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Philosophy and Ideals of Sri Narayana Guru

Volume: 7

Issue: 4

Month: April

Year: 2020

P-ISSN: 2321-788X

E-ISSN: 2582-0397

Received: 18.12.2019

Accepted: 25.01.2020

Published: 01.04.2020

Citation:

Malathi, G. "Philosophy and Ideals of Sri Narayana Guru." *Shanlax International Journal of Arts, Science and Humanities*, vol. 7, no. 4, 2020, pp. 103-106.

DOI:

<https://doi.org/10.34293/sijash.v7i4.1613>



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Abstract

Sri Narayana Guru was one of the famous Philosophers in Indian society; he wants to uplift the lives of people from their problems, unwanted rituals, and customs. He intended to make full use of knowledge and made himself an instrument to correct the ills of the world. He got awakening during penance in the cave of Marutvamalai, near to Kanyakumari, his life and ambitions as well as the career of benevolence and prosperity were laid in his personality. He made the logical conclusion that there is only one caste – humanity, one religion – Humanism, and one God- the Universal Spirit. He started SNDP for the welfare of the people and motivated people to learn education, which is one of the solutions for development.

Keywords: Yogam, SNDP, Education, Morality, Universal spirit

India is a vast country it extends from Kashmir in the north to Kanyakumari in the south, the same way in western parts to eastern parts, the vastness and variation of geographical features such as, land forms, natural resources, climate conditions, and others have provided the bases for a great variety in ways of living from very early times and it also a heritage country, it resulted in the development of social, economic, cultural and political life of people over a thousand years.

The people from various part of the world came to India through the mountain passes and the seas and made India as their home land, the result of migration over thousands of years, the descendants of the group of people belonged to almost all the racial stock of humanity and their home¹, those include the Indo-Aryans, the Persians, the Greeks, the Kushanas, the Shakas, the Hunas, the Arabs, the Turks, the Africans, and the Mongols. The migration and formation of rules of a different set of peoples not ended by Kingdoms of the early and medieval period it led to the modern period due to the resource of lands of India. The British entered India changed the situation of India entirely from its pasts.

British rule changed the nature of Indian people's life, and they struggled for their free life; various part of Indian state leaders shown their attitude by distinguishing manner, some of them fought, some of them participated in agitations, some of them gave petitions, and some of them motivated people through their philosophy and formed religious organizations against of British Empire. There were so many social organization appeared against of British Rule as well as awaken the people in all over India, through these organization many social reformers struggled for the upliftment of the people from the various problem, one among the reformer was Sri Narayana Guru, who was Kerala's famous and popular social reformer, he spread his philosophy and ideals differently.

¹ Arjun Dev, *The Story of Civilization*, Vol. II, p. 373.

Narayana Guru was born on 1854 CE at Chempazhanty, in the suburb of the city of Trivandrum; the present capital of Kerala, India², during British rule, Trivandrum was the capital of the princely state of Travancore. His parents were Madan Asan and Kutti Amma; he was called as Nanu by his parents.³ He learned Tamil, Malayalam, and Sanskrit from his father and formal schooling at the school of Chempazhanty Pillai. In 1877 he was sent to the family of Varanapally for his higher education under the guidance of Kummapilli Raman Pillai Asan. Narayana Guru was blessed with a very critical and analytical mind, he avoided arguments and spent most of the time in meditation and self-study, he intended to make full use of knowledge and made himself an instrument to correct the ills of the world. His thoughts and attitude different from the common one, so his relatives decided to arrange for a marriage⁴. He did not present himself at the wedding ceremony. He wandered about in search of Truth, during that time he worked in a Tamil book shop in Trivandrum⁵; he learned Tamil and devoured Tamil literature and philosophical treatises. He left his home and wandered from man to man, place to place, he walked and swam but no barriers hinder the spirit of search, he stayed and slept in slabs of some wayside rest house or wayside verandah or the temple yard. He got awakening during penance in the cave of Marutvimalai, near to Kanyakumari⁶, after attained awakening he chose to live in a thick forest on the banks of the river Neyyar, which located, a couple of miles away from Neyyattinkara⁷ the red fire of knowledge was beginning to glow within him. He became a changed man with a strange silence in his ways, both the subject and the object of utmost compassion. Past, present, and future merged into a continuous whole, and he forgot weeks and months as they glided freely by without affecting him, the result was that his duties became clear as daylight to

him at every step. His life and ambitions as well as the career of benevolence and prosperity were laid in his personality. He made the logical conclusion that there is only one caste – humanity, one religion – Humanism, and one God- the Universal Spirit. It was not an easy task to make the poor ignorant people realize the presence of the universal spirit within them. They must get the strength to come out from their prisons and declared that these sectarian principles are against the universal spirit of humanity.

Narayana Guru Installed one shiva temple at Aruvippuram and his philosophy of the equality of human beings is captured as a motto, and it displayed at the entrance of Aruvippuram temple.⁸ He continued to construct temples and installation of ideals; it was criticized by the newspaper on those days, but he stated that when people think of God only not worship stone⁹, he not only installed idols but also lamp (Jyothi) and mirror. These three stages of installations such as the idols, the lamps and the mirror with ‘Om’ – represented the spiritual progress of man¹⁰, he considered the temple as center of purity and development, so he wanted the temple to be clean and beautiful places and people who should come with clean bodies and minds. All of the Guru’s educational programs were launched through temples and lectures at temples.

Sree Narayana Temples were different from other temples, where any rituals which will make the premises dirty is prohibited, but some simple enough for the common man to follow are prescribed by Guru; but he thought that the construction of the temple and worshipping God was not the solution to uplift their people who were struggled in so many problems, they must educate, it only changed their situation, immediately he changed the focus from temples to education, he used the temple as a tool in his hand to bring his people out of their dejection and self-pity, so he avoided to construct the large temple. Instead, the large hall should be constructed for people to gather, to discuss matters and educate themselves and that the temple buildings could be used as schools. He gave the people a three-point

2 Nitya Chaitanya Yati, *Sree Narayana Guru*, Varkala, p. 2.

3 Taikuttam, Purushothaman, *Mathatheetha Pravachakan*, p. 38.

4 K.K.Ponmeleth, *Vazhikattikal*, p. 97.

5 Koickal K. Jacop, *Sree Narayana Guru*, p. 41.

6 E.I. Warriar, *Swanthathryathileku Nayicha Acharayanmar*, p. 331.

7 Koickal K. Jacop, op. cit, pp. 58-59.

8 Aymanam Nalinakshan, *Sree Narayana Gurudiva Padmudrakal*, p.12.

9 S. Omana, op. cit, p. 66.

10 Koickal K. Jacop, op. cit, p.104.

formula for development,

Strength through Organization

Freedom through Education

Economic Independence through Industries¹¹

Sree Nayarana Guru was rising in the social horizon of Kerala as the undisputed spiritual leader of the downtrodden people. Dr. Palpu went and met him and found their ideas were converging to one point; the result was that the Temple of Association of Aruvippuram was converted into Sree Narayana Dharma Paripalana Yogam (The Society for the Implementation of Sree Narayana Dharma) in 1903¹² with Sree Narayana Guru as life-time President¹³, Dr. Palpu as Vice-President and Kumaran Asan as General Secretary¹⁴. The yogam was an outgrowth of the committee for the administration of the Aruvipuram temple, and they started periodical named as 'Vivekodayam,' it worked as the mouthpiece of the Yogam.¹⁵ Sree Narayana Dharma Paripalana (SNDP) became a milestone in the road to the progress of the whole community, and it well organized under the stewardship and central control of the Guru. The SNDP is a unique organization, and its merger of both spiritual and material needs of the people, this unity of action was maintained almost till the end of the life of Guru. The first and foremost duty of the SNDP was to take up mass education, formal and non-formal, spiritual and materialistic. He suggested the speeches be made about religion, morality, education, and industry, which would be of benefit to the people.

Religion: dissuade people from worshipping of evil spirits and weird rites, stress the superiority of prayer and worship; do not criticize other religions in an objectionable or insinuating fashion.

Morality: Exhort people to practice truth, cleanliness, fear of evil and faith in God and impress on the need for unity, people must fight against meaningless and harmful customs.

Education: highlights educations advantages and explains the danger in its absence, and encourages people to start schools, reading rooms, etc...

Industry: improve agriculture, trade, handicrafts, etc. And encourage people to learn about industries scientifically.

The SNDP strove to implement what the Guru advised; schools were opened, first attached to temples, and then separately; in the course of time, the schools developed into colleges, vocational training institutions, teacher training colleges, etc. The Guru firmly believed that the community needed economic power, and it would come only through industry and commerce, the first Industrial Exhibition was organized on the Second Annual Day of the SNDP at Kollam in January 1905¹⁶ this exhibition had boosted the people and gave an opportunity to display their expertise and craftsmanship, within a decade of its inception the SNDP attained incredible success, and then onwards, it had been steadily growing adapting itself to suit the changing socio-political conditions and the consequent need of the people. The SNDP's second phase organizing secretary was T.K.Madhavan; he took up issues which caused the Yogam to adopt methods of agitation. The first issue was fighting for Avarnas' right to the used public road which resulted in the Vaikom Satyagraha and second issued was the Anti-Liquor agitation¹⁷ the Yogam adopted agitational methods like picketing the toddy and arrack shops; it was sabotaged from within by vested interest, the agitation had its effect. The SNDP Yogam and its organized became an undefeatable social force.

The Guru took another blood step; he established an Order of Monks (Dharma Sangham) at Sivagiri to maintain his spiritual legacy. And he bequeathed all his property to the Dharma Sangham and gave guidelines that, to help the people to attain purity of body, mind, and word, to know the fundamentals of religion, devotion, and love of God, improve the educational level of common people and love to serve the people.¹⁸ The SNDP started basically as an organization of the toiling millions; it continues to be dedicated to the cause of the poor.

11 Thaikuttam Purushothaman, op. cit, p. 66.

12 Koichal K. Jacop, op. cit, p.104.

13 Sree Narayana Dharma Paripalan Yogam, in Vivekodaym, III No. I March 1967, p. 49.

14 E.I.Warrier, *Swathanthryathileku Nayicha Acharayanmar*, p. 334.

15 P.S. Velayudhan, *Yoga Charitram*, pp. 110-111.

16 Ibid, pp.110-130.

17 E.J. Warriar, op. cit, p.348.

18 Koickal K. Jacop, op. cit, pp. 186-187.

Sree Narayana Guru founded an Advaita Ashram in 1913 to reach propagate as well as live the Advitha philosophy¹⁹. People flocked to him for various purposes such as, out of curiosity, some to learn from him, some to get diseases cured, and get his blessings in starting any new venture in the industry. He presides over two important conferences in Always. The objects of the first-ever conference of its
19 Ibid, p. 114.

type in Kerala was, in his words: “To understand, To inform and Not for discussion”²⁰, such as conference is still conducted annually by his followers and attracts scholars of various religions from both India and abroad. The Guru’s chief concern was the emancipation of the whole society; his life was, in essence, his message. On the 20th of September 1928 the Guru entered Mahasamadhi at Varkala.
20 Kottukkoyikkal Velayudhan, op. cit, p. 157.

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