Chapter IV
RELIGIOUS PHILOSOPHY OF SREE NARAYANA GURU: SOCIAL ASPECT

4.1 SOCIAL STRATIFICATION IN KERALA IN NINETEENTH CENTURY

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

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

¹ E.M.S. Nabutiripad, Keralam Malayalikalute. (Kozhikode: Mathrubumi) p. 57
the temples controlled by the upper castes. They had to stand at some distance away from the temples and caste Hindus. There were untouchability, unapproachability and even unseeability. Some people believed that the low caste people were not to be seen by the Brahmins when they had to be specially pure. This horrid caste system brings in to light how the upper castes enjoyed life in its fullest manner. Society was moulded for the convenience of the upper castes and majority of men and women were deprived of normal life activities. It was at this time of misery that Guru was born and saved the out caste Keralites from tangles of pernicious habits and choking diehard prejudices.

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

The wandering sanyasin became Sree Narayana Guru and went to Aruvipuram, twenty-five kilometres south of Trivandrum from where he inaugurated his programme of action. The imperative need of the people for a centre of worship was fulfilled by him by the installation of Śivalinga on 10th February 1888 – the Śivarāthri day of the year. This
action became a milestone in the history of India's spiritual emancipation, and this news of silent revolution echoed to the far-flung frontiers of India. A group among the highest branch of Brahmins alone had the divine right to install an idol and consecrate it. And yet an Ezhava was performing this most sacred of sacred ceremonies and knocking out the very bottom of the caste system. When a Brahmin asked the Guru what right he had as an Ezhava to consecrate an idol of Lord Siva, the Guru replied humorously that the idol that he consecrated was not a Brahmin Šiva. This reply of fanciful wit silenced the orthodox objector. We see him defending in this manner throughout his life. "The whole of Kerala nay the world at large, this holy man conceived as a model abode where human values prevailed, love and brotherhood flourished. And his life long effort was to egg his fellow mortals on to undertake this noble task of building everywhere oases of peace, prosperity and progress." With this act of consecration a new era dawned in Kerala. The Pratihṣṭa (Consecration of the idol) was a silent but stern challenge to the age-long taboos. This daring act was a great success. His move was not against anything but for something. It is this constructive approach which brought in the best result with moderate effort and with least ill will. The Guru was aware of the universalism and sense of equality of the true Hindu faith. Therefore he attempted to reform its popular form from within with a view to raising it again to its purity and grandeur.

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

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

4.11 THE REFORMATION OF WORSHIP

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

³ ibid., p.187
Śakti. Mādan and Muthappan were earlier forms of Lord Śiva. Animal sacrifice was still existing. It continued till the right leader led them out of the ‘Slough of Despond’. In Sree Narayana Guru, people found a true savior and path finder. He took over their leadership. In many places he unseated the gods whose names had association with the killing of birds and consumption of liquor. He replaced them by idols of Śiva, Subrahmania and Gaṇeṣh, and instituted poojas of the type performed in temples dedicated to them.

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

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

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

Sree Narayana Guru was against building temples in the old manner, spending a lot of money. Money should not be lavished on festivals, fire-works and such other items. He wanted houses of God to be clean, airy, well-ventilated places where people met and mingle freely and without inhibition. People could assemble there with ease and listen with comfort to dissertations on religion and other topics. The temples should be abodes of Truth and Love. Rituals in temples should be cut down, they have to be simple and solemn. He also preferred the worship of deities who represented humane and benevolent aspects of godhead as well as man. In most of the temples, he had consecrated Hindu Gods in the old orthodox Hindu style. Every temple should have gardens around it. There should be schools and Technical schools too as ancillaries to these temples. The money received, as offerings should be
spent for the benefit of the people. Bathing cubides with overhead pipes were preferable and he was against digging tanks as adjuncts to temples because temple tanks are very rarely kept clean. The Guru did not abolish idol worship altogether. After Aruvippuram prathishta he began consecrating temples after temple. He made provisions for schools and reading rooms in these holy precincts. The teaching of sanscrit language and the vedic texts denied to non-Brahmins were provided for. He also encouraged the learning of English.

4.111 IMPORTANCE OF IMAGE-WORSHIP

Some people criticized the Hindu view of idolatry or image worship. Sree Narayana Guru was of the opinion that image worship is found helpful in the religious life of some and it is also a hindrance than a help to yet others. In Hinduism there is room for both these classes of men. Image worship is only a means to an end. Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa was a standing refutation of all the eloquent diatribes against image worship. “It was through his intense devotion in the early stages to the image of the Divine Mother in the temple at Dakshineswar that he attained his realisation. In the words of his disciple, Swami Vivekananda, to say that image worship is sinful is like saying that childhood is sinful. And if men like Sankara, Chaitanya and Ramakrishna
Paramahamsa found image worship helpful in their religious lives, there may be millions of their countrymen who will find them equally helpful.\footnote{D.S. Sharma, *Hinduism Through the Ages.* (Bombay: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 1973) p. 142}

A yogi has no need for idol as an aid for concentration, but illiterate people require them as steps to rise towards spirituality. And so the Guru provided them with what they yearned for. As the Gītā puts it:

Let no enlightened men unsettle the minds of ignorant men who are attached to their work. Himself doing all works with good faith, he should make others do as well.

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

\begin{quote}
"The highest is oneness with God
The next, silent meditation and understanding
The third step is worship of idol
The fourth, pilgrimage and performance of Homas (Sacrifices)"
\end{quote}

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

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

\footnote{Moorkoth Kunhappa, *Sree Narayana Guru.* (New Delhi: National Book Trust, 1982) p. 31}
nine long years of training in *Mantras* (spell), *Tantra* (musical formula for attaining supernatural powers), *Śāstras* (scriptures), *Vedas, Upanishads and Ādhyātmic* (spiritual) philosophy. This educational system is aimed at making each priest a well-oriented personality deeply well versed in religious doctrines.

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

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

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

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

During his travels the Guru established many temples and performed many installation ceremonies. Śiva and Subrahmaṇia were the principal deities. These temples can be found from Manglore to Kanyakumary. The Guru advised the people to reduce the temple ceremonies to the minimum. Temples should be models of cleanliness and seats of devotion. Every temple should be a spiritual centre inspiring men's varied activities for raising the low, for helping the poor, for comforting the sick, for refining the life of the high and the low, for encouraging art and literature. Let religion and religious institution en-
noble and enrich life in all beneficial ways and unite their followers in common joys, work and ideals. It does not matter what a man's religion is, provided the grows in virtue, was a familiar saying of the Guru.

About Guru's temple building activity Dr. Palpu said, "Temples and Mutts have been of great help for the progress of this (Thiyya) community. Such institutions have not only catered to the religious needs of the people, but they also have enthused them in many kinds of good deeds. Through their help, people differing in social position and character have become united with a sense of equality. Thus feelings of brotherhood and mutual love have been engendered in them. Temples have been helpful in making ordinary people act with rectitude and a sense of morality. These are verily institutions, which propagate religion as well as moral conduct. They are also intended to give craft based and specialized kind of education and training. The community's resources are conserved by them to be utilized for it's well being as well as progress. These institutions owned by them have become the means to assert the self-respect of this community, which has been thoroughly ruined by long years of social persecution. These temples are intended to be accessible to members of all castes, lower as well as higher. As a result of that those persons who really need this kind of opportunity will be much more benefited. That is why it has been so decided."
The temples he established are throughout the length and breadth of Kerala and in a few places in Tamil Nadu as well as Sri Lanka. His influence and impact continues to be felt through these temples, memorials and statues of the Guru and they still survive and become his message to the people. Temples are necessary for the purification of mind and body. “When you visit temples, do think of God not of idol.” This was the answer given by the Guru to the people who opposed idol worship as it encouraged superstition. Then the Guru reached a stage when he sought to dissuade idol worship like in Islam, Judaism and Protestant Christianity where there is no idol worship. Amongst the temples he established four temples stand out by the uniqueness of their prathishtas. They are Kalavamgodam Temple (Mirror prathishta with the sacred symbol of AUM), Sree Chithambara Temple at Karamukku (Lighted Lamp), Murukkumpuzha Temple (Slab with the word – Satyam, Dharmam, Daya, Sneham) and Vecchur Ullala Temple (Mirror). In these temples the conventional idol was dispensed with.

Guru's field of action and Temples consecrated

1. Śiva Temple at Aruvippuram
2. Gokaranath Temple at Mangalore.
3. Sree Sundareswara Temple at Kannur.
5. Sreekanteswara temple at Kozhikode.
7. Maheswara Temple at Kurkanjeri.
8. Somasekhara Temple at Peringottumkara.
9. Sree Narayanamagalam Temple at Moothakunnam.
12. Sreekanteswara Temple at Panavally.
17. Ananda Shanmugha Temple at Edappally.
22. Kapaleswara Temple at Kayikkara.
25. Sidheswara Temple at Chengannur.
27. Śiva Temple at Ayiramthengu.
29. Vakkom Velayudhan Nada at Chirayankizhu.
31. Sree Jñāneswara temple at Anjuthengu.
32. Arthanareeswara Temple at Kadakkavur.
33. Anandavalleswari Temple at Mannanthala.
34. Kolathumkara Śiva Temple at Kulathoor.
35. Arath Subrahmaṇya Temple at Kayikkara.
36. Sree Nayinar Deva Temple at Arumannur.
37. Subhrahmaṇya Temple at Muttakkatt.
38. Gaṇapathy Temple at Kollar.
40. Sree Chitambara Temple at Karamukku.
41. Kalakandeswara Temple at Murukkumpuzha.
42. Temple at Kalavangodam.
43. Ullala Aumkareswara Temple at Vechoor.
44. Śarada Madom at Sivagiri.
45. Advaita Asramam at Alwaye.

4.IV.1 Śiva Temple at Aruvipuram

Aruvippuram is a beautiful place on the banks of the river Neyyār near Neyyattinkara town 25 kms. south to Trivandrum. Śiva Temple at Aruvipiram is the first temple consecrated by the Guru. The Guru installed a Śivalinga (phallus) on the pedestal on the eastern bank of the
river Neyyar at 3’O clock in the morning on February 10\textsuperscript{th} Śivarathri day in 1888. He consecrated it and performed abhisheka (holy bathing of the idol) in the presence of hundreds. The crowd gathered there rent the midnight air with \textit{panchakshara mantra} and traditional temple music. The first consecration made by the Guru was an epoch making event in the history of Kerala where colossal disparities and grave injustice were perpetuated in the name of caste. Later on a temple was built where the idol was installed and the Guru’s famous message was engraved in granite in the temple premises.

‘Devoid of dividing walls
Of caste or race
Or hatred of rival faith
We all live here
In brotherhood
Such know this place to be!
This model foundation.’\textsuperscript{7}

Prof. M.N. Vijayan Commended that these are the most beautiful slogan in the world.\textsuperscript{8}

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


\textsuperscript{8} Desabhimani Varanthapathippu – 19.11.2000, p. 1
in to the Mutt were taught tantric practices and philosophy. In course of time a regular sanctum and a hall were built at Aruvipuram through local effort. A committee known as ‘temle sabha’ was also formed to manage the regular income of the temple. A society with eleven share holders was registered in 1899 to manage the affaires of the temple. The society later expanded as an organisation known as Sree Narayana Dharma Paripalana Yogam (S.N.D.P. Yogam). This organisation was founded for the propagation of the religion of Sree Narayana Guru.

The devotional hymn ‘Śiva Śataka’ in Malayalam was written by the Guru in connection with the installation of Śīvalinga at Aruvipuram.

4.IV.2 Gokarmanath Temple at Mangalore

This temple is also known as Thirpatheeswara Temple. Gokarmanath temple was set up at the request of the Billavas or Thulu Thiyyar of Mangalore area. The Guru laid the foundation stone for the temple in January 1908. A collection box was installed at the site and within four years the construction of the temple was completed. It is a replica of Thirpatheeswaran to avoid the pilgrimage to far away Thiruppathi and wasting their resources. The aim of the Guru was to stop ostentatious and expensive ceremonies and rituals in temples, and advises them to save money and invest it in socially useful work like running schools, libraries and the like. He assured the people that they would get all the spiritual benefits if they worshiped at the local shrine.
The Guru enthroned the idol Śivalinga in the temple on 21st February 1912. It was said that the Śivalinga was brought from Kashi. Besides Śivalinga, the idols of deities Krishṇa, Gaṇesha, Shanmugha and Annapūrṇēswary were installed in separate Kovils. This is the only temple consecrated by the Guru in Karnataka state.

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

4.IV.3 Sree Sundareswara Temple at Kannur

The temple is at Talap, a small village in Kannur. In 1907 (on 28th Makaram 1088 M.E.) a committee named Sree Bhakti Samvardhini Samithi was organised under the leadership of Cheruviri Karunakaran. He was also the president of the committee in connection with the consecration of the temple. The Guru laid the foundation stone on 11th January 1908 and the construction of the temple building was done under the guidance of Sri. Chaitanya Swamikal. The Guru installed the idol Śivalinga on 11th April 1916 (Meenam 1091 M.E.). The Guru suggested the name Sundareswara Temple. As its very name implies
the site where the temple is situated and the engravings on the walls of
the temple are very beautiful. In this temple the daily *poojas* are
performed five times a day and an annual festival of eight days starts on
*Pooyam* star in the month of *Meenam*. *Sree Narayana Guru Jayanthi,
Mahasamadhi, Navarathri, Mandala Pooja, Chaithanya Swamy
Samadhi, Mahaśivarathri, Ilaneerattam, Śivagiri Theerthadanam,
Amavāsi Tharppaṇam, Karthika Vilaku* and *Deepavali* are being
celebrated in this temple. The idol of the goddess *Pārvathi*, god
*Gaṅapathi, Sri Subrahmanya, Sri Śastha* and *Navagrahangal* are
installed in small buildings in the temple premises. This temple is under
the control of *Sri Bhakthi Samvardhini Samithi*. *Sree Narayana Vidya
Mandir* senior secondary school, *Sree Narayana I.T.C.*, *Sree Narayana
working women’s Hostel* and *Sree Narayana Ladies Hostel* are
fuctioning under the *Samithi*. *Sri Chaithanya Swamikal*, one of the most
beloved disciples of the Guru, laid into *samadhi* in this temple. His
samadhi mandiram is built adjacent to the temple.

4.4V.4 Jagannath Temple at Thalassery

Thalassery is a small town in Kannur district. This temple is
about 4 kms. south of Thalassery town. Kumaranasan, the famous
poet, the direct disciple of the Guru and general secretary of S.N.D.P.
Yogam, visited Thalassery in 1905. He met many Thiyya leaders of that
locality and explained to them that the Guru had recognised temples as
one of the means of rejuvenating the community and founding a temple at Thalasserry would be quite relevant. The leaders decided to have a Śiva Temple at this place and a committee named Jñānodayam Yogam was organised. Kottiyath Ramunni laid the foundation stone for the temple in Asan’s presence in 1906. A collection box was installed at the site and within a year the collection was announced to Rs.7568/-. The consecration of the temple building was done under the supervision of Chaitanya Swamikal. The Thiyya of North Malabar under the leadership of Kottiyath Ramunni and Moorkoth Kumaran had completed the construction of the temple by the beginning of 1908. The installation of the idol Śiva was performed by the Guru on 13th February 1908 and christened the temple as Jagannath temple. The famous Jagannath Temple at Puri in Orissa is unique in the sense that it has always been open to all castes. By giving that name the Guru impressed upon his disciples the absurdity and irrationality of caste. In front of the huge gathering the Guru announced his decision that “Pulayas can be admitted inside the temple.” The Guru threw the temple open to all depressed classes.

The temple building is decorated with beautiful carvings. A statue of the Guru made of panchloha was installed by Bodhananda Swamikal, one of the disciples of the Guru, in the northern side of the temple premises on 13th March 1927 under the aegis of Moorkoth Kumaran.
This is the first statue of the Guru. It was made in Italy by Professor C. Thavarli, an Italian.

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

Dharmadam Cornation Basic School, South Vayalam U.P. School, Sree Jagannatha Industrial Training Centre, Sri Jñānodaya Yogam Working Women’s Hostel, English Medium School at temple gate and Kuthuparamba, Sree Narayana Printing and Publishing Company and Sri Janodaya Vanitha Sangham are functioning under the Jñānodaya Yogam of this temple. The president of this Jñānodaya Yogam is Sri. K.P. Ratnakaran. Sri. Balagopala Mattom, Śiva Vishṇu Vairi Khathaka temple at Chavassery, Sree Narayana Mattom at Kadamboor, Gaṇapathy Kovil at temple gate, Veeravan Cheri Annapoorneswari temple at Thikkoti and three acre plot are there under the Jñānodaya Yogam.
4.IV.5 Sreekanteswara Temple at Kozhikode

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

4.IV.6 Yakkara Visweswara Temple at Palakkad

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

The annual festival for seven days is being celebrated in the month of Meenam. Festival ends on full moon day. A committee of forty
members elected from different regions of Palakkad district governs the administration of the temple. An executive body of nine members elected from the committee, deals with the day-to-day activities.

4.IV.7 Maheswara Temple at Koorkanchery

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

4.IV.8 Somasekhara Temple at Peringottumkara

Peringottumkara is situated on the banks of the river Ponnani and southwest to Trichur taluk. Majority of the people is Ezhavas. This is the oldest temple consecrated by the Guru in old Kochi State. The deity of the temple is Śiva and the Guru installed the idol of the deity on Thursday, 9th Kumbham 1094 M.E. Somasekhara temple is under the control of 'Sree Narayana Swamy Smaraka Samajam'. Sri Vidyananda Swamikal governed the temple for thirteen years. The festival of the temple starts on Chothi star in the month of Kumbham. This is one of the
famous festivals in Trichur district. A primary school and a Sanskrit school are working under the Samājam.

4.IV.9 Sree Narayananamangalam Temple at Moothakunnan

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

4.IV.10 Gowreeswara Temple at Cherayi, Ernakulam

Cherayi is in Pallipuram village in old Kochi. The installation of the idol of this temple was on 9th Avittam day Makaram 1087 M.E. (1912). An inter dining was conducted by Sahodaran Ayyappan a disciple of the Guru, in this temple. This temple which is also known as 'Malayalapazhani' is a great cultural centre. The festival of this temple is very famous. The deity of this temple is Devi. The temple is under the control of the Vijñānavaradhini Sabha. It was organised on 1st Meenam 1063 M.E. After the installation ceremony the Guru exhorted the people
gathered there that an educational aid fund must be started to endow the poor for their higher education. He added that the rich people must start and promote industries in the state and if one could not spend the whole money two or more could start industries in co-operative basis or companies.

4.IV.11 Sree Bhavāneeswara Maha Temple at Palluruthy

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

As per the instructions of the Guru, the Ezhavas of Palluruthy and nearby places formed as organisation called Sree Dharma Paripalana Yogam in 1081 M.E. The Maharaja of Cochin gave permission to build a temple for Ezhavas in Palluruthy on 21st March 1907. Thus a temple was consecrated and an idol of Śivalinga was installed by the Guru on the 24th Kumbham 1091 M.E. (1916). On that day the Guru laid a foundation stone for a school adjacent to the temple. This is the S.N.D.P. School in which now there are almost 6000 students. Annual festival for tendays starts on Bharani day and ends on Uthram day. The Guru conducted intercaste marriages and interdining in this temple. Mahatma Gandhi visited this temple on 6th Makaram 1109 M.E.
Today there are almost 4000 members in Palluruhy Sree Dharma Paripalana Yogam. Each member has to perform *Nitya Pooja* once in a year.

4.IV.12 Sreekanteswara Temple at Panavally

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

4.IV.13 Ardhnareeswra Temple at Illikkal Kumbalangi

The deity of this temple is Ardhanāreeswara. The installation of idol was performed by the Guru on *Rohini* day in the month of *Meenam* 1084 M.E. (May 1908). The temple is governed by the temple *sabha* called *Vijñāna Pradayini Samajam* which has more than thousand families as members. Annual festival is being conducted in the month of
Meenam. It starts on Rohini day and ends on Uttram. The Harijans are allowed to adore and worship here. A mutt called Sree Narayana Guru Matt was constructed here by Narasimha Swamikal and the inauguration of that mutt was done by the Guru in 1103 M.E. The temple sabha has a school and a playground. On advice of the Guru, Nedungayil Narayana Thandar conducted an inter dining for 300 people on 24th Vrishikam 1103 M.E. People belonging to different castes and communities participated in it; Ezhavas, Pulayas and educated Christians were there with Sahodaran Ayyappan.

4.IV.14 Sreekumaramangalam Subrahmaṇya Temple at Kumarakam

This Subrahmaṇya temple is at Kottayam district. The temple is situated on the banks of lake Kumarakam. The deity of this temple is Subrahmaṇya and idol of this deity was installed by the Guru in 1080 M.E. (1904). Harijans are also permitted to worship here. Annual festival for five days starts on Pooyan day of the month of Kumbham. Administration of the temple is under the control of Sree Kumaramangalam Devaswam Board. People of Kumarakam celebrate Sree Narayana Guru Jayanti Kumarakam Vallamkali on Chatayam day every year in memory of the Guru’s visit to Kumarakam in 1904.
4.IV.15 Bālasubrahmaṇya Temple at Parlikkad

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

4.IV.16 Ananda Bhutheswara Temple at Mezhuveli

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

4.1V.17 Ananda Shanmuga Temple at Edappady

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

4.1V.18 Subrahmanya Temple at Poonjar

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

4.1V.19 Sree Kumaramangalam Temple at Prakulam

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

Sree Kumaramangalam temple was consecrated in 1078 M.E. (1903) by Neelakantan, the son of Pillamattu Vadakkathil Chattan Kunju.
The Guru installed the idol of the deity Gaṇapathy and a Photograph and a silver idol of Subrahmaṇya. A lance was also kept there and he himself lighted a lamp in front of the idol. He told the people gathered there that, now the lance is enough, in future there will be a big temple and the idol in this place. Annual festival for ten days is being conducted in the month of Kumbham. The temple festival is famous for its Kettukazhcha the procession of elephants and horses with the trappings. Hindus and non-Hindus take part in this procession.

4.IV.20 Velayudha Mangala Temple at Anjalummood

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

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

4.IV.21 Sreevallabheswara Temple at Poothotta

This temple is at Poothotta, a small village about 25 km. South to
Kochi town. This place Poothotta is the confluence of three districts – Ernakulam, Kottayam and Alappuzha. This village is surrounded by Vembanattukayal (lake) in the west, Konathupuzha (river) in the east and the confluence of river Konathu and Vembanattukayal in the south. This place is rich in natural beauty. The deity of this temple is Vallabheswara (Śiva) and the idol was installed by the Guru on 10th Kumbham 1068 M.E. (20th February 1893 A.D.). This temple is under the control of S.N.D.P. Yogam. The educational institutions like High School, Higher Secondary School, Vocational Higher Secondary School, Nursery Training School and Industrial Training Centre are also functioning there.

4.IV.22 Kapaleswara Temple at Kayikkara

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

4.IV.23 Velikkatt Karthikeya Temple at Prakkulam

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

4.IV.24 Subrahmanaṭya Temple at Chemmanathumkara

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

4.IV.25 Siddheswara Temple at Chengannoor

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

4.IV.26 Kunninezhath Bhagavathy Temple at Karunagappally

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

4.IV.27 Śiva Temple at Ayiramthengu

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

4.IV.28 Puthan Nada Deveswara Temple at Vakkom

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

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

This temple is in Vakkom Panchayath of Chirayinkeezhu taluk which is in Thiruvananthapuram district. This place is surrounded by Anjuthengu Kayal. Vakkom Kayikkara road (Kochu Pappu Tharakan Road) which runs through the central part of Vakkom, divides this region into two - northern and southern regions of Vakkom. The three temple including Vakkom Velayudhan Kovil consecrated by the Guru, are in the North Vakkom. Vakkom Velayudhan Kovil is also known as Vakkom Subrahmanya temple. This is the first Subrahmanya temple
consecrated by the Guru. Annual festivals are not conducted here. But the youths of this place use to conduct seminar and gifts of food in this temple.

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

4.IV.30 Ananda Valleswara Temple at Puthiyakavu

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

4.IV.31 Sree Jñāneswara Temple at Anjuthengu

Anjuthengu is a small village which is about 2 km to Kadakkavoor. Majority of the people are Roman Catholics. The remaining majority are Hindus. The deity of this temple is Jñāneswara (Śiva). The Guru
installed the idol of Śiva on 15th Meenam 1090 M.E.(1915 A.D.). Annual festival starts on Makam in the month of Kumbham. A committee of elected members from this village, governs the day today activities of the temple. The Guru started a Bhajana Mutt also in Anjuthengu.

4.IV.32 Arthanāreeswara Temple at Kadakkavoor

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

4.IV.33 Ananthavalleswara Temple at Mannanthala

This temple is at Mannanthala, 6 km north east to Thiruvananthapuram. The deity of the temple is Devi and the idol was consecrated by the Guru on Revathi day 22nd Kumbham 1064 M.E. (1889 A.D.). In connection with this consecration the Guru wrote one of
his Archavatara Sthutis – Mannanthala Devi Stavam. The old Mananthala Durga Devi Temple was reconstructed and the idol of Durga was replaced with that of Devi. This temple is under the control of S.N.D.P. union at that place. Narayana Vilasam Primary School was started in 1082 M.E. (1907 A.D.) under the aegis of this temple administrators. Now this school is upgraded as Mannanthala Govt. High School. Annual festival of seven days starts in the temple on Revathy Star in the month of Meenam.

4.IV.34 Kolathumkara Śiva Temple at Kulathoor

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

4.IV.35 Arath Subrahmaṇya Temple at Kayikkara

This temple is the renovation of an old Dharmasastha temple. The Guru enthroned the idol of Subrahmaṇya in 1069 M.E. (1894 A.D.). The old idol of Dharmasastha is also there. So this temple is known as
Arath Dharmasastha temple. This temple was consecrated by Arath Family. This is situated in the seashore in between Varkala and Kadakkavoor. The administration of this temple is done by eight selected members of Arath family. Only daily Poojas are performed. No annual festival is conducted. The first priest was Neelakantan Santhi. The daily Poojas were also performed by Kumaran Asan for years. So near this temple a building was constructed to commemorate him.

4.IV.36 Sree Nayinar Deva Temple at Arumanoor

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

4.IV.37 Subrahmaṇya Temple at Muttakkatu Kunnumpara

The deity of the temple is Lord Subrahmaṇya. The idol of this deity was installed by the Guru in Vrichikam 1071 M.E. (1896 A.D.). This temple is situated near Kovalam on the top of the Muttakkatu hill which is in between the Arabian sea and Vellayani pure water lake. This is one of the most entrancing spots in Kerala. This temple is made up of huge rocks and it is built on the crest of a huge boulder known as
Kunnumpara. "The place commands a panoramic view of the expansive sea to the west, with the luxuriant vegetation, mainly of coconut palms, standing sentinel all around and the Sahya Ranges towering towards the east. From the rock oozes a perennial stream of crystalline water. This adds to the charm and attraction of the place. It is as it were the very symbol and emblem of indestructible Prakṛti. A statue of the Guru is installed in the temple premises and daily Poojas are performed.

4.IV.38 Ganapathy Temple at Kottar Nagarcovil

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

4.IV.39 Bhavaneeswara Temple - Tamil Nadu

This is in a village known as Bhavani in Erode in Tamil Nadu state. The deity of the temple is Bhavaneeswara (Śiva). The Guru installed the idol of the deity in 1913.
4.IV.40 Sree Chitambara Temple at Karamukku

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

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

"The inner organ, the senses and counting from the body,

The many worlds we know, are all, on thought, the sacred form

Of the supreme Sun rises in the void beyond;

By relentless cogitation one should attain to this."9

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

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4.IV.41 Kalakanteswara Temple at Murukkumpuzha

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

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

4.IV.42 Temple of Kalavamgodam

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

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

11 ibid., p. 37
"No shadow could exist without depending on a model original
Since the manifest world is seen to have no original model anywhere
Neither shadow nor actuality is this: all is seen
Like a snake that a gifted artist might cleverly sketch"12
This shows the climax and culminations of his mission to reform worship. He started with idols; the task ended with sponsoring and demonstrating the Nirguṇa form of worship which is the subliment stage of bhakti. The mirror prathishta is a highly intellectualised symbol of the Guru's philosophy of Advaita.

4.IV.43 Ullala Aumkareswara Temple at Vechur

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The Guru started the Brahma-Vidyalaya at Sivagiri for the proper study and propagation of Advaita Vedānta with other philosophies and religions on traditional and modern lines. The Guru’s intension behind
the consecration of the Śārada Muttam at Sivagiri was to transform Sivagiri into the intellectual Sringeri of the South. The consecration was the crowning act of his life. Here there is a training school for priesthood. Brahmacharis or youths who had taken the vow of celibacy were trained to become priests. They would dedicate themselves to campaigning for the spiritual and social progress of the people. Three trained priests are deputed to all the temples consecrated by the Guru. So the right pattern of worship and social service could be given effect everywhere. The Guru also gave certain instructions on the future role of Sivagiri Mattom.

“a. To enlighten people about the fundamentals of religion and spread everywhere devotion and love of God.

b. To serve the people in such a way as to help them attain the three-fold purity that of body, mind and word.

c. To speak to the people the grandeur of non-violence, love and unity and see that they are observed in action.

d. To improve the educational level of the common people.

e. To identify the right type of young men to be trained as brahmachāris and choose from among them those who have the turn of mind for renunciation and admit them to monkhood and send them out as messengers of love to serve their fellows.”

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4.IV.45 Advaita Asramam at Alwaye

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

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

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

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

4.IV.46 Grudeva Birth Place Chempazhanti

Chempazhanti, the birth place of Sree Narayana Guru is a little town about 12 km north of Thiruvananthapuram, the capital of the then
Indian native state Travancore. Today it is the capital of Kerala State. In Chempazhanti there stands a hut-Vayalvarath house which appeared to be too old to stand erect with no windows except for three iron bars in a lawn in the front for letting in air and light in to three small rooms. That was the house where Sree Narayana Guru was born. The floor was washed with cow-dung. The walls were of mud. "This small house, more than a century old, this cramped and stuffy room where was born the man whose fame enveloped the entire world- none can watch it except with a mind charged with emotion."\textsuperscript{14} The house got its name Vayalvarath house because it stood on the fringe of a paddy field. "The caste-wise topography of Cehmpazhanthi was composed mainly of three castes-Nairs, Ezhavas and Pulayas. The three castes maintained their existence on three planes, almost three different worlds. Life at Chempazhanthi was also like its landscape – a dark forest dense with superstitions where evil customs roamed about like wild animals".\textsuperscript{15}

Adjacent to Narayana Guru’s ancestral home was the Bhagavathi Temple of Manackal where the family members worshipped regularly.

\textbf{4.V IMPACT OF THE GURU PHILOSOPHY}

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

\textsuperscript{15} ibid., p. 2
silent revolution echoed to the far flung frontiers of India. Dr. Palpu, the Darbar Physician of the Maharaja of Mysore, who feverishly desired to change the destiny of the masses of India’s working classes who were smothered by caste humiliation, was directed by Swami Vivekananda to seek the dynamic guidance of a living Guru and came to Aruvipuram to seek Narayan Guru’s help in his campaign for establishing human rights.

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

People with various kinds of talents were attracted to the Guru. Among them were C.V. Kunjuraman, Mooloor Padmanabha Panicker, Mahakavi Kumaran Asan, T.K. Madhavan, K.P. Kayyalakkal, C.O. Madhavan, K. Kumaran, K. Govindan, K. Ayyappan and Satyavrathan. Sri. Narayana Chaitanyam Bodhananda, Govindananda, Atmananda, Dharma Theertha, Nataraja Guru, Ananda Theertha, Achutananda, Vidhyananda, Narasimhananda, Sankarananda and Narayana Theertha were sanyasins of the first round. All of them
worked as a single team with various chosen fields of activity. The result was the ushering in of three parallel organisations with three different but complementary ideals. These three organisations are Sree Narayana Dharma Paripalana Yogan (S.N.D.P. Yogam), Sree Narayana Dharma Sangham and Sree Narayana Gurukulam.

4.V.1 Sree Narayana Dharmaparipalanayogam (S.N.D.P. Yogam)

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

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

The Guru's mission was not to be confined within segregated limits and the target of his religious assault was universalism. He himself agreed to be the Yogam's life-time President. Dr.Palpu was
assigned the general Secretaryship. Anyone from any caste could be a member of the society. Ezhavas were in an overwhelming majority among its members and the reins of the society came in to the hands of them. Even if it be so the Guru’s ideal-universalism was not affected because every one of them worked for the uplift of all depressed castes. Ezhavas were at the top of the hierarchy of the untouchables and also were numerically the largest community. So they achieved strength of their movements. This inspired all castes below them to emulate their move for betterment and induced the higher caste to examine and improve their customs.

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

In the vast annual gatherings of the S.N.D.P. Yogam engaged good speakers. They talked to people about moral and spiritual issues. The Guru insisted them to give importance to Religion, morality, education and industry.
Religion:- The Guru wanted to expose superstitions to dissuade people from worshipping with weird rites like animal sacrifice and evil spirits. He told the speakers to stress the superiority of prayers and to worship in a dignified manner and also to explain the *Saguna* and *Nirguna* aspects of Brahman according to the pure Hindu Philosophy. The Guru also informed them that wherever there is a genuine demand for a temple or Mutt, encourage people in an intelligent manner and not to criticise other religions in an objectionable or insinuating fashion.

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

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

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

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

1) If the speaker is not sure about a point, he should not stress it.

2) Speeches should not, in their tone or style, hurt the feelings of the so called lower caste or cause resentment among the so called upper caste. As far as possible make everyone genuinely concerned with the progress and welfare of the depressed sections.

Wherever possible under the auspices of temple, arrangements to be made for discourses and speeches based on mythological stories which reveal the greatness of God and also illustrate philosophical truths. The annual meetings of S.N.D.P. Yogam were very often addressed by the higher castes and also by officialdom including the Devans of Travancore and Cochin. The Guru’s concern for the uplift and well-being of the have-nots can be seen from this guide line. It also implies the humanitarian and socialist trend in the approach. In the annual meetings of the Yogam the Guru emphasised three things viz the advantage of united action, the benefits of education and to help the community register economic progress which were very dear to the Guru. In the first annual gathering Dr. Palpu reminded the people gathered there about the need for united action, hard work and industry. About education he said that “A society or for that matter a group, makes durable progress and achieves prosperity only through education. In our
community there should be none without at least primary education. For that one and all should specially strive. When you refer to an Ezhava male or female, it should imply that he or she is one who knows how to read and write.  

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

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

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17 ibid., p. 75
18 ibid., p. 75
Ezhavas. He sent a message to the Annual conference of the Yogam held at Sivagiri on 17th Makaram 1102 M.E. No group can gain strength and achieve prosperity by any means other than organised effort. It was on this principal that the Yogam was established. 'The term Ezhava does not denote caste or religion. Therefore anyone can be made a member of the yogam. I wish many more joined'.

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

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19 ibid., p. 78
transformation was achieved within as short a period as a single generation.

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

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

In the year 2000 the election of the office bearers of the S.N.D.P. Yogam was conducted on December 29\(^{th}\). Advocate Vidhyasagar was elected as the president and Vellappalli Natesan as the General Secretary. The Vice President is K.N. Satyapalan and M.B. Sreekumar is the Devaswom Secretary. They took charge on December 31, 2000. The term of the elected body is five years. Ten members are nominated to the Director Board. They are S. Sadasivan, Biju Kannezhath, ibid., p. 52

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

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

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

4.IV.2 Sree Narayan Dharma Sangham

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

4.V.3 Sree Narayana Gurukulam

Narayana Gurukulam was founded in 1923 by Nataraja Guru with
the approval of the Guru for the propagation of wisdom through Guru-
Sishya Parampara. It stands neutrally above all particular expressions
of faith or ideology. It is based on the non-dual wisdom of the Absolute.
The Gurukulam situated on a hillock adjacent to Sivagiri is an
independent body which disseminates the teachings of the Guru. It is an
off shoot of the Sivgiri Mutt. Originally Nataraja Guru taught boys of the
Ashram and now the Gurukulam’s role is the interpretation of the Guru’s
philosophy in relation to advanced western speculations. This is the
most articulating organ of the Guru’s philosophy and humanist teachings. This became a world wide fraternity of contemplative minded people. This has many centres outside Kerala as well as abroad especially in western countries.

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

\(^{24}\) I. V. Das, (Ed.) \textit{Nitya Chaitanyam}. (Kannur: Nitya Chaitanya Vedi, 2001) p. 19
The impact of S.N.D.P. Yogam on the times was tremendous and there came in to being different organisations representing the major sections among Hindus.

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

2. Nair Service Society (N.S.S.):- In 1914 the Nair Service Society of the caste Hindus, especially the powerful sudra (Nair) Community came in to being. It was devoted to eradicating the taboos and false beliefs prevalent in that community. The society was started by stalwarts like the later Gandhian Kelappan and a distinguished judge Changanassery Parameswaram Pillai. It was essentially a social reform movement. One of the early leaders of the society was Mannath Padmanabha Pillai. He played an important role in Vaikkom Satyagraha. In his autobiography, he acknowledged his indebtedness to the teachings of the Guru. Under the leadership of Mannath Padmanabhan the N.S.S. made the community a truly integrated one. The society campaigned successfully for a Nair regulation which assured a just system of inheritance.
3. **The Yogakshema Sabha:** The Yogakshema Sabha is the organisation of the Hindu priestly class, the Nampoothiries. This Sabha was organised by the progressive minded young Nampoothiries to reform their community from within. The Malayalee Brahmin Organisations tended to move to ultra left radicalism. They tried to liberate Nampoothiri women folk who were treated as slaves in their own houses. The youth of the community gravitated swiftly to the left. Widow remarriage was one of the planks of the Sabha's activity.

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

Thus we can say that the four organisations – the S.N.D.P. Yogam, The Pulaya Mahajana Sabha, the Nair Service Society and Yogakshema Sabha had done the yeoman service in modernising Kerala. The latter three organisations were indebted very much to the Guru and to the Yogam. And these three organisations represent their own respective communities. But S.N.D.P. Yogam is not a sectarian Organisation but upon to all irrespective of caste creed and religion.
4.V.5  Sivagiri Pilgrimage

Vallabhasery Govindar Vaidyar and T.K. Kittan, the disciples of the Guru, requested the Guru to announce Sivagiri a holy place for pilgrimage. The Guru acknowledged their wish and announced Sivagiri as the pilgrim centre and suggested the New Year Day – the first of January as the day on which the pilgrims would assemble at Sivagiri. The Guru requested the people to observe ten days austerities with the Five Purities advised by Lord Buddha. The five Purities of Buddha are of the body, of food, of mind, of the word and of deed. He suggested yellow dress the colour of Krishna's and Buddha's robes, for the Sivagiri Pilgrims. This yellow dress must be cheap, simple and clean cloths. The cloths in wear can be dyed yellow with turmeric and can be used. Later they can be washed white for everyday use. The Guru added that every act should have a purpose and the aims of Sivagiri Pilgrimage he explained are ten. They are Education, Industry, Religion, Cleanliness, Piety, Group living, Agriculture, Trade, Handicrafts and Technical Training. Experts should be invited to lecture on these topics on the first of January. The Pilgrims should listen them with discipline and attention. They should practice what they learnt and thus succeed in life and thus lead to the prosperity of the people and the country. Thus the life should be made worth living which is the chief aim of the pilgrimage.
The Guru was jñānin of a unique kind who had a keen living sense of the people and of social necessities. He started a silent revolution against casteism and evil practices that were prevalent among the people of Kerala. He tried to eradicate the taboos and false beliefs prevalent in different communities. He exposed to public gaze the terrible harm that false benefits and superstitions actions have done.

In 1904 an Ezhava conference was held at Paravur (Quilon) under Guru's Chairmanship for the uplift of the community. In this conference the Guru decided to put and end to the evil practices like 'Thalikettu', Thirandukuli, Pulikudi etc and to evolve a new code for the conduct of marriages. These customs involves huge expenditure and held complete sway over the social life of those days: 'Thalikettu' was a mock marriage, a ceremonially tying of the marriage thread around the neck of a girl even before puberty. It was considered as an index of status and of social prestige. 'Thirandukuli' or ceremonial bath was rite which amounted to the public announcement of a girl's puberty or adult hood. Pulikudi was another primitive custom for celebrating the fact of the first pregnancy, by ritually drinking a so-called sacred concoction. This was performed in the seventh month of first pregnancy. The husband was to give the wife a drink in which seven different ingredients of sour taste had been mixed. As in the case of other functions an elaborate feast was a traditional necessity.
The actual wedding consisted of the presentation of a garment to the bride by the groom’s sister who then led her to the husband’s house. The presentation used to be done inside the house. It was the Guru who changed this custom by having the ceremony performed on a platform in the open court yard of the house. According to him the marriage must be simple and the participants should not exceed ten persons — groom, their parents, one companion each of the girl and the groom, a priest and an important man of the locality. The Guru added that the priest is to hand over the garlands, his heart brimful of the thought of God. Marriage should be registered in the book kept for that purpose.

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

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

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25 K. Sreenivasan, Sree Narayana Guru. op. Cit., pp. 119,120
would not make them accepted in practice. For this purpose the Guru himself went to wedding ceremony in many houses.

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

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

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

\textsuperscript{26} ibid., p. 92
himself was a great educationalist. He began life as a village teacher, started a Sankrit school at Aruvippuram and at Varkala where it is still being run. At Alwaye he founded the Advaita Ashram Sanskrit school which is one of the best institutions of the kind in the state. It imparts free Sanskrit education to numerous pupils. Most of the temples he established have schools attached to them.

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

4.V.7 Guru as a Humanist

The guru a unique ‘Jñānīn of action’ took the role of not only a saint and philosopher but also a humanist in his life. An assertion of the Guru “Man is not for Religion, Religion is for man” is a thorough going
statement of the philosophy of humanism. Like Vivekananda, the true correlation between Karmayoga and humanism is found in him. In *Atmopadēsa Satakam* the emphasis is laid on man. According to him the urge for freedom or salvation enables man to acquire knowledge and thus he conquers his environment by knowing. He stated that self-instruction is the best means to know one self and world. The Guru projected a God who would stand the test of reason and a religion which served progressive human and social purpose. The message such as ‘One Caste, One Religion, One God, for Man’ and Whatever be the religion, it suffices if it makes a better man,” propounded by the Guru reveals himself as a true humanist and internationalist. Even though he was a rustic saint he boldly envisaged the concept of ‘One World’ many decades back. This concept emerges only from a man who is an unstinted believer in humanity.

4.V.8 Narayana Guru and Rabindranath Tagore

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

Modern India’s national bard Rabindranath Tagore was a great
educationalist seer and one of the outstanding humanists. Poet Tagore met the Guru at Sivagiri on 22nd November 1922. There was much in common between the Guru and the Bard. The two kindred souls conversed as much through silence as through speech.

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

About the meeting Tagore made an ecstatic utterance as follows

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

4.V.9 Narayan Guru and Mahatma Gandhi

Gandhiji's visit to Vaikom and his meeting with the Guru were historic events. He visited sivagiri on March 12th 1925. The meeting was arranged at Gandhi Ashram. They discussed about untouchability. Vaikom Satyagraha, that was being held to remove untouchability and the conversion of religion.

Gandhiji believed Varṇāshrama concept as a divinely ordained dispensation and according to him the unflattering basis of this caste-system is the individual's karma, past or present. Gandhiiji tried his best to convert the Guru to this orthodox view by citing the example of the different sized leaves of the same mango tree in the Ashram. The Guru

said that the juice of all leaves taste the same having one and the same quality. "So are all men in essence. Man every where belongs to one caste, one species." To the Guru service is the one religion, and have the one and only God of mankind. Then Gandhiji was convinced of the irrationality of caste and the sparks of dissent was vanished. Thence forward he vigorously worked to eradicate untouchability and caste observance. This meeting produced a healthy impact on our freedom struggle and on Gandhiji’s leadership of it. After this the Indian National Congress approved fight against casteism and communalism as one of its major planks.

Guru’s meeting with Gandhiji was an epoch-making one for the reason that it persuaded Gandhiji to reconsider his belief in Chāturvarṇya. There after Gandhiji considered caste as a man-made evil. It was the biggest divisive factor in Indian Polity, nay in Indian religion.

According to the Guru caste was not determined by God. If caste is necessary, let everyone be a Brahmin. To call one self a Sudra is to admit inferiority. The Guru’s opinions were unambiguous and categorical. Both agreed in removing unouchability.

At Sivagiri the Guru trained untouchable boys for priesthood along with other Hindu Children. According to the Guru and Gandhiji the lower classes should get educated, and be given them equal
opportunities for betterment along with everyone else. On the next day of the meeting, in speech at a public meeting at Trivandrum Gandhiji rhapsodied as follows “I consider it the greatest good fortune of my life to have visited the beautiful Travancore state and met the most venerable saint Sree Narayana Guruswami Trippandangal.”

The meeting of the trio—the Maharshi Rabinda Nath Tagore, Mahatma Gandhi and the Guru was an event of great significance “This modern trinity was actually beckoning the nation to a new, exciting and significant vista of Brotherhood, Freedom, Service and unitive self realisation.”

30 ibid., p. 6