CHAPTER – III

NARAYANA GURU’S CONCEPT OF RELIGION

Sree Narayana Guru’s attitude to religion is worth elaboration because of his profound scholarship, incisive intellect and independent thinking. He had understood the teachings of all religions and came to the conclusion that there was no fundamental difference between their basic principles. The aim of all religions is to attain happiness. The action leading to Self-happiness should be the gist of all religions. This is the only religion, according to the Guru.

In the concept of religion the Guru tried to reveal the essential oneness of all religions. According to him, humanity is rooted in one single religion. The rivers emerging from various mountains, converge into the oneness of the ocean, so all religions merge into the single, eternal object. Different religions continuously strive for the attainment of this oneness. Thus, what is revealed from these endeavours is the irrefutable evidence that there is only one religion. When the essence of all religions is the same it can be seen that there is a single religion only. This view was expressed by the Guru through his concept of One Religion.

The Guru’s concept of One Religion is a call for human dignity which in essence gives every man the responsibility of preserving the honour and freedom of his fellow men to live in equality and well-being. The Guru analysed all the known religions in the world and came to the conclusion that there is no
difference between one religion from the other. According to the Guru, the aim of all religions is to attain happiness.

His view on One Religion is elucidated through his works such as *Atmopadesa Satakam, Arivu, Daiva Dasakam, Darsanamala, Advaida Deepika and Brahmavidya Panchakam*. The relevant verses of these works are discussed in this chapter. Let us try to know what religion is. The origin and definition of religion are discussed in the previous chapter. Before dealing with his concept of One Religion it is important to know the role of religion. So a brief outline of the role of religion’s place in human life is discussed.

**THE ROLE OF RELIGION**

Each human being has, or should have, in his or her mind, consciously or unconsciously, a notion about his or her goal in life, as well as of the means of achieving it. Always accompanying this awareness is the freedom to choose one’s goal as well as the means of achieving it. If this freedom is denied, life becomes meaningless. Therefore, this freedom in human life is fundamental.

But this freedom is curtailed by one exigency; one has no control over what happens, even to oneself as part of the flow of the total nature. Regardless of whether one is considered to be good or bad, one can only abide by what naturally happens. This point is made clear by Narayana Guru in the *Atmopadesa Satakam*. 
By nature’s action caught and turned,

Men of good action too, alas keep turning round.

Mis – action to counteract, non-action avails not.

Gain motive bereft, wisdom one should attain.

(Narayana Guru A.S Verse 43)

The Guru here directs our attention to four different aspects of action, that is nature’s action (*prakriti*) to create what is specific and particular from the general matrix of virtual realities; the man of good action (*sukriti*), who wishes to escape its binding or compelling obligatory pressure in the matter of rising above necessity to freedom; perverted mis-action (*vikriti*), which arises out of our natural attraction and repulsion to sensual or mundane interests; and non-action (*akriti*). These are potent tendencies whose force is operative overtly or innately (Nataraja Guru *One Hundred Verses of Self Instruction* 154).

Man is bound to live with a full sense of freedom in a world not at all in his control, but as part of a boundless universe which has an order of its own, complete in itself. Human kind has not been able to discover all the laws that govern this nature. This universe is so vast and complex. Human kind has, of course, found out certain laws of nature, but their meaninglessness is confined to an extremely limited sphere of the universe. Neither is it certain that these are the only laws that govern nature. The concern of most modern scientists and technologists is limited to making use of the laws of nature discovered so far to help render human life more effortless and pleasurable. Man is capable to live
only by abiding by the exigencies of nature that take into account no one’s interest in particular. That means to live as part of the whole, with no freedom to choose, but by complying with whatever nature demands.

Life is a sort of progression from the past to the future. In this process, it becomes inevitable for human beings to reckon with the unbridled sense of freedom on the one side and total dependence on nature on the other, and to harmonize these two extreme poles. Here comes the necessity in human life of harmonizing the free will of a person with the will of nature, otherwise known as destiny (Muni Narayana Prasad *The Philosophy of Narayana Guru* 110). This harmonization, in fact, is what religion enables man to attain. Even atheists, who avowedly denounce all religions, have their own religion, for they too suggest an alternative way for man to harmonise himself with the total.

In this context, religions promise that people can reconcile their personal freedom with the overall flow of nature which seems to care for nothing. Religion prepares us to perceive these two faces as pertaining to a neutral overall Reality and scheme of life. On its own, that Reality transcends the above mentioned dual poles. Nothing outside this One Reality happens in either the “free” personal life or the total nature. Religion thus shows us how to unite ourselves with the total Reality rather that with either of the opposite poles, thereby enabling us to fill our lives with peace and sense of fulfilment.

Unifying the will of individuals and the will of the total could be thought of as possible in two ways. One, to bring down the will of nature in conformity
with the individual’s will. This evidently is not possible for the simple reason that the will of the total nature works in a way quite incomprehensible to human minds. Then the possible way is the second alternative - that of raising the individual’s will up to agree with the will of the total or the will of God. To comply with God’s will means to leave the will of the individual so flexible as to be in tune with the unpredictable and unthinkable will of God. That means, to make God’s unforeseeable will as one’s own, or to remain fully satisfied to what nature confers upon us. Dependence on nature then becomes transformed as being one with nature. This sense of oneness with the whole renders life filled with the feeling of blissfulness and fulfilment. Life then is felt as being lived meaningfully. Such is the hope that all religions promise to mankind.

THE ONE RELIGION OF THE GURU

Of all the closed static groupings in society the one most fraught with danger to man is the formation of rival religions on a relativist dualist basis. Conflicts become possible under such conditions. When what contributed to such a life of internal strife within men in the formation of wrongly motivated religious groups is once discovered and eliminated from religious life, all fall into unity, by analogous tendencies between groups becoming revealed as between each religious formation (Nataraja Guru The Philosophy of a Guru 128).
When the Guru declares “One Religion for Man”, his exhortation is to regain one’s universal identity with Self-knowledge. Self-knowledge well-known as *atma-vidhya* is understanding oneself, as an individual being in relation to his environment. It is because of this, Nataraja Guru defines religion as a whole-hearted relationship between man with his fellow men or with some unseen value-factors.

A critical study of the world’s great religions will reveal that there exists a value of great significance, as the essence of religions. This could be called the greatest common multiple of religions. Buddhists recognize this as *Dharma*, Christians calls this God, The Light of all lights. Muslims bow down in reverence to Allah, the holy and merciful one. In the Indian philosophy this is *atman* (self). It is the search for this value of values in everyday life as the object of life which constitutes the concept of One Religion.

Narayana Guru’s concept of One Religion is more clearly stated in his own compositions. In the envoi of the poem entitled *Anukampa Dasakam*, the Guru pays homage to the truth behind life as the highest human value applying directly to a spiritual life without any religious coloration.

Accordingly, the Guru wants us to live as one single human community, whatever be the religion. This is very much the ideal place for mankind according to India’s ancient *rishis* - *Vasudhaiva Kudumbakam* (the world is one single family). Arnold Toynbee, the eminent historian, echoes the same sentiment while surveying the story of the entire human race and regards it as
the only alternative to destroying ourselves in the atomic age. The broad outlook that all religions are one and the same in essence is the protective shield of the mind against religious bigotry and miseries resulting from it. The concept of One Religion is a call for human dignity which in essence gives every man the responsibility of preserving the honour and freedom of his fellow men to live in equality and well-being.

The concept of One Religion is discussed by the Guru in verses 44 to 49 of the Atmopadesa Satakam which shall be examined here. In order to be able to lay bare the philosophical implications of the One Religion in the mind of the Guru, let us read this sequence of six verses in a selective order. (Nataraja Guru The philosophy of a Guru 129.)

(a) **All Religions have the Overall Aim of Happiness**

All religions when viewed horizontally as different from another in expression reveal many features that make for contrast. When we take a verticalized inclusive or contemplatively dialectical view of the same situation of all religions understood together, a mutual agreement or transparency of content reveals itself between them, because the overall aim and end of all religions, however diverse, is none other than happiness in life, here or here after, or both. The verse 49 enunciates this unequivocally as follows:
Everyman at every time makes effort in every way,
Self-happiness to secure; thus in the world
Know there is this One Religion alone; known thus and
Avoiding evil, one should his inner self attune.

(Narayana Guru A.S Verse 49)

The greatest common factor in all conscious and unconscious behavioural motivation is the search for happiness. Yogis seek \textit{kaivalyam}, Jnanis seek Self-realisation, Buddhists seek \textit{nirvana}, the Christian goal is salvation; these are all different names for the summum bonum of everybody’s search. Many people do not believe in any religion, yet they too have formulated their own philosophy and scheme for collective endeavour to achieve the common happiness of mankind. Humanism and Marxism are examples of religion - like movements, yet are not recognized as religions. The Guru wants us to go beyond the semantic fixation of the connotation given to the word ‘religion’ so that we can easily grasp the common goal of mankind, which is nothing but man’s search of happiness. (Nitya Chaitanya Yati \textit{Neither This Nor That But Aum} 100) Recognition of this common happiness marks allegiance to the One Religion or faith which is of all beings.

Happiness refers to a supreme human value in whose light all other motives are only secondary considerations or particular instances. Happiness as the aim of man gives unity to human purpose and brings all religions, faiths or creeds under its single sway. If this verity should become properly understood by followers of different religions, we should be able to arrive at one single
value common to all faiths or religions whatsoever, past, present or possible in the future, in any part of the world. The One Religion or faith, the very aim of every religious man to see it established in this world can thus become easy of realization when approached in the way of the wise. Thus, much bloodshed in the name of religious rivalry could be avoided at least in the future.

The Guru not only presents here the happy prospect of ‘One Religion’ for all mankind in a scientific or public sense, but also more pointedly than that, asks each man to adopt this attitude so that he could find peace of mind for himself and attain the goal of happiness. The One Religion of mankind would thus follow as night the day, or as a natural corollary to the common human goal of happiness as the highest of unitive human values.

(b) The Deep Mutual Adoption Implied in Religious Affiliation

When a man accepts or adopts a certain religion as an ideology or as a pattern of behaviour as the one he likes or calls his own, there is a deep-seated fusion of the Self and the non-Self factors which takes place within him. Egoism tends often to fan and exaggerate the disparity of religions, but when the relation is contemplatively bipolar and verticalised, where in the true Self in man and not the ego participates, adoption does not result in conflict. (Nataraja Guru The Philosophy of a Guru 130)

The possibility of adopting a religion as one’s own is itself, as the Guru points out, only a recognition of the homogenous parity in the participation of
the Self and the non-Self factors involved. By itself this possibility belongs to the pure Self, and when understood in such a pure perspective, is fully dignified and conducive to Self-realization. The danger, however, is that this pure nature of bipolar adoption becomes misapplied. The adhyasa or superimposition mutually of non-self factors on the self and vice versa takes place. Here in alone the danger lurks.

*The dweller within the body from its existential body-view,*

*In respect of all things, treats “that” or “this” or “mine”*

*Transcending physical limitations; when we consider this*

*We should concede that any man immediate realization has.*

(Narayana Guru A.S Verse 48)

Unmindful or ignorant of the many ways available to approach the one final goal of identifying oneself with the whole, they think the one way they are familiar with alone is at one’s disposal, and that all the others simply misguide people. In the place of the total Reality with which they are intended to be identified, they wrongly find identity with a particular way of approach to it, with a particular religion. An individual, in the state of identity with the whole, becomes nothing, as a drop becomes nothing when fallen into the ocean. The same happens to those who happen to find themselves one with a particular religion also, they feel lost in the being of religion. In the ideal identity with the whole that all religions aim at, the individual feels the blissfulness of realizing the Absolute. On the other hand, the identity with a particular religion creates the impression that the individual sacrificing himself physically is blissful or is
doing service to God. The noblest of all gains that all religions promise, thus ends up in becoming the most ignoble of all losses. In either case, there is the common factor of one forgetting one’s identity with being an individual entity and finding a new identity with something very abstract, ideal and of high value.

Transmuting one’s identity with closed religions into an open one with God or the Absolute is the best solution to the prevailing problems of religious rivalry. Only the wise realize this. Most of the believers remain ignorant of this. Instead of making life blissful through religiousness, they find blissfulness in sacrificing the very life meant to be made blissful. Only a little of discrimination and wisdom, and going one step further, are required to make one shift the identity, from a particular religion to the one goal of all religions. It also results in the living experience of non-dual blissfulness.

(c) Rival Religions Really Plead for the Same Value

The protagonists of any religion dream of uniting all humanity under one faith. Just as a member of a certain nation might want all nations to come under its sway. Hindus might want the entire world to become Hindu and so on. In respect of the desire to see fellowship on unity of faiths, both the parties involved in this delicately balanced dialectical situation may be said to be sailing in the same boat. The tragedy of the situation is that he is highly conscious of the importance of his own mission, his tendency to find fault with the honest faith of another acts itself, at the same time, as a subtle veil. The full
recognition of the fact that the other man is just like himself in his own zeal for the particular religion that he prefers to call his own is absent. There is easy vertical adoption and difficult horizontal recognition of the values involved in rival faiths which could be reconciled only when looked at unively. In verse 47 it reads as:

To become of one faith is what everyone speaks of;
This the proselytizers do not, recognize;
Wise men, freed of objects to another’s faith,
Know this secret in full.

(Narayana Guru A.S Verse 47)

To visualize all dangers in clear terms requires a subtle dialectical insight which is the prerogative only of rare human beings to possess. This is the reason why the Guru in the second half of the above verse refers to the wise man, so rare on earth, who can see through the intricate tangle that such a socio-religious problem can present. In fact this one point of non-recognition of the difference between the mechanistic view in this matter, and the dialectical view of the same by a wise man, explains the reason for all the disasters and failures in the attempts that well intentioned persons have made to avoid religious conflicts in the course of what constitutes the history of humanity till now.

(Nataraja Guru One Hundred Verses of Self Instruction 164)
The Nature of the Irony Implicit in Religious Rivalry

There are many religious groups in the world which have risen to correct wrong opinions or practices which might have prevailed in disjunct religions and at distinct times. All religions in essence answer to one central human need for spiritual consolation. Those who argue for or against any particular religion are compared to the well-known story of a few blind men seeing an elephant - the one who feels the elephant’s leg claims, the elephant looks like a pillar; the other who feels its tail says it is broom like, the third feeling its ears asserts an elephant is like a winnowing fan in shape. None of them is wrong, but none of them is right either. What each acquires is simply a partial knowledge and this always allows room for disputation. So it is with the defenders of religions as well. One religion becomes respectable and another despicable only because of the partial understanding about the religion each one has (S.Omana Philosophy of Sree Narayana Guru 133).

Not seeing that the various religions in the world
Are essentially the same, advancing various arguments
Like the blind men and the elephant, roam not like fools
But stop wandering and calmly settle down.

(Narayana Guru A.S Verse 44)

The verse 44 underlines the need for taking a global view of religious systems. Comparative religion must tend to establish the points of affinity in corresponding structural aspects of religions, rather than stress differences based
on aspects torn out of the proper context or perspective. The familiar analogy of the blind men of the fable with the elephant is used advantageously by the Guru here.

The total truth that is independent of particular circumstances and which should be limited even to correct particular items only tends thus to remain outside the scope of any particular formulation on codification of religious life. The total or the global truth tends to be even more than the sum total of the individual points of view. Moreover, the original founder of a religion might have had clarity of vision of the global truth, which those who follow him without the same degree of original insight cannot have in the natural course of happenings in life.

Direct global insight into the nature of the Absolute or Total Truth, that is the basic subject matter of all religious faiths or patterns of behaviour, tends thus to be overlaid or examined piecemeal and partially, giving rise to endless theological, doctrinal or other differences, around which much disturbances of life take place.

To the eyes of a person able to see the essential, as distinct from the merely superficial aspect of religions, there is a common basic substratum of which the divergent expressions are only secondary and unimportant marginal aspects. Thus in essence, all religions are trying to reveal the need for spiritual consolation. They all seek happiness and there is no religion in the world which aims at suffering rather than happiness.
In the verse 45 the Guru stresses the need to see the underlying unity of religions.

*One faith in another’s view is low, and the doctrine
Cardinal as taught in one, in another’s measure lacks;
Know, confusion in the world shall prevail so long
As the unitive secret herein remains unknown.*

(Narayana Guru A.S Verse 45)

One man’s faith will appear as unworthy to another. A basic dictum of another’s religion is often looked upon with disdain and is rated unsatisfactory. Such confusion born of irrational prejudices continues in the minds of the people as long as the unitive secret of universal sameness remains unknown (Swami Muni Narayana Prasad *The Philosophy of Narayana Guru* 133).

Rivalries and feuds between followers of different faiths, religions or creeds, big or small in number, can never come to an end when approached in the usual way of relativistic or mechanistic reasoning. It is not possible to defeat any religion through fighting, for every religion has for its strength at its core the high value factor that makes it a religion. One religion attacking another, for this very reason, results not in the destruction of the targeted religion, but only of the persons who fight. The discriminating persons, therefore, always keep themselves away from such fights (S. Omana *The Epistemological Perspective in the Philosophy of Narayana Guru* 51).
The Guru here deplores the lack of unitive wisdom. It is through the *Advaita* approach which is unitive and non-dual in character could expect a universally tolerant attitude to develop in the mind even of the common man, which will tend to minimize or at least mitigate the rivalries and rub their edges off. This kind of unitive wisdom in the Guru’s vision of the future of the lot of humanity, the solution for conflicts between religions and allied ideologies that are closed and static can come only when the open, dynamic and unitive contemplative or universal way becomes evident to the minds of the generality of men.

*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!*  

(Narayana Guru A.S Verse 46)

It is not possible to vanquish, any religion by fighting it. By becoming competitive and fighting against each other’s religion, the adherence of the members of the persecuted religion only become increased in its fanatic zeal. By promoting religious feuds one is only destroying his own integrity and succumbs to the evil of hatred. This should never be forgotten. (S.Omana *Philosophy of Sree Narayana Guru 133*).

The verse 46 underlines the fact that persecution only makes unilateral faith firmer. The martyrs to any deep belief prove the irony of the situation in
the history of any religion and this is contrary to what might be expected by mechanistic reasoning. (Nataraja Guru *The Philosophy of a Guru* 132) The apocalyptic touch of the last line of the verse 46 gives a prophetic touch to the Guru’s philosophy of religion.

The roots of any religious growth are not in its outer expressions. There are deep seated value factors that make any religion flourish in any country. Religion has its subtle raison d’etre which is not overtly evident to the view or even subject to the attack of worldly polemics. If this were so, many old religions should have been exterminated by this time.

A religion cannot be brushed away as just somebody’s mere opinion. Major religions are giving the inspiration to live meaningful lives. Religion consoles many aching hearts. All religions satisfy the needs or console the spiritual hankerings of those who seek refuge under them. When the benefit is spent out, and a religion has no succour or consolation to offer to its adherents, it might shrink or even die a natural death. Overt fighting only strengthens all the more the root aspects of a religious growth by a strange law of opposites. (Nataraja Guru *One Hundred Verses of Self Instruction* 164)

The man who actively engages himself in attacking other people’s religions finds that to the extent that he stressed extraneous matters in such an attack, he is hurting the cause of his own religion. The subtle dialectical interdependence and independence of religious growth is a matter that should be respected, if the vain self-destruction of humans to be avoided. A complex
phenomenon of double loss and double gain is involved here, and since no one religious formation can claim the sole prerogative of being totally right for all the time, the attack must recoil on the attacker himself. The difference of collective opinion and individual opposition is also a factor that goes against the attacker of another’s religion. Religions have an inner two-sided personality which makes many of the living ones invulnerable. Unilateral attack only makes them stronger to the dismay of the attacker who often only spells his own utter failure.

In India religion is called dharma because it sustains all the traditionally preserved essential values of life. (Nitya Chaitanya Yati Neither This Nor That But Aum 95.) By accepting the validity of another person’s faith, we can avoid the exaggeration of its emotional impact and defensive reactions. By appreciating and imbibing the essential of another religion we will only discover the greater and hidden truth of our own religion; hence it is foolish to promote exclusiveness in religious attitudes. Unitive understanding enables one to appreciate the essence of all religions as it is the same.

THE PARLIAMENT OF RELIGIONS

To highlight the realization of the essential oneness of all religions, Narayana Guru organized a Parliament of Religions at Advaithashramam, Aluva, in 1924. This was the first ‘All Religions Meet’ organized in Asia. At the entrance of the venue the following message was written as specifically directed by the Guru: “Meant not for arguing and winning, but for knowing and
Religious hostility and competitiveness was the one serious social problem that Guru was most concerned with in those days. This gave him the inspiration to organize a Parliament of Religions at the _Advaita Ashram_ itself, hoping that it would help create mutual understanding among different religions and to bring out the good in all religions. In the first such religious conference in the history of the world held in Chicago, Swami Vivekananda took part to represent Hinduism (Swami Vivekananda 3). After that spectacular event in which the spiritual power of the eternal religion was brought to the fore in all its glory, the conference master-minded and brought to reality by Sree Narayana Guru was the second in the world and the first in Asia. At the entrance to the venue itself it was written in bold letters: “Not to argue and win but to know and let know”.

The Guru desired that the conference should be held at the Aluva Advaita Ashram and that representatives from all over India should take part in it. When the principles of different religions were discussed on a common platform, the underlying unity would become easy to grasp. The differences and contradictions were rather superficial and it was meaningless to fight on these issues. The need was to see the essence that linked all of them. The Guru wanted the conference to be planned in a way that would accomplish this vision.
Sir T. Sadasiva Iyer was the president of the conference. A special feature of this Parliament of Religions was that prominent rationalists Manjeri Ramakrishna Iyer and Mithavadi C. Krishnan also took part in the deliberations, defending atheism and rationalism. Rishi Ram representing Arya Samaj, a Buddhist monk from Sri Lanka, Swami Sivaprasad of Brahma Samaj, Mohammed Moulavi representing Islam and K.K. Kuruvila representing Christianity. The president opened the proceedings after first receiving the Guru’s benediction. Each of the speakers explained the core of his respective religion in great detail.

The welcome address was read by Swami Satyavratan and the vote of thanks was proposed by C.V. Kunjuraman.

The Guru desired that the world should know the philosophy and outlook that characterized the proclamation read out at the end of the conference. That was the reason for entrusting Swami Satyavratan with the task of preparing the welcome speech. The Guru himself briefed Satyavratan about the theme and made suitable correction in the text. He considered that the address contained like fragrance in a flower, the essence of his philosophy of life. Therefore, we can proceed with our narrative only after seeing the relevant parts of this speech (M.K. Sanoo 166).

The speech said that the Gurudeva was born a Hindu and lived as a Hindu in the eyes of the world. Yet he had understood, to the extent possible, the principles of other religions. The ultimate aim of all religions is one and the
same and each was efficient to make a man a useful citizen of the world or yearn for release from the bondage of worldly life. The dispute only centred round the external aspects of observances. The Guru preached this truth to his disciples and followers. It was on this basis that the Guru formulated his doctrine “One Caste, One Creed, One God for Man.” Due to congenital defects or temptation to transgress nature’s laws, man is heir to many afflictions of the mind and the body and they are transmitted to the later generations. Those who know the basis of physical affliction and their cure are called physicians. Those who deal with the afflictions of the mind are called priests. There are many systems of medicines and the practitioners of each claim for their system supreme virtues compared to the others. Patients do not enquire into the origin of the system but take any medicine that would afford them relief. The same argument is applicable to the afflictions of the mind. Hindus were not shy to study thinkers like Socrates, Spencer, Kant and Swedenborg because they were Europeans. Similarly Europeans show no reluctance to study Hindu authors like Badarayana or Sankara. When the philosophic text of one religion could be read and understood by anyone irrespective of his religion, nothing prevents him from introducing into practice the principles he grasped from them. Texts on philosophy, science and arts are made use of by everyone and are considered the common inheritance of all men. Books on spiritual matters could also be treated the same way and utilized for the good of humanity (M.K. Sanoo 168).

Man could not keep his mind inactive. Just like a child the mind went on questioning and verifying the answers it could formulate. The most wonderful
of them were those relating to God, soul, rebirth, fruits of action, heaven and hell, the world of action, salvation, etc. Many of the answers the man found before he discovered the art of writing have been lost for ever. Still the inheritance was considerable. This belongs to all humanity and no one had any exclusive right on it. Such exclusivism would be against the spirit of the ancestors who acquired it for posterity. Answers to spiritual problems evolved by thinkers and intellectuals of an age when philosophy, science and logic had not developed so much, are found in the treasure house of each religion. Instances are also there of accepted theories being proved wrong.

Religious books abounding in stories which were basically stories of a search for meaning by the ancients in the spiritual and other fields, were magnified a thousand-fold through the lend of poetic imagination so much so that they appeared absurd to the modern minds. Seeds of the same myth crossed frontiers and appeared in different forms in different religious books. The astronomical conception that time is caused by change in the relative position of the sun became the seed of a story of the God of death (change bought about by time) being the child of sun and he became the lord of the dead. Since death was never a pleasing prospect, the God of death was made black, was given a terrible buffalo as his mount and a rope and pestle as his weapons. To complete the story he was given the powers to judge the dead according to their past actions and was made a king - Dharma Raja. An accountant was provided for him called Chitragupta (meaning ‘concealed in pictures’) by allegorising the idea that the mind kept a record of all actions in the form of pictures. The same
myth of the Hindus assumed a different form in the books of the ancient Assyrians for whom Saturn was the God of death. The Assyrian Saturn performed all the functions of the Hindu ‘Kala’ and the only difference was that while Kala was the son of the sun; Saturn was the son of his wife Chayya (shadow). It was natural that Saturday became an inauspicious day for them. This example shows how the same myth assumed different forms and gave rise to different customs amongst the followers of different religions. Many were the inter-religious fights that stemmed from the lack of generosity to acknowledge that these stories and legends that might appear absurd to modern science and logic were actually the common characteristics of all religions. It is a pity that instead of wondering at the underlying similarity of the myths of different religions, the people held aloft the apparent absurdities to ridicule one another.

No religion was free from the blemishes brought on by the wars fought in the name of religions by the priest kings of old, backed by the forces of imperialism. Later when temporal and spiritual domains were separated the mode of fight changed substituting words for swords and resulted in the weak points of each religion receiving undue attention and the merits receding into oblivion. This led to a fall in standard of the religious faith among the commoners. This style of fight had also been replaced by the method of conversion which appeared harmless but was actually productive of evil.

Everyone was agreed that religion was a spiritual affair. Every religious leader had commended religion to his followers as the means for salvation. Buddha stressed that salvation is only for those who have renounced every
desire. Christ advised his disciples to leave everything and follow him. It is an undisputed principle with every sect of Hinduism that salvation is only for those who have renounced everything.

It was the capitalist who amassed wealth by exploiting the inventions of the scientists. In the same way a group of clever converted the religious principles and means of salvation revealed by great souls into goods of commerce for making huge profits. They became famous throughout the world as priests. Nor all of them are such, but quite a number of them. When these shrewd men found that the spiritual theories propounded by great thinkers were becoming popular they lost no time in assigning unto themselves the office of spiritual advisers and turned it into a highly profitable profession. This was the origin of most of the rites and rituals connected with religion. Had these priests stopped with being teachers, society would not have had to undergo so much misery. But when this was commercialized the beneficiaries naturally sought to extend their empire and religion began to find strength in numbers. When the strongest religion became the chief means of salvation, the mind was barred entry into its logic. The spiritual knowledge devised by great religious founders for attaining salvation came to be used by priests for the accretion of more worldly strength. This process of religions being treated as a social affair, instead of as a spiritual one, has started from the beginning of history. Just as those who wielded temporal power wanted to extend their frontiers to include the whole world, spiritual leaders also seemed to desire sway over the entire world. The empire of religion unlike the physical one had no mutually exclusive
lines of demarcation in space and conflicts were, therefore, permanent and continuous. Mankind can have freedom from this state only if religion is regarded as a purely spiritual affair. This would be possible only by adopting the position that religion was an act of faith and not an accident of birth. Men of religion, instead of striving to foster knowledge, employed their minds and means to expand their social empire and the harm that resulted was there for everyone to see.

There was only one remedy for this evil – to grant Rama and Krishna the freedom to study and choose, instead of the prevalent method of the one deciding for the other which religion was the best. But opportunities should be provided to make Rama and Krishna fit to make a wise choice. Institutions should be established, where every religion could be studied by anyone and where expert advice should be provided through men proficient in each religion (M.K.Sanoo 167-169).

The concluding message at the conference was as follows:

“As the speeches in this conclave of religions have shown that the ultimate goal of all religions is the same, there is no need of conflict among those who take different paths. We have decided to provide facilities to study the messages of all religions at the proposed academy at Sivagiri” (Moorkoth Kumaran 154).
The address could be concluded by expressing the hope that it would become clear to everyone why they had proclaimed that the Conference was held not to argue and win but to know and make known.

Just after this event he took a formal decision to start a “School of All Religions”, which he called Mata Mahapatasala, at Sivagiri to teach the essentials of all religions. A school of Brahmavidya (Brahmavidyalaya) was later started there. The Guru’s wish was fulfilled to some extent by Nataraja Guru, his disciple at Aluva who under his tutelage took up studies in Sorbonne. Later, Natarja Guru, who founded the Narayana Gurukula Movement, by establishing the East West University of Brahmavidyalaya, was responsible for interpreting the Guru’s teachings to the modern scientific world. The syllabi include the study of the Guru’s compositions and the scriptures of all world religions. It has become a worldwide community of contemplatives and the most articulating organ of the Guru’s philosophy and humanist teachings.

GOD REALIZATION

God realization is the one goal all religions conceive in experiencing the non-duality is portrayed by the Guru thus:

The ever appearing and even disappearing experiences emerge first, and then they sway back and forth assuming the forms of both of mind and matter. And thus the real becomes darkened (as apparent forms) in a thousand ways, and then all of them roll back
to their restful abode, finally to merge in its own splendour. Even philosophically perceiving thus is not wisdom. One should, instead, become a bee that gently falls into the honey filled core of the lotus (God) and with its gentle murmur be there for ever in the ecstasy of blissfulness (Narayana Guru Janani Nararathna Majari Verse 3).

God realization means the awareness of the non-dual Reality. That means to become one with the Ultimate Reality Brahman. Into this non-dual experience become merged all philosophical understanding concerning the cause and nature of the world, all devotional and ritual observances and all moral codes of human conduct. In it terminates all religiousness.

**GOD**

The Guru does not postulate God as a separate Reality; he identifies the Ultimate Reality with God; as Spinoza identifies Truth with God. In Daivadasakam the Guru defines God as satyam jnanam, ananda – truth, knowledge and happiness. God alone exists; all that appears as forming the world are simply the manifestations of one God (S.Omana *The Epistemological Perepective in the Philosophy of Narayana Guru* 54).

God, the one Reality that underlies everything that appears to be in all the worlds, here or hereafter, is more than a matter of belief for the Guru. Admitting the existence of the world means admitting the realness of God, for
the world cannot appear to be without a causal Reality underlying. Likewise, admitting God means admitting the existence of the world as the apparent form in which God becomes manifest. God, atman, Brahman, arivu, cit were interchangeable terms to the Guru.

God exists in the minds of both the believers and the non-believers. Something that exists in consciousness has necessarily to be consciousness in essence. The God asserted by the believers also is consciousness in essence. Both thus come to an agreement in this respect.

Suppose a non-believer denies God with no clear idea in his mind as to what he denies; this makes no sense because denying some thing with definiteness means, the person who denies, knows what he denies. Similarly, asserting something also pre-supposes the knowledge of what is being asserted. An interesting fact in this respect about God is that both the believers and nonbelievers have no clear idea as to what God is. The believers openly hold that God is an unknowable Reality, whereas the non-believers acknowledge that they are not quite sure what they are denying. It thus becomes all the more clear that more important than arguing for or against the existence of God is knowing clearly what is meant by God. Once clearly known, the arguments for as well as against, become irrelevant, for something clearly known needs no asserting and can never be denied.

If in one’s mind God is segregated from the totality of the visible world and imagined as an independent entity, then various qualities and motivations
can be wrongly attributed to that entity. When God is understood as the ever unfolding totality, all qualities, clear and mysterious, are necessarily included. Such an understanding of the God-head opens us to experiencing ourselves as fully integrated with our fellow beings in the cosmic functioning of an on-going creation, steering past duality that gives rise to intra and inter-personal mal-adjustments and friction.

Religions like Buddhism and Jainism do not believe in the existence of a God. Such religions do admit dharma as a fundamental factor that underlies the life of each individual with that of the total. The basic factor concerning religion could be seen even in modern ideologies like Marxism that do not claim to be religions, or rather are anti-religious. The only difference with such ideologies is that ‘the total nature’ is replaced by the ‘total human society’. There the seat of God is occupied by the state supposedly is bound to ensure the happiness of individuals as well as of society. Instead of individual subjugating themselves to the will of God, people are asked to obey the commandments of the state (Swami Muni Narayana Prasad Shorter Philosophical Poems of Narayana Guru 216). In both cases bringing the individual will and the will of nature under the control of a third factor is one and the same.

Narayana Guru admits the existence of one Reality only. The Guru installed various deities in temples and composed hymns to praise them. His praising many gods does not mean that he admits of more than one God. The oneness of God and multiplicity of deities are not to be confused. A particular deity the Guru praises is neither seen by him, nor did he mean to be seen by
others, as one among many gods, but only as symbolizing the one Ultimate Reality in a particular way. The images installed in the temples are known as *vigrahahas*, meaning something to be pondered upon in a specific way. The Guru sees the many deities as representing the one *Brahman*. He sees the one *Brahman* in which all the different deities are merged.

When Narayana Guru says one God for man we have to understand God as both Reality (*sat*) and illusion (*asat*) as the Guru himself declares in the central verse of the *Darsanamala* “That alone Exists” (*tat eva sat*) in the *Bhana Darsana* (vision of awareness).

That which is made manifested by the knowing function of consciousness is super imposed. That which is not super imposed never becomes an object of the knowing function of consciousness.

That which is super imposed is the sat that alone is “That”.

(Narayana Guru *D.M. Bhana Darsanan* Verse 10)

In *Arivu* (Epistemology of Gnosis) the Guru equated knowledge with God. According to the Guru, knowledge or *jnanam* is God. *Brahmavidya* is the means to this God-realisation, in other words, the attainment of *Advaitic* knowledge. Arivu is a work having a personal march of the Guru’s own realization of the Absolute Reality. Its each word is filled with the clarity of a comprehensive vision of the Ultimate Reality he realized.

The non-dual vision, ancient India’s gift to the world of thought, is acknowledged as the greatest among the philosophical concepts of mankind.
Indian culture is a conglomeration of Vedic, Upanishadic and Puranic ideologies. Grasping their significance in full, man has in the light of the teachings in the Vedas and Upanishads, assigned sanctity to humanity in the modern age, by abjuring all religious animosities. So to suit the taste of all those prone to faith in one God it becomes necessary to compose a prayer of cosmopolitan character.

The Guru has composed such a prayer entitled Daiva Dasakam. Prayer is the incessant effort made by the people to keep their will always attuned to the will of God. It is a fact that man finds his well-being only through prayer. Daiva Dasakam, is purely a prayer all through, though replete with his philosophical vision of non-duality.

PRAYER

Praying is a religious observance and it has found its place in one way or other in all religions. It prevails even in religions that avowedly do not admit the existence of a God or souls. Even down right nihilists and atheists seem to have some sort of prayer like observance. Instead of a prayer addressed to God, a prayer may don the garb of a hopeful wish. Even those who do not pray, at least greet each other wishing the best. Such best wishes also imply a sort of prayer. In short, prayer is a psychological phenomenon that manifests in all humans, the religious as well as the non-religious.
Prayer is the incessant effort made by the people to keep their will always attuned to the will of God. All these prayers undoubtedly centre around one God, variously named by many poetically-minded seers. *Ekam sad viprah bahudha vadanti* (the Ultimate Reality is one alone, but scholars speak of it in various ways) is one of the Vedic dicta.

The ultimate goal of a seeker or supplicant can attain is finding oneself with one God, *Brahman, Atman* or *arivu*. An advaitin (non-dualist) really needs no prayer, for in his perception there is no duality between the supplicant and God. But a non-dualist may feel that those who follow him, aspiring for the perfection of wisdom, need a prayer. Such a prayer should be a means for them to attain the heights of non-dualistic perception (Swami Muni Narayana Prasad *Shorter Philosophical Poems of Narayana Guru* 222).

Though almost all the available prayers and hymns composed by great masters are philosophically profound, such a one addressed to the one God and not to any particular deity like Siva, Vishnu, Brahma, Subrahmanya, Ganapathy or Devi, can hardly be found. Viewed from this perspective, in the vast panorama of the spiritual literature of India, from the most ancient times to the most modern age, it was the pen of Narayana Guru that blessed with a philosophically profound prayer addressed to the one God, acceptable not only to Indian spiritual tradition in general, but also to all the religions of the world as well. Narayana Guru’s *Daiva Dasakam* is a prayer which can be assessed from all the three angles of the philosopher, the religious person and the
scientist. God is here recognized as one God, not as the God of any place or religion. That Absolute is related with everything that depends on the Supreme.

The word ‘Daiva Dasakam’ means ‘ten verses on God’. This prayer was composed by the Guru keeping his close devotees and disciples in mind. The Guru, in the meanwhile, had also disciples who were atheists. Some one denying the existence of God implies that the concept of God is already in his mind. Denying something categorically requires a clear knowledge of what is being denied. That means, the concept of God is already in the mind of an atheist also. The believers too only assert the existence of a God according to their own understanding. Therefore, let us try to understand what is to be understood by God, quoting Narayana Guru’s Daiva Dasakam.

O God, keep watch on us here
From over there, never
Letting loose your fast hold;
You are the captain of the steamer
For crossing the ocean of becoming,
And the mighty ship is
None other than your feet.

(Narayana Guru D.D Verse 1)
God is here recognized as that Superior Reality to which one can surrender one’s ego. In this verse this world is equated to an ocean of misery, and a devotee is considered as a helpless being caught in that miserable ocean. God is considered as a great navigator who can take this helpless person across the ocean. Thus, the word of God or the name of God is equated with a steamship (Nitya Chaitanya Yati Universal Prayer 6).

The sentence in the opening verse, “O God protect us, never leave us here, is a replete with duality. To say, there and here, above and below you and us, protector and the protected all is duality. There is the problem in which the non-dual philosophy gives such a prayer in which there are several shades of duality (Nitya Chaitanya Yati Universal Prayer 5).

This is not to be considered as a defect. Only a person who is caught in the web of duality has the need for prayer. When a person sees ‘here’ and ‘there’ ‘I’ and ‘others’ then he seeks to get out of that trap. Only when he is assailed with that kind of a sense of misery does he turn to God or to some other source for redemption. Such a person naturally feels that he or she is helpless and inferior to that great Reality of which he or she is only a part. When such a person makes a prayer, it is likely to be dualistically conceived.

*Counting all the countables*

*One after another, when*

*Everything is reckoned and finished with,*

*They disappear and continue*
To exist in the seeing mind

In like manner, let this mind

Attain rest pulsationless in you.

(Narayana Guru D.D Verse 2)

The Ultimate Reality called Brahman is what is thought of as God in this prayer. This Brahman is pure consciousness in essence. The Vedantic explanation of the appearance of the world is that it is Brahman manifesting itself, while also undergoing no intrinsic change. That means, the essential content of all that appears to be is nothing other than Brahman or pure consciousness. This consciousness, felt by the person who perceives as the knowing mind is called ‘drk’ in Vedanta, literally means ‘the eye’, and signifying the knowing subject. Then the object known is called drsya.

The countables referred to in the present verse are equivalent to what Sankara means by drsya in his work Drk-Drsya-Viveka (discriminating the knower and the known). Sankara says if an object seen is drsya, then the eye that sees it is the drk. Such objects could be countless, but the eye drk remains one alone. Thus all that is observable, whether gross or subtle, physical or mental, seem to converge to one point - like consciousness - the consciousness of the individual observer here rendered as “the perceiving mind” (drk). This is how the observed world and the observing mind are related in Vedantic perception.
Food and clothes and such other daily needs
Providing us ever with no lapse,
You make our lives generously blessed
You alone are our sole Master.

(Narayana Guru D.D Verse 3)

The definition of God in this verse is a departure from the usual Vedantic concept. Instead of an abstract generalization, God is shown here as intimately related with every sentient being, especially man, at a very existential level such as in the meeting of daily requirements of life, like food, clothing and shelter.

Like ocean, waves, wind and depth,
Are ourselves, maya, your glory and you
Let me inwardly have
Such an awareness of life’s scheme.

(Narayana Guru D.D Verse 4)

In this verse, Narayana Guru is giving an analogical equation. The aspirant who is offering the prayer is expected to meditate on the relevancy of the equation.

God in this verse is likened to the depth in an ocean. The way to secure the grace of God is to perceive it as the depth principle in our own being. The fundamental aspects to be correlated in a systematic way in arriving at an
intuitive perception of the Ultimate Reality is compared here to the ocean and its different aspects.

In this verse, the four elements are associated with the ocean. These are ocean, waves, wind and depth exist together, one inseparable from the other. So too, we, *maya*, God’s glory and God are inseparably one. The essence of the prayer made in these verses, have an intuitive awareness of the coherent unity of the four fundamental factors mentioned here, comparable to four factors in the ocean.

*You are the creation, the creator too,*

*As also the myriad of created things.*

*You again, O God are the substance*

*Of which all creation is made.*

(Narayana Guru *D.D Verse 5)*

The act of creation, the creator, the things created and the substance for creation are all different functional modes of one and the same consciousness Reality, which really is inconceivable and ineffable.

The God that the Guru addresses in this prayer is not a reality outside the world. At the very outset he accepts the process of one thing transforming into another. The Guru addresses the ceaseless transmutation of things as God. Narayana Guru identifies God with his unified Substance. He does not postulate God as a separate entity.
You indeed are maya
The maker of maya too,
As also the enjoyer thereof
You are even the noble one who
Remove the very same maya
To grant us the state of Supreme Union.

(Narayana Guru D.D Verse 6)

It is the primeval desire in God to unfold everything that results in the creation of the world. Such a desire becomes materialized as the gross world is a mystery indeed. The necessity of explaining this mystery is why the seers postulated the idea of maya. Thus it is a man-made theory. But the very theory involves the notion that maya is God-made. The Reality that underlies the being of God, of the seers, of everything, is one and the same. So to say that God is the maker of maya and that humans are the makers of maya are equally true (Muni Narayana Prasad Shorter Philosophical Poems of Narayana Guru 269).

The unreal cannot remain as a fact for ever. When the real emerges that automatically erases all vestiges of ignorance. Here the Guru suggests that God is the only Real one who withdraws the illusions of maya and grants the supreme union with God.

Your are Existence, Consciousness and Value Experience,
You are the present and the past,
And the future is no other than you.
Even these spoken words, well considered,

Are nothing but you.

(Narayana Guru D.D Verse 7)

Brahman is defined as Saccidananda. It is a compound word in which sat, cit and ananda are combined together. The Guru in his Darsanamala, uses this compound word itself. In the present verse the Guru replaces sat with satyam for material convenience. Satyam is defined by Sankara thus:

Yad rupena Yan niscitam tad rupam
Na vyabhicarati tat satyam.

(Taittiriya Upanishad 2.1.1)

That, which never changes its intrinsic nature that is truly ascertained to be its own, is the Real. That Real is conceived as God in this prayer. The Reality (sat) that is beyond all duality is pure and unconditional consciousness (cit) in essence, referred to as jnanam in this verse.

Completely filling both within and without
Is the state of your grandeur,
That state we hail
O God, success be yours!

(Narayana Guru D.D Verse 8)
After realizing that the very word with which one praises God is the Absolute, the supplicant becomes overwhelmed with the glory of God. Then even the thinnest line between the adorer and the adored vanishes. That state is described here as the brimful glory of God.

In the next verse also the attitude of glorification is prevailing

*Success be yours, O Great Lord Divine,*

*Ever intent on saving those in misery,*

*Success be yours, O the one*

*Consciousness and value-experience in essence*

*Of the ocean of mercy,*

*Success be yours!*

(Narayana Guru *D.D* Verse 9)

In all religions it is stressed that there is one and only one God. Even though God’s power manifests in many ways which can be called by different names and understood in different forms, one has to make the ultimate stand of reducing these god-heads to a God of all gods and a Truth of all truths. Here the Great Lord Divine means God, the greatest of all that is divine, is pure effulgence in essence, the effulgence of unconditioned consciousness. The Great Lord here is understood as the Ultimate God-head one arrives at, both through phenomenological and transcendental deduction.

However, that god cannot touch the human heart if He, She or That is only an abstraction. Narayana Guru sees God in the crying voice of millions all
over the world who turn to God as their only refuge and succor. There is a numinous silence that is experienced by every supplicant in his or her own heart where the one praying receives Grace and feels consoled. This common experience is referred to here as ‘ever intent on saving those in needs’.

In the deep ocean of your glory
Let us all become immersed,
There to dwell, dwell forever
In Felicity Supreme.

(Narayana Guru D.D Verse 10)

The goal of this prayer is not for “going to heaven”. Heaven may be pleasure-giving but that happiness is transient; only Truth is eternal. Becoming truthful is identical with realization or deliverance. After having attained that state, one does not react to good and evil with love and hatred.

Although individual life is pluralistic, there is no plurality in the Self. Realization is not merely the experience of seeing one’s individuality merge into the Absolute. It is the realization that all selves are already one with the absolute. That is why in the present verse it is said: “Immersed let us all become, there to dwell”. The state of the final merger prayed for here is portrayed by the Guru in the concluding verse of Atmopadesa Satakam as follows:
Neither this, nor that, nor the content of existence am I.

But existence, subsistence, joy-immortal; thus attaining clarity

Emboldened, discarding attachment to being and non-being,

One should gently, gently merge in SAT-AUM!

(Narayana Guru A.S Verse 100)

RITES AND RITUALS

Rites and rituals have an important role in all religions. Ritualism, with its implications of excess and symbolism, marks one characteristic development of early Vedic religion (M.Hiriyanna 37). A ritual is a set of actions, performed mainly for their symbolic value. So performing rituals are a sort of action, and therefore rituals in general, are known as karmas (actions). Deliberately performed actions alone are usually treated as karmas, and all such karmas are aimed at attaining certain goals.

Human actions can be categorized into two: actions performed for direct worldly benefits, called laukika karmas, and symbolic actions that represent certain ideas or ideals, called vaidika karmas. Ritualistic actions or vaidika karmas are very different from worldly actions or laukika karmas. The word vaidika means both ‘related to knowledge’, and ‘related to the Veda’, for the word Veda, though refers to the most ancient scriptures of India, literally means knowledge. Rituals are performed deliberately with specific ends in view; the actual part has only a symbolic significance, because the goal aimed at
is not a natural outcome of those actions. As symbols, these rituals signify something and it is this significance that makes one expect the future attainment of certain results. That means, the attainment of a ritual’s goal depends on the completeness of the knowledge the performer has of the symbolic meaning and their probable benefits.

Every ritualistic action has something sublime to convey. Rediscovering this wisdom significance of the rituals later became a necessity, especially by the time of the advent of the Upanishads. The entire text of Chandogya Upanishad is an attempt in an elaborate way to recover the forgotten wisdom significance of the simple rite of Udgitha chanting that forms part of the elaborate ritual known as Somayaga. The Upanishad, by accomplishing this, unfolds the entire spectrum of the highest wisdom known as Brahma Vidya or Atma-Vidya. Narayana Guru also had the same attitude towards rituals.

Indian spirituality recommends two directions for the attainment of that wisdom that is karma-marga (the path of action) jnana marga, (the path of wisdom). The path of action means the way of following rituals. In order to attain the goal, the Gita recommends the way of integration of jnana and karma. This same view is also seen in Narayana Guru. The Guru shows how karma could be made use of as a means for imparting wisdom, by the harmony of karma and jnana a way that well be called jnana karma samanvaya. Here in this respect Narayana Guru’s view is different from Sankara’s view.
Sankara’s view is *jnana karma samuchaya*. According to Sankara, mixing up of ritualism (the way of action or *karma*) with wisdom (*jnana*) was an error. Sankara considers mixing up of *jnana* and *karma* is a fallacy called *jnana karma samucchaya dosa*. According to him, the goal attained by means of *karma* is transient; whereas that of *jnana* is eternal. Therefore, in search of eternal happiness, ignore the path of *karma* or rituals and one should resort to the path of wisdom. But according to Narayana Guru, *karma*, instead of being something opposed to *jnana*, turns out to be a dependable means of attaining *jnana*. Resuscitating that wisdom teaching is what Narayana Guru does through his renewal of the sacred fire sacrifice.

*Homa* is a ritual of pure wisdom impact. *Homa* also known as ‘*homam*’ or ‘*haven*’ is a Sanskrit word used which refers to any ritual in which making offerings into a consecrated fire is the primary action. The offerings are the aggregate of objects for the senses, the mind and the intellect.

The revisualization and revaluation of the very ancient ritual of fire sacrifice, which forms part of the *Vedic* culture, is accomplished by Narayana Guru in the work entitled *Homa Mantram*. Instead of ruling out ritualism altogether in the present *mantra*, which is to be chanted while performing the sacrifice, Narayana Guru admits it and shows that each element of the ritual helps lead to the highest realm of non-dual wisdom. This perception also reveals a philosophical understanding of life and day-to-day life values become inseparably one.
Aum O Fire, this brightness of yours pertains to Brahman.

Therefore you are the perceptible Brahman.

You have the (five) sense organs, mind

And intellect for your seven tongues (sapta jivah)

Into you (being such) I offer the objects

(Of sense organs, mind and intellect)

As sacrificial firewood.

And into you I offer myself

In the form of clarified butter.

You be pleased with us, be pleased with us!

Please confer on us the higher values

As well as the worldly values. Svaha

Aum peace ! peace ! peace !

(Narayana Guru Homa Mantram)

The mantra sounds like a Vedic one and shows that an ordinary fire sacrifice could be made sublime as a demonstrative lesson of higher wisdom. The burning fire, effulgence in essence, stands for Brahman. In essential content, Brahman is unconditioned consciousness (cit), an experience of pure brightness. The main defining characteristic of fire is also brightness. Consciousness, being brightness in essence, illumines itself as well as everything else. So does the fire. Fire and Brahman thus have the common feature in this respect.
Fire always flames upwards. Knowledge also leads man upward in life. Another characteristic of fire is that it is all pervasive. Brahman also is all pervasive in nature. With regard to all pervasiveness also, thus, fire and Brahman are similar. The dissimilar in them is that fire is visible to the eyes, whereas Brahman is visible only to the intuitive eyes of a contemplative. The visible fire, therefore, is made use of as a tool to help one to know or rather to realize the invisible Brahman.

Fire sacrifice in external appearance acknowledges all the ritualistic customs, is much different in nature from the fire-sacrifices the Vedas ordain. Though, this is a ritual in external appearance, it is purely of wisdom-significance. This pertains to the context of karma or jnana would be somewhat difficult. Karma becoming transformed as a means of jnana, or jnana becoming actualized through karma is witnessed here. It could, therefore, be said that the integration (samanvaya) of jnana and karma is effectively accomplished by this fire sacrifice conceived by Narayana Guru.

**TEMPLE**

The place of worship is given importance in almost all religions. It is different in each religion. In Hinduism the place of worship is called temple, in Christianity it is known as church, in Islam it is mosque etc.

Temples are the heart of Hindu religious life. Temples bring devotees close to the divine. They are imitations of the cosmic order on the earth, a
sociological “middle cosmos” established by priest–craft between the macrocosm of the universe and the microcosm of the individual and that the icons in the temple synthesize both doctrine and sacred presence both didactic and suggestive of the feeling of divine power. The temples act as mediums through which devotees approach the God-head, which cannot be otherwise comprehended or grasped directly as we do the world around us. When we worship at a temple, we temporarily step out of the limitations of worldly life and try to have a glimpse of transcendental reality. The deity which is the object of devotion and worship, guide the devotees in their pious endeavour.

Temples are built with a view that people could get their well-being through the temple. That was the main concept of the temple when it was built by the great acharyas. Later on the temples became the exclusive domain of the priest-hood and the avarnas or the lower caste people were not allowed to enter the temple. So the avarnas, who were forced to live in humiliating conditions, attributed their pitiable state to their being denied entry into temples and worship of the Gods in the temples. This attribution of their misery to the supernatural powers destroyed their will to fight back for the rightful place in society. The Guru with his deep insight into human nature understood the situation perfectly. The Guru thought if temples were the main culprit in subjecting these people to such oppression and misery, he must use the very same temples to resurrect the people from these miseries.

In philosophy Narayana Guru followed the way of Sankara. Sankara as an Advaitin installed deities of Siva, Devi and Subrahmanya. Likewise
Narayana Guru also consecrated temples and installed deities of Siva, Subrahmanya, Devi and Ganapathy. His praising many gods does not mean that he admits of more than one God. The Guru sees many gods as representing the one Brahman or Arivu.

The deity installed in a temple is not just meant for worshipping and asking for favours. Every deity, in his perception, is a visual means that help the supplicant to attain the non-dual experience.

Illumination in the hearts of the devotees - that was the Guru’s concept about the purpose of temples. A notable change is reflected in Narayana Guru’s attitude towards idol worship. He wanted to elevate man to God, to sublimate idolatry to the pure level of abstract values, to lead the stem of devotion to the boundless ocean of Brahman, the changeless and imperishable ‘Tat Tvam Asi’ and ‘Aham Brahmasmi’.

The Guru considered temples as centres of purity and development. Temples could be a good stepping stone for a more serious search into the higher values of life. So he wanted temples to be clean and beautiful places where the people should come with clean bodies and minds.

Temples, in the perception of the Guru, are not merely places of worship. They have as well to serve as the focal point for the cultural advancement of the localities concerned. The Guru showed how the culture could be instrumental in leading them to higher wisdom through his installation of new temples. Each temple was to have an open area for the people to get
together formally and informally to discuss matters of higher values. This was to be supported by the addition of a library attached to the temple (Swamy Muni Narayana Prasad *Philosophy of Narayana Guru* 120).

Moorkoth Kumaran, one of the biographers of the Guru, says: “The temples as envisaged by the Guru should enrich the people culturally and financially through their attached groves, libraries, lecture halls, educational institutions and individual centres. Let the temple remain a centre of such activities. Let it be a means of social uplift both to those who have faith in idol worship and to those who do not have, each according to his own conviction” (Moorkath Kumaran 150).

The temples built by Sree Narayana Guru are different from other temples. Any rituals that will make the premises dirty are prohibited. The rituals prescribed by the Guru are simple enough for the common man to follow. Animal sacrifices are strictly forbidden. The priests in these temples are those who are trained at the Brahma- Vidyalayam of Sivagiri. Birth as Brahmin is not a necessary qualification. These temples are open to all irrespective of their caste and religion.

Through the installation of different deities he established the oneness of Reality that is the non-dual Reality. A symbol is a known idol representing the unknown idol. Different deities represent the symbols to reach the higher spirituality. The art of God symbolism helps both the literate and the illiterate. The illiterate derive at least some idea of the Supreme Truth through the
symbols which help them to maintain their ancient culture and heritage. As for
the literate the understanding of the inner significance of the symbols
established a greater conviction of the truth that they represent. The Guru knows
the importance of symbolic representation of the Gods. So he chooses to install
different deities in different temples.

SIVA TEMPLES

By the installation of the idol Siva, the Guru brings out the view that
there is only one Reality, the Brahman. The idol Siva represents the Arivu, the
knowledge. It is because of the superimposition that the people see the one
Brahman as different deities in different names and forms. Actually there is
only one Reality, the Absolute non-dual Brahman. All deities in his perception
are the manifestations of the one Brahman, the Arivu or the knowledge. This is
the view established by the Guru in installing the Siva idol. This is the same
view when he installed the idols of Subramanya, Ganapathy, Devi, Lamp and
AUM in different temples.

1. Aruvippuram Siva Installation - Trivandrum - 1888 March 12 (M.E
1063 Kumbam 29)

The installation of the Siva idol in Aruvippuram by Sree Narayana
Guru was an epoch-making event. In those days all people were not allowed to
enter the orthodox temples. Sree Narayana Guru realizing the seriousness of the
problem, pondered over it, and decided to have a new temple opens to all kinds of people without any caste-discrimination. The Guru installed the Siva idol in Aruvippuram on March 12, 1888 on a Sivarathri night.

The new temple marked the beginning of revolutionary changes in respect of the South Indian temple culture and marked the beginning of the end of casteism, in the south India. In those days it was the accepted practice that Brahmin priests alone had the right and authority to install idols in temples. But here a non-Brahmin that too from a backward community showed that he could do the job, on the strength of his spiritual wisdom. The Guru through this action has illustrated that not only Vedic knowledge, but also knowledge of the Absolute (Brahma-Jnanam) is not the monopoly of one caste, and it can be achieved by anyone of any caste. (Murkoth Kunhappa 25) This installation gave impetus to the consecration of other temples in different parts.

2. **Vakkom Deveswaram Temple – Trivandrum -1889 (M.E 1064)**

The second Siva temple is the Vakkom Deveswaram Temple. In this temple the Guru installed the Siva idol. This temple is also known as Puthen temple and Puthen Nada.

3. **Ayiramthengu Pattathil Temple – Kollam – 1892 (M.E 1067)**

In this temple the Guru installed the Siva idol.
4. **Kayikkara Sree Kapaleswara Temple – Trivandrum – 1893 (M.E 1068)**

In the year 1893 the Guru installed a Sivalingam in this temple and named the temple as Kapaleswara.

5. **Kulathoor Kolathukara Siva Temple – 1893 March 27 (M.E 1068 Meenam 13)**

In this temple the Guru installed the Sivalingam by replacing an old idol of Bhadrakali.


In this temple the Guru installed the Sivalingam. The Sivalingam was brought by the Guru from Aruvippuram.

7. **Moothakunnam Sree Narayana Mangalam Temple – Trivandrum – 1903 February 2 (M.E 1078 Makaram 20)**

The Guru installed the idol of Siva, Subrahmanya and Ganapathy in this temple.
8. Vezhapra Sree Sakhiparambu Temple – Alappuzha – 1905 March
   (M.E 1080 Meenam)

   The Guru installed the photo of Siva having moustache in the year 1905. The photo is still there without any damage.

   (M.E 1083 Kumbam 1)

   The Guru had apparently the Jagannath Temple at Puri in mind while naming the new temple as Jagannath Temple. The important ceremony here is ‘Ilaneerattam’ by which the tender coconut is sprinkled on the idol. In this temple the Guru installed the Siva idol in the middle, Ganapathy in the south west and Subramanya in the north west respectively.

10. Kumbalangi Ardhanariswara Temple – Ernakulam - 1908 February
    (M.E 1083 Kumbam)

    The Guru re-installed the old Durga Temple and named it as Ardhanariswara Temple. The Guru installed the idol of Ardhanariswara. He stopped the practice of animal sacrifice and such ceremonies which were prevalent there.

In this temple by the order of the Guru, Chaitanya Swamikal, the disciple of the Guru, had done the Shaddadhara Pratishta. The Sivalingam was installed by the Guru himself, and later on the temple was named by the Guru as Sreekanteswara.


In the last phase of the 19th century and the first phase of the 20th century the low caste people were prohibited to enter the so called upper caste Hindu temples in this district in Karnataka. The position of Karnataka in this matter was not different from that of Kerala. Billavas of South Karnataka had wanted a temple and they informed this matter to the Guru about it. By the order of the Guru, Chaitanya Swamikal took the direction for the construction of a temple in Kudroli. In February 1913 the Guru installed the Sivalingam. This had made a tremendous impact on the lives of the downtrodden people of Karnataka. This place became a model abode without any caste discrimination. The poojas here are done by the Malayalees in the Kerala style.

   In the year 1913 the Guru installed the idols of Siva, Subrahmanya and Ganapathy in this temple.


   On March 28, 1915 at midnight the Guru installed the Sivalingam in this temple. He also installed the idols of Ganapath and Subrahmanya in the south side and the north side of the temple respectively. The temple was named by the Guru as Jnaneswaram Temple.

15. **Palluruthi Sree Bhavaneeswaree Temple – Ernakulam - 1916 March 7 (M.E 1091 Kumbam 24)**

   On March 7, 1916, Sree Narayana Guru installed the Sivalingam. The Guru also installed the idols of Parvathi, Murukan, and Ganapathy in this temple as sub-deities.


   On February 28, 1916, the Guru visited the temple and removed the old Devi (BhadraKali) idol and installed the idol of Ardhanareeswara. He prohibited the practice of animal sacrifice in this temple.
17. **Kannur Sree Sundareswara Temple** - Kannur - 1916 April 11 (M.E 1091 Meenam 29)

The Guru installed the Siva idol in this temple and named it as Sree Sundareswara Temple.


In this temple the Guru installed the Sivalingam. and named it as Sree Maheswara Temple.

19. **Peringottukara Sree Somasekhara Temple** – Trichur - 1919 February 11 (M.E 1094 Kumbam 9)

This temple was built as a tomb on the 41st day of the death of Sivalinga Swamikal on February 11, 1919. In this temple the Guru installed the idol of Siva.

20. **Panavalli Srikanteswara Mahadeva Temple** – Alapuzha – 1922 May 30 (M.E 1097 Edavam 18)

In this temple the Guru installed the Sivalingam on May 30, 1922.

21. **Chernnamangalam Siva Temple** – Trivandrum - 1927 June 13 (M.E 1102 Edavam 30)

The Guru installed the idol of Siva in this temple.
SUBRAHMANYA TEMPLES


   There was a 200 year old Devi idol in the temple and the Guru replaced it and installed the idol of Subrahmanya. The temple is also known as Vakkom Velayudhan Nada. It is believed that this is the first Subrahmanya installation of the Guru.

2. **Vakkom Puthiyakavu Ananda Valliswaram Subrahmanian Temple - Trivandrum - 1888 (M.E 1063)**

   The Guru re-installed the old temple and installed the idol of Subrahmanya in this temple.


   A photo of Sastha (Ayyappa) inscribed on the wall was already there in the temple. When the photo of Sastha was damaged the re-installation of an idol became imperative. The Guru installed the idol of Subrahmanya in this temple. But the people mainly worship Sastha. So this temple is also known as Dharma Sastha Temple.
4. **Kunnumpara Sree Subrahmanya Temple – Trivandrum - 1896**  
December 2 (M.E 1071 Vrichikam 17)

The Guru installed the idol of Subrahmanya here in 1896. Here there are steps on the left side leading to Kunnumpara Sree Subrahmanya Temple, which the Guru had once described as the ‘Dakshina Palani’. The steps remind one of the steps to Palani Temple.

5. **Prakulam Sree Kumaramangalam Temple – Trivandrum – 1902**  
(M.E Meenam 1078)

This temple is widely known as the Manalil Temple. In this temple the Guru installed a lance, a photo and a silver idol of Subrahmanya. The Guru also installed the idol of Ganapathy as a sub-deity here.

6. **Kumarakam Sree Kumaramangalam Temple – Kotayam – 1905**  
March (M.E 1080 Meenam)

In this temple the Guru installed a lance and a photo of Subrahmanya. The place where the temple is situated is named by the guru as Sree Kumaramangalam.

7. **Cheraiy Sree Gowreeswara Temple – Ernakulam – 1912 January**  
22 (M.E 1087 Makaram 9)

On January 22, 1912 the Guru installed the idol of Subramanya in this temple. In the south side of the temple a Ganapathy idol, in the north a Devi idol
and in the west an idol of Siva were also installed. Thus the concept of the Siva family was made a reality in this temple.


There was a prayer hall and it was surrounded by the idols of snake. By the order of the Guru these idols were thrown in to the Aluva river and the prayer hall became a temple in 1921. The Guru installed a lance and a portrait of Subrahmanya in the temple.

GANAPATHY TEMPLE

1. Kottar Sree Pillayar Kovil –Tamil Nadu -1908 April 13 (M.E 1083 Medam 1)

The news of the Aruvippuram installation spread far and wide. When it is echoed in Kanyakumari, some devotees of the Gurudeva requested him to consecrate a temple for them. The Guru reached Kottar and installed the idols of Ganapathy and Subrahmanya on April 13, 1908. The Guru named the temple Pillayar Kovil.

DEVI TEMPLES

1. Mannanthala Devi Temple (Anandavalliswaram Temple) – Trivandrum – 1889 March 5 (M.E 1064 Kumbam 22)

The Guru installed the Devi idol in this temple. Before the installation there was an old Bhadrakali idol and animal sacrifice was an important
ceremony. The Guru removed the old idol and installed the Devi idol and stopped the practice of animal sacrifice.

2. **Kunninazhikathu Bhagavathi Temple** (Sree Narayana Bhuvaneswari Temple) – Kollam – 1894 (M.E 1064)

   The Guru installed the idol of Devi made of stone in 1894 in this temple. The place where the temple is situated is given by the Kunninazhikathu family. So this temple is also known as Kunninazhikathu Bhagavathi Temple.

3. **Sivagiri Sree Sarada Temple** – Trivandrum - 1912 April 30 (M.E 1087 Medam 18)

   The Guru dedicated a temple at Sivagiri exclusively to the Goddess of learning, Saraswathi. One of the other names for Goddess Saraswathi is Sarada and the Guru preferred this name. Hence this temple is known as Sarada Matt. This Mattt is situated in Varkala, which was famous as Dakshina Kashi from time immemorial (Moorkoth Kumaran 139).

   While the temples in other places were erected by the Guru at the request of the people, the Sarada Mutt and a school Vaidika Vidyalaya near Sarada Mutt were the Guru’s own creations. The Sarada Temple is octagonal in shape with eight windows that let in a flood of light and fresh air – a departure from traditional temple architecture. The image of Sarada Devi is a lovely statue imbedded inside the lotus of marble. There are no offerings of food, no
festivals, no processions, and no worships there. The devotees can have darsana of Sarada Devi, pay respects to the goddess, sing hymns, or be lost in meditation. The Sarada Temple is the symbol of the Guru’s message “educate and be enlightened”.

By the consecration of Sarada and prescribing only meditation and recitation of hymns as rituals of worship, the Guru was practically elevating the common man towards the higher level.

Instead of installing deities like Siva, Subrahmanya, Ganapathy and Devi there are other kinds of installations done by the Guru. They are.

1. **The Karamukku Temple – Trichur -1921 May 13 (M.E 1096 Edavam 2)**

The Karamukku Temple at Trichur marks a turning point in the Guru’s idol installations. The Guru installed a burning lamp, reciting the famous mantra ‘Tamaso ma jyothir gamaya’, thus giving practical expression to the ancient Upanishadic prayer at this temple.

When a lamp is lit, we feel the presence of the spirit more strongly. No auspicious function is conducted without a lighted lamp. This is followed by almost all religions.

When the people wanted something more in the temple, then the Guru suggested it would be better to keep the portraits of great men all around the light.
3. Murukkumpuzha Temple – Trivandrum - 1923 February 5 (M.E 1097 Danu 8)

In Murukkumpuzha there was as old Kali Temple and animal sacrifice was prevalent. The Guru stopped this practice and re-installed the temple. In the Murukkumpuzha Temple the Guru placed a bronze plate with “Aum” written in the middle and the words Satyam (truth), Dharmam (duty), Daya (Compassion), Sneham (love), etched on it. Anything would do, if it helps you to concentrate, was the idea behind this action. The greater the noble thought which a symbol evokes, the greater is the effect (Koyikkal K. Jacob 153).


In Kalavangodam there was an old Devi temple. When the re-installation of this temple became imperative the Guru came there by the request of some devotees. In the Kalavangodam Temple the Guru asked the devotees to get him a mirror. When the mirror was brought, an artist was instructed to erase the mercury coating at the back of the mirror, so as to project the letter “Aum” in the front. Thus ‘Aum’ became the idol in this temple (Murkoth Kunhappa 37).

The word ‘Aum’ has got supreme significance in the Hindu religion. The Kathopanishad says: “That word which all the vedas declare, which all austerities proclaim and on which men concentrate when they lead the life of a
religious student – that word I tell you briefly is “Aum”. According to the Mandukya Upanishad “The past, the present and the future all this is only the syllable Aum. And whatever else there is that transcends the three – fold time – that too is only the syllable Aum”.

5. **Ullala Omkareswara Temple – Kotyam - 1927 June 25 (M.E 1102 Midunam 11)**

In the Ullala Omkareswara Temple the Guru installed a mirror with the inscription of *Aum*. The mirror by its truthful reflection, always reminds us that as we are, so are our Gods too. God lives not in temples but in the hearts of the good people.

The mirror installation reflects the Guru’s deep insight and extraordinary foresight. He was actually evolving an evolutionary process in idol installations. Through this process, he demonstrated that worship is a psychological principle and that the effect of worship depends not on what a person worships but how he worships.

The activity of the Guru’s temple installation can be summed as: “A seeker begins his religious pursuit with the worship of God in idols; he gradually ascends to the sphere of great effulgent light; he reflects truth, kindness, peace etc in his life; finally he experiences Supreme Truth, which is “*Aum*”, shining like the sun in the soul, like the reflection in a mirror.”
STOTRA WORKS OF NARAYANA GURU

While installing the deities in the temples the Guru wrote hymns (stotra) to praise these Gods. These stotras are not indicating any particular deity, but it helps the aspirant to reach the highest realm of spirituality. The stotra works of Narayana Guru given by Swami Muni Narayana Prasad in his work Philosophy of Narayana Guru are given below.

Vināyaka Astakam: Eight verses on Vinayaka or Ganapathy.

In this song of praise, the Guru visualises Vinayaka, symbolically representing the Absolute as the one adored by both God and man.

Sri Vāsudeva Astakam: Eight verses on Vasudeva or Vishnu.

Vishnu is seen as a yogi with a well balanced state of existence, while at the same time, he is attributed with all the mythologically accepted qualities.

Vishnu Astakam: Eight verses on Vishnu.

Here, Vishnu is adored in his traditionally worshipped form. The supplicant thinks of himself as a humble servant to Vishnu, a concept very dear to the Vaisnavites.

Sri Krishna Darsanam: A vision of Sri Krishna.

This work is an extemporaneous exposition of the ecstatic vision.
**Siva Prasada Panchakam**: Five verses on the grace of Siva.

In this prayer the Guru praises Siva’s graceful willingness to safeguard those who suffer from the infatuations of lust and other aspects of the material world.

**Sadasiva Darsanam**: A vision of the Eternal Siva.

This work praises Siva as the cause of the phenomenal world, as well as our saviour from all its miseries.

**Siva Satakam**: One hundred verses on Siva.

These hundred verses are a revelatory head-to-foot description of the symbolic figure of Siva. A high degree of intimacy is constantly maintained between the Guru and the deity. In this prayer, he prays to Siva, the destroyer of kāma, to save him from the temptation of lust.

**Ardhanarishwara Stavam**: A hymn to the Androgynous Siva.

This hymn was written when Southern India was severely gripped by the effects of an unprecedented drought. In this prayer the Guru humorously rebuke Siva for letting the people suffer for want of water whilst he carries all the water in his matted hair.

**Mananatitam**: Beyond comprehension.

A hymn of ten verses praises Siva mainly as the destroyer of kama.
Cijjada Chintanam: Reflections on mind and matter.

In this work the Guru makes it clear that the difference between mind and matter are but two apparent manifestations of the one Absolute Reality, represented here by Siva.

Kundalini Pattu: Song of kundalini snake.

A song praising Siva and addressed to one’s own mind conceived as a dancing snake.

Indriya Vairagyam: Detachment from the pleasure of the senses.

This composition of ten verses describes how one can finally visualize Siva both outside and inside, by internalising one’s own perception.

Prapancha Sristi: The creation of the world.

The praising of Siva in ten verses depicts how the illusory appearance of this objective world and the subjective aspect that perceives it all have their source in the one body of Siva.

Kolatriesa Stavam: Hymn to kolatriesa.

Praising the deity of Siva installed by the Guru at the Kolathukara Siva temple in Kulathur near Trivandrum. In this prayer the Guru prays to Siva to bless him with an ideally happy life, within the vicinity of His abode, free from all sufferings.
**Svānubhava Giti** : The lyric revelation of the realized Self.

This is the song of one hundred verses. It is a free flowing song in which the figure of Siva surfaces frequently.

**Pinda Nandi** : Foetal Gratitude.

The Guru praises Siva as the one who protects the embryo while it remains helpless in the darkness of the mother’s womb. This is a unique but realistic concept of the protective role of God.

**Chitambara Astakam** : Eight verses on mental space.

This is a prayer in praise of the Sivalingam. The Reality represented by the lingam is praised equally by all Gods and men, thus transcends the limits of all the world. At the same time, it is perceived in the boundless space of one’s own mind.

**Tevara Patikankal** : Five songs of praising Siva.

Five songs praising Siva, resembling those of the great Saiva saints such as Nalvar.

**Devi Stavam** : A hymn to Devi.

The Mother Goddess is visualized as the embodiment of the final silence - the culmination of all wisdom teaching. The supplicant prays to Devi to breathe into him the secret of silence of which she is the essence. It is explained in this work that all beings, including the Guru, are mirage-like and deceptive. The only way to achieve any satisfaction in life is to become aware of the need to be one with Devi.
**Mannantala Devi Stavan** : A hymn to praise Devi.

The Guru wrote this when he installed the deity of Devi at Mannanthala Devi Temple. There is nothing that is impossible to Devi, and when one realizes that such a Devi exists within oneself nothing is felt impossible.

**Kali Natakam** : The dance dream of Kali.

This song is in praise of Kali, the Mother Goddess. Her cosmic dance of momentarily changing moods, presents itself in the form of an ever-changing world and its life.

**Janani Navaratna Manjari** : A nine gemmed bouquet on the Mother.

This prayer song was written when the foundation stone for the Sarada Temple at Sivagiri was laid by the Guru. It addresses the Mother as the personification of wisdom. This is a hymn; its contents elucidate Vedanta in a highly melodious diction.

**Bhadrakali Astakam** : Eight verses on Bhadrakali.

Describing Bhadrakali, the most auspicious Goddess with a dark external appearance in her different moods.

**Devi Pranama Devyastakam** : Eight verses paying obeisance to Devi. The Guru describes Devi’s changing moods in different context, all symbolizing various aspects of the one all supporting the creative principle.

**Shanmukha Stotram** : A hymn to Shanmukha, the six-headed God.

This is a prayer song in praise of Subrahmanya.
Shanmukha Dasakam: Ten verses on Shanmukha.

This is a highly poetical and symbolic head-to-foot description of Subrahmanya's figure.

Shanmatura Stavam: Hymn on Shanmatura, the six Mother-Gods.

This consists of nine alternative verses praising Subrahmanya in his different moods.

Subramanya Kirtanam: A hymn to praise Subrahmanya.

A touch of revision given to some notion prevailing in the Vedanta and yoga systems is apparent in this work.

Navamanjari: A bouquet of nine verses.

It describes the different moods of Subrahmanya, each in one way or other, providing a source of relief to the humble.

Guha Astakam: Eight verses on Guha, Subrahmanya.

This is a description of the different moods of Subrahmanya as seen by the Guru.

Bahuleya Astakam: Eight verses on Bahuleaya or Subrahmanya.

How subrahmanya could be conceived in the Vedantic context with all the mythological anecdotes given their due places and depicted in a seemingly Tantric style, is exemplified by the Guru through this work (Swami Muni Narayana Prasad The Philosophy of Narayana Guru 128-34).
Though the Guru had built some temples, it doesn’t mean that he is the lover of the Hindu religion. He had no bias towards any religion. In 1916 the Guru made an open declaration that he had no specific relation with any religion and that he had not established any particular religion. It does not mean that the Guru’s attitude was irreligious. On the contrary, he always remains a lover of the truly Universal Religion, the human religion, with its external obligation of morality. He once said, “Religion is a matter of mind. All religions embody the truth. I have no relation with any current religions. I established some temples in accordance with the desire of some Hindu devotees, who approached me for such consecration. I am ready to do with the same for Christian and Muslim devotees, if they express a similar desire (Address of Narayana Guru at Pattathanam inaugurating the opening of a building).

Having established a number of temples and thereby deified orthodoxy and brought a degree of self-respect to the lower castes, he changed the emphasis and said that the building of temples should not be encouraged. The belief of the people in temples is decreasing. It is possible that they might regret the expenditure on temple building as waste of money. Times have changed that much. However, the people may not agree with this view and they are told now that temples are not necessary. If they are particular let them have public contribution. A temple helps to inculcate cleanliness. Time was, when it was hoped that the people, irrespective of caste, could be brought together in a common place of worship. But experience has proved otherwise. Temples underline the difference between castes. Hereafter, efforts should be towards
educating people. Let them have knowledge According to the Guru, knowledge is power and it is through knowledge that gave the power to claim intellectual superiority.

The Guru was aware of the fact that lack of education was the main cause of man’s inability to face problems in life, of many of the social and personal evils, of social segregation and also of low standards of living conditions. He therefore, gave much importance to people getting educated. If Kerala is today the most educationally advanced state in India it is partly because of this passionate advocacy of education for the masses by Narayana Guru.
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