. to educate people about the teachings and vision of Narayana Guru, focusing on education, self-improvement and social equality.

## Assignments

1. What role did Narayana Guru play in the 19th and 20th century reform of Kerala's educational system?
2. Explain Ernest Kirk's contributions to Narayana Guru's social and educational philosophy.
3. Discuss the Sivagiri Free Industrial and Agricultural Gurukulam's emphasis on vocational education for self-sufficiency. In what ways did it help the local populace?

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# Guru's Contribution to Industrial and Economic Growth



# The Role of Industry in Guru's Vision on Economic Growth

## UNIT

### Learning Outcomes

Upon completing this unit, learners will be able to:

- ◆ understand Narayana Guru's vision of economic growth through industrial development
- ◆ recognise the importance of establishing educational institutions and industrial training centers in promoting self-reliance and economic progress
- ◆ describe Guru's emphasis on creating value-added products from local resources to prevent economic loss and achieve sustainable development

### Prerequisites

There was a time in Kerala when society was deeply divided by caste, economic inequality and social exclusion. In such a context, the idea of economic growth was not just about wealth. It was about dignity, self-reliance and liberation for those who had been marginalised for centuries. Sree Narayana Guru, a visionary reformer and spiritual leader, emerged as a beacon of hope, advocating a world where prosperity was accessible to all, regardless of caste or status. But what made Guru's vision unique was his emphasis on the transformative power of industry. He saw industry not merely as a means to generate wealth but as a pathway to self-respect, unity and social reform. For Guru, education and industrial development were the twin engines driving social progress. The following unit going to expose different dimensions of Sree Narayana Guru's approach to economic growth, focusing on his thoughts about the role of industry. How did he connect economic activities with social transformation? Why did he emphasise skill development and self-reliance? What lessons can we draw from his ideas in today's context of globalised economies and environmental challenges? Let us explore these questions and discover the timeless wisdom in Guru's vision for a prosperous and equitable society.

## Key themes

Poverty, Economic Development, Industry, Holistic development, Self-reliance, Sustainability, Skill development

## Discussion

Sree Narayana Guru, an influential reformer and spiritual leader of modern India, conceptualised a vision for economic progress that extended beyond mere material prosperity to include the overall development of individuals and society. His approach was holistic, emphasising a harmonious balance between material advancement and spiritual upliftment. Unlike traditional economists who articulate their views through formal treatises or theoretical frameworks, Guru's economic philosophy was conveyed implicitly through his teachings, speeches and practical initiatives, which were deeply rooted in his commitment to social justice, equality and human dignity. Guru firmly believed that the development of industry and commerce held the key to achieving economic independence for society, particularly for the marginalised and oppressed sections of the community. He saw economic empowerment as an essential step toward the eradication of poverty, ignorance and social inequalities, which were perpetuated by caste discrimination and other systemic barriers.

One of the cornerstones of Guru's economic vision was skill development. He recognised that empowering individuals with practical skills and vocational training would not only enable them to earn a livelihood but also foster a sense of independence and confidence. In his opinion, true economic growth could not

be achieved without addressing the root causes of unemployment and underemployment. Therefore, he advocated for educational reforms that integrated industrial and technical training to prepare people for participation in the workforce. His emphasis on self-reliance highlighted the importance of individuals and communities taking control of their economic futures by actively engaging in productive activities rather than relying on external aid or patronage.

Although Sree Narayana Guru's economic ideas were not organised into formal doctrines, they were deeply practical and transformative. His initiatives, such as the establishment of industrial training centers, vocational schools and small-scale enterprises, exemplified his belief in creating self-sufficient communities. By focusing on the development of industries like weaving, agriculture and small-scale manufacturing, he encouraged value addition and discouraged dependency on external markets or exploitative intermediaries. Through his life and teachings, Guru demonstrated that economic growth must serve a higher purpose, the holistic upliftment of individuals and the establishment of a just and equitable society. His vision remains timeless, providing a blueprint for inclusive and sustainable economic development that prioritises human dignity and well-being over mere material accumulation.

### 4.1.1 Industry as a Priority

Sree Narayana Guru considered industry to be a cornerstone of social progress and identified it as the second most important priority after education. He recognised that the development of industries was essential for creating jobs, reducing poverty and fostering economic growth. Guru believed that industrialisation could empower communities, especially those marginalised and economically disadvantaged, to rise above traditional dependencies and achieve financial independence. When many communities were stuck in poverty due to a lack of resources and opportunities, Guru saw industry as a transformative force. He encouraged people to view industry as a pathway to self-reliance and wealth creation. This vision was important as it aimed to unlock the potential of marginalised groups, helping them escape exploitation and support society's economic growth.

Guru articulated his vision for industrial development in his 1912 speech at the Paravur Vijnana Vardhini Sabha. In this address, he stressed the urgent need for industrialisation to improve the economic conditions of the downtrodden. He highlighted that industries could play a vital role in reducing economic inequalities and fostering social mobility. For Guru, industrial growth was not merely about generating wealth but also about ensuring that wealth was distributed equitably across all sections of society. Guru also emphasised the importance of innovation and adaptability in the industrial sector. He encouraged people to overcome their fear of adopting new technologies and methods, which he viewed as critical for progress. By embracing modern tools and innovative techniques, Guru believed that individuals and communities could

enhance their productivity and competitiveness. He understood that resisting change would only perpetuate stagnation, while embracing innovation could open the door to new opportunities.

Collaboration and collective effort were central to Guru's vision of industrial development. He urged individuals to work together in establishing and running industrial ventures. For Guru, such cooperative efforts would not only pool resources and expertise but also foster a sense of ownership and responsibility among participants. He believed that collective action in industry would empower people to build strong, self-reliant communities.

Guru's emphasis on prioritising industry was inclusive, extending beyond large scale enterprises to recognise the immense potential of small scale and cottage industries. He understood that these industries could play a crucial role in transforming local economies, especially in rural areas where large industrial projects were not feasible. Guru believed that small-scale and cottage industries could provide employment, reduce poverty and promote self-reliance among marginalised communities. To turn this vision into reality, Guru supported practical initiatives that could empower people to engage in productive economic activities. One of these initiatives was the establishment of industrial training centers. These centers were designed to equip individuals with the skills and knowledge required for various trades and crafts. By providing hands on training, these centres enabled people, particularly from disadvantaged backgrounds, to gain expertise and participate actively in industrial and economic development.

## 4.1.2 Value Addition and Domestic Economy

Sree Narayana Guru was acutely aware of the economic disadvantages caused by exporting raw materials and importing finished goods at inflated prices. He observed that this practice not only drained wealth from the country but also hindered the economic self-reliance of local communities. As an example, Guru pointed out the export of coconut products such as kopra and coir, which were processed abroad and re-imported as finished goods at much higher costs. This dependence on foreign processing resulted in the loss of potential profits and limited the economic growth of local producers. To address this issue, Guru emphasised the importance of value addition within the country. He encouraged local industries to focus on processing raw materials domestically, thereby retaining wealth and creating employment opportunities. By advocating self-reliant economic practices, Guru aimed to reduce dependency on external markets and promote sustainable economic development. His vision for value addition was not limited to economic benefits; it also sought to instil a sense of pride and self-respect among local producers.

## 4.1.3 Economic Policies and Ethical Practices

Sree Narayana Guru's vision of economic growth was grounded in a strong ethical foundation. He believed that material progress alone was not enough and should always align with moral and spiritual values. The establishment of a new tea shop at Sivagiri under Guru's guidance can be seen as a simple example confirming this claim. While the tea shop was an economic venture, Guru insisted on maintaining cleanliness, ensuring quality products and adopting moderation in

profit making. These instructions reflected his belief that economic activities should be conducted with integrity and fairness. According to Guru, wealth and prosperity are meaningful only when they uplift individuals and contribute to the betterment of society as a whole. He warned against the dangers of greed, selfishness and exploitation, emphasising that unchecked pursuit of wealth could harm both individuals and the community.

Guru stood for a harmonious balance between material wealth and spiritual well-being. He encouraged people to pursue economic activities with honesty, fairness and responsibility, making sure that their actions benefit society and do not exploit others. For him, true development meant creating conditions where everyone could prosper without compromising ethical principles. By integrating ethical considerations into economic activities, Guru provided a vision for sustainable and socially responsible development. He emphasised that prosperity should not lead to inequality or moral decline but should serve as a tool to create a just and equitable society. His teachings remain relevant today, offering guidance for fostering economic growth that respects human dignity and promotes collective welfare. This balanced approach continues to serve as a timeless model for building an economy rooted in values and compassion.

## 4.1.4 Sustainability and Waste Management

Sree Narayana Guru was ahead of his time in understanding that unchecked industrialisation could have a devastating impact on both the environment and human health. He was deeply concerned about the negative effects of pollution, waste and the reckless exploitation of natural resources. For Guru, true eco-

nomic progress could not be achieved at the expense of the planet's well-being. Guru emphasised the need for industries to adopt sustainable practices. He advocated proper waste management and the careful disposal of industrial waste, recognising that pollution harms the land, water and air, ultimately affecting communities and their health. He also urged industries to minimise environmental damage by adopting cleaner, more responsible production methods. His approach was not limited to simply reducing waste; it extended to the way resources were used, emphasising efficiency and the idea that using resources wisely today would benefit future generations.

Guru's commitment to sustainability was not only about conserving the environment, but also about guaranteeing long-term economic stability. He saw that using resources efficiently could lead to self-sufficiency, reduce dependency on external sources and create a sustainable model for growth that would benefit society over time. This approach to sustainable development mirrored modern concepts of environmental responsibility, where industries today are increasingly focusing on green practices, reducing their carbon footprint and using renewable resources.

Long before environmental sustainability became a global concern, Sree Narayana Guru emphasised the importance of sustainable practices in economic and industrial activities. He recognised the negative impact of waste and pollution on both the environment and human health. Guru advocated proper waste disposal and encouraged industries to adopt practices that minimised harm to the environment. Guru's approach to sustainability was not limited to environmental conservation; it also included the efficient use of resources and the promotion of practices that ensured long-term economic stability.

His emphasis on sustainable development aligns closely with modern concepts of environmental responsibility and green industrial practices. By addressing issues such as waste management and resource conservation, Guru demonstrated his forward-thinking vision for economic growth that respected the planet's ecological balance.

#### 4.1.5 Industries and Social Upliftment

For Sree Narayana Guru, economic growth was inseparable from social reform. He viewed industrial development as a powerful tool for addressing caste-based discrimination and untouchability. Guru believed that financial independence would empower marginalised groups, enabling them to challenge oppressive social structures and assert their dignity. To achieve this goal, Guru spoke for the establishment of industrial training centres and conducted awareness campaigns to educate marginalised communities about the importance of economic self-reliance. He encouraged individuals to acquire skills that would enable them to participate in industrial and commercial activities, thereby reducing their dependency on upper caste employers and landlords. Guru's efforts to link industries with social upliftment were grounded in his broader vision of creating an egalitarian society. By promoting economic independence among marginalised communities, he sought to break the cycle of poverty and subjugation that had persisted for generations.

#### 4.1.6 Sivagiri Pilgrimage and Focus on Commerce

Sree Narayana Guru identified commerce as one of the eight key objectives of the Sivagiri pilgrimage. His emphasis on

commerce reflected his deep understanding of the relationship between economic progress and the overall wellbeing of society. Guru believed that commerce could serve as a powerful tool for achieving self-reliance and reducing dependency on exploitative systems. Through the pilgrimage, he aimed to create awareness about the importance of economic development and encourage people to engage in productive commercial activities. It was a platform to raise awareness about various aspects of individual and social progress, including education, cleanliness, agriculture and commerce. Guru understood that economic development was integral to achieving the broader goals of social reform and spiritual upliftment.

He believed that a society's prosperity depended on its members' ability to engage in productive and sustainable economic activities.

Although the Sivagiri pilgrimage has evolved over time, with tourism becoming a significant aspect, its original intention was deeply rooted in economic empowerment. Guru saw the pilgrimage as an opportunity for people to come together, share ideas and explore practical ways to improve their economic conditions. He envisioned it as a time for reflection on the role of commerce in social progress and for discussions on how individuals and communities could contribute to economic development in meaningful and sustainable ways.

## Recap

- ◆ Sree Narayana Guru emphasised holistic development.
- ◆ Balancing of material and spiritual growth.
- ◆ His teachings promoted social justice, equality and human dignity.
- ◆ Guru believed industry and commerce were essential for economic independence.
- ◆ He focused on empowering marginalised communities through self-reliance.
- ◆ Skill development and vocational training were key aspects of his vision.
- ◆ He advocated education integrated with industrial and technical training.
- ◆ Guru emphasised sustainability, ethical practices and resource conservation.
- ◆ Value addition in local industries was encouraged to boost self-sufficiency.
- ◆ His economic philosophy linked industrial growth with social reform.
- ◆ Guru promoted community participation in economic activities.

- ◆ The Sivagiri pilgrimage included commerce as a focus for economic empowerment.
- ◆ Guru's vision prioritised self-reliance, dignity and sustainable growth.

## Objective Questions

1. What did Sree Narayana Guru prioritise after education in his vision for economic progress?
2. In which year did Sree Narayana Guru deliver a speech at the Paravur Vijnana Vardhini Sabha, highlighting the need for industrialisation?
3. What type of industries did Sree Narayana Guru encourage, especially in rural areas?
4. What was the purpose of the industrial training centres established by Sree Narayana Guru?
5. What was the primary concern of Sree Narayana Guru regarding the export of raw materials and the import of finished goods?
6. What did Sree Narayana Guru emphasise about sustainability and waste management in industrial practices?
7. What example did Sree Narayana Guru set through the tea shop established at Sivagiri?

## Answers

1. Industry	5. Wealth drain
2. 1912	6. Sustainability
3. Small-scale industries	7. Cleanliness, moderation
4. Skill development	

## Assignments

1. Why did Guru include Industrial education as one of the objectives of the Sivagiri pilgrimage?
2. How did Sree Narayana Guru conceptualise economic progress?
3. In what ways did Guru integrate ethical principles into his economic vision?
4. How did Guru view the relationship between economic independence and social equality?
5. Explain the significance of skill development in Guru's economic philosophy.

## Suggested Reading

1. Prasad, M. N. (2006). *Narayana Guru: Complete Works*. New Delhi: National Book Trust.
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# First Industrial and Agriculture Fair Conducted at Kollam

## UNIT

### Learning Outcomes

Upon completing this unit, learners will:

- ◆ understand the historical significance of the second anniversary of S. N. D. P. Yogam in Kerala's socio-economic awakening
- ◆ recognise the impact of the ten-day exhibition in promoting industrial, agricultural and scientific awareness among marginalized communities
- ◆ be familiar with the broader cultural and social impacts of the event in inspiring equality, entrepreneurial thinking and national reform movements

### Prerequisites

Sree Narayana Guru's philosophy went beyond spiritual teachings to address the practical needs of society, particularly focusing on the upliftment of marginalised communities. He envisioned a society where economic growth was not just about material wealth, but about self-reliance, social justice and ethical progress. His ideas on economic empowerment, industrial development and agricultural reform were deeply connected to the principles of equality and human dignity. Guru emphasised that true progress must encompass both spiritual and material advancement, fostering a society where every individual has the opportunity to thrive. In a time when traditional economic structures often reinforced social inequalities, Guru stood for the development of industries and agriculture as means of empowerment. His teachings laid the groundwork for initiatives that sought to combine economic growth with social reform, creating opportunities for the disadvantaged and promoting sustainability. Understanding this philosophy opens up an exploration of how practical steps were taken to apply these ideas, especially in the context of local development. This sets the stage for a discussion on first industrial and agriculture fair conducted at Kollam.

## Key themes

Technology, Caste discrimination, Equality, Economic empowerment, Social reform.

## Discussion

The Sree Narayana Dharma Paripalana (S. N. D. P.) Yogam was established in 1903 with the vision of leading society towards a progressive mindset, free from the deep-rooted influence of caste discrimination and untouchability. The organisation was founded by Dr. Palpu with the blessings of Sree Narayana Guru, who championed the idea of equality, education and social justice. The S. N. D. P. Yogam emerged as a response to the prevailing social injustices, especially towards the lower castes and sought to challenge the oppressive practices of the caste system. It aimed to provide a platform for the social, educational and economic empowerment of the Ezhava community and other marginalised groups in Kerala. The organisation also worked towards promoting the values of social justice, human dignity and universal brotherhood, in line with Guru's teachings. The Yogam initially focused on promoting education and religious reformation. Sree Narayana Guru's call for "One caste, one religion and one God for mankind" became a guiding principle for the movement.

In 1905, on the second anniversary of the Sree Narayana Dharma Paripalana Yogam, an All India Industrial and Agricultural Exhibition was organised in Kollam, following the vision and mission of Sree Narayana Guru. This event was the first of its kind in India and was aimed at promoting industrialisation and agricultural development. The fair served as a platform to showcase advancements in these fields and encouraged people to

engage in productive economic activities. The main objective of the exhibition was to encourage self-sufficiency through industrial and agricultural progress. Guru believed that economic development was essential for social upliftment, particularly for marginalised communities. He viewed economic empowerment as a means to achieve social equality and justice.

This remarkable occasion took place on the 24th of Dhanu 1080, according to the Malayalam calendar, at Kollam. This event is remembered for the huge impact it had on the community and the region at large. The celebration went beyond a mere commemoration of the organisation's growth; it was designed to inspire and awaken the masses, particularly those from socially backward communities. A ten-day-long exhibition was organised as part of this anniversary event. The exhibition was inaugurated by Bordealen, the then forest conservator of Trivandrum, who was a British officer. This in itself was a remarkable moment because, during the colonial era, the involvement of British officials in such local cultural activities was rare. The exhibition was held in a building and space that belonged to Sri P. K. Kunjiraman in Kollam and it turned out to be one of the largest and most prestigious exhibitions that Kerala had seen at that time. The success of this exhibition was not only measured in terms of popularity but also in the quality of its organisation and the social impact it generated.

The exhibition showcased a diverse range of innovations and trends from different sectors, including agriculture, industries, science and technology. The organisers aimed to display new advancements that were emerging in these fields and it became one of the most important exhibitions of the time. The committee that led this exhibition was formed under the patronages of the S. N. D. P. Yogam and the key members included Dr. Palpu as the chairperson, with M. Govindan and C. K. Kunjiraman as secretaries and Pallakaserry P. K. Sekharan as the treasurer. Other prominent figures, such as Alumoottil Kochu Kunju Channar, Mattancheri Govindan Vaidyar and Menatheril Narayana Panicker also contributed their efforts to the success of the exhibition. The intention behind organising such a grand exhibition was not only to showcase the developments of the time, but also to spark a movement of social and industrial growth among the marginalised sections of society. The organisers campaigned widely across India to gather interest and participation. As a result, applications for stalls in the exhibition came in from various regions of British India, including Travancore, Kochi and Malabar. The exhibition became a symbol of a growing consciousness that reached far beyond Kerala, helping to spread the message of progress and self-reliance.

Among the many items showcased at the exhibition, one particularly interesting contribution was from the women of Thalasseri, Calicut, Mahe and Kannur, who sent beautiful crocheted items for display. These handcrafted goods represented the skills of the Ezhava community and the exhibition focussed mainly on agricultural, industrial and handcrafted products created by this community. This inclusion gave the Ezhava people an opportunity to showcase their talents and abilities in the

fields of craftsmanship and industry, areas traditionally looked down upon by the upper classes.

The success of the exhibition was truly unexpected. Dr. Palpu, who played a crucial role in organising the event, could hardly have anticipated the overwhelming response. About 3,000 people, from places as far as Kanyakumari to Kannur, attended the exhibition. The excitement was not limited to the displays alone; there were also literary competitions, which added an intellectual dimension to the event. The success of the exhibition was so high that it initiated a cultural shift, contributing to a broader social awakening among the lower castes and marginalised communities. However, this progress did not come without resistance. The awakening of the downtrodden and their newly found sense of pride and agency were seen as a threat to the upper castes, leading to social unrest. There were reports of a riot between the Nairs and the Ezhavas, showcasing how deeply entrenched social hierarchies could be wounded by efforts aimed at equality and progress.

In his inaugural speech, Dr. Palpu addressed the crowd with great enthusiasm, emphasising the need for progress and how various parts of India were witnessing inspired efforts towards social and religious reforms. He remarked: "This is an era in which hard work is being done for progress. Around us, we see many types of inspired efforts. People all across India are ready for social and religious progress." Dr. Palpu's words highlighted the collective spirit that was sweeping across the country, in line with the larger freedom movement and social reforms happening in India at the time. One of the most notable moments in his speech was when Dr. Palpu responded to the Travancore Divan's remark that granting education to lower-caste people could damage indus-

trial development. Dr. Palpu countered this by pointing out that the lack of education had not helped industrial growth either. He referred to the examples of other countries, such as Japan, where industrial progress had been directly linked to the spread of education. He said, "So far, not many Government schools were allocated to this community and that did not result in much industrial progress. Also, it is evident from the examples of countries like Japan; industrial growth was proportional to the spread of education."

This speech was not just an assertion of the power of education but also a rallying cry for the importance of industrial development, which was closely tied to the spread of education and awareness. Dr. Palpu's statements reflected the influence of Sree Narayana Guru's philosophy, which emphasised economic sustenance through the judicious use of human resources. Guru's teachings inspired many of his followers, including Dr. Palpu, to pursue missions that combined education, economic empowerment and social reform. The event also led to a cultural shift within the S. N. D. P. Yogam and among the general public. The exhi-

bition was not just an isolated occurrence; it sparked a wider culture of hard work, competition and industrial development. Yogam volunteers were not the only ones motivated by the event; it served as an inspiration for individuals from different sections of society to embrace hard work and entrepreneurial thinking. This drive for progress, born out of a sense of equality and justice, contributed significantly to the broader national movement.

The success of the exhibition set the stage for another exhibition in 1907, during the fourth anniversary celebrations of the S. N. D. P. Yogam. This time, however, the organisers had learned from the previous event and sought to expand their horizons. The inauguration of this second exhibition was done by Castle Stewart, who remarked on the diverse range of items on display, from silk clothes from Travancore to sewing machines from Singer and even miniature models of bungalows made by the Hengi Company of Farooq. The exhibition showcased a remarkable blend of foreign and local technologies, industries and innovations, further demonstrating the growing awareness and capability within the Indian community.

## Recap

- ◆ SNDP Yogam contributed greatly to the upliftment of the oppressed.
- ◆ Second anniversary of S. N. D. P. Yogam, a milestone in Kerala's socio-economic awakening.
- ◆ Ten-day exhibition in Kollam showcasing advancements in agriculture, industry and technology.
- ◆ Organised by Dr. Palpu and other key members to inspire marginalised communities.
- ◆ Participation from Travancore, Kochi and British India.

- ◆ Participation of women entrepreneurs from Mahi, Kannur, Kozhikode, Thalasseri.
- ◆ Exhibition's success and its impact on the social order.
- ◆ Cultural shift and social awakening despite resistance from upper castes.
- ◆ Dr. Palpu's emphasis on education and industrial growth inspired by global examples.
- ◆ Event sparked entrepreneurial thinking, equality and progress aligned with Guru's teachings.
- ◆ Success of the 1905 exhibition paved the way for a larger event in 1907.
- ◆ Blend of foreign and local technologies showcased community capabilities and awareness.
- ◆ Foundation for justice, progress and social reform inspired by Sree Narayana Guru.
- ◆ Opinion of Travancore Divan and Palpu's reply.

## Objective Questions

1. When was the second anniversary of the S. N. D. P. Yogam held according to the Malayalam calendar?
2. Where was the ten-day exhibition organised as part of the second anniversary of the S. N. D. P. Yogam?
3. Who inaugurated the ten-day exhibition held during the second anniversary of the S. N. D. P. Yogam?
4. Who was the chairperson of the committee that organised the exhibition during the S. N. D. P. Yogam anniversary?
5. How many people approximately attended the exhibition from regions like Kanyakumari and Kannur?
6. Which country did Dr. Palpu cite as an example of industrial progress being linked to education?
7. Who inaugurated the exhibition organised during the fourth anniversary of the S. N. D. P. Yogam?

8. What was the broader message emphasised by the exhibitions organised by the S. N. D. P. Yogam?
9. What key teaching of Sree Narayana Guru guided the activities of the S. N. D. P. Yogam?

## Answers

1. 24th Dhanu, 1080	6. Japan
2. Kollam	7. Castle Stewart
3. Bordealen	8. Equality, progress
4. Dr. Palpu	9. Education and empowerment
5. 3,000	

## Assignments

1. Explain the significance of the second anniversary of the S. N. D. P. Yogam in the socio-economic awakening of Kerala.
2. What was the aim of the agricultural and industrial fair?
3. Evaluate the importance of education and industrial development as highlighted in the inaugural speech by Dr. Palpu.

## Suggested Reading

1. Kumaran, M. (2007). *Sree Narayana Guru Swamikalude Jeevacharitram*. Varkala: Sree Narayana Dharma Sangham Trust.
2. Velayudhan, P. P. (1978). *S. N. D. P. Yoga Charithram*. Kollam: Sree Narayana Dharma Paripalana Yogam.
3. Vinayakumar, D. L. (2021). *Sreenarayanan Guruvum Adhunika Kerala Shrishtiyum*. Varkala: Kalapoornna Publications.
4. Prasad, M. N. (2006). *Narayana Guru: Complete Works*. New Delhi: National Book Trust.





## First Lottery- Dharmashodathi

# UNIT

### Learning Outcomes

Upon completing this unit, learners will:

- ◆ be exposed to the significance of Sree Narayana Guru's introduction of the Dharmashodathi lottery as a pragmatic approach to raising funds for social welfare
- ◆ identify the key institutions established through the proceeds of the Dharmashodathi lottery
- ◆ familiarise themselves with the functioning of the Dharmashodathi lottery

### Prerequisites

Imagine a time when society was deeply divided by rigid hierarchies and progress seemed unattainable for those at the margins. In such a setting, how could one inspire a community to rise above limitations, embrace unity and build a future grounded in equality and self-reliance? What creative approaches could be used to spark a movement that not only questioned injustice but also empowered individuals to seek knowledge, self-respect and collective upliftment? This is the backdrop where the revolutionary ideas of a great philosopher took shape, blending wisdom with innovative methods to guide people toward social and spiritual awakening. It was a time when even the smallest actions carried the potential to bring transformation. One such effort was the first lottery 'Dharmashodathi.'

### Key themes

Lottery, Shodathi, Dharma Kalasala, Dharma Sodari, Dharma Kalavidyalayam, Social equality.

## Discussion

During the time of Sree Narayana Guru, the social and economic conditions in Kerala were going through difficult situations. Many noble causes, especially those aimed at uplifting the marginalised communities, needed financial resources, but it was hard to find capital for such endeavours. What made it even more challenging was that people had limited financial resources and any attempt to raise funds could potentially disrupt the daily economic activities of the common people. This is where Sree Narayana Guru's practical and innovative thinking made a big difference. Guru recognised the need for funding, but instead of using traditional ways that might cause difficulties, he thought of a creative solution that would not harm the economic balance of the community. His approach was to use a method that had not yet been formally introduced in India but was already being practiced in other parts of the world: a lottery system. This was a unique and forward-thinking idea in the context of the times, especially since lotteries were not officially established in India at that point.

In 1924, with the permission of the Travancore Government, Sree Narayana Guru launched the "Dharmashodathi" lottery. The word 'Shodathi' means 'lucky draw,' which is commonly associated with lotteries. But Guru's use of the lottery was not for personal gain or for entertainment, as we see today. It was a means to collect money for the betterment of society. His focus was on using the funds to build institutions that would serve the public good, particularly those that would benefit the underprivileged communities.

On Guru's 67th birthday, he made a public declaration about the purpose of the lottery, stating that the proceeds would

be used to establish several key institutions for social welfare. These included a Dharma Kalasala, an institution for education and agricultural training aimed at improving the skills of marginalised communities; a Dharma Sodari Madam for the betterment and empowerment of girls, providing them with educational opportunities and a Dharma Kalavidyalayam, another educational institution focused on girls' education. In addition, the funds would support the establishment of nursing homes, orphanages and animal shelters to care for the needy, sick and abandoned. Guru also emphasised that the income from the lottery should be used to promote unity and peace among people. This innovative idea of using a lottery for social welfare was not just about raising money; it was a means to encourage empathy, charity and social harmony. It carried with it the core values of Dharma (righteousness) and Kshema (welfare), aiming to improve the lives of people in a holistic way.

Let us look at how the Dharmashodathi lottery functioned in practice. The lottery was open to people of all castes and religions. Guru wanted everyone to contribute according to their income, so people could give one percent of their annual income to the cause. If someone did not have much wealth, they could contribute as little as one rupee on their birthday. Contributions could be made in instalments, with the person having to declare the number of instalments. In return for their contribution, they would receive lottery tickets as receipts for their donations. The lottery system was structured so that people who contributed more would have a chance to win larger prizes. But, the unique aspect of Guru's lottery was that even the prize money was not meant for personal gain. It

will go back into the fund, to be used for establishing the institutions that Guru had outlined in his declaration. If the winners of the lottery were not able to use their prize money for these causes, the Shodathi Committee would step in to carry out the plan of establishing these institutions. The Shodathi Committee was made up of seven qualified members, including prominent figures like Dr. P. Palpu and Thiruvengidam Pillai, who were tasked with overseeing the execution of Guru's vision. Their role was to make sure that the funds raised through the lottery were used for the greater good of society, in line with the goals that Guru had set.

In today's world, the lottery is often seen as a way for individuals to win large sums of money. However, Guru's lottery was completely different. Instead of using the prize money for personal benefit, it was reinvested for the welfare of the community. The Dharmashodathi lottery was not just about raising funds; it was about fostering a sense of care, love and compassion among people. It was a call for unity, for people to come together for the common good, regardless of their social status or financial position. The concept of using funds for charity and welfare is still relevant today. For instance, many people contribute to relief funds for natural disasters or social causes, such as the Prime Minister's and Chief Minister's relief funds. These contributions are proof

of the ongoing spirit of care and empathy among people. However, the challenge today remains in ensuring that these funds are used judiciously and efficiently, just as Guru had envisioned in his Dharmashodathi lottery.

Sree Narayana Guru's innovative thinking and compassionate approach through the Dharmashodathi lottery serve as an example of how a simple idea, when executed with purpose and wisdom, can lead to transformative social change. By introducing this initiative, Guru emphasised the importance of collective action and solidarity, particularly in a society where social divides were prevalent. The lottery was not just a financial tool but a means to unite people from different backgrounds, transcending barriers of caste and class and fostering a sense of shared responsibility for the well-being of the community. Through this effort, Guru demonstrated how even small, well-intentioned actions can produce lasting impact, moving society towards justice, equity and compassion. His envisioned a society in which every individual, regardless of their position, could contribute to the common good and participate in the building of a fairer, more inclusive future. The Dharmashodathi lottery stands as a testament to this noble vision, embodying the transformative power of wise leadership, community collaboration and a deep sense of moral purpose.

## Recap

- ◆ First lottery in independent India was from Kerala.
- ◆ Lotteries generate income for the government.
- ◆ It is a support for common people.

- ◆ First lottery was started by Narayana guru.
- ◆ First lottery – Dharmashodathi.
- ◆ Kerala's social and economic conditions were difficult during Sree Narayana Guru's time.
- ◆ The lottery aimed to raise funds for social welfare, not for personal gain.
- ◆ The lottery was open to all castes and religions.
- ◆ The prize money was reinvested into the fund for the betterment of society.
- ◆ The Shodathi Committee oversaw the use of funds.
- ◆ The idea promoted unity, care and compassion among people.
- ◆ Contributions for social causes continue today, reflecting the same spirit of charity.
- ◆ Guru's lottery shows how simple ideas can bring meaningful social change.
- ◆ It demonstrated his vision for a just, equitable and compassionate society.

## Objective Questions

1. What was the primary purpose of Sree Narayana Guru's Dharmashodathi lottery?
2. Which was the first state to start lottery industry in India?
3. In which year was the Dharmashodathi lottery launched by Sree Narayana Guru?
4. Who gave permission for the Dharmashodathi lottery to be launched?
5. What was the meaning of the word Shodathi in the context of the lottery?
6. What was the unique feature of Guru's lottery compared to modern lotteries?
7. What percentage of a person's income was suggested for contribution to the Dharmashodathi lottery?
8. What were the key institutions that Guru aimed to establish with the

proceeds of the lottery?

9. Who were some of the prominent members of the Shodathi Committee?
10. What was the role of the Shodathi Committee in the Dharmashodathi lottery?
11. What value did Sree Narayana Guru emphasise through the Dharmashodathi lottery?

## Answers

1. To collect money for the betterment of society and the establishment of key institutions for social welfare.
2. Kerala
3. 1924
4. The Travancore Government
5. Lucky draw
6. The prize money was reinvested for social welfare, rather than for personal gain.
7. One percent of their annual income.
8. Dharma Kalasala, Dharma Sodari Madam, Dharma Kalavidyalayam, nursing homes, orphanages and animal shelters.
9. Dr. P. Palpu, Thiruvengidam Pillai and other prominent figures.
10. To make sure the funds raised were used for social welfare and Guru's vision.
11. Unity, empathy, charity and social harmony.

## Assignments

1. What were the key institutions that Sree Narayana Guru aimed to establish with the funds raised through the Dharmashodathi lottery? Explain the role of these institutions in the betterment of society.
2. Evaluate the significance of the Dharmashodathi lottery in promoting unity,

peace and social harmony among people from different castes and religions.

3. In what ways did Sree Narayana Guru's Dharmashodathi lottery challenge the prevailing social norms of the time? How did it contribute to the empowerment of marginalised communities?

## Suggested Reading

1. Kumaran, M. (2007). *Sree Narayana Guru Swamikalude Jeevacharitram*. Varkala: Sree Narayana Dharma Sangham Trust.
2. Velayudhan, P. P. (1978). *S.N.D.P.Yoga charithram*. Kollam: Sree Narayana Dharma Paripalana Yogam.
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# Formation of Different Industrial and Commercial Firms Inspired by Guru's Vision

## UNIT

### Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of this unit, the learner will:

- ◆ understand how vocational training empowered marginalised communities
- ◆ recognise the impact of Guru's teachings on local industries and economic self-reliance
- ◆ learn about the objectives and challenges of the Malabar Economic Union
- ◆ identify the contributions of key individuals in Guru's industrial ventures

### Prerequisites

Sree Narayana Guru's ideas, based in spirituality, had a strong influence on society. At a time when social and economic divisions were deep and many communities were excluded from economic growth, Guru's vision went beyond religion. He understood that economic empowerment was as important as spiritual growth and he worked to address issues like poverty, exclusion and caste-based inequality. His efforts led to the creation of industrial and commercial firms that provided economic opportunities to marginalised communities while promoting equality and social welfare. This unit will show how Guru's teachings led to the formation of these firms and their role in changing society. It will look at the impact these firms had on Kerala's economy and how they helped create a more inclusive society.

### Key themes

Economic sustainability, Vocational training, Economic Empowerment, Self-Reliance.

## Discussion

Today, with creative planning and organised execution, success in commerce and industry is a common possibility. Numerous avenues for guidance and financial support are available, helping individuals and businesses thrive. However, the situation was different a century ago. For most people, the idea of achieving economic sustainability was beyond their reach. They were often excluded from opportunities and being neglected and rejected was a harsh reality that many had to accept. It was in this context that Sree Narayana Guru actively worked to bring them into the mainstream of society. His teachings and efforts became a driving force in elevating the marginalised and making sure that they had the opportunity to participate in the growth and development of the community. One of his key contributions was the establishment of vocational training centres that provided valuable skills to people, especially those who had previously been denied such opportunities. These centers did not only focus on personal development but also aimed to encourage the creation of new ventures in the industrial sector, further expanding the opportunities available to marginalised communities. The weaving centre at Sivagiri, the tile factory established by Kumaran Asan and the screw pin production unit founded by Kottukoyikkal Velayudhan are just a few examples of the numerous initiatives inspired by Guru.

The weaving centre at Sivagiri, initiated by Guru, aimed to provide a livelihood to local children by teaching them weaving. Looms and other necessary equipment were brought from Kannur and a skilled instructor was appointed to lead the centre. More importantly, caste was not a

barrier to learning or teaching at the centre and people from all castes were welcomed to participate. Under Guru's guidance, C. Kesavan, who had proficiency in weaving, was entrusted with leading the institution. During this period, the production of woven goods grew rapidly. The centre also produced clothing for the inmates of Sivagiri and the institution received financial support from the government in the form of a monthly grant of thirty rupees. However, the centre's activities slowed down when C. Kesavan left to pursue law studies. Later, C. K. Madhavan, another of Guru's disciples, took charge and worked to revitalise the centre. Guru personally collected funds to help reform and improve the weaving centre, which later earned around two hundred rupees per month.

Guru's openness to new ideas regarding the industrial sector is evident in his encouragement of C. K. Madhavan to travel to Malabar to learn about the colouring of threads. Madhavan spent six months acquiring this skill and, upon returning to Sivagiri, applied his new knowledge to enhance the operations of the weaving centre. Although the centre is no longer in operation today, its legacy lives on in the transformative impact it had on the local community and in the spirit of entrepreneurship that Guru instilled in others.

Guru did not just initiate industrial ventures himself; he also inspired others to follow suit. One such example is the tile production unit started by Guru's disciple, Konni Messiri (Moothedathu Raman Konni), at Aluva. The factory, named Sreenarayana Vilasam Tile Factory, was founded on land that Guru had personally identified. The company had three

partners, Raman Mesthiri, Kottiyattil Raman and Guru himself, with Konni Mesthiri also contributing to the funding for Guru's share. Later, when the company was sold, Guru's share was donated to the Dharma Sangham, demonstrating his commitment to the broader welfare of society. Guru's teachings also had an influence on Kottukoyikkal Velayudhan, a prominent figure in the local industrial scene. Guru advised Velayudhan that education and wealth were essential for safeguarding the poor and emphasised the need for the industrial sector to be developed to create wealth. Inspired by these words, Velayudhan established a co-operative society to produce floor mats, providing employment to almost two thousand people. This venture became a source of livelihood for many families and contributed to the local economy.

Kumaran Asan, one of the three great modern poets of Kerala, was also deeply influenced by Guru's teachings. Though known primarily for his poetry, Kumaran Asan was also a successful entrepreneur. His dual role as a poet and an entrepreneur might seem to be at odds, as one involves the realm of imagination and creativity, while the other is focused on the rational world of business, profit and loss. However, Guru's influence helped him reconcile these two aspects of his life. Asan owned a printing press, Sarada Book Depot, and also ran a tile factory called Union Tile Works, established in 1921 at Aluva. The factory produced thousands of tiles daily, with a production rate of four thousand to five thousand tiles per day. Kumaran Asan's sudden death led to his wife, Bhanumathiayamma, taking over the factory, where it continued to operate smoothly until 1960.

Through these various examples, we can see how Guru's teachings not only transformed the lives of individuals but

also played a key role in the development of industries and the broader economic landscape of Kerala. Guru's vision for economic empowerment, coupled with his encouragement of vocational training, inspired many to take the initiative to create their own ventures, contributing to the economic and social upliftment of marginalised communities. His approach blended spirituality with practical action, ensuring that his ideas led to real change in the world of business and industry.

#### 4.4.1 Malabar Economic Union

The Malabar Union was established to promote the economic progress of the downtrodden people. It was built on the principle that there should be no caste barriers and was founded with the vision of Guru's message: "prosper through industries." The individuals who played a crucial role in the creation of this organisation were Dr. Palpu and his brother Thanu, who recognised the potential of this project to bring about significant social change. The Malabar Economic Union began its activities in 1916 in Alappuzha and the profits generated from the project were intended for the collective benefit of the community. This was the core agreement underlying the organisation's operations.

In one of his speeches, Guru pointed out that the lack of knowledge on how to convert raw materials into value-added products was a major barrier to economic progress. He also highlighted how the transfer of wealth to other lands, through trade, weakened local economies. He advocated the establishment of industries within the region that could process and add value to local raw materials. The Malabar Economic Union was built on these foundational ideas, with the goal of increasing the region's economic

independence and prosperity. With this goal the union began by collecting raw materials that were abundantly available in the region, such as coconut fibres and dried coconut kernels. These materials were then processed into value-added products, such as coir and coconut oil, which could be sold for a higher price, contributing to local economic growth. The company was led by an Englishman named Neev, who was tasked with overseeing its operations. To raise more capital, the company offered shares for sale, each priced at fifty rupees. Guru himself purchased shares, reflecting his active involvement and interest in the success of the venture.

The Malabar Economic Union continued to prosper, expanding its business activities through collaborations with companies from other countries. One notable partnership was with a company named Walker, which had branches in places like Madras and London. This collaboration allowed the Economic Union to extend its reach and grow its business operations. Officials from Walker came to Alleppey to participate in the expansion of the Union's business ventures, helping to increase its visibility and operational capacity. For a time, the activities of the Economic Union ran smoothly. However, over time, disputes

arose among the officials of the companies involved, leading to tensions within the partnership. Eventually, the collaboration ended and a legal case was filed regarding the dispute. The Madras High Court ruled that the Walker company should pay a compensation of three lakh rupees to the Malabar Economic Union. However, Dr. Palpu's idealistic approach prevented the union from accepting the compensation.

The dispute with the Walker Company severely impacted the operations of the Economic Union. Despite these setbacks, the workers remained committed to the organisation. To continue the Union's work, the Economic Union purchased a plot of land near the Vadathodu Vadakkekara district for the construction of a new building. Unfortunately, the Union could not resume its activities after this point. Despite the enthusiasm and efforts of the workers, the organisation could not overcome the difficulties it faced and after operating for about a year and a half, the company had to cease its activities. Nevertheless, the brief existence of the Union serves as a testament to the transformative potential of Guru's teachings and the importance of local industrial ventures in promoting economic self-reliance and social equality.

## Recap

- ◆ Sree Narayana Guru worked to bring marginalised people into mainstream society.
- ◆ Self-employment place a big role in achieving economic sustainability.
- ◆ Guru established vocational training centers to provide valuable skills.
- ◆ A weaving centre was established at Sivagiri to train the youth

- ◆ Guru encouraged new industrial ventures.
- ◆ Kottukoyikkal Velayudhan and Kumaran Asan were influenced by Guru's teachings.
- ◆ Co-operative society started by Kottukoyikkal Velayudhan.
- ◆ The Malabar economic union focused on converting local raw materials into value-added products.
- ◆ Economic advantages of local products.
- ◆ Training to convert raw materials to value added products.
- ◆ The collaboration between Walker Company and Malabar economic Union.

## Objective Questions

1. Name an initiative inspired by Guru in Sivagiri.
2. Who established the tile factory at Aluva?
3. Who initially led the Sivagiri weaving centre?
4. Who took charge of the weaving centre after C. Kesavan left?
5. What was the name of the tile factory started by Konni Mesthiri?
6. Where was the Sreenarayana Vilasam Tile Factory established?
7. Who established a co-operative society for floor mat production?
8. What was the name of Kumaran Asan's printing press?
9. Where was the Union Tile Works factory established?
10. Who took over the tile factory after Kumaran Asan's death?
11. In which year did the Malabar Economic Union begin its activities?
12. Where was the Malabar Economic Union established?
13. Who were the key figures in creating the Malabar Economic Union?
14. What was Guru's message that inspired the Malabar Economic Union?

15. Who was the Englishman leading the Malabar Economic Union?
16. Which company did the Malabar Economic Union collaborate with?

## Answers

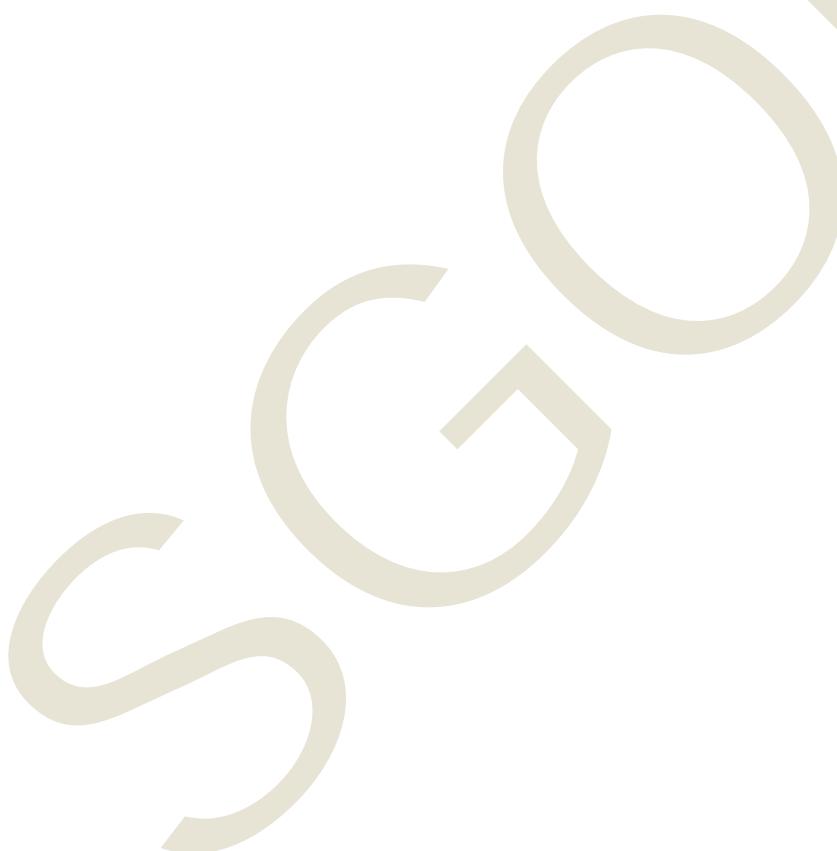
1. Weaving centre	9. Aluva
2. Konni Mesthiri	10. Bhanumathiyamma
3. C. Kesavan	11. 1916
4. C. K. Madhavan	12. Alappuzha
5. Sreenarayana Vilasam Tile Factory	13. Dr. Palpu and Thanu
6. Aluva	14. Prosper through industries
7. Kottukoyikkal Velayudhan	15. Neev
8. Sarada Book Depot	16. Walker

## Assignments

1. How did Sree Narayana Guru contribute to the economic empowerment of marginalised communities?
2. How did Sree Narayana Guru encourage industrial development in Kerala? Provide examples.
3. Analyse the objectives and activities of the Malabar Economic Union.
4. What was the significance of Guru's statement, "Prosper through industries?"

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**Guru on Equality  
and Responsible  
Consumption**



# One-Caste, One-Religion, One-God for Mankind:Guru's Vision of Oneness

## UNIT

### Learning Outcomes

After the completion of this unit the learner will be able to:

- ◆ understand Guru's idea that all humans are equal
- ◆ recall the meaning of "One caste, one religion, one god for mankind"
- ◆ describe the importance of the Aruvippuram temple Consecration
- ◆ recognize the influence of non-dualism in Guru's teachings
- ◆ think about how Guru's message can help create an equitable society

### Prerequisites

There are many religions in the world. Among them, some are theistic, and some are atheistic. Some are monotheistic, while some are polytheistic. Some worship male gods, some worship female gods, some worship nature, and some argue that no such gods exist. If we look around, we can see different customs and rituals among people who practice the same religion. Why do religions exist? It can be observed that every religion has two aspects: one internal and the other external. The inner meaning of religions claims that they are for the well-being and growth of humans. Time and language will not affect this inner meaning, as all religions fundamentally claim to support humanity. There are efforts to pass on timeless values such as truth, fraternity, compassion, etc. The outer aspects of religions include customs, rituals, priesthood, dos and don'ts, etc. In short, all religions aim for human welfare and goodness. This concept invites us to learn each religion carefully. Is this the current interpretation of religions, particularly within the

priestly class? At least some priests are misinterpreting religious principles using their rhetorical skills and vanity to suit their motives. Such misinterpretation can lead to distancing people from human brotherhood, which religions aim for on a larger plane. When people lack the awareness of the essential unity of religions, it can lead to intolerance, enmity, and even war.

## Key Words

Humanity, Religion, fraternity, fanaticism, Oneness

## Discussion

### 5.1.1 Sreenarayanaguru's Vision of Religion

Sreenarayanaguru's vision of religion was based on humanism and fraternity. Guru considered all to belong to one self-fraternity. Guru taught that the essence of all religions is the same. He showed the inner core of religions and pointed out the sameness of their essential features. This clarity of vision based on Advaita (non-dualism) is what marks him out from other gurus. Narayana Guru presented the noble message 'One caste, one religion, one god for mankind.' In his work *Jathi Nirnaya*, he clarifies the notion of caste, where he affirms that the caste of man is his humanity; man's humanity marks out the human kind. He further says, "Within a species, is it not that offspring truly breed? The category of man is thus viewed as belonging to a single caste. Of the human species, is there even a 'Brahman' born, as is the 'Paraya'? Where is the difference between man and man in caste?" So, it is clear that, according to him, humans belong to one caste: the human species. Guru's religion is *Athma sukha* (happiness of the self). He clarifies it in the 49th verse of *Athmopadesasathakam*. Guru's concept of God is the oneness that pervades this

world. Guru did not express any concerns about calling it by any name, be it Jehovah, Allah, Siva, or Krishna. In Vedanta, it is called Brahma, and when it exists as an individual, it's denoted as athma.

### 5.1.2 Guru: A Descendant of the Advaita Tradition

Even though 'one caste, one religion, one God for man' are the Guru's words, they echo the wisdom of the Advaita tradition. In Guru's own words: "Do humans live for the caste and the world? Or for the humans themselves? In a world that diminishes man's role, what purpose does pleasure serve? Caste diminishes man, so it is unnecessary. Caste does not exist. It is foolish to think that it exists." If we can identify Guru as a revolutionary, his revolution was peaceful. Compassion and love for fellow beings arise from the non-dual vision, which could be clearly seen in his revolution. Guru was compassionate to the downtrodden who were denied social justice. His compassion also extended to oppressors who belonged to the upper castes. Guru considered no one an enemy. Thus, the revolution occurred without enmity. Guru did not encourage any program that deviated from the common good of humanity. An example of these

principles can be seen in the words written at Aruvippuram after the consecration of the idol of Lord Siva in 1888. “This is a model space where all live in fraternity, without caste discrimination or religious fanaticism.”

### 5.1.3 Guru's Praxis

With the temple consecration of Aruvippuram, Guru gave a new dimension to the existing concept of God. This revived the concept that God is one that lies closer to the people. Subsequently, the practices imposed by the Chaturvarnya System, a four-tiered class system, crumbled like a stack of cards. Guru consecrated a temple when even entry to temples was prohibited for the people of the lower castes. The Aruvippuram temple consecration was a historic event. It seemed as though an unwritten law solely reserved hygiene

and pure deities for the upper caste. Lower-caste people had to be satisfied with impure deities and low customs. So the Aruvippuram consecration was a wake-up call to the wounded masses. By consecrating Siva, Guru initiated a peaceful battle against inequality in worship and caste discrimination. Guru wished temples to become centers of unity and organized activities. For Guru, temple consecrations were a means to cultivate the right kind of devotion, independence, fraternity, etc. The Aruvippuram temple consecration could also be considered an attempt to change a social system that was entirely based on religion. For that, Guru used the means of devotion itself. Thus, “This is a model space where all live in fraternity, without caste discrimination or religious fanaticism” was a loud proclamation denoting that movement

## Recap

- ◆ Religions have two sides: the internal and the external
- ◆ All religions aim for human welfare
- ◆ The core of all religions is humanity
- ◆ The priests without proper knowledge derail the believers
- ◆ Narayana Guru did not establish any religion
- ◆ ‘All are of self-fraternity.’
- ◆ ‘The many faiths have but one essence.’
- ◆ *Atmasukha* (happiness in self) is the religion
- ◆ Advaita experience (non-dual) was the reason behind the Guru's conception of oneness
- ◆ The Aruvippuram temple consecration was a historical correction

- ◆ Holy places should be centres of togetherness
- ◆ Same kind of mercy towards the downtrodden and the upper caste
- ◆ One caste, one religion, one God for mankind

## Objective Questions

1. What is the ultimate aim of all religions according to the text?
2. According to Guru, what is the true caste of man?
3. In which verse of *Atmopadesa Satakam* does the Guru mention his idea of religion?
4. What is Guru's view on the existence of caste?
5. What central concept does Guru's idea of God emphasize?
6. Where did Guru consecrate the temple that became a symbol of social reform?
7. Which deity was consecrated by Guru at Aruvippuram?
8. What term does Guru use to describe his idea of religion focused on the happiness of the self?
9. What was the slogan given by Guru that emphasizes equality among humans?
10. What did Guru aim to create through his temple consecrations?
11. What system crumbled after Guru's temple consecration?
12. Did Guru establish a new religion?

## Answers

1. Human welfare.	3. 49th verse.
2. Humanity.	4. Caste does not exist.

5. Oneness.
6. Aruvippuram.
7. Siva.
8. Atmasukha.
9. One caste, one religion, one God for mankind.
10. Model spaces of fraternity.
11. Chaturvarnya system.
12. No

## Assignments

1. Explain how Sree Narayana Guru's concept of religion promotes human unity and equality.
2. Discuss the historical and philosophical significance of the Aruvippuram temple consecration.
3. How does Guru's vision reflect the core ideas of Advaita Vedanta?

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## Guru on Gender Equality and Women Empowerment

### UNIT

#### Learning Outcomes

After completing this unit, the learner will be able to:

- ◆ describe Guru's views on gender equality and women's empowerment
- ◆ identify the steps Guru took to support women's education and social roles
- ◆ explain the importance of institutions like SNV Sadanam and the Dharmashodathi lottery
- ◆ discuss how Guru's ideas on women's empowerment are relevant to today's society

#### Prerequisites

We live in a society that gives importance to women's empowerment. Previously marginalized women are now making their way into the mainstream. The United Nations and most nations are giving special importance to the physical and mental development and well-being of women and children. On 18th December 1979, the United Nations General Assembly adopted a treaty to eliminate all forms of discrimination against women. Even before that, in 1946, the United Nations established a commission—the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW). The aims were the elimination of violence against women, women's empowerment, gender equality, etc. The 1979 treaty came into being due to the almost three-decade-long hard work of CSW. Around half of the world's population is women. A nation cannot advance if it excludes half of its population and focuses solely on men. True progress or development is only possible in a society where equal rights and opportunities are available to all genders. Now, many multinational companies

and nations are headed by women. Programs like Kerala's 'Kudumbasree Mission' aim at women's empowerment. Narayana Guru gave importance to the well-being of women and children. Women occupied many responsible positions in the social reform activities envisioned and guided by the Guru. In this unit, we will examine some of Guru's activities related to this.

## Key Words

Women Empowerment, Gender Equality, Education, Social Reform

## Discussion

### 5.2.1 Guru and Women's Empowerment

Guru gave special attention to the progress of women. Sri Narayana Guru recognized the role of women in the economic development of society as a whole. Guru believed that the status of women should be on par with that of men. His efforts to promote gender equality were innovative and a reflection of his forward-thinking. During his visit to Sri Lanka, he delivered a speech outlining his plans for Aluva Advaita Ashram. He stated, "In addition to this, we need a hospital, an inn, handicraft centres, a convent-like place (a Dharma palana mutt) for girls, and an orphanage." Guru envisioned that in the 'dharamapalana mutt,' girls should get training in character development, language, nursing, stitching, handicrafts, and other suitable fields. He believed that such training could transform them into positive role models for family or celibate life." Respect and pride for women were important in Guru's vision for family life. He emphasized that the foundation of gender equality should begin at home. He also insisted on providing women with minimal primary-level education. In a message sent to the

'Vijnanavardhini Sabha,' he said, "Women also should learn, not just men." We should not let them fall behind." A lottery named *Dharma Shodathi* was started to raise funds for the education of girls. Many orthodox people opposed the Guru's women empowerment activities by citing books like the Manusmriti. As a response to this, Guru went to some respected and prominent families of his time and spread awareness among them about these matters, which made them send girls from their families to school. When girls from those families started going to schools, the general public followed suit. These activities could have caused significant social issues, but the guru addressed them with calmness and presence of mind. These kinds of activities helped the spread of education even to the lower classes of society.

### 5.2.2 Actions Against Social Injustices

During the guru's time, many expensive malpractices like 'Thalikettukalyanam' and 'pulikudi' were carried out in homes with girls. Many people believed that having a girl child was burdensome. But Guru removed many such practices, which

resulted in reducing the societal pressure on parents. Narayana Guru welcomed the idea of widow marriage too. In the 225<sup>th</sup> verse of 'Narayana Smriti,' it is said that if one still wishes for a family life and has the vitality of youth and good health, after contemplating properly on the matter, one can marry again." At the same time, Sreenarayananaguru opposed polygyny and polyandry. He also advocated for equal importance for both partners in the institution of marriage.

### 5.2.3 Promotion of Women's Education and Skills

When a big project like 'Sivagiri free industrial and agricultural Gurukulam' was planned and the outline was made, one of the institutions planned as a part of the project was a girl's school. The importance guru gave to the cause of female education was evident from activities like the founding of 'Sree Narayana Vidyarthini Sadanam' (SNV Sadanam), an institution for accommodating girl students. We have already learned that guru encouraged women to learn handicrafts and other skills. But he did not encourage people simply to follow the jobs or skills practised by their ancestors. He believed that everyone must find their own nature and a suitable job. He viewed the caste tradition (where individuals follow their parents' profession) as a reason for the disintegration of many professions. He also observed that the quality of many of the professions gets diluted due to these kinds of irrational traditions, such as the caste system.

### 5.2.4 SNV Sadanam and Its Legacy

Mundakkal Kesavanasan was one of the disciples of Guru. Kesavanasan's wife was T. V. Narayani Amma, and she was addressed by Guru as 'Matha' (mother). She later became famous as 'Sadana Mathavu' because she started an institution called 'Sree Narayana Vidyarthini Sadanam' (SNV Sadanam). When people from the lower castes got permission to study, many women started coming to the Women's College at Thiruvananthapuram. There were students from distant places, and the accommodation facility was limited. Knowing this, Narayana Guru gave a gold coin to Narayani Amma and directed her to start a hostel for girls. So Narayaniamma and Asan rented a building at Baker Junction, Thiruvananthapuram, and started Sree NarayanaaVanitha Sadanam on July 24, 1924.

In 1935, the control of SNV Sadanam was handed over to the 'Sthree Samajam.' In 1955, the government donated a 75-cent plot of land for the construction of a two-storey building, to which the 'Sadanam' relocated. In the year 1943, Narayani Amma founded a working women's hostel and a nursery for the children of officials. It was the first nursery in Kerala. Former Kerala minister K. R. Gouri Amma, K. O. Ayisha (deputy speaker), Fathima Beevi, who later became a Supreme Court judge, etc., were inmates of SNV Sadanam. Thapaswini Amma and Azheekal Krishnan Vaidyar established another SNV Sadanam at Ernakulam with the same goal. Now, all across Kerala, many SNV Sadanams' are working. These are some of the notable examples of Narayana Guru's efforts for women's empowerment.

## Recap

- ◆ The empowerment of women
- ◆ Social progress through gender equality
- ◆ Women friendly activities related to Aluva Advaita ashram
- ◆ Guru's vision on family life
- ◆ Guru's reply to orthodox people who opposed women's right to education
- ◆ Ban against '*thalikettukalyanam, pulikudi*', etc.
- ◆ Promotion of widow remarriage
- ◆ Guru's opposition to polygamy and polyandry
- ◆ Dharmashodathi lottery towards the educational fund for women
- ◆ Women were advised to learn handicrafts and skills
- ◆ Famous inmates of SNV Sadanam

## Objective Questions

1. What was the name of the lottery which started to fund women's education under Narayana Guru's guidance?
2. Which social reformer promoted gender equality and women's empowerment in Kerala?
3. Which institution was started by Narayani Amma for accommodating girl students?
4. In which year did the Sree Narayana Vanitha Sadanam start?
5. What kind of institution was planned as part of the Sivagiri free industrial and agricultural Gurukulam project for girls?
6. Which United Nations treaty was adopted in 1979 for the elimination of discrimination against women?
7. What type of customs did Narayana Guru oppose, such as *Thalikettukalyanam* and *Pulikudi*?

8. Who gave a gold coin to Narayani Amma to start a hostel for girl students?
9. Which verse of Narayana Smriti supports the idea of widow remarriage?
10. What did Guru suggest girls should be trained in, apart from academics?
11. Who among the following was a famous inmate of SNV Sadanam—K. R. Gouri Amma, M. F. Hussain, or Arundhati Roy?

## Answers

1. Dharma Shodathi.
2. Narayana Guru.
3. Sree Narayana Vidyarthini Sadanam.
4. 1924.
5. Girls' school.
6. CEDAW.
7. Harmful social practices.
8. Narayana Guru.
9. 225.
10. Handicrafts and life skills.
11. K. R. Gouri Amma

## Assignments

1. What did Narayana Guru say about gender equality? How were his views different from others at that time?
2. Why was SNV Sadanam started? How did it help in women's education?
3. Which bad social customs affecting women did Guru fight against? How did he try to change them?
4. How did Guru encourage women to learn new skills and not just follow family jobs?
5. Why are Guru's ideas about women's rights still important today?

## Suggested Reading

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## Mishrabhojanam and Mishravivaham

# UNIT

### Learning Outcomes

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

- ◆ understand the ideas of *Misrabhojanam* and Misra Vivaham
- ◆ know how these practices challenged caste in Kerala
- ◆ learn about the role of reformers like Sree Narayana Guru and Ayyappan
- ◆ recognize the support from social and legal changes

### Prerequisites

From the time India got its freedom, all the governments have done many things to ensure the well-being, unity, cooperation, and rights of the downtrodden. The architects of the Indian Constitution seriously considered the threats posed by the caste system. To solve this, the constitution ensures rights based on freedom, equality, and fraternity. Article 14 of the Indian Constitution ensures the equality of all in front of the law, irrespective of caste, religion, and gender. Article 15, which safeguards citizens from such discrimination, and Article 21, which ensures the right to life and personal liberty, are examples of this. Even 70 years after independence, caste-based discrimination, enmity between religions, and associated problems persist in most states. We are all familiar with media reports of young people dying because they married someone from a different caste or religion. This awareness is often accompanied by a great deal of shock. Why are such evil deeds occurring? The way shown by Guru and his disciples, along with their work to eradicate the irrational social evil of caste, is important.

Guru has written two works on caste: 'Jathi Chinthanam' and 'Jathi Lakshanam.' Guru said that being human is the caste of all humanity. He also demonstrated the irrationality of the caste system in those works. Indications of these ideas appear in his other works as well. The ideas he put forth to eradicate the caste system are 'Misrabhojanam' (inter-caste dining of the people from the upper castes and the lower castes) and *Misra Vivaham* (inter-caste marriage). Let's explore the details of these ideas in the following sections.

## Key Words

Misrabhojanam, misravivaham, Sahodara Sangham, Sambandham

## Discussion

### 5.3.1 Misrabhojanam: The Concept and Historical Practice

'Misrabhojanam' is a combination of the Sanskrit words misram and bhojanam. The word "misram" means to mix or combine, and "bhojanam" means food. Misrabhojanam literally means dining together. We know that members of a family dine together. At functions like marriage, we dine with strangers. Associated with places of worship, we may eat together, irrespective of caste, religion, etc. This practice is known as Misrabhojanam. But due to boundaries imposed by caste, a large part of the population couldn't choose what they could eat or wear. Misrabhojanam had historical significance. It is a history of the sacrifice, tolerance, dedication, and foresight of people like Guru and his disciple, Sahodaran Ayyappan. Those who belong to the upper castes implemented discrimination in the name of caste, which, in reality, according to the guru, does not exist. Movements like misrabhojanam and misravivaham were peaceful acts of revolution initiated

by Guru. Even in his younger years, Narayana Guru engaged with humanity without considering caste boundaries. Many such anecdotes can be found in his biographies. During a caste system discussion, the 'Apasudrathikaranam' section of the Brahmasutra came up for discussion. Guru boldly stated that Sri Sankaracharya's interpretation was incorrect.

The Sahodara Sangham movement, founded by Sahodaran Ayyappan, had an important role in the activities led by Narayana Guru against caste discrimination. Sahodara Sangham was founded on May 29th at Pallippuram, North Paravur. "All humans belong to one caste" was the motto of the Sahodara Sangham. The group organized an inter-caste dining program at Cherayi the day after its founding. Vallon, Chathan (students belonged to the Pulaya community), and many from the Ezhava community have participated and pledged to eradicate the caste system.

The following is the pledge. Since caste discrimination is irrational, unnecessary, and harmful, I pledge that, without

breaking any law, I'll do everything possible to eradicate it." On the eve of Narayana Guru's 69<sup>th</sup> birthday, Sahodaran Ayyappan wrote an article in Vivekodayam magazine. In that article, he has pointed out the important role the movements of 'misrabhojanam' and 'misravivaham' can play for the cause of caste eradication. Ayyappan says, "Many artificial walls have been erected between humans in the name of religion, color, language, etc. To destroy those and to bring equality and unity among humans, the best ways are to practice inter-caste dining and inter-caste marriage between the communities that are distanced from each other." For that, he instructed the youth to work based on Guru's concept of human oneness. He also said that there is no other bigger way to heal the world.

### 5.3.2 Opposition, Endorsements, and the 'Great Message'

Then, inter-caste dining was conducted across Kerala. Many of Guru's disciples organized such events. Sahodaran Ayyappan and some members of the movement even got attacked and mocked by some upper-caste people for this. Several youths involved in the "misrabhojanam" faced expulsion from their caste and community. Due to pressures from the upper-caste individuals, some were compelled to perform ritualistic acts of atonement and purification.

Even the 'VijnanaVardhini Sabha,' an organization that followed Guru's vision, was against inter-caste dining. They falsely claimed that Narayana Guru opposed inter-caste dining. This did hurt Ayyappan, and he himself approached Guru and received a written message from Guru regarding the topic and made it public. The message quickly gained

popularity. Here is the message:

"However different the religion, clothing, language, etc. of humans may be, since they all belong to the same caste, their marrying with each other or dining together is of no harm."

On 1921 May 15<sup>th</sup>, a state-level meeting of 'Sahodara Sangham' was held, and the same was attended by Narayana Guru. The above-mentioned message, handwritten by Guru, was made public there. It was called the 'Great Message,' and Sahodaran Ayyappan then explained it. Kumbalangi inaugurated the A. Sreenarayana Mutt on 24th Vrichika 1103 (as per the Malayalam calendar). The function included an intercaste dining session. Nedungayil Narayanan and Chandran Vaidyar organized the feast under the guidance of the Guru. People from many communities participated in the function, including people from the Pulaya community, the Ezhava community, and the Christian community. The presence of Sahodaran Ayyappan and Sree Narasimhaswamy made the function more newsworthy.

The fear these types of caste elimination programs created among orthodox people was evident from activities like the formation of 'Poorva Achara Sabha' (an organization aimed at preserving traditional laws and customs) at Kochi. A speech made by its head, S. M. Kumara Swami Iyer, clearly reflected this attitude. He said, "Now there is a new inter-caste dining group called Sahodara Sangham. If this group continues like this for four or five years, caste differences will get eliminated. Everyone in my household supports this group, with the exception of me. We currently view inter-caste dining as merely a game. But if given enough thought, one can understand how this could soon destroy the caste system."

### 5.3.3 Social Movements and National Impact

During 1924-25, the famous Vaikom Satyagraha (a nonviolent social protest for temple entry for the lower caste) became a prominent model for inter-caste dining and community kitchens. The protesters became models for the whole society by cooking and eating together, without minding any differences based on religion, caste, etc. In 1929 (Malayalam year), the Kerala Pradesh Congress Committee passed a resolution against untouchability and organized an intercaste dining function. Many prominent figures like K. Kelppaan, Sarojini Nayudu, T. R. Krishna Swamy Iyer, C. Rajagopalachari, Devadas Gandhi, etc., participated in that function; thus, the intercaste dining movement gained national attention.

### 5.3.4 Misra Vivaham: Inter-caste Marriage as a Social Revolution

Unlike intercaste dining, intercaste marriage didn't become popular swiftly. But this idea also initiated a social revolution. Again, Sahodaran Ayyappan was the one who took up this idea, following the principles of Sreenarayananaguru. In a society where caste-related laws and rituals were strictly followed, breaking those laws invited heavy punishment. People then perceived relationships and marriages that crossed caste boundaries as risky affairs.

Despite strict adherence to the caste system, upper-caste men continued to engage in sexual relationships with women from lower castes. Upper-caste men often justified this common practice as a privilege. This is called 'Sambandham.'

Only the eldest son of a Brahmin family could marry back then. The younger ones were connected with lower-caste women through 'sambandham.' But lower-caste men were only allowed to marry women from their caste.

In 1827, the Special Marriage Act was passed in British India. That act made intercommunity marriage among Hindus lawful. However, it excluded Muslims, Buddhists, Christians, Parsis, Jains, and Sikhs. People from the religions mentioned above had to relinquish their religion for intercommunity marriages. Then the act was amended in 1922. This amendment allowed Hindus, Sikhs, Jains, and Buddhists to participate in intercommunity marriages without compromising their religious beliefs. In 1838 alone, polygyny and polyandry were illegal as per the Kochi Nair Act.

Narayana Guru always upheld the oneness of humanity, which transcends religions. He viewed marriage as a personal choice between two individuals. Guru had clarified that a woman is entitled to choose her partner. So Guru insisted that those about to marry meet and communicate clearly before the wedding.

In 1916, Guru supervised the first intercommunity marriage at Aluva Advaita Asramam. The groom belonged to the Ezhava community, while the bride was German. The civil marriage bill presented in 1923 at the Cochin legislative assembly was a turning point. Sahodaran Ayyappan presented the bill. The speech delivered on that occasion by Sahodaran Ayyappan is very thought-provoking:

"If it can be proved that all of you are of mixed origin, no other proof is needed for the fact that intercommunity marriages happened in the past. Which community is not mixed? No community exists without

mixed blood. What is the point of opposing intercaste marriage in the name of religion and community?"

He demanded that the assembly members rise above the narrow-mindedness caused by giving more importance to religion and caste. He wanted them to awaken to an inclusive social awareness and a humanistic viewpoint.

Once this bill was passed, the intercaste marriage movement strengthened. Eminent personalities like C. V. Kunjiraman, M. P. Joseph, etc., joined Sahodaran

Ayyappan. V. T. Bhatathirippadu's cooperation was also noteworthy. His sister got married to a Nair man, and thus, he himself became a model.

Sahodaran Ayyappan's activities against the caste system provoked many from the upper castes. This led to several confrontations. But most of the opposition started fading out when everyone became aware of Narayana Guru's support. Because Guru was well respected by all. Guru's vision of humanity gives hope to all even today.

## Recap

- ◆ Intercaste dining and inter-caste marriage as tools for caste eradication
- ◆ Meaning of the word '*Mishrabhojana*'
- ◆ Sahodaran Ayyappan's commitment to Guru's principles
- ◆ Intercaste dining and inter-caste marriage as peaceful acts of revolution
- ◆ *Sahodara Sangham* against caste discrimination
- ◆ Pledge of Sahodara Sanghamam
- ◆ Guru's maha sandesam
- ◆ Dining programs conducted at various locations
- ◆ Poorvachara samrakshana sabha
- ◆ The common kitchen of Vaikkom Satyagraha
- ◆ '*Sambandham*' relation between the upper caste and the lower caste
- ◆ Special Marriage Act
- ◆ Humanity beyond religion
- ◆ From a religious-centric attitude to human-centric attitude
- ◆ First inter caste marriage held at Aluva Advaita Ashram

## Objective Questions

1. Who founded the Sahodara Sangham?
2. In which year did the first inter-caste dining at Cherayi take place?
3. What was the name of the sabha that opposed Sahodaran Ayyappan's move for inter-caste dining?
4. What did Narayana Guru declare in the 'Great Message'?
5. Which leader's mutt inauguration became a site for inter-caste dining in Kumbalangi?
6. Which reform did the Kerala Pradesh Congress Committee pass a resolution in support of?
7. In what year did Narayana Guru oversee the first inter-caste marriage at Aruvippuram?
8. In which community was the practice of sambandham prevalent?
9. What legislative bill did Sahodaran Ayyappan introduce in 1923?
10. Who accompanied Sahodaran Ayyappan to obtain a written statement from Narayana Guru?

## Answers

1. Sahodaran Ayyappan.	6. Temple entry.
2. 1917.	7. 1925.
3. SNDP Yogam.	8. Nair.
4. One caste, One religion, One God for mankind.	9. Inter-caste marriage legalization
5. Kumara Guru.	10. Moorkoth Kumaran

## Assignments

1. What is the meaning of Misrabhojanam, and why was it important in Kerala's social reform movements?
2. Who were the key figures behind the Misrabhojanam and Misra Vivaham movements, and what did they aim to change?
3. What challenges did people face when they supported inter-caste dining and inter-caste marriages?
4. How did legal changes and national movements support the fight against caste discrimination in Kerala?

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## Guru on Peace and Compassion

### UNIT

#### Learning Outcomes

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

- ◆ understand the concept of responsible consumption as promoted by Narayana Guru
- ◆ explain the objectives and ethical vision behind the Sivagiri pilgrimage
- ◆ identify Guru's emphasis on simplicity and austerity in social and religious practices
- ◆ describe Guru's model for economically disciplined and gender-equal marriages
- ◆ recognize how Guru's teachings align with sustainable and inclusive development

#### Prerequisites

The dress we wear had to go through many processes to be in its present form. The whole process started with the farmer sowing cotton seeds in the ploughed field. When cotton is spun into threads, those threads undergo numerous processes. How many different types of chemical processes might have occurred before producing the final version of the dress? What kinds of toxic wastes might have been emitted? In underdeveloped countries, producing items like cotton requires using a lot of water, fertilizer, and pesticides because sustainable development models are not sufficiently implemented. Many of these chemicals damage the soil structure, necessitating the use of more fertilizers and pesticides in the future. This

practice is harmful to the natural state of the environment. Behind all everyday items, there are often stories of creation and destruction. So we should foresee the problems, like health issues, climate change, environmental hazards, etc., and behave responsibly in the production and usage of the items we use. So, when we adopt ways to eliminate or minimize the ill effects of using resources for development, it can be considered a sustainable approach in production or usage. Protecting nature in this way also paves the way for social and economic progress. That means development goals like economic competence, poverty alleviation, an increase in job opportunities, development in the industrial sector, etc. will be attainable. Thus, according to the concept of sustainable development, economic and social sustainability can be attained by using and distributing resources with ethical judgment and foresight. Narayana Guru had that foresight, and thus he always highlighted the need for simplicity and reducing unnecessary expenses and inspired people to follow it.

## Key Words

Sivagiri pilgrimage, Thalikettkalyanam, Thirandukuli, Pulikudi, marriage

## Discussion

### 5.4.1 The Objective of Sivagiri Pilgrimage

On January 16, 1928, a decision was made regarding the Sivagiri pilgrimage. We have already seen the details regarding the beginning of the pilgrimage. The Sivagiri pilgrimage stands out from most other pilgrimages because it is usually associated with a religion. However, the Sivagiri pilgrimage is unique because it is not associated with any particular religion. Neither religion nor caste creates discrimination or a boundary there. Most great minds and gurus have tried to bring man nearer to a religion or God. But Narayana Guru tried to bring humans closer to each other. Guru advised that 'a knower of all tenets should make great efforts for the advancement of another, so Narayana Guru can be called the great prophet of humanism.

The Sivagiri Pilgrimage is thus a journey to the presence of such a guru. However, the Guru opposed people using their hard-earned money solely for a pilgrimage. So, he insisted that if people gather for a pilgrimage, it should serve a beneficial purpose. Thus, the eight goals of the Sivagiri pilgrimage were formed from the Guru's compassionate thoughts. The Guru envisioned the Sivagiri pilgrimage as a hub for disseminating knowledge that could serve as the foundation for a prosperous life.

Guru instructed the organizers of the pilgrimage to bring experts from fields like agriculture, commerce, handicraft, science, technology, education, hygiene, organizational matters, and spirituality. This will allow new trends and knowledge from these fields to be shared through speeches at the pilgrim center. None of

the above topics belong to a particular religion or culture. One cannot limit these goals to the confines of a single society. It indicates that Guru never wanted to be the ambassador of any one particular religion, civilization, or society. He was the prophet of an all-inclusive oneness. The Sivagiri pilgrimage Guru envisioned was a balanced blend of materialism and spirituality.

### 5.4.2 Guru's Views on Austerity

Guru opposed unnecessary expenses and prohibited pilgrims from showing luxury. Guru's instruction on the dress code for the pilgrimage was an example of this attitude. Guru prescribed a yellow-colored dress for the pilgrims. But he discouraged them from buying costly items like yellow silk. He said, "Not even a new cloth is needed. Instead, the white clothes already in use can be turned yellow by using turmeric water as dye. Once the pilgrimage concludes, wash this cloth as necessary to restore its original white colour. He especially reminded the pilgrims to keep the journey a non-luxurious affair.

Guru also instructed them not to make the pilgrimage an entire noisy affair, which could ruin the purity of the concept. He didn't allow too many hardships in the name of pilgrimage. He said, "In this age, not everyone can do a long fast or follow strict rules. Fasting for ten days and following Buddha's 'pancha suddhi'—five hygiene practices—is enough. Panchasuddhi includes cleanliness of the body, words, mind, sense organs, and home.

In Guru's era, many traditional practices caused economic problems for families. 'Thalikettukalyanam' (an elaborate marriage ceremony), 'Thirandukuli' (a

type of menstrual ceremony), 'Pulikudi' (a pregnancy ceremony), etc., are examples of such practices. Once, Guru went to the house of a person named 'Alummoottil Channar' to watch a mystical ritual performance called 'Sarpapattu.' In this performance, the virgin women performers with the cluster of arecanut flowers (Kavuginpookula) dance in a manner similar to the movements of snakes. The performers' heads were doused with water from about a hundred tender coconuts during the performance. Guru told them to boil water with a plant called 'Ramacham' (vetiver grass) as a substitute for the tender coconut water. When the arecanut flowers fell to the ground, they replaced them with newer ones. Instead, Guru told them to reuse the older ones. Channar disagreed with the suggestion, saying that the dancers may reject it. Still, Channar obeyed it out of respect. But the dancers accepted the older clusters. Observing this, Channar took pride in the dancers' acceptance of the clusters he had given them. Hearing this, Guru said, If so, they will accept even common twigs with leaves if given by you. So from now on, common twigs will be sufficient. Let the areca nut flowers bloom into fruits."

It is evident from this that Guru tried to avoid unwanted expenses in any situation. Guru never allowed spending unnecessary amounts of wealth, however auspicious the function may be. His biographies provide numerous examples of this. Guru wished for a basic Sivagiri pilgrimage, but Guru's followers made the pilgrimage a very luxurious affair.

When Guru prescribed dresses dyed in turmeric, it was based on a pragmatic economic insight. The yellow dye from the cloth can also be washed off. It all shows the value of simplicity, too. Guru said, "One should not spend money unnecessarily."

### 5.4.3 Guru's Model of Conducting a Wedding

India's heritage is based on a system of life and society founded on familial connections. The heartfelt intimacy, warmth, and love between the members create a sense of security, instill morality, and cultivate a healthy mind in generations. When the system of caste grew stronger in society, superstitions and harmful customs became a part of the family system. These practices were not scientific or rational and were incompatible with the well-being of humanity. Thus, when the families followed these practices, their expenses multiplied and their economic condition worsened. Families must initiate social changes.

Guru believed that families with a healthy system of life create progressive youth. Thus, families play an important role in the wholesome development of a society. Guru envisioned a family system based on gender equality. For that, Guru aimed to spread awareness among all sections of society through SNDP Yogam, Sahodara Sanghamam, and other Sree Narayana organizations. As a crucial step to raise this awareness, Narayana Guru reevaluated and unified the existing systems of marriage. Guru believes that in a marriage, the bride and groom ought to have equal status. The family system envisioned by Guru ensured dignity and respect to women. He adopted a different approach compared to the social system prevailing then.

In 1905, Guru presided over a meeting at Paravoor near Kollam. In that meeting, a decision was made to avoid practices (pulikudi, thirundukuli, thalikettu, etc.) that cause unnecessary expenses. Narayana Guru's vision on marriage is explained

in the 178th to 180th verses of Narayana Smrithi/Sree Narayana Dharmam.

He proposed a marriage function based on economic discipline. According to him, marriage functions can be conducted in public spaces like a temple compound or a mutt. The details of the marriage can be entered in the registers kept in the respective institute. A month prior to the function, parents should bring the promised bride and groom to this place. This allows them to talk and get to know each other. They will be spending a lifetime together. At least fifteen days should be between the wedding and this meeting. Only around ten people are needed for this function. If parents think they can spend more, they should deposit it in the couple's name. The receipt given after the deposition can be given as a gift. They can use this money to improve their lives and the lives of their children.

In the 178th verse, it is said that partners can be chosen at the Gurukulam. Marriage rituals can be carried out at the Gurukulam or a place of worship. Knowledgeable individuals have to preside over the marriage function. Ten people are required to attend the function. Those ten are the parents of the couples, two classmates, two relatives, the priest, and the teacher (Acharya). All ten of these people should be present. This system is for the whole society. The 179th and 180th verses mention aspects related to people's participation in the system.

Guru also banned the dangerous practice of dowry. The 181st verse clarifies this: "Good people have banned the practice of giving and receiving dowry. It is equivalent to selling daughters." Even though great minds have given clear guidelines on this, society's conscience hasn't awokened to it.

## Recap

- ◆ Objectives of the Sivagiri pilgrimage.
- ◆ Instructions to pilgrims
- ◆ The dress code of pilgrims
- ◆ One should not spend money unnecessarily on any auspicious events
- ◆ Overall judicious spending
- ◆ To bring together all humanity
- ◆ Pilgrims should observe the five types of cleanliness (Pancha suddhi)
- ◆ Social changes start from families
- ◆ In a marriage, the bride and groom should be equals.
- ◆ 1905 Paravur meeting
- ◆ Unnecessary expenses should be avoided during marriages
- ◆ If money is to be spent, it should be deposited.
- ◆ 178th to 180th verses of Narayana Smriti
- ◆ Dowry prohibition

## Objective Questions

1. Who envisioned the Sivagiri pilgrimage?
2. In which year was the decision to conduct the Sivagiri pilgrimage taken?
3. What coloured dress did Guru recommend for Sivagiri pilgrims? What natural item did Guru suggest to dye the cloth yellow?
4. Which social ceremony did the guru discourage?
5. What alternative did Guru suggest for tender coconut water in rituals?
6. What is the term for the five hygienic practices Guru recommended?
7. According to Guru, where can marriages be conducted economically?

8. How many people are required to witness the marriage in Guru's model?
9. What social evil did Guru compare to "selling daughters"?
10. Which verse of Narayana Smrithi addresses the dowry system?

## Answers

1. Narayana Guru.	7. Pancha Suddhi.
2. 1928.	8. Temple compound or Mutt.
3. Yellow.	9. Ten.
4. Turmeric.	10. Dowry.
5. Thalikettukalyanam.	11. 181.
6. Ramacham water.	

## Assignments

1. What was the main purpose of the Sivagiri pilgrimage according to Narayana Guru?
2. How did Guru promote simplicity in the way people dressed for the pilgrimage?
3. Why did Narayana Guru oppose traditional ceremonies like Thalikettukalyanam and Pulikudi?
4. What model of marriage did Guru suggest to avoid unnecessary expenses?
5. How do Guru's teachings support the idea of sustainable and responsible living?

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**Guru on Peace, Justice  
and Partnership for  
Goals and Strong  
Institutions**



## Guru on Peace and Compassion

# UNIT

### Learning Outcomes

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

- ◆ recognise that all religions, despite differences, aim for happiness and spiritual fulfilment
- ◆ know Ahimsa as a universal principle upheld by spiritual leaders like Guru, Gandhi and the Buddha
- ◆ analyse Guru's teachings on compassion and non-violence in Jeevakarunya Panchakam and Anukampa Dasakam
- ◆ describe how Guru viewed compassion as essential to true spirituality and a noble life
- ◆ evaluate the role of Ahimsa and compassion in fostering personal and social harmony

### Prerequisites

The goal of all sustainable development programmes is to establish a harmonious and sustainable way of life for the world, allowing everyone to experience peace and happiness (Ananda). Today, we are more aware of the various factors that could hinder progress towards sustainable development. But could religion be one such obstacle? Our TV screens, phone alerts and news headlines are filled with stories of religious clashes that divide communities, destroy homes and fuel anger, all carried out in the name of faith. Originally, religions began with a noble promise to uplift us, nurture our inner selves and guide us toward happiness. But

now, the pure message of religion is distorted and so its intended aim of nurturing the inner self and promoting spiritual growth has been overshadowed by divisive interpretations and practices. Instead of guiding individuals toward self-reliance and inner peace, many religious expressions have become vehicles for external conflicts and misunderstanding, declining the very essence of faith. Why does this alteration occur? Can we rediscover the true essence of religion and restore its original purpose? Narayana Guru, a visionary ahead of his times, believed that the core of religion was the promotion of human welfare and inner growth rather than fuelling conflict and division. His insights encourage us to view faith as a healing force, one capable of fixing what is broken and inspiring a more peaceful, compassionate world. In today's complex landscape, Narayana Guru's perspective on religion is more relevant than ever.

## Key Words

Peace, Empathy, Ahimsa, Harmony, Peace, Happiness, Inner Growth, Spiritual Fulfilment, Religious Unity.

## Discussion

The ultimate goal of all religions is to provide happiness and spiritual fulfilment. Though the rituals, practices and belief systems of all religions may differ, their inner essence or crux remains the same. Guru emphasised that humanity is more important than religious differences. Karl Marx described religion as 'the opium of the people,' suggesting it was used to control and pacify society. However, Guru took a different stance, believing that religion, when properly understood, could serve as a means for enlightenment and social harmony. He clarifies his views on religion in verses 44 to 49 of *Athmopadesasathakam*. In verse 44, Guru presents the well-known parable of the blind men and the elephant. Each blind man touches a different part of the elephant and relying on that limited contact, describes it without understanding the entire animal. Similarly, people focus on the differences

between religions without realising their fundamental unity. Guru warns against ignorance and urges individuals to reflect deeply and seek a broader understanding. Religious conflicts arise when people fail to recognise the shared essence of faiths. Guru highlights this issue in verse 45:

*One faith is desppicable to another;*

*The 'Karu' described in one is defective in another's estimation;*

*In the world, the secret of this is one alone;*

*Know that confusion prevails until it is known to be thus.*

For the adherents of one religion, another faith might seem deficient or insignificant, leading to misunderstandings and divisions. However, Guru emphasises that the core principle of all religions is

the same. Only those who truly understand this can free themselves from prejudice and unnecessary conflicts. According to Sree Narayana Guru's teachings, the true purpose of religion is to foster the growth of the inner spirit and promote human welfare. He believed that when religious principles are diluted by external interests, especially those of a political nature, the essence of faith is lost. This distortion leads to conflicts and divisions rather than the unity and enlightenment religion is meant to inspire.

In verse 46, Guru strongly opposes the idea that religious conflicts can eliminate a religion:

*To vanquish (a religion) by fighting  
is not possible; no religion*

*can be abolished by mutual attack, the  
opponent of another faith*

*Not remembering this and persisting in  
his fight,*

*his own doom shall he in vain fight for,  
beware!*

Guru asserts that no religion can be destroyed through fighting or violence. History has shown that religions tolerate wars and oppression as they fulfil deep human needs. Those who attempt to eliminate another faith through conflict only bring destruction upon themselves. Instead of engaging in religious disputes, people should focus on fostering peace and understanding. Often, religious conflicts stem from small reasons. Minor misunderstandings, when fuelled by emotionally charged individuals who lack discernment, can escalate into major disputes or even riots. Guru warns against such impulsive actions and advocates rational thinking and dialogue. Guru's vision of religion establishes him as a modern-day prophet of peace. He

firmly rejected the notion that religious conversion was necessary for spiritual liberation. He stated: "Religious conversion is unnecessary for spiritual liberation; all religions strive for that." Guru encouraged individuals to study different religions to develop mutual respect and understanding. However, if someone, after deep reflection, chooses to embrace another faith, it should be entirely their personal decision. For Guru, what truly mattered was not one's religious identity but one's moral character and goodness. To promote interfaith understanding, Guru established centres for the study of religions. He believed that education was the key to reducing religious prejudice and fostering unity. Religions have played a vital role in shaping India's rich cultural heritage. To preserve this heritage and prevent conflicts, Guru advocated the establishment of institutions dedicated to the study of religions. He believed that government-supported religious education could help people understand the true essence of faiths, leading to a more peaceful society. By promoting interfaith dialogue and education, such institutions could reduce religious conflicts, fostering social harmony and national progress. This, in turn, would set an example for the rest of the world, demonstrating that religious diversity can coexist with peace.

### 6.1.1 Ahimsa

Ahimsa, or non-violence, is one of the highest human virtues. It means avoiding harm to any living being in thought, word, or action. Many great spiritual leaders have embodied the principle of Ahimsa. Mahatma Gandhi spoke on ahimsa extensively in his writings, emphasising its power in social and political transformation. Even in moments of immense suffering, some of the greatest figures in history upheld Ahimsa. When

Jesus Christ was crucified, he prayed, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." These words reflect pure compassion and the absence of anger or hatred towards those who harmed him. Even when Athens' legal system sentenced Socrates to death by drinking hemlock, he bore no anger. He chose not to bribe the jailor to escape his fate, remaining committed to upholding Athenian law as a model citizen. Plato recorded that even in his final moments, Socrates contemplated life and death through the lens of timeless wisdom.

Buddha, too, demonstrated boundless compassion when he convinced King Bimbisara of Magadha not to carry out animal sacrifices. This was rooted in deep compassion and love for all living beings. Buddha's actions reflected mercy and empathy towards the animals, as he could not bear to see innocent creatures suffer. His refusal to accept the practice of animal sacrifice was not born out of anger or judgment, but rather from a profound understanding that causing harm to others for ritualistic purposes is incompatible with the values of kindness and compassion. Buddha demonstrated, through this intervention, that true compassion extends to all forms of life and the love for fellow beings requires protecting them from unnecessary harm or suffering.

When Patanjali, the author of the Yoga Sutra, introduced Ashtanga Yoga as the path to self-realisation, he began with Ahimsa, the first in the essential principles of Yama, which outlines five moral disciplines for a virtuous life: Ahimsa (Non-violence), Satya (Truthfulness), Asteya (Non-stealing), Brahmacharya (Self-control) and Aparigraha (Non-possessiveness). While these are essential for a yogi, they are also valuable for anyone striving to lead a righteous life. History is filled with examples of

enlightened individuals who lived by these values, inspiring generations with their compassion and wisdom.

Sree Narayana Guru upheld Ahimsa as a fundamental principle of life. He believed that true non-violence extends beyond human beings to all living creatures. Once, while speaking to Christian friends, Guru discussed the commandment, "Thou shalt not kill." When they explained that it referred to human life, Guru responded that if the intention were only to prevent killing humans, the commandment would have explicitly mentioned so. Instead, he interpreted it as a universal message against killing any being. Guru's teachings on Ahimsa are elaborated in works such as Anukampadasakam and Jeevakarunya panchakam. Those who met Guru described him as the embodiment of kindness and compassion.

In his work, Jeevakarunya panchakam, Guru states: A person who kills innocent beings for personal pleasure will suffer both in this life and beyond. Conversely, one who treats animals with love and refrains from harming them will experience true happiness. Since meat cannot be obtained without killing and killing is a sinful act; one should give up eating meat. By understanding the pain and suffering of animals, one can cultivate compassion and live a more ethical life. The practice of Ahimsa is incomplete without Jeevakarunya (kindness to all living beings). In Jeevakarunya panchakam, Guru explains: The entire world and all living beings manifest the same non-dual reality. This understanding unites all of humanity. If we acknowledge this unity, how can we justify harming another being? It would be like harming ourselves. Making a vow not to kill is important, but a greater vow is to refuse to consume meat. If people stop eating meat, the demand for killing will naturally

decline.

In Anukampa dasakam (Ten Verses on Compassion), Guru highlights compassion as a supreme virtue. He writes: “He who is merciful is truly alive.” A person without compassion is as useless as water flowing through a desert or a flower without fragrance. “If your heart beats for fellow beings, if your inner self is filled with compassion, if your mind softens with love, you are a noble being,” he said. In the latter verses, Guru describes spiritual masters such as the Buddha, Christ, Prophet Muhammad and Krishna as the embodiment of compassion. He emphasises that true spirituality is rooted in kindness, not religious divisions.

Guru believed that Ahimsa should be practiced in all aspects of life. Even in small matters, he was mindful of non-

violence. He once remarked that tapioca is an ideal food because harvesting its root does not kill the plant, allowing it to regrow, unlike crops where the whole plant is uprooted. This shows his attention to even the smallest ethical details. Guru’s vision extends beyond individuals to society. He believed that if people cultivate Ahimsa and compassion, society will transform. When individuals grow in kindness, their collective influence leads to a more peaceful world. Eventually, this realization of oneness will dissolve conflicts and ensure lasting peace. Through his teachings and actions, Sree Narayana Guru showed that peace and compassion are the cornerstones of a harmonious society. By practicing Ahimsa and Jeevakarunya in daily life, we can contribute to a more compassionate and conflict-free world.

## Recap

- ◆ All religions seek happiness and spiritual growth despite their differences.
- ◆ False understanding of religion can be a hindrance to sustainable development.
- ◆ The ultimate aim of sustainable development is a balanced and blissful life.
- ◆ Guru valued humanity over religious divides.
- ◆ Guru, a peace prophet, rejected forced religious conversion.
- ◆ Changing one’s religion is not necessary if the aim is spiritual liberation.
- ◆ Guru built centres to teach religion and unity.
- ◆ Education on faith can foster harmony.
- ◆ All should learn all religions.
- ◆ Ahimsa is non-harm in thought, word and deed.
- ◆ Gandhi, Jesus, Socrates and Buddha lived in Ahimsa.

- ◆ Jesus forgave crucifiers with compassion.
- ◆ Socrates died calmly for justice.
- ◆ Buddha stopped sacrifices for the love of life.
- ◆ Patanjali's Yoga begins with Ahimsa.
- ◆ Guru extended Ahimsa to all beings.
- ◆ He said, 'Thou shalt not kill' is universal.
- ◆ Jeevakarunya Panchakam says killing for pleasure brings suffering, while kindness brings joy.
- ◆ Anukampa Dasakam calls compassion the sign of a truly alive person.
- ◆ Guru praised Buddha, Christ, Muhammad and Krishna for kindness.
- ◆ Spirituality is kindness, not division.
- ◆ Guru called tapioca an ideal food since harvesting it doesn't kill the plant.
- ◆ Ahimsa and compassion reshape society.
- ◆ Kind people make a peaceful world.
- ◆ Guru's teachings show that peace and ahimsa build harmony.

## Objective Questions

1. What is the ultimate goal of all religions?
2. In Athmopadesasathakam, which parable does Guru use in verse 44 to illustrate limited perception?
3. What happens when external interests dilute religious principles?
4. Which verse of Athmopadesasathakam contains the lines about one faith being deemed defective by another?
5. What is Narayana Guru's view on religious conversion for spiritual liberation?
6. Why did Narayana Guru establish centres for the study of religions?
7. What does the term Ahimsa mean?

8. In Sree Narayana Guru's teachings on Ahimsa, why is he refusing meat consumption?
9. Which food did Narayana Guru mention as ideal because harvesting it does not kill the plant?
10. What are the eight steps of yoga according to Patanjali?
11. How many rules are included in Yama and what are they?
12. What does Ahimsa mean, according to Sree Narayana Guru?
13. Why did Guru say we should not kill other beings?

## Answers

1. Spiritual fulfilment and happiness
2. The parable of the blind men and the elephant
3. The core message of inner growth and human welfare is lost
4. Verse 45
5. It is unnecessary, as all religions aim for spiritual liberation
6. To promote interfaith dialogue and reduce religious prejudice
7. Non-violence or avoiding harm to any living being
8. It prevents killing, as obtaining meat involves killing animals
9. Tapioca
10. Yama, Niyama, Asana, Pranayama, Pratyahara, Dharana, Dhyana and Samadhi
11. Yama has five rules- Ahimsa, Satya, Asteya, Brahmacharya and Aparigraha
12. Not hurting any living being in thought, word, or deed
13. Jeevakarunya Panchakam and Anukampa Dasakam
14. All beings are one, so killing them hurts us and goes against kindness.

## Assignments

1. Discuss how Sree Narayana Guru's interpretation of the parable of the blind men and the elephant, as presented in Athmopadesa Satakam, can be applied to address contemporary religious conflicts. In your answer, identify a current real-world example of interfaith misunderstanding and analyse how Guru's ideas could help to resolve it.
2. Analyse Sree Narayana Guru's perspective that religious conversion is unnecessary for spiritual liberation, as all religions seek the same inner fulfilment. Discuss how it could contribute to reducing religious prejudice and promoting social harmony.
3. Critically examine the principle of Ahimsa as taught by Sree Narayana Guru, drawing on his discussions in works such as Jeevakarunyapanchakam and Anukampadasakam. How can the concept of Ahimsa be applied to address modern challenges such as environmental degradation, ethical consumption and interfaith conflicts?

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## Secular Spirituality and World Peace

# UNIT

### Learning Outcomes

After completing this unit, the learner will be able to:

- ◆ understand secular spirituality and its role in world peace
- ◆ explain the significance and relevance of the All-Religious Convention at Aluva
- ◆ identify the core aim of the convention
- ◆ discuss how interfaith dialogue fosters mutual respect and understanding
- ◆ relate the Golden Rule to Guru's teachings and other spiritual traditions
- ◆ know how secular spirituality can reduce religious conflicts and promote global harmony.

### Prerequisites

Religion has always played an important role in shaping human societies, not just in India but across the entire world. People from all walks of life are profoundly influenced by religion. However, many individuals follow religious practices without fully understanding the deeper philosophy behind them. This lack of understanding often leads to conflicts and misunderstandings in the name of religion. Recognising that these issues stem from not grasping the true essence of one's own beliefs highlights the need for clear, grassroots religious awareness. Interreligious conferences are crucial in bridging these gaps by fostering dialogue, mutual respect and a shared understanding of spiritual values. The All-Religious Conferences demonstrated the power of bringing diverse traditions of faith

together to emphasise their common goal - human welfare and spiritual progress. Such gatherings reinforce the idea that secular spirituality, which transcends religious divisions, is key to establishing lasting world peace. Understanding the significance of these conferences provides a strong foundation for exploring how unity in diversity can lead to a more harmonious global society.

## Key themes

Matha Maha Padasala, religious fanaticism, All-Religious Convention, Interfaith Dialogue, Spiritual Growth, Spiritual Education, Global Ethics, Global Harmony, Inner Wisdom.

## Discussion

Secular spirituality focuses on a way of life where individuals coexist in peace, understanding and kindness, honouring one another without conflict over differing beliefs. This approach emerged above the divisions of religion, politics, or power, placing humanity at the core of our existence. Sree Narayana Guru, an enlightened teacher, recognized that despite the diverse rituals and customs found across religions, all religions share a fundamental objective, which is to promote happiness and spiritual development in every individual. Guru's teachings reinforced that humanity should always take precedence, presenting a perspective that transcends religious boundaries and emphasizes unity over division. His vision inspires generations, advocating a human-centred approach to spirituality that nurtures harmony, mutual respect and compassion among all people, irrespective of their belief systems.

To foster world peace and promote secular spirituality, Sree Narayana Guru organized an all religious conference at Advaita Ashram in Aluva. This pioneering interfaith gathering embodied Guru's vision of uniting people across religious

divides without endorsing any single faith. He envisioned the event as a unique platform where representatives from diverse traditions could set aside their differences and engage in meaningful dialogue under the guiding principle, "Not to argue and win but to know and to inform." Through this conference, Guru demonstrated that the true essence of spirituality lies in universal values such as compassion, mutual respect and the pursuit of inner growth values that transcend individual religious practices. By focusing on these shared ideals rather than on sectarian divisions, the conference illustrated that secular spirituality is key to achieving lasting global harmony and peace.

### 6.2.1 The All Religious Convention of 1924

On March 3 and 4, 1924, a groundbreaking inter-religious convention was held at Aluva in Ernakulam. This historic event marked the first meeting of its kind in Asia and the second worldwide, following the renowned Parliament of the World's Religions in Chicago in 1893. Unlike many gatherings



that often concentrated on debates to win arguments, the Aluva convention was purposefully designed as a space for genuine dialogue and knowledge sharing. A sign prominently displayed at the entrance read, “Not to argue and win, but to know and to inform,” which set a collaborative and respectful tone for the event. This inscription appeared to embody the principle that all religions share the same essence. Participants from various faiths came together with the shared goal of learning from one another, fostering an environment where diverse perspectives could converge in the pursuit of deeper understanding and unity.

Swami Satyavratha, the secretary of Advaita Ashram in Aluva, explained in a press release that the primary goal of the convention was to eliminate enmity between different faiths by disseminating accurate and comprehensive knowledge about them. He stressed that by understanding the core tenets and values of each religion, people could overcome misconceptions and foster mutual respect. Representatives from various religious traditions, including Hinduism, Islam, Christianity and others participated in the event. They shared insights into their spiritual practices not to debate or compete but to create bridges of understanding and solidarity.

Sathyavratha Swami's welcome speech was prepared exactly as Sree Narayana Guru had instructed. In his speech, Swami Satyavratha shared Guru's dream of uniting religious scholars world wide. Although practical challenges meant a global gathering was impossible, the conference still brought together many respected scholars from different Indian faiths. The meeting was chaired by Sir T. Sadashiva Iyer, a well-known judge from the Madras High Court. The event was marked by a spirit of curiosity and

mutual respect, showing that the search for spiritual knowledge and the well-being of all people goes beyond borders and cultural differences.

## 6.2.2 Key Messages of the Convention

During the meeting, several important points were emphasized based on Sree Narayana Guru's instructions:

1. The purpose of the meeting is not to engage in debates for victory but to share knowledge and learn from one another.
2. Information in religion, spirituality, science and the arts should be accessible to everyone, regardless of caste, religion, gender or nationality. This wisdom belongs to all humanity and should be used to enhance collective understanding.
3. Mixing political power with religious authority is a dangerous practice that can distort the true spirit of faith. Such an entanglement should be avoided in a modern society.
4. Regarding religion, the government should remain neutral, maintaining a secular stance that ensures fairness and respects all faiths equally.
5. Just as businessmen use scientific discoveries to earn profits, commercial interests have sometimes influenced the establishment of places of worship. This practice undermines the purity of spiritual pursuits and should be discouraged.
6. Just as kings historically aspired to rule the world, some religious leaders have harboured ambitions for power. Such mindsets are dangerous and can disrupt social harmony.

7. Religion should remain solely concerned with spiritual development and inner growth without becoming entangled in worldly ambitions or conflicts.
8. One should not follow a religion merely because of family or social pressure. Instead, each individual should choose a faith based on personal conviction and genuine belief.
9. No one should be able to decide another person's religious path. Everyone should be able to study various religions and select the one that best aligns with their inner values.
10. Institutions dedicated to teaching the spiritual principles and paths to liberation found in different religions should be established and accessible to all. These institutions should include experts from various faiths who can serve as advisors to guide those seeking spiritual knowledge.

Through Swami Satyavratha, Sree Narayana Guru conveyed a profound message at the All-Religious Conference held at Aluva. The diverse speeches delivered at the event demonstrated that all religions ultimately seek spiritual growth and human welfare, making the conflict between believers both unnecessary and counterproductive. Instead of fostering division and sectarianism, Guru advocated mutual understanding, interfaith dialogue and shared learning. To realize this vision, he proposed the establishment of the Matha Maha Padasala at Sivagiri - a grand, permanent academy dedicated to the study and celebration of all religions together. This initiative aimed to break down barriers of misunderstanding and promote universal spiritual wisdom. Although Guru remained devoted to this

initiative until his final days, the academy was not completed during his lifetime. Nevertheless, his pioneering vision inspires contemporary interfaith dialogue and global efforts toward lasting harmony.

A century after the Parliament of the World's Religions was first held in Chicago (1893) - where Swami Vivekananda's historic speech on religious tolerance left a lasting impact - another interfaith conference was convened in the same city. This event, attended by approximately 8,000 representatives from diverse religious traditions, aimed to draft a global ethical declaration centred on two fundamental principles. The first principle was the Golden Rule, which states: "What you wish to be done to yourself, do to others." This timeless moral teaching resonates across multiple spiritual traditions. Sree Narayana Guru conveyed a similar idea in Ātmopadeśa Śatakam (Verse 24): "Whatever one does for one's own happiness should contribute to the happiness of others." Likewise, Jesus Christ proclaimed: "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." In Jati Nirnayam, Guru further reinforced this universal truth by declaring: "Humanity marks out what species humans are." This reinforces that ethical principles like the Golden Rule transcend religious boundaries, emphasizing our shared humanity as the foundation for spiritual and moral teachings across traditions.

The second principle emphasized active engagement with humanity, urging people to recognize that the core of all religions and cultures is the recognition of human dignity and universal brotherhood. This idea was eloquently expressed in a message delivered on the eve of the Aruvippuram consecration, describing the gathering as: "A model space where all live in fraternity, without caste discrimination or religious fanaticism."

This vision aligns with secular spirituality, which transcends religious boundaries and emphasizes ethical living, human unity and inner transformation as pathways to world peace. Sree Narayana Guru's teachings present a universal and inclusive spiritual philosophy deeply relevant to contemporary global challenges.

Verse 49 from *Atmopadesa Satakam* encapsulates Sree Narayana Guru's vision of universal harmony, emphasizing the fundamental unity of all beings through the shared pursuit of happiness.

*All beings, at all times, everywhere, are exerting them-selves to attain happiness.*

*This quest for happiness is the 'One religion' in the world, of which no one has any dispute.*

*Knowing this, one should restrain from being lured into any sin*

*of fighting one's own fellow beings.*

The central theme of this verse is the universal pursuit of happiness as the fundamental truth that unites all beings. Sree Narayana Guru emphasizes that every being strives for happiness, transcending religious, social, and cultural divisions. By declaring it the One Religion beyond dispute, he shifts the focus from external religious differences to an inner, shared human experience, emphasizing unity over separation. Recognizing this universal oneness is essential for world peace, as it eliminates false notions of superiority, exclusion, and religious conflict. The verse also conveys a strong ethical message - understanding that all beings share the same ultimate goal and should prevent individuals from engaging in conflict and harm. Fighting one another is irrational and immoral when happiness is a common pursuit. Guru warns against

divisions and violence, urging humanity to embrace peace, non-violence, and mutual understanding. Rooted in Advaita philosophy, this teaching promotes the idea that realizing our interconnectedness leads to inner harmony and social cohesion.

The verse 71 of *Ātmopadeśa Śatakam* emphasizes the impermanence of existence and the continuous process of becoming, reinforcing the idea that nothing remains fixed or absolute. This insight is crucial in understanding human unity and peaceful coexistence.

*Nobody remains established forever in a state of sameness.*

*The process of becoming is going on;  
And all are subjected to this beginningless sport of the Divine.*

*When all this is known in its entirety, one becomes happy beyond measure.*

This verse emphasizes the impermanence of all existence and the continuous process of change. Sree Narayana Guru asserts that nothing remains fixed forever; everything is in a state of becoming. This aligns with the Advaita (non-dualistic) philosophy, which perceives the world as an ever-changing manifestation of the one ultimate reality (Brahman). The verse also describes this transformation as a beginningless divine play, implying that change is not random but part of an eternal cosmic order. Realizing this truth leads to happiness and inner peace. Understanding the transient nature of life frees individuals from suffering caused by attachment and resistance to change. Instead of clinging to fixed identities or fearing transformation, one embraces life's natural flow. This wisdom leads to spiritual liberation (moksha), allowing one to experience deep contentment and harmony with existence.

One of the primary causes of conflict - whether religious, social, or political - is the rigid attachment to fixed identities, beliefs, and divisions. However, this teaching of the Guru reminds us that existence is not static but an evolving process, and all beings are part of this divine cosmic flow. Recognizing this ever-changing nature of life helps individuals to transcend narrow divisions, accept diversity, and foster a sense of shared existence. This idea aligns perfectly with secular spirituality, which is not confined to any single religious framework but instead promotes universal values such as compassion, understanding, and harmony. By realizing that change is an inherent aspect of life, individuals and societies can let go of dogmatic attachments and embrace a more inclusive and interconnected way of living. This verse highlights spiritual liberation (moksha) as the realization of the transient nature of all things. When people internalize this truth, they become free from suffering caused by rigid attachments and divisive conflicts. This leads to inner peace, which, when collectively embraced, contributes to world peace. It serves as a philosophical foundation for overcoming divisions and embracing a more harmonious, inclusive world, a vision at the heart of Sree Narayana Guru's secular spirituality and its relevance to global peace efforts.

To commemorate the spirit of the All-Religions Conference held at Aluva, Sivagiri Mutt later organized two further conventions: one in February 1974, marking the golden jubilee and another in February 1999, celebrating the platinum jubilee. Both events were held at the Aluva Advaita Ashram, reaffirming Guru's enduring vision of religious harmony and universal brotherhood. These

gatherings serve as a reminder that no philosophy can endure without the gentle influence of humanity. The longevity and relevance of spiritual teachings over time attest to their deep internalization of universal human values. Ultimately, these efforts affirm that no single religion can claim superiority over another, for it is our shared humanity - not religious differences - that truly unites us. This recognition lays the foundation for a more just, inclusive and peaceful world, in alignment with the principles of secular spirituality and global harmony. Sree Narayana Guru's secular spirituality provides a practical and philosophical foundation for global peace. By recognizing the oneness of humanity and the universal nature of happiness, individuals can transcend divisive barriers and cultivate a world built on compassion, wisdom and unity.

### 6.2.3 Secular Spirituality for a Peaceful Future

Sree Narayana Guru's approach to spirituality was not about eliminating religion but raising it above conflicts and personal ambitions. He believed that if spiritual education were available to all, it could foster a more peaceful, compassionate society. His message is simple; learn from all spiritual traditions, focus on inner growth and let love and understanding guide our actions. Today, when conflicts over religious beliefs continue to cause wars, riots and divisions, the lessons from the Aluva convention and Guru's teachings offer a powerful remedy. By embracing secular spirituality, which values humanity and inner wisdom over external divisions, we can create a world where every individual contributes to a culture of peace and understanding.



## Recap

- ◆ Religious conflicts arise from confusion about the true philosophy behind religions.
- ◆ Guru taught all religions aim for happiness and spiritual growth.
- ◆ The Aluva All-Religious Convention promoted interfaith dialogue and learning.
- ◆ The 1924 Aluva meeting was Asia's first and the world's second inter-religious event.
- ◆ A sign, "Not to argue and win but to know and inform," set the tone of the event.
- ◆ Swami Satyavratha said the goal was to end religious hate through knowledge.
- ◆ Faith representatives met to build understanding, not barriers.
- ◆ True spirituality should be free from political and commercial influences.
- ◆ Satyavratha's welcome speech reflected Guru's vision.
- ◆ Sir T. Sadasiva Iyer chaired the convention.
- ◆ Guru planned a "Matha Maha Padasala" at Sivagiri to teach all faiths.
- ◆ Chicago's 1993 meeting echoed a global ethics for peace.
- ◆ The Golden Rule was "What you wish to be done to yourself, do to others."
- ◆ Secular spirituality cuts conflict and builds lasting peace.

## Objective Questions

1. What does secular spirituality prioritize?
2. Where was the world's first inter-religious meeting held?
3. What was Sree Narayana Guru's great vision regarding religions?
4. What is the basic reason behind conflicts between religions?
5. Where did Guru organize the All-Religious conference?

6. Who was the chair of the Aluva all-religions meet?
7. What guiding principle was displayed at the entrance of the Aluva convention?
8. What was the main purpose of the inter-religious dialogue at the Aluva convention?
9. How did the Aluva convention contribute to secular spirituality?
10. Which timeless maxim, central to many spiritual traditions, was highlighted as part of a global ethic?

## Answers

1. Inner growth, unity and peace beyond religious differences
2. In Chicago
3. Promoting spiritual growth and human welfare
4. Lack of clear understanding of one's religion
5. At the Advaita Ashram in Aluva
6. Sir T. Sadasiva Iyer
7. 'Not to argue and win, but to know and to inform'
8. To eliminate enmity and foster mutual understanding among faiths
9. Sharing of knowledge and promotion of unity
10. The Golden Rule: 'Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.'

## Assignments

1. Discuss the connection between secular spirituality and world peace and explain the relevance of the All-Religious Conference at Aluva in promoting these ideas.
2. Consider Sree Narayana Guru's teaching that all religions share the same goal of promoting spiritual growth and human welfare. How can this perspective shape your approach to understanding people of different faiths and what impact might it have on your everyday interactions?

3. In what ways do you believe open and respectful interfaith dialogue can reduce conflict and promote understanding in today's society? Provide examples from your observations and reflect on how the All-Religious Conference held at Aluva exemplifies these principles.
4. Reflect on the maxim 'Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.' How can this rule guide your actions and contribute to a more compassionate and peaceful community?

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## "Strengthen through Organization"

# UNIT

### Learning Outcomes

After completing this unit, the learner will be able to;

- ◆ know the role of cooperative societies in economic and social empowerment
- ◆ describe the historical development of cooperative movements
- ◆ identify the contributions of Sree Narayana Guru to cooperative and social reform movements
- ◆ analyse the impact of S. N. D. P. Yogam on Kerala's social and economic landscape
- ◆ explain the role of various social organizations in uplifting marginalized communities

### Prerequisites

From childhood, individuals become part of various social groups or communities for survival and growth. The family serves as the first social unit, providing love, care and basic necessities. Schools introduce children to broader social structures, where they engage in different groups, whether as a class, a school community, or smaller circles of like-minded peers, often working towards common goals. As they grow, individuals engage in society through affiliations driven by economic, social, or cultural interests. Political parties, cultural organizations and social media platforms help unite people for collective action and progress.

Beyond such social and political organizations, economic cooperation is also essential for social well-being. The United Nations, through its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), emphasizes the importance of economic stability in ensuring the welfare of



people worldwide. Economic progress is essential for overall development, a principle echoed in Sree Narayana Guru's message that industries can drive economic growth. However, entrepreneurship requires capital, which remains a significant challenge in underdeveloped and developing countries. While many possess the talent and ambition to start businesses, financial constraints often hinder their efforts. Co-operative societies offer a practical solution by fostering collective economic empowerment and reducing disparities.

## Key Words

Rochdale Society of Equitable Pioneers, S. N. D. P. Yogam, Vavoottu Yogam, Aruvippuram Kshetra Yogam, Sadhu Jana Paripalana Yogam, Prathyaksha Raksha Daiva Sabha, Nair Service Society, Islam Dharma Paripalana Sangham, Vivekodayam Magazine, Agricultural Credit Societies.

## Discussion

Co-operative societies function locally, with the primary goal of protecting unorganized common people from the oppressive acts of the rich. Due to economic constraints, even today, many individuals, regardless of their talent or hard work, struggle to establish themselves in the industrial sector. Co-operative societies emerge as a means for unorganized people to organize themselves, offering a collective approach to economic and social empowerment. By minimizing exploitations commonly found in capitalist systems, such as the involvement of middlemen, co-operative societies help bring manufacturers and consumers closer. These organizations work to safeguard the economic and social interests of unorganized people. In short, they provide a way of conducting business where individuals with a common goal unite and collaborate.

The co-operative movement has a centuries old history. It is believed that the first co-operative society was formed by weavers in Britain in 1844, following the Industrial Revolution. Twenty eight weavers played a pivotal role in its establishment. In the same year, the first co-operative consumer store was founded by Robert Owen. This first co-operative society was called the "Rochdale Society of Equitable Pioneers." The primary aim of the Rochdale society was to provide goods at a lower price than the market value, making them accessible to people with limited purchasing power. Another key objective was to reduce the role of middlemen in trade. In essence, the driving force behind co-operative societies was the economic upliftment of individuals through mutual co-operation.

In 1904, the Co-operative Credit Societies Act was passed in British India,

leading to the establishment of numerous co-operative societies. These societies were based on principles such as self-help, self-administration and self-responsibility. Their progressive ideals stood in contrast to the narrow-minded, caste and religion based divisions of the time, helping to dismantle such regressive attitudes. Democratic principles, such as equal voting rights, electing authorities for a limited tenure and a participatory decision making process, were fundamental to these societies. These practices contributed significantly to both economic and social progress.

The act was formulated by Frederick Nicholson from Madras, who studied the co-operative societies of Europe in depth before drafting it. In 1905, the Agricultural Credit Co-operative Society became the first organization formed under this act. It was established in Kanaginhal village, Gadag district, Karnataka. Around the same time, Sree Narayana Guru initiated organizations like the S. N. D. P. Yogam and co-operative groups. He aimed to create societies based on equality, economic progress, and collective well-being. In the 19th century, several volunteer groups emerged across India to spearhead social and religious reform movements. Kerala also witnessed the rise of such movements, which fostered a culture of social and economic cooperation among the oppressed communities. Many organizations of this time had names ending in Yogam, Sabha, or Samajam, reflecting their role in uniting people for a common cause.

The first volunteer group founded by Guru was Vavoottu Yogam, also known as Aruvippuram Kshetra Yogam. Its purpose was to ensure the smooth functioning of the Aruvippuram temple. Over time, this organization evolved into the Sree Narayana Dharma Paripalana (S.

N. D. P.) Yogam. Guru envisioned these organizations as instruments for both material and spiritual development. His speeches and writings reflect this vision. He was aware that, in a society deeply divided by caste-based discrimination, gathering people or communicating freely was a challenge. Thus, he structured these organizations with a clear action plan to overcome such barriers.

“Strengthen through organization” was one of Guru’s famous teachings and its impact was deep on Kerala’s social and cultural landscape. Many organizations called Desa Sabhas were formed to manage the administration and other affairs of temples founded by Guru. These groups were crucial in promoting democratic awareness and economic independence among unorganized people. To uphold and transmit Guru’s spiritual teachings to future generations, Sree Narayana Dharma Sangham was established. This organization was envisioned as a platform for spiritual growth and ethical living. Guru also wrote insights into the principles and activities of this organization.

## **The Origin of S. N. D. P. Yogam**

Swami Vivekananda’s famous remark - Kerala, a lunatic asylum - was made during his visit to Kerala, reflecting the severe social inequalities and rigid caste based discrimination that prevailed at the time. Swami Vivekananda learned from Dr. Palpu about the widespread caste oppression in Kerala while in Mysore. This made him visit Kerala to witness the situation directly. During his visit, he discussed with prominent figures such as Chattambi Swamikal and Avittam Thirunal, the Yuvaraja of Travancore, addressing the urgent need for social reforms. Motivated by the words and

observations of Swami Vivekananda, Dr. Palpu visited Narayana Guru and discussed the upliftment of the oppressed people of Kerala. They recognized that the deep-seated social and economic disparities marginalized groups faced could only be addressed through collective organization.

Guru believed that for such organizations to be widely accepted by the public, they should have a well-recognized spiritual figure as their leader. Then, they discussed transforming the Aruvippuram Kshetra Yogam into a broader organization, the Sree Narayana Dharma Paripalana (SNDP) Yogam, which would operate across Kerala. Thus, S. N. D. P. Yogam, Kerala's first revolutionary social organization, was formed. It also became the first social organization in Kerala to be registered under the Indian Companies Act. On April 8, 1903, the S. N. D. P. Yogam received its government license and on May 15, 1903, it was officially registered by the Company Registrar I. H. H. Prince. Narayana Guru was the founding President and lifetime Chairman of S. N. D. P. Yogam. Dr. Palpu was elected Vice President and Kumaran Asan became the General Secretary.

Many Dalits understood Guru's message of "strengthen through organization" and formed their movements. Inspired by Ayyankali, Kavarikkulam Kandan Kumaran founded the Brahma Prathyaksha Sadhujana Parayar Sangham in 1911. Later, Kallada Ramanarayanan, an associate of Ayyankali and others founded the Arumuga Vilasam Kuravar Sangham, uniting the Kurava caste. The S. N. D. P. Yogam pursued various goals, including promoting agriculture, handicrafts, commerce and industry. It also aimed to modernize the weaving sector and recruit as many women as possible. Additionally, it sought to encourage the use of locally manufactured goods, reducing dependency

on external sources. Kuttippuzha Krishna Pillai, a noted scholar, remarked that S. N. D. P. Yogam was the "pilot vehicle of all organizations in Kerala."

The organization's influence led to the formation of various other movements, including Sadhu Jana Paripalana Yogam (1907) by Ayyankali, Prathyaksha Raksha Daiva Sabha (1909) by Poykayil Yohannan, Vaala Samudaya Parishkarani Sabha (1910) by Pandit K. P. Karuppan at Thevara and Brahma Prathyaksha Sadhujana Parayar Sangham (1911) by Kavarikkulam Kandan Kumaran. Other organizations that emerged included Anappuzha Kalyana Dhayini Sabha (1913) and Valaseva Sabhas of Vaikom and Paravoor (1912) and an organization for pulayas at Kochi under the leadership of Krishna Asan was founded. In 1915, Pazhoor R. Siva Subrahmanyam Samban founded Sambavar Sangham. Sathyavilasini Sangham by Varkala S. K. Raghavan at Alappuzha, Sahodara Sangham by Sahodaran Ayyappan (1917), Travancore Cheramar Mahasabha by Pambadi John Joseph (1921) and Sree Nandanar Mokshapradayini Sangham by I. C. Chandrasekhar (1931) at Mavelikkara.

The impact of S. N. D. P. Yogam extended beyond the Hindu community. Abdul Khader Moulavi, a progressive Islamic thinker, sowed the seeds of renaissance within the Muslim community by establishing organizations such as the Islam Dharma Paripalana Sangham and Jama Athur Irshad. Notably, the names of these organizations were similar to that of SNDP Yogam. Vakkam Abdul Khader Moulavi maintained a close relationship with Narayana Guru and participated in the 9th-anniversary meeting of S. N. D. P. Yogam at Sivagiri, where he advocated religious harmony. Inspired by the success of S. N. D. P. Yogam, the Nair Service Society (N. S. S.) was founded

on October 31, 1914, at a meeting held at Mannathu Padmanabhan's residence. This organization played a crucial role in improving the socio-economic status of the Nair community, which was largely unorganized at the time.

Many of these organizations gave importance to educating the people of Dalit communities. In all homes, education and hygiene grew hand in hand. Inter-caste dining became a common practice in all areas. Mannathu Padmanabhan once remarked: "The spiritual advice of Swami and the awareness programmes of S. N. D. P. Yogam were the driving forces behind the rapid progress of the Ezhava community. Other communities also followed suit, organizing themselves and engaging in reform activities." Even before Guru formally articulated the message "gain strength through organization," the concept was already being implemented. In 1894, under Guru's guidance, Aruvippuram Kshetra Yogam was founded to manage temple related activities.

Recognizing the need for economic self-sufficiency, the S. N. D. P. Yogam decided in 1905 to convert several local organizations into cooperative societies. The wealth generated from these cooperative societies could be utilized to provide low interest loans to those in need. These loans would enable individuals to start small industries and businesses. If managed wisely, the additional income earned by the society could be used to establish schools and other essential organizations within the community. Yogam emphasized that growth and timely changes in a society or a country can only be achieved through the cooperation of well-intentioned individuals. These principles should be put into practice through cooperative societies and companies. Education should foster self-confidence,

true patriotism and awareness of worldly affairs among the people, as only this can transform their perspective. People wholeheartedly welcomed the reforms introduced by Yogam. This was evident from the speech delivered by Kumaran Asan at the anniversary meeting of the S. N. D. P. Yogam in May 1910. The speech was later published in the 1085 Medam edition of Vivekodayam magazine.

We can summarise the speech as: "After the establishment of Yogam, many organizations were formed in Kerala, focusing on areas such as religion, education, industry and renaissance. In one way or another, all these organizations strive for the betterment of society." The primary recommendation related to the economic measures taken by an organization was to initiate chits. According to the Chit Funds Act of 1982, the Government of India defines a "chit"; it "... means a transaction whether called chit, chit fund, chitty, kuri or by any other name by or under which a person enters into an agreement with a specified number of persons that every one of them shall subscribe a certain sum of money (or a certain quantity of grain instead) by way of periodical instalments over a definite period and that each such subscriber shall, in his turn, as determined by lot or by auction or by tender or in such other manner as may be specified in the chit agreement, be entitled to the prize amount." This system was formed to help people who are financially backward to gain more financial independence.

In 1907, an editorial in the Vivekodayam magazine highlighted the need for cooperative business projects, inspiring people to form cooperative societies and companies to find funds and to make investments. The Vivekodayam editorial also stated: "The time has come in Kerala for confident philanthropists to focus on

these matters by establishing and nurturing commercial and social institutions through sincere and consistent efforts.” In 1909, Mithavadi C. Krishnan established the Calicut Bank at Kozhikode, offering gold and promissory note loans. During 1927 - 28, T. K. Madhavan, then the Secretary of S. N. D. P. Yogam, led the establishment of 60 cooperative societies, of which 20 were registered under the Cooperative Department. In 1928, under his leadership, the Kumarakom Kaka Vyavasaya Sahakarana Sangam (a cooperative for the clam industry) was formed.

In 1921, with Guru’s blessings, Bodhananda Swami, one of his disciples, founded the Cochin National Bank Limited in Thrissur. The bank operated branches in Valappad and Puthukkad, offering deposit services and chit funds. Ten per cent of the bank’s annual income was allocated to student scholarships, charitable institutions etc. Now, cooperative societies have a major impact across various sectors:

1. Agricultural credit, agricultural supplies, agricultural marketing, agricultural processing.
2. Functional cooperatives like dairy, poultry, fisheries, sports, foods, vegetables, etc.
3. Industrial cooperatives.
4. Public distribution of essential commodities through consumer cooperatives.
5. Urban credit cooperatives.
6. House cooperatives.

S. N. D. P. Yogam’s contributions laid the groundwork for Kerala’s modern cooperative and social welfare movements, transforming the lives of millions through education, financial independence and social reforms.

## Recap

- ◆ Economic stability ensures social welfare.
- ◆ Co-operative societies empower the unorganized individuals.
- ◆ Co-operative societies minimize exploitation by reducing middlemen in trade.
- ◆ The first co-operative society was formed in Britain in 1844.
- ◆ The first co-operative consumer store was founded by Robert Owen.
- ◆ The first co-operative society was the Rochdale Society of Equitable Pioneers.
- ◆ The first Agricultural Credit Co-operative Society was formed in Karnataka.
- ◆ Guru says “Strengthen through Organization.”
- ◆ Sree Narayana Guru initiated the S. N. D. P. Yogam.

- ◆ Guru promoted organization for social empowerment.
- ◆ Aruvippuram Kshetra Yogam evolved into SNDP Yogam.
- ◆ Caste-based discrimination hindered social progress.
- ◆ Swami Vivekananda called Kerala a “lunatic asylum.”
- ◆ Dr. Palpu and Narayana Guru collaborated for social reform.
- ◆ S. N. D. P. Yogam was Kerala’s first revolutionary social organization.
- ◆ S. N. D. P. Yogam as the pilot vehicle of other organizations.
- ◆ Guru served as S. N. D. P. Yogam’s founding President.
- ◆ S. N. D. P. Yogam also encouraged cooperative societies.
- ◆ Ayyankali led the Sadhu Jana Paripalana Yogam in 1907.
- ◆ Poykayil Yohannan founded Prathyaksha Raksha Daiva Sabha in 1909.
- ◆ Many reformist groups like the NSS followed S. N. D. P. model.
- ◆ Muslim leaders established Islam Dharma Paripalana Sangham.
- ◆ Co-operative societies were promoted to ensure financial independence.
- ◆ S. N. D. P. Yogam encouraged the formation of chit funds.
- ◆ Chit funds provided financial support to the weaker sections.
- ◆ Vivekodayam magazine advocated co-operative business projects.
- ◆ Mithavadi C. Krishnan founded Calicut Bank in 1909.
- ◆ Cooperative societies played a role in agriculture, industries and consumer goods.
- ◆ S. N. D. P. Yogam’s influence shaped Kerala’s modern co-operative movement.
- ◆ The organization emphasized education and financial empowerment.
- ◆ S. N. D. P. Yogam’s initiatives reduced caste and economic disparities.

## Objective Questions

1. What is the primary goal of co-operative societies?
2. Which economic issue do co-operative societies help address?
3. Who founded the first co-operative consumer store?
4. What was the name of the first co-operative society?
5. Where was the first Agricultural Credit Co-operative Society in India established?
6. Which Act led to the formation of co-operative societies in British India?
7. Who drafted the Co-operative Credit Societies Act?
8. Who initiated S. N. D. P. Yogam?
9. What was Guru's famous slogan about the organization?
10. What was the initial name of S. N. D. P. Yogam?
11. Who was S. N. D. P. Yogam's first President?
12. Who served as the first Vice President of S. N. D. P. Yogam?
13. Who was the first General Secretary of the S. N. D. P. Yogam?
14. Who remarked that Kerala was a 'lunatic asylum'?
15. Which organization was founded by Ayyankali?
16. Who founded the Prathyaksha Raksha Daiva Sabha (PRDS) in 1909?
17. Who founded the Nair Service Society?
18. Which leader promoted co-operatives among Muslims?
19. What Islamic organization was modelled after the S. N. D. P. Yogam?
20. Who established the Cochin National Bank?
21. What financial system was recommended by the S. N. D. P. Yogam?

22. Name co-operative society that was formed for the clam industry?
23. Who called S. N. D. P. Yogam the pilot vehicle of all organizations in Kerala?
24. What was a major outcome of the co-operative movement?

## Answers

1. To protect unorganized individuals from economic exploitation
2. Exploitation by middlemen
3. Robert Owen
4. Rochdale Society of Equitable Pioneers
5. Karnataka
6. Co-operative Credit Societies Act, 1904
7. Frederick Nicholson
8. Sree Narayana Guru
9. Strengthen through Organization
10. Aruvippuram Kshetra Yogam
11. Sree Narayana Guru
12. Dr. Palpu
13. Kumaran Asan
14. Swami Vivekananda
15. Sadhu Jana Paripalana Yogam
16. Poykayil Yohannan
17. Mannathu Padmanabhan
18. Abdul Khader Moulavi
19. Islam Dharma Paripalana Sangham
20. Bodhananda Swami
21. Chit funds
22. Kumarakom Kaka Vyavasaya Sahakarana Sangam
23. Kuttippuzha Krishna Pillai
24. Financial independence for the weaker sections.

## Assignments

1. Examine the role of co-operative societies in promoting economic self-sufficiency and reducing social inequalities. Discuss how these societies minimize exploitation and contribute to financial empowerment, with special reference to the co-operative movements in Kerala.
2. Analyse the historical evolution of the S. N. D. P. Yogam, highlighting its significance in Kerala's social and economic transformation. How did Sree Narayana Guru's vision of 'Strengthen through Organization' influence the establishment and activities of this organization?
3. Critically evaluate the contributions of various social reform movements that emerged in Kerala inspired by the S. N. D. P. Yogam. Discuss the formation, objectives and impact of such organizations.
4. The co-operative movement has significantly contributed to various sectors, including agriculture, industry, trade and finance. Discuss the principles and functioning of co-operative credit societies and their impact on the economic development of marginalized communities. Provide examples from co-operative initiatives in Kerala.

## Suggested Reading

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3. Praveen, O. K. (2018). *Sree Narayana Guru and S. N. D. P.: Role in Co-operative Movements and Economic Empowerment*. Research Guru, 11(4), 1-10. Retrieved from <https://www.researchguru.net/volume/Volume%2011/Issue%204/RG16.pdf>
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5. Mathur, B. S. (1996). *Cooperation in India*. Sahitya Bhawan Publications.
6. Chalakkal, J. M., & K. G. Sasi (2006). *Theory and Practice of Cooperative Societies in Kerala* (Vol. I).



## Guru's Influence on the Formation of Trade Unions

# UNIT

### Learning Outcomes

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

- ◆ learn about the formation of the Travancore Labour Association (T. L. A.)
- ◆ analyse the struggles of workers and early labour movements in Kerala
- ◆ know the contributions of Vadappuram P. K. Bava in labour rights
- ◆ examine the role of Sahodaran Ayyappan in forming labour unions
- ◆ understand the importance of collective resistance for workers' rights

### Prerequisites

In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, workers in Kerala faced severe exploitation, such as long working hours, low wages and harsh punishments. Caste-based discrimination made their situation even worse and employers took advantage of their helplessness through unfair fines and deductions. Any attempt to resist this led to severe consequences. To protect the rights of workers and ensure fair wages and better conditions, trade unions became necessary. Over time, these unions helped secure basic labour rights, including the widely accepted norm of eight hours of work, eight hours of rest and eight hours of recreation. In today's globalized world, where industries and cultures are interconnected, safeguarding both employer and employee interests remains vital.

## Key themes

Trade Union, Labour Movement, Employer-Employee Relations, Travancore Labour Association (T. L. A.), Vadappuram P. K. Bava, Adi Vaippin Thozhilali Sangham.

## Discussion

Narayana Guru implemented social reforms at a time when caste discrimination was at its peak in Kerala. The upper caste Brahmins, adhering to the Chaturvarnya system, positioned themselves above even kings in the social hierarchy. The illiterate masses had little awareness of the absurdity of the caste system and, as a result, lived within the rigid boundaries of the existing caste system without questioning it. The working class faced severe challenges, particularly illiteracy and poverty. Even among workers performing the same tasks, wage disparities based on caste and gender were common. According to the 1931 census report, Trivandrum had nearly 140 factories employing 24,000 workers, while Devikulam had 59 factories associated with tea plantations. Workers in these plantations were prohibited from engaging in any other profession. Those who attempted to resist this unwritten rule faced severe punishments, including torture and social exclusion.

The first labour union in Kerala was formed under the guidance of Narayana Guru. This association, named the Travancore Labour Association (T. L. A.), was established on March 11, 1922, in Alappuzha. Guru proposed two key strategies for economic growth; they were the establishment of more industries and the strengthening of the labour sector. To strengthen the labour sector, workers need to be united. Without collective resistance, achieving justice was difficult, especially in those times when caste discrimination was deeply entrenched.

As suggested by Guru, Vadappuram P. K. Bava played a crucial role in forming the association. Bava began his career as a mat weaver at Derasmail Company, which produced coir products. During that period, the Ambalapuzha and Cherthala taluks of Alappuzha had numerous coir factories and oil production units, many of which were started by the British. The majority of workers here were farmers and poor tenants. They toiled from early morning until late evening, working 14 to 16 hours a day, yet received the lowest wages.

Even minor mistakes by workers resulted in heavy fines. Additionally, employers used methods like commissions and lotteries to exploit workers financially. A significant portion of their rightful earnings ended up with Mooppans - the stewards of company owners. Vadappuram P. K. Bava rose voice against the workplace exploitation. He stood up to the management for torturing and abusing the workers who were working hard till dawn. Any form of resistance from workers was met with violent retribution, either from the Mooppans or the police. Under this oppressive system, both the Mooppans and their British employers gained enormous profits at the expense of workers.

Bava's leadership was marked by bold resistance. On one occasion, around a hundred workers gathered under his guidance and stopped a British manager named Vandi. The enraged manager, who possessed both power and wealth, threat-

ened to shoot them with his gun. However, Bava fearlessly challenged him to shoot and declaring that while the manager had a gun, Bava had the support of thousands of workers. This marked the first labour rebellion in Kerala. Vadappuram P. K. Bava was deeply committed to the cause of humanity and made multiple attempts to establish an organization for the working class. However, his efforts initially met with failure. One day, he learned that Narayana Guru was visiting a temple in Kidangamparambu. Along with T. C. Kesavan Vaidyar, Bava approached Guru and related the problems faced by workers. After listening attentively, Guru advised, "Alright, then form a union for the workers. With the strength of unity, let them become strong and independent."

Taking Guru's words to heart, the first public meeting of the Travancore Labour Association was held at Kulappura Temple ground on April 23, 1922. Satyavratha Swami participated in the meeting and delivered a message from Guru, stating, "the organization being founded today will grow to be world renowned. Our blessings and best wishes are with it." Inspired by Guru's words, Bava published a notice inviting workers to establish the union on March 31, 1922. Guru visited the temple premises again during the formation of the union. Bava again visited Guru there and Guru gave him a silver coin as a token of support and encouraged him, saying, "do not be afraid. The future belongs to the working class." These words gave Bava even more courage.

Sahodaran Ayyappan also played a key role in the formation of labour unions. In 1921, he founded "Adi Vaippin Thozhilali

Sangham." Another prominent labour organization was Ochanthuruth Labour Union, which included coir workers, farmers and coconut tree climbers. Ayyappan was deeply concerned about the rights and workplace conditions of the workers. In the December 1919 issue of Sahodaran magazine, he published an article highlighting the struggles of the workers and proposing solutions for a healthier work environment. His suggestions remain relevant even today. He made it clear that the workspace should have basic facilities, such as clean toilets and should conduct activities that promote the mental and physical well-being of the workers. He also insisted on adhering to the eight-hour work policy and ensuring one day off. In short, he emphasized the importance of love and empathy between employees and employers.

For a yogi, problems are like water droplets on an arum leaf; because they do not affect him. A true yogi remains in a state of equilibrium, immersed in Sat-Cit-Ananda (Existence, Consciousness and Bliss). Narayana Guru was a sage of modern times, a yogi and tyagi. Yet, this same Guru did not remain detached from society. Instead, he actively engaged in the fight for equality and progress. The social transformations he initiated created a favourable environment for revolutionary movements, including the rise of the Communist Party. A deeper study of Guru's influence on Kerala's cultural fabric reveals not just a spiritual leader, but a highly intellectual revolutionary. His vision and actions laid the foundation for many progressive movements, shaping the socio-political landscape of Kerala for generations to come.

## Recap

- ◆ Upper-caste Brahmins held dominance in the social hierarchy.
- ◆ The first labour union in Kerala is Travancore Labour Association (T. L. A.).
- ◆ Guru emphasized industrial development and labour sector strengthening.
- ◆ Vadappuram P. K. Bava played a major role in forming T. L. A.
- ◆ Workers suffered long working hours, low wages and financial exploitation.
- ◆ Confrontation of Bava against British manager was the first labour rebellion of Kerala.
- ◆ Bava sought Narayana Guru's guidance for labour organization.
- ◆ Guru advised workers to unite for strength and independence.
- ◆ The first public meeting of T. L. A. was held on April 23, 1922.
- ◆ Sahodaran Ayyappan founded "Adi Vaippin Thozhilali Sangham" in 1921.
- ◆ Ochanthuruth Labour Union included coir workers, farmers and climbers.
- ◆ Guru was both a spiritual leader and a social reformer.
- ◆ His efforts contributed to Kerala's revolutionary movements.
- ◆ Guru's influence extended to the rise of the Communist Party.

## Objective Questions

1. What was the first labour union formed in Kerala?
2. Who played a key role in forming the Travancore Labour Association?
3. Name labour organization that was founded by Sahodaran Ayyappan
4. What were the major struggles faced by workers in early 20th-century Kerala?

5. Which manager did Vadappuram P. K. Bava confront in the first labour rebellion of Kerala?
6. Who was the spiritual leader that guided Vadappuram P. K. Bava?
7. What words of encouragement did Narayana Guru give to Vadappuram P. K. Bava?
8. Which industries were associated with the Ochanthuruth Labour Union?
9. Which publication did Sahodaran Ayyappan use to discuss labour issues?
10. What was Narayana Guru's philosophical stance on social problems?
11. What was the impact of trade unions in Kerala?

## Answers

1. Travancore Labour Association (T.L.A)
2. Vadappuram P. K. Bava
3. Adi Vaippin Thozhilali Sangham
4. Long working hours, low wages and financial exploitation
5. A British manager named Vandi
6. Narayana Guru
7. Do not be afraid. The future belongs to the working class
8. Coir workers, farmers and coconut tree climbers
9. Sahodaran magazine
10. A yogi remains unaffected, but he actively engaged in social reforms
11. Protection of worker rights and improved working conditions.



## Assignments

1. Examine the socio-economic conditions of working class in the early 20th century of Kerala. How did caste-based discrimination, poor wages and harsh working conditions contribute to the rise of labour movements? Illustrate with historical examples.
2. Analyse the role of Narayana Guru in Kerala's labour movement. How did his ideas on social equality and economic development influence the formation of trade unions? Elaborate your answer by discussing the interaction of Guru and Vadappuram P. K. Bava.
3. Discuss the significance of the Travancore Labour Association (T. L. A.) in shaping Kerala's trade union movement.
4. Evaluate the impact of Sahodaran Ayyappan's contributions to labour rights in Kerala. How did his ideas on workplace conditions, fair wages and worker welfare shape the future of labour organizations?

## Suggested Reading

1. Sethulekshmi, S. (2021). "History of Trade Union Movement in Kerala with Special Reference to AITUC (1922-1947)" (Doctoral dissertation). Shodhganga.
2. Chalakkal, J. M., & K. G. Sasi, (2006). *Theory and Practice of Cooperative Societies in Kerala* (Vol. 1). Open Source.
3. Panikkar, K. N. (1992). *Against Lord and State: Religion and Peasant Uprisings in Malabar 1836-1921*. Oxford University Press.
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7. *International Journal for Multidisciplinary Research*. (2023). "Trade Unions: A Symbiont of Multifaceted Changes in Kerala." Retrieved from <https://www.ijfmr.com/papers/2023/6/9871.pdf>



## SREENARAYANAGURU OPEN UNIVERSITY

QP CODE: .....

SET-1

Reg.No:.....

Name : .....

### FOURTH SEMESTER BA PHILOSOPHY EXAMINATION

#### DISCIPLINE CORE - B21PH02DE SREENARAYANAGURU AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT (CBCS - UG)

2024-25 - Admission Onwards

Time: 3 Hours

Max Marks: 70

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#### SECTION A

**Answer any ten of the following questions in one word or sentence. (1x10=10)**

1. What does 'sustainable development' mainly focus on?
2. What is the best way to manage electronic waste?
3. Name three economic indicators to measure the national progress.
4. What does samsara chakra represent?
5. What is Guru's vision of endearment?
6. What does Guru's emphasis on cleanliness relate to in sustainable development?
7. What is the message of Guru's poem 'Daivadasakam'?
8. Which practice did Guru oppose that exploited nature and people?
9. What was Guru's view on industrialization without ethics?
10. Which Indian philosophical system emphasises non-duality and the oneness of all existence?
11. Which institution was founded by Guru to spread education?
12. What does Guru emphasize in his poem 'Atmopadesa Satakam'?
13. Who is the author of the book *Vrikshayurveda*?
14. Which value in Guru's thought supports peaceful coexistence with nature?

15. Which economic index indicates the holistic measure of progress, focusing on well-being?

## SECTION B

**Answer any ten of the following questions in one or two sentences. (2x10=20)**

16. Define sustainable development.
17. What is the central message of Sreenarayananaguru's social philosophy?
18. What is the significance of the Aruvippuram installation?
19. Mention one educational reform introduced by Guru.
20. How did Guru promote equality?
21. What is the role of self-discipline in sustainable living, according to Guru?
22. What does 'responsible consumption' mean?
23. What was the main aim of Sree Narayana Guru's vision on education?
24. How can education help build a just society?
25. What is meant by partnership for goals in sustainable development?
26. Why is peace essential for sustainable development?
27. Write one contribution of Guru towards economic progress.
28. How does Guru's poetry support sustainability?
29. Why is justice important in social reforms?
30. How did Guru relate spirituality to social development?

## SECTION C

**Answer any five of the following questions in one paragraph. (5x4=20)**

31. Explain the relation between Guru's teachings and sustainable development.
32. What are the goals of sustainable development?
33. Explain Guru's role in promoting education.
34. Discuss Guru's economic ideas in relation to industrial development.

35. What values does Guru's poetry reflect?
36. How does Guru's philosophy support responsible use of resources?
37. Describe Guru's idea of equality in human society.
38. How do Guru's ideas help in achieving peace and justice?
39. In what way does Guru's vision connect with global development goals?
40. Describe Guru's role in promoting self-reliance through education and work.

## SECTION D

**Answer any two of the following questions in 300 words. (2x10=20)**

41. Analyze Guru's educational reforms and their impact on Kerala society.
42. Discuss Guru's contributions towards economic and industrial development.
43. Assess the relevance of the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in addressing the ten critical threats to humanity outlined by the Commission for the Human Future.
44. Critically evaluate the concept of 'Samsara Sagara' versus 'Samvid Sagara' in Vedantic philosophy and their implications for sustainable development.



## **SREENARAYANAGURU OPEN UNIVERSITY**

QP CODE: .....

SET-2

Reg. No : .....

Name : .....

### **FOURTH SEMESTER BA PHILOSOPHY EXAMINATION**

#### **DISCIPLINE CORE - B21PH02DE SREENARAYANAGURU AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT (CBCS - PG)**

2024-25 - Admission Onwards

Time: 3 Hours

MaxMarks: 70

#### **SECTION A**

**Answer any ten of the following questions in one word or sentence. (1x 10=10)**

1. How does Guru's concept of 'One World' relate to sustainable development?
2. What role did Guru see for women in education?
3. What was one key industry Guru promoted for economic growth?
4. What does Guru mean by 'equality' in his teachings?
5. How does responsible consumption relate to Guru's philosophy?
6. What was Guru's vision for world peace?
7. Who introduced the concept of Gross National Happiness?
8. Name one institution Guru established for social reform.
9. What does Guru's concept of 'Ariuvu' emphasize?
10. What does 'Samvit' symbolize in philosophy?
11. What aspect of environmental ethics did Guru promote?
12. What was Guru's stance on entrepreneurship?
13. How many types of cleanliness are there for Guru?
14. What does minimalism mean in Guru's teachings?
15. Who wrote *Ashtanga Hridaya*?

## SECTION B

**Answer any ten of the following questions in one or two sentences. (2x10=20)**

16. Explain Guru's view on the interconnectedness of all beings.
17. What importance did Guru place on vocational training?
18. Explain Guru's view on the role of industries in society.
19. How did Guru encourage entrepreneurship among the marginalized?
20. What was Guru's stance on wealth distribution?
21. Explain the concept of 'Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam' in Guru's teachings.
22. How does Guru's idea of equality extend to environmental conservation?
23. Explain Guru's concept of 'Dharma' in the context of justice.
24. Why is sustainability important for future generations?
25. What role does spirituality play in Guru's vision of development?
26. What was the impact of Guru's focus on inclusive education?
27. What role did self-reliance play in Guru's economic ideas?
28. How did Guru encourage ethical business practices?
29. What does social harmony mean in Guru's philosophy?
30. What is the ethical use of resources in Guru's teachings?

## SECTION C

**Answer any five of the following questions in one paragraph. (5x4=20)**

31. Explain the importance of sustainable development for future generations.
32. Discuss how Guru's educational reforms contributed to social development in Kerala.
33. Discuss Guru's initiatives for economic empowerment of women.
34. Discuss how Guru's teachings on equality can address social inequalities in modern society.
35. Discuss the role of strong institutions in achieving sustainable development according to Guru.

36. Analyse how Guru's teachings on peace can be applied in conflict resolution.
37. Discuss the role of technology in achieving sustainable development.
38. How does Guru's approach to social justice support sustainability?
39. Explain Guru's approach to economic development for rural areas.
40. Discuss Guru's approach to conflict resolution in society.

## SECTION D

**Answer any two of the following questions in 300 words. (2x10=20)**

41. Evaluate the role of Indian philosophical traditions, such as Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam and Ananda, in shaping sustainable development practices.
42. Critically analyze the limitations of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and Gross National Product (GNP) as measures of national progress, and assess the potential of Gross National Happiness (GNH) as an alternative metric.
43. Discuss the significance of Sree Narayana Guru's All-Religious Conference of 1924 in promoting secular spirituality and global harmony.
44. Examine the impact of Sree Narayana Guru's philosophy of 'Strengthen through Organization' on the socio-economic transformation of Kerala through the establishment of the S.N.D.P. Yogam and cooperative societies.

## സർവ്വകലാശാലാസീതം

വിദ്യയാൽ സ്വത്രത്രാക്കണം  
വിശ്വപ്രഭരായി മാറണം  
ഗഹപ്രസാദമായ് വിളങ്ങണം  
സുരൂപ്രകാശമേ നയിക്കണേ

കൂദിരുട്ടിൽ നിന്നു തെങ്ങങ്ങളെ  
സുരൂവായിയിൽ തെളിക്കണം  
സ്വനേഹദീപ്തിയായ് വിളങ്ങണം  
നീതിവെജയയന്തി പാറണം

ശാസ്ത്രവ്യാപ്തിയെന്നുമേകണം  
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ബോധരശ്മിയിൽ തിളങ്ങുവാൻ  
അതാനക്കേന്നുമേ ജുലിക്കണേ

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# SREENARAYANAGURU OPEN UNIVERSITY

## Regional Centres

### Kozhikode

Govt. Arts and Science College  
Meenchantha, Kozhikode,  
Kerala, Pin: 673002  
Ph: 04952920228  
email: rckdirector@sgou.ac.in

### Thalassery

Govt. Brennen College  
Dharmadam, Thalassery,  
Kannur, Pin: 670106  
Ph: 04902990494  
email: rctdirector@sgou.ac.in

### Tripunithura

Govt. College  
Tripunithura, Ernakulam,  
Kerala, Pin: 682301  
Ph: 04842927436  
email: rcedirector@sgou.ac.in

### Pattambi

Sree Neelakanta Govt. Sanskrit College  
Pattambi, Palakkad,  
Kerala, Pin: 679303  
Ph: 04662912009  
email: rcpdirector@sgou.ac.in

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Sreenarayanaguru Open University

Kollam, Kerala Pin- 691601, email: info@sgou.ac.in, www.sgou.ac.in Ph: +91 474 2966841

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