CONCLUSION

By studying the personality of great men we study the history of mankind at large because the progress of humanity to a great extent depends upon individuals who became instrumental in creating history. Eminent personalities play the most predominant role in moulding the socio-political formations under almost all circumstances. The ability of leadership and quality of character are very important. Further, the strength and courage to face challenges and ordeals are more important. The volume of such trials and tribulations becomes more severe in the case of individuals who hail from the lower strata of society. The ability to withstand such challenges became essential to attain the ultimate success of socio-political movements.

Sahodharan Ayyappan was born and brought up under such a situation mustered the courage to confront the social calamities with a spirit of strong determination. His continuous struggles for a social change became a grand success under the most adverse circumstances. It heralded the dawn of a new era in which Sahodharan Ayyappan was called to initiate the process of political change. From the status of an ordinary mortal he assumed the stature of a great institution of socio-political change. He became the harbinger of a new era moving from the days of colonialism to that of freedom.

Sahodharan Ayyappan has carved out an immortal niche for himself in the annals of socio-political movement in Kerala by the revolutionary changes he effected and the sufferings he under went for the uplift of the people in general and of the lower sections in particular. The more orthodox among the Ezhavas were averse in granting to the castes lower than themselves the rights and privileges which they were gaining one after the other from the higher castes. Similarly the brilliant boys who hailed from the Ezhava community did not get any encouragement from the community to undergo their higher studies.
Sahodharan Ayyappan was the first Ezhava to become a graduate in Cochin State. All the lower castes were so proud of him that they respectfully called him K.Ayyappan B.A. He was honoured like a prince. As desired by Guru, he decided to work for the eradication of caste system. Towards that aim, he wanted all the lower castes to mix together, move forward inter dine and even inter marry. When he organized an interdining at Cherayi, Vijnana Vardhini Sabha, the powerful organization of the Ezhavas of Cherai, decided to excommunicate the twenty four participants. The inter diners were nick named as ‘Pulachovans’ and Sahodharan Ayyappan got the honour of ‘Pulayan Ayyappan’. The action of excommunication did not in any way reduce the enthusiasm of the inter diners. They formed an association called Sahodhara Sangham and considered the day of first interdining (29 May, 1917) as its formation day. This association had implicit faith in the philosophy of Sree Narayana Guru, i.e., brotherhood of all human beings. Along with inter dining; Sahodharan Ayyappan also advocated intermarriages for the destruction of caste. He was of the opinion that intermarriages would promote the spirit of self respect in the minds of the people. He was well aware of the effective role of press in deciding the human thinking. Hence, he started the journal *Sahodharan* for the spread of the ideas of Sahodhara Sangham. Within a short period, interdining spread to different areas of Cochin and also to the neighbouring State of Travancore and Malabar. However, the Vijnana Vardhini Sabha had tried to utilize the name of Sree Narayana Guru for the cause of orthodoxy and it was a great disadvantage to the interdining movement. To counter this strategy of the Vijana Vardhini Sabha, Ayyappan decided to seek the support of the Guru. He went to the Aluva Advaitasramam and explained every thing that was going on in the name of inter dining to the Guru. After hearing Sahodharan Ayyappan, the Guru without any hesitation gave a message in his own handwriting in support of inter dining. The Guru also presided over the All Kerala Sahodhara Sangham convention summoned at Alwaye on 15 May, 1921. The printed copies of the Great Message in a leaflet form and a small book with the cover photo of the Guru.
containing a commentary on it were distributed to the audience. Following this, the Vijnana Vardhini Sabha took the decision that there was nothing wrong in interdining and inter caste marriage which was a great victory for the Sahodhara Sangham.

Sahodharan Ayyappan wanted to eradicate the feelings of caste from the human mind. He advised the Ezhavas that mere petitioning for the removal of their disabilities would not bring any solution. They themselves had a share in perpetuating the caste system that promoted their disabilities. The mere participation of a certain number of Ezhavas in an interdining with the Pulayas did not mean that the Ezhavas were totally freed from caste-hatred. First of all, they had to get rid of the caste distinction. They were not to be Brahmins or Ezhavas or Nairs or Pulayas, but they were to form a casteless society of patriotic Keralites.

Sahodharan Ayyappan had a style of his own in the speeches. He used to address the audience by the term dear brothers and continued it in simple words. After some minutes, slowly the nature of speech turned into waves and finally become a tsunami against superstitions, untouchability and casteism. His speeches attracted big crowds. After those speeches an effigy of the caste monster was set to fire with the accompaniment of slogans against caste. Through the columns of Sahodharan, he reminded that the very foundation of the caste system rested upon the taboo on interdining and intermarriage and by popularising these two practices that foundation could be shaken and the caste setup could be broken down. The means advocated were continuous efforts based on love and service mindedness without malice and vengeance towards none. Ayyappan’s efforts in this regard were aimed at the materialisation of Guru’s vision of a casteless society.

Since S.N.D.P. Yogam was committed for the eradication of caste and in the establishment of a casteless society, Sahodharan Ayyappan desired to work in that organization. He was responsible for rejuvenating the activities of S.N.D.P. Yogam in the erstwhile Cochin State and became the brain behind the Declaration of Rights at Ernakulam.
Sahodharan Ayyappan did yeoman service to the Yogam in its fight against the evil of drinking. In the midst of cruel repression from the Government, he proceeded with the agenda of campaign against drinking. He firmly believed that this bad habit had taken away much wealth, energy and intelligence from the community. Hence he took up the mission of implementing Guru’s birthday message and the duty assigned by the S.N.D.P.Yogam to work as Joint Secretary and made a very effective and vigorous campaign for prohibition.

Sahodharan Ayyappan was a true democrat and had taken keen interest in the freedom of the country. Even though he criticised Gandhiji, it was a constructive one. On the other hand, he wanted to see the uncompromising attitude of Gandhiji against caste system and superstitions. Gandhiji on several occasions made compromises with the customs and traditions. Such instances irritated Sahodharan Ayyappan and he wrote fiery articles.

Sahodharan Ayyappan stood for adult franchise and communal representation for the cause of social justice. He wanted to serve the country through his community. For a healthy development of democratic institutions, it was necessary to have voting right to all people, irrespective of wealth, education and community. He was of the opinion that S.N.D.P.Yogam has several noble ideals. It worked for cosmopolitanism and universal brotherhood. In other words, S.N.D.P.Yogam stood for the eradication of caste where as other community organizations worked for its perpetuation. As a leader of the S.N.D.P.Yogam, he was against accepting any salary for the service. To him it was not only a service to the community but also a great contribution to the development of the mother land.

The Legislative Reforms Act of 1930 passed in Travancore sought to perpetuate the property qualification for franchise in violation of the wishes of vast sections of people. This was followed by the Abstention Movement. The Abstentionists demanded representation in the Legislature and Public Services for all communities in proportion to their numerical strength as well as the introduction of adult franchise and responsible government in the state.
Sahodharan Ayyappan joined the abstention movement and considered it as a part of the freedom struggle of the avarnas to get equal rights with savarnas in the administrative processes of the country. Eventually the whole question regarding the representation of various communities in the legislature was re-considered. Franchise was widened and a specific number of seats were reserved for the Ezhavas, Christian and Muslim communities in the General constituencies. In this way, he worked for the empowerment of marginalized sections of society.

His demand for reservation in government service should not be considered as anti-democratic or anti-national. During that period nepotism was openly displayed and hence there was no chance for getting justice to avarnas. Sahodharan Ayyappan firmly believed that for the uplift of the backward communities, reservation in Government jobs was essential. His continuous efforts resulted in the establishment of a Staff Selection Board. He made strenuous efforts for the appointment of Harijans in top posts after giving the necessary training. These ideas paved the way for the introduction of special recruitment of Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribes.

Unlike Sree Narayana Guru, Sahodharan Ayyappan believed that ideas about religion and God were irrelevant to the promotion of egalitarian values. He observed that religion, particularly Hinduism, had only spread superstitions which supported the caste system. So in the place of Guru’s religious and rational thought, he developed a rationalist ideology. His ideology consisted of three major strands- the secular humanism of Buddhism, the achievements of science and the Marxist ideology of socialism. He extolled the virtues of science. He was of the opinion that priests were trained in magic and played tricks with man in relation to God. So the rationalists should not fall a prey to the magic of priests, but should over come the fear of magic through scientific explanation.
Sahodharan Ayyappan was of the opinion that even after the rapid progress of science, there are areas which are left unknown to scientists. Those unknown areas were utilized by religions for the spread of their belief and became the sanctuary to the needy. Hence, people refused to desert religion. So the people have to eradicate caste and make religions a personal affair. He cautioned the Sivagiri pilgrims against the degeneration of the pilgrimage by institutionalization and commercialization.

The mass media played a tremendous role in the awakening of the common people. Sahodharan Ayyappan stated in the *Sahodharan*, a journal in Malayalam, of the primary aim of spreading the ideas of Sahodhara Sangham among the people. He edited and published another journal called *Velakkaran*. Through these journals, Sahodharan Ayyappan wanted to give the workers an idea about international developments. However, he tried to educate the people about many of the socio-political problems of the period. He tried to improve the standard of living of the labourers. Sahodharan Ayyappan who edited the journal *Yukthivadi* for two years became one of the important leaders of the rationalist movement in Kerala. He always stood for the promotion of scientific enquiry and analysis instead of blind faith. He tried his level best to popularize the concepts like rationalism, universal brotherhood, humanism and secularism.

Sahodharan Ayyappan was unique as a poet. During those days, most of the poets belonged to the school of surrealism. But his theme was nature centred and realistic. He traced the man and his environment. In a rationalist way he tried to describe the facts. The poems had the simplicity and nobility of a humble seeker of truth. He tried to avoid complicated and confusing explanations in his writings. Several later poets and writers adopted his style. Most of his poems were in the nature of counselling. Through out his poems, the reader can feel the heart beats of a great humanist who always longed and worked for the liberation of the oppressed and suppressed sections of the society. So, his poems were
not mere expression of emotions, but the exposition of a well thought out plans and conclusions. Moreover, his poems contained the personal experiences that he had to face in the course of upholding the dignity and freedom of the individual. Throughout his poems, he stood for revolutionary changes, upheld the greatness of rationalism, spread of the scientific spirit, stressed the purity of life and promoted the spirit of freedom and ridiculed ignorance and superstitions.

Sahodharan Ayyapan was a very powerful and effective public speaker. His particular style of speech attracted big crowds. His words were simple and piercing and touched the heart of the audience. Generally, his fiery speeches were on the subjects like untouchability, caste, age old customs and superstitions. His speeches had its reverberations in the mind and had made subsequent stir in the intelligence. During the course of speech, he had shown uncommon boldness, not even spared the royal family.

The Cochin State Congress formed in 1936 by the leaders like T.K.Nair, Sahodharan Ayyappan, Panampilly Govinda Menon and E. Ikkanda Warrier had an important role in the rise and growth of freedom struggle in Cochin. He made use of the Cochin Legislative Council to ventilate the grievances of the people and for introducing adult franchise instead of property qualification. He also demanded through a resolution in the council for the introduction of responsible government at an early date. After becoming the leader of the Cochi Rajya Praja Mandalam, he continued to demand the same with added determination. He hoped that with the introduction of responsible government, the council would have also an elected president.

In the Cochin Legislative Council, Sahodharan Ayyappan argued for progressive legislations to all the communities. During the discussion on the Nair Regulation Amendment Bill in the Council he opined that the Bill was beneficial not only to the Nairs but also to the Ezhavas and other backward communities. In the maiden speech of Sahodharan Ayyappan in
the Cochin Legislative Council, he criticized the government policy towards the Pulayas. He requested the government to persuade the Maharaja to make a declaration stating that the Depressed Classes have equality in all civic rights with other people. Here also he demonstrated his empathy to the people in the lowest rung of the society.

Sahodharan Ayyappan became instrumental in the enactment of several legislations like the Cochin Thiyya Act, Cochin Makkathayam Thiyya Act, Cochin Civil Marriage Act and Cochin Caste and Religious Disabilities Removal Bill. He tried for the introduction of family planning, prohibition, free education for poor, free and compulsory primary education, the Cochin Agriculturists Relief Bill and the Cochin Verumpattamddars Act.

During the Deputy Presidentship of Sahodharan Ayyappan in the Cochin Legislative Council, he supported all progressive resolutions. He had tried to protect the interests of other communities as well. However, his activities helped the Ezhava community of Cochin to achieve all round progress and a footing of equality with the savarnas. He had several outstanding qualities as a minister. He was simple and hard working. Several new roads were constructed, connecting different parts of Cochin. He used his ministership for the service of the people with utmost justice. He never did anything for the sake of publicity.

Sahodharan Ayyappan became a role model for social reformers, poets, legislators, politicians, administrators and journalists. In his crusade against the fossilized customs of Kerala society, he succeeded to a large extent in changing the outlook of the savarnas. Hence several progressive minded people from different walks of life acknowledged his greatness as a social reformer. Sree Narayana Guru’s ideas of a casteless society were, to some extent, materialized through the activities of Sahodharan Ayyappan.
The social reform movement initiated by Sree Narayana Guru was further led by Sahodharan Ayyappan. He succeeded to combine the social reform movements with the political movements of the period. It is a remarkable combination of social maladies with the political realities of the century. He played an important role in the liberation of the people of his times from the grip of casteism and superstitious beliefs. His life and works rather became unparalleled in the history of modern Kerala. Being born and brought up in the monarchical and colonial background he had seen the dawn of freedom as well as the working of democracy. He had the rich experience of monarchy and democracy. He became the embodiment of social liberation and political freedom. He had witnessed both sides of colonial and imperial domination as well as freedom.