CHAPTER II
SAHODHARA MOVEMENT

Several factors like western education, the philosophies of Sree Narayana Guru, Vaikunda Swamikal, Brahmananda Swami Sivayogi and Vagbhatananda played a decisive role in the moulding of the social outlook of Ayyappan. Ayyappan was closely associated with Sree Narayana Guru since his childhood. Sree Narayana Guru gave all kinds of help for his studies at Trivandrum. After his B.A course, Ayyappan visited the Advaitasramam at Alwaye and met Guru. During their course of discussion, Swami remarked that “caste must go” for the betterment of Kerala society.1

Sahodharan Ayyappan began to think of collective action for the destruction of caste system after his arrival at Cherayi in May, 1917. He gathered a group of like-minded young men. Ayyappan suggested the idea of holding an inter dining as a prelude to the fight against caste system. Accordingly, the group comprising of 12 persons - K.A. Achuthan, P.N. Achuthan, K.C. Kesavan, K. Kumaran, A.C. Karthikeyan, A.T.A. Aandy, K.A. Krishnan, A. Raman Pillai, T.K. Kittan, Kooni Raghavan Master, Krishna Seeri Vaidyar and Sahodharan Ayyappan - issued a notice inviting the people to participate in a meeting on 16 Edavam 1092 (29 May, 1917) at Cherayi Thundara Parambil for discussing a serious issue on the destruction of caste system.2

Several people of the area assembled at the venue of the meeting. Ayyappan made a very powerful speech which stirred the sentiments of the people against caste.3 He had requested the participants to sign an undertaking and take the pledge as follows: “Since I am thoroughly convinced that caste discrimination is against sastras and is prejudicial and uncalled for, I myself declare with all intentions and knowledge that I will do whatever I can to eradicate it in ways that are not illegal”.4
The people who attended the meeting took the oath and signed an undertaking. At the end of the meeting, Sahodharan Ayyappan informed the gathering, “some among us are prepared to take food with a Pulaya. If anybody likes inter dining, he can join us”. While a few among the assembled persons showed much enthusiasm, many including the President of the meeting, Mattappallil Kannu Kumaran Master left” the place. Korui then a boy of 14 years, joined the inter dining as a protest against the Caste Hindus and his painful experiences as a member of backward community. Kannan Vaidyar, the brother of Ayyappan, did not give permission to hold the function at his house on the ground of ‘Bharani’ festival and consequent displeasure of Bhagavathi. So the participants met at the house of Raman Pillai, the nephew of Ayyappan.

It was a very simple function. Pallipurath Korasseri Ayyaru and his son Kannan of the Pulaya caste came as special invitees. After much persuasion and compulsion Kannan and his father entered the house. Kochitti Asan gave a neat cloth to Kannan and removed the old and dirty one. A little rice with porridge was served by Ayyaru on the plantain leaves of Kannan. The participants of inter dining took their share from the leaves and tasted it. This was the symbolic act of destroying caste by rejecting a custom which had separated people into water tight compartments.

The actions of Sahodharan Ayyappan resulting in the inter dining at Cherayi fell like a bomb shell on orthodox Hindu circles and produced far reaching results in the social set up of Kerala. Hearing the news of inter dining, Sree Narayana Guru blessed the organization and advised Sahodharan Ayyappan to behave like Jesus Christ. Vijnanavardhimi Sabha was the famous organization of the Ezhavas of Cherayi. An urgent meeting of the Sabha was held on 5 June 1917 on the basis of a complaint lodged by 13 members. It discussed the complaint of inter dining with Pulayas in the house of Achuthan Raman Pillai. The Sabha decided to enforce social boycott on the 22 families of the 24 participants in the inter dining function,
directly and through the Karayogams. The boycott was a terrible one. The Ezhava community was instructed not to co-operate with the 22 families in the marriage functions and other ceremonies. The washer woman was not to give the *mattu* meant for removing ‘pula’ or defilement. The barber refused their services to them. It was an excommunication which deprived them of the essential social services. Some of them took ‘Panchagaviam’ and purified themselves to escape from this ordeal. But many showed uncommon boldness to undergo the punishment without faltering. The conservatives were hostile to them in many ways. The hostilities were in the form of obstructing the bride, preventing drinking water and sending false telegram to teach the inter diners a lesson. The inter diners were nicknamed as Pula Chovans and Ayyappan got the title Pulayan Ayyappan.

The Vijnana Vardhini Sabha began a vigorous campaign against them and appraised the matter to Sree Narayana Guru. But he gave only a vague reply that if there was anything objectionable in inter dinning, it might be rectified. The Sabha misinterpreted the Guru’s words and used his name to justify their action and propagated that Guru was against inter dining. Sree Narayana Guru who preached the unity of man was trying to put into practice by setting an example in his Advaitasramam at Alwaye where he was bringing up Pulaya and Pariah children with all others. In the Ashram the inmates belonging to different castes lived as members of one family eating and sleeping together without any discrimination. It led to a split in the karayogams. While Ezhava orthodoxy stood up with the Vijnana Vardhini Sabha, progressive minded people supported the interdiners. The action of excommunication did not in any way reduce their enthusiasm. They formed an association called Sahodhara Sangham and considered the day of first inter-dining as its formation day (29 May, 1917). This association had implicit faith in the philosophy of Sree Narayana Guru, i.e, brotherhood of all human beings. The Sahodhara Sangham started its own journal *Sahodharan* as a means of propaganda. In its first issue was stated the aim of the Sangham as follows:
This is a small organization began in a humble way by bringing together those who are ready to have the honesty to preach what they believe and to practice what they preach in order to eradicate the obsession of casteism by the power of its lofty goal.\textsuperscript{15}

Sahodharan Ayyappan was sincere in the popularization of the Sahodhara Movement. He was well aware of the effective role of press in the moulding of human thinking. Hence through the columns of \textit{Sahodharan}, He desired to disseminate progressive ideas for the destruction of caste system. Even in the first issue of \textit{Sahodharan}, Sahodharan Ayyappan reiterated the point that the programme of inter dining was a wonderful medicine to dilute the solid caste mentality of the people.\textsuperscript{16} Uplift of the lower castes, destruction of the superstitions of higher castes and promotion of communal harmony were the objectives of inter dining.\textsuperscript{17} Sahodhara Sangham was not a highly organized association with branches. But similar and independent Sanghams with the same mission were organized in different parts of the Vaipin Island, Paravoor, Shertalai and Kodungallur.

Sahodharan Ayyappan’s activities inspired the youth in the neighbouring areas to organize inter dining function as a measure against meaningless caste discriminations. Such functions were held continuously at various places. Some Ezhava youths under the leadership of Thandasseri Achuthan organized a similar function at Peringottukara. They dined with the Pulayas and the conservatives of the village were infuriated. They took action against the organizers in the manner of imposing social restrictions. As a result, the Ezhavas of the locality were divided into two groups. The noted disciple of Sree Narayana Guru, Sri Sivalinga Swamikal, had to renounce the headship of mutt at Peringottukara and went to Manathala mutt near Chavakkad. However, Sahodharan Ayyappan later thanked the residents of Peringottukara for their support which strengthened his hands in the fight against caste divisions.\textsuperscript{18}
The news of inter dining inspired some young men of Ochanthuruth in Vaipin Island to organize another ‘Misrabhojanam’. Its leader was M.K. Narayanan who had the strong conviction that inter dining and intermarriage were the two powerful means to fight against casteism. He took the decision to invite members of different castes in his marriage functions. But on the previous day of the marriage, the bridegroom’s family came to know that the local people would not co-operate in the function. The bridegroom immediately went to the office of the Sahodhara Sangham at Palliport and informed the matter to Ayyappan. He took up the responsibility to make all arrangements for the marriage functions. Invitees like P.K. Deever and his wife, Kannathodathu Velayudha Menon, Vallon, Chachan and so on belonging to high and low castes like Nair, Valan and Pulaya communities attended the marriage and it was a grand success.

The feast held at Cherayi eventually assumed the nature of a movement and it spread to the neighbouring state of Travancore and Malabar areas. Padmanabha Channar of Kayyalakkal and some other progressive minded Ezhavas shared food with Pulayas. P.K. Panicker and Varappallil Thankappa Panicker even employed Pulaya boys as servants in their houses. E.K. Chami gave the leadership for an inter dining ceremony at Palakkad. Another one was held at Karimpadath under the banner of Ezhavodayam. On the occasion of the College day celebrations at the Maharajas College Trivandrum members of Nair, Christian, Ezhava and Vellala communities participated in the common dining. At Kayikkara which was a strong centre of orthodoxy, Ayyappan spoke at a public meeting against casteism and organized an inter dining function. An inter dining was held at Alleppey under the initiative of Ezhava Yuva Jana Samajam. Ayyappan through the columns of ‘Sahodharan’ appreciated the participants and advised them that they had to disseminate the idea among the people that caste system was unnecessary and face all kinds of challenges with patience and courage.
There were several Ezhava women dedicated their lives for the spread of the teachings of Sree Narayana Guru. Sahodharan Ayyappan desired to bring them in the struggle against caste. Accordingly, a Women’s Sahodhara Sangham was organized on 16 Chingam 1093 (1 September, 1917). The first meeting of this organization was held at Vatakakkom Nediyara School in the presence of an ascetic woman Chandrika and elected Pappikutty Yogini and K. Lakshmi Amma as president and secretary respectively. N. Meenakshi Amma, M. Lakshmi Amma, M.K. Gowri Amma, P.K. Kallyani Amma, V.K. Karthiyani Amma and K.A. Narayani Amma were the executive committee members.  

Interdining as an action defying caste rules had been organized by others even before the one at Cherayi. Vaikunda Swamikal, a mid 19th century social reformer of South Kerala, hailed from the suppressed rung of the caste ridden Hindu society, raised vehement opposition to the caste-Hindus. He gave the clarion call to the oppressed communities to liberate themselves from the clutches of caste-Hindus. He founded an organization called ‘Samathuva Samajam’ which declared that all were equal before the Almighty. Even among the sudras, inter dining was not in practice. So, Vaikunda Swamikal introduced the concept of inter dining with a view to eradicating untouchability. Vaikunda Swamikal instructed his followers irrespective of caste, creed or community, to bring and cook food by taking the water from the sacred well of Swamittoppu and asked them to share with him. He had also send his disciples to the houses of the tribal people in order to encourage inter dining. In 1914 Manjeri Rama Iyer and two students belonging to the Theosophical Society incurred temporary excommunication for participating in a marriage feast of a Thiyya youth. In Calicut, under the auspices of the Theosophical Society inter dining had become a common affair. The Sri. Ramakrishna Mission also had taken steps for the eradication of casteism. As a practical measure for this, they encouraged inter dining. In their Ashram at Harippad, members of high castes and untouchables took food in common gathering. But they could not succeed in creating any commotion upon the social conscience. Ayyappan did not confine
to organizing inter dining functions only. Without faltering even at the threat to his life, he organized mass meetings and spoke eloquently against casteism and caste rules as a follow up to the inter dining ceremony. All these were aimed at the single object of destroying caste.

The trials and tribulations that Ayyappan had to undergo consequent to his action were indicative of the intensity of the social stir it had gathered momentum. Moothakunnam was a stronghold of Ezhavas. The ‘Hindu Matha Dharma Paripalana Sabha’ had decided to boycott the inter diners of Cherayi. Once Ayyappan went there to propagate his views against casteism the local people welcomed him by spraying cashew nut oil and throwing cow dung at him.²⁷

Sahodharan Ayyappan had a different experience at Kodungallur. There he went to participate in a special meeting of the ‘Jnanarthadayini Sabha’. When he stood up on the dais to speak, some one from the audience threw an anthill at him. This was followed by pandemonium and the Chairman dissolved the meeting. Ayyappan and his supporters then went in a procession to the house of Damodaran, an influential Ezhava of the locality and an interdining function was held there.²⁸ At Pallanthuruth also he had a similar experience. When he rose to speak in the meeting arranged there, a band of people began to shout against him and moved towards the dais. They were pouring abusive words upon him. Some one was crying aloud that this Pulakotti²⁹ should not be allowed to live any more. He should be killed immediately. He remained calm and made a humble request to grant him just five minutes’ time to say what he had to, before he was killed. Then at a slow pace he began to speak with the consent of the opponents. It lasted for an hour and in its eloquence vanished the madness of the people.³⁰

The challenges could not discourage Ayyappan in his crusade against casteism. His methods were peaceful. He literally followed the advice, “The Sangham would grow up. Be
patient like Christ”, which Sree Narayana Guru was pleased to give him after a few episodes of inter-dining. Ayyappan was determined to add vigour to his movement. 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 inter-dining movement. To counter this strategy of the Sabha, Ayyappan decided to seek the support of the Guru. He went to the Advaitasramam and narrated every thing that was going on in the name of inter-dining to the Guru. After hearing Ayyappan, the Guru without any hesitation gave a message in his own handwriting in support of inter-dining. The message runs as follows: ‘Whatever may be the religion, dress or language, etc. of the people, there is no harm in intermarrying and inter-dining between them since they belong to one caste’.

Sree Narayana Guru 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 among the audience. Ayyappan regarded the Great Message as a clean explanation of the Guru’s methods for the destruction of caste. It was a great victory for the Sahodhara Sangham. The propaganda of the Vijnana Vardhini Sabha that Guru was against inter-dining was proved to be baseless. The Guru’s opinion in written form was good armour for the Sangham against the orthodoxy. With its publication, many in the enemies, camp changed sides. They began to support the Sahodhara Sangham and its cause.

Sree Narayana Guru’s message gave a heavy blow to the very foundation of the Vijnana Vardhini Sabha’s attitude towards the Sahodhara Sangham and inter-dining. When the spiritual authority was found unhelpful, the Sabha turned to the political authority as a supporter of orthodoxy. It decided to wait upon a deputation to the king with a memorandum to get Ayyappan exiled as he was indulging in activities aimed at the destruction of caste. With the help of the Diwan Peishkar the delegation called on the King. Mistaking the
delegation’s purpose to be the prayer for the removal of caste disabilities without hearing, the
king told them that caste was an evil institution which caused great difficulties. The
Government could move against caste disabilities only if strong public opinion was created
against the concept of pollution. He concluded that: “One Ayyappan has begun the work for it
(for the strengthening of public opinion against the observance of pollution). When it gains
strength, Government will be compelled to remove caste disabilities. Till then you have to be
patient ……………” The king’s appreciation of the efforts of Ayyappan silenced the
debate. The ashamed delegates simply prayed for the grant of timber required for the
construction of the proposed school adjacent to their temple and returned with a favourable
reply in that regard.34 The disappointed Sabha leaders then resorted to the strategy of filing
criminal cases against Ayyappan and the members of the Sahodhara Sangham. They
alleged that Ayyappan and his supporters were trying to spread the practice of inter
dining and to encourage the participants to enter the temple for worship without undergoing purificatory
rites in violation of the rules of the Sabha and also to trespass into the temple premises to
organize meetings there, in the District Magistrate Court. The complaint was put aside for
lack of evidence and the complainants were warned against deliberately filing baseless cases
against social reformers.35 All these efforts of the Vijnana Vardhini Sabha made the
organization a reactionary one. The progressive minded Ezhavas exerted pressure for a
change. Finally, the leaders of the Sabha were led to a rethinking on the issue and on 10
Medam M.E 1096 (22 April 1921), the Sabha took the decision that there was nothing wrong
in inter dining and inter marriage was desirable between certain sections within the Ezhava
community.36 It was a great triumph for the Sahodhara Sangham.

The enemy of the Sahodhara Sangham was not actually the Vijnana Vardhini Sabha,
but the system that perpetuated the evils of casteism and the Sangham had to carry on the war
at all levels against the system itself. It had to eradicate feelings of caste from the human
mind. The Sangham adopted the methods of propaganda through the press and platform.
Speeches had no lasting effect and they were meant for the ordinary people. Caste feeling had to be wiped out first from the mind of the leaders of the society. The response to the attempt at inter dining from the prominent leaders of the Ezhava community itself was mixed. C. Krishnan, a spokesman of social reform in Calicut and the editor of Mitavadi, appreciated the ‘misra bhojanan’ programme. At the same time Kumaran Asan, the Secretary of the Sree Narayana Dharma Paripalana Yogam and the great poet of Malayalam, could not appreciate the action of Ayyappan without reservation. In his opinion, ‘it was a jump straight downward from the world of idealism to the practical world, that would lead to self-ruination.’ In this matter one who consistently stood by Ayyappan was his mentor Sree Narayana Guru. In deeds also he had supported inter dining. When the conflict over the issue was getting widened, one day Sree Narayana Guru came to Alleppey. He went to a devotee’s house at Kidangam Parambil to take rest. A few old and young men then rushed to see him. After asking to make some payasam, he went for meditation. The payasam was ready by the time he woke up. Then he called a Pullaya boy there and asked him to serve the payasam to all those who assembled there. Everybody took it without raising any objections. That was the way of the Guru to mend the feud over inter dining.

Sahodharan Ayyappan evinced great energy and courage in spreading his ideas among the masses. Like the Christian missionaries he held meetings at street junctions and market places in Cherayi and Ayyambilli areas to educate the people on the futility of the fossilized social customs and beliefs of the Ezhavas and the Depressed Classes in general. The content of his speeches and writings was always the theory of universal brotherhood. The greatest obstacle for the achievement of this brotherhood is caste system. So it is to be destroyed. Inter dining is a means to achieve this. The purpose of the organizers was to strive for the eradication of caste discrimination in a peaceful way to bring about the general welfare of the country. It might help to uplift the downtrodden and to remove the superstitions of the higher sections and thereby to achieve concord among the people. It could not be expected that
wealth and education would remove caste distinctions. Inter dining and inter marriage are not practiced between the Ayyangars and Tamil Brahmins even while both of them belong to the Brahmin community. Therefore the first thing to be done is to open the way for the downtrodden to attain progress by self-help. In order to achieve this aim, caste etiquettes that condemned them to position lower to that of the animals should be removed.40

He strongly believed that so long as the caste system was in prevalence, the caste disabilities could not have been removed. Each caste was responsible for maintaining the caste distinctions. So caste itself had to be removed. Each caste had to work for that goal. So Ayyappan 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. As the Nairs were oppressive to them, they were equally more oppressive to those they considered inferior to themselves. The mere participation of a certain number of Ezhavas in an inter dining 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. The struggle had to be against caste distinctions that enslaved everybody. The educated and the cultured had to prevent the non-Brahmins from becoming the replicas of the Brahmins. They were not to be Brahmins or Ezhavas or Nairs or Pulayas, but they were to form a casteless society of patriotic Keralites.41 Sahodharan Ayyappan was reiterating that people should try to eradicate the very consciousness of caste, rising beyond the aim of achieving the limited goal of getting ameliorated their own caste disabilities. The feeling of high and low should be given up and each community should be aiming at elevating the so called lower castes to their own level. Those who were working against casteism should first of all free themselves from caste thought. Loyalty to caste group had to be replaced by the loyalty to one’s own country. The writings of Sahodharan Ayyappan were impregnant with a series of concepts of universal brotherhood. His speeches in the corner meetings had its characteristics. He used to address the audience from the top of a bench or a stool by using the term “dear brothers” and continue
it in simple words. After some minutes, the nature of speech turn into waves and struck against superstitions, untouchability and casteism. He used to point his finger at the audience and by looking at their face argued against caste. Ayyappan was not the leader created by the crowd; but he was the person who had attracted the crowd. After those speeches an effigy of the caste monster was set to fire in front of the crowd.

In M.E. 1094 (1919 A.D) the annual message of the Sahodharan was to shed the rigid casteism and to work for the uplift of those who were suffering from penury, irrespective of their caste. It appealed that the ordinary labourers, tillers of the soil and carriers of load were the real incarnations of God who had come to test the compassion, devotion and sense of equality of the social workers. Instead of bathing, dressing and feeding the idols of Gods in the temples, those life idols of God had to be bathed, dressed and fed. By that God would be pleased and the blessings would be conferred upon them. In the annual issue of M.E. 1103 (1928), the call to eradicate caste was reiterated. It reminded that the very foundation of the caste system rested upon the taboo on inter dining and inter marriage and by popularizing these two practices that foundation could be shaken and the caste set up could be broken down. The means advocated were continuous efforts based on love and service mindedness without malice and vengeance towards any one.

In the annual issue of M.E. 1119 (1944), Sahodaran carried a big picture of Sree Narayana Guru with the words, “Neither ask, say nor think caste.”

In due course, the opposition to the Sahodhara Sangham and its scheme of inter dining lost ground with the decision of Vijnana Vardhini Sabha on 22 April, 1921. Meanwhile the opinion that those who were ex-communicated for holding inter dining functions should be readmitted in the Sabha was gaining strength and numerous requests raising such a demand began to reach the committee. On the basis of these requests, the executive committee decided to take back the ex-communicated to the Sabha on 4 Makarm M.E 1102 (17 January 1927). For the ratification of the decision the general body of the Sabha was held under the
Presidency of Ayyappan on 6 Makaram 1102 (19 January 1927). The decision was ratified and the news was telegraphically conveyed to Sree Narayana Guru. After a decade, the controversy over inter dining between the Sahodhara Sangham and the Vijnana Vardhini Sabha was thus ended in favour of the former. It was the sign of a notable change in the attitude of the orthodox section of his community. Kumaran Asan, the General Secretary of the Sree Narayana Dharma Paripalana Yogam, also was able to realize by this time the direction towards which the wind was blowing. In his presidential address to the 20th annual general body meeting of the Yogam, Kumaran Asan spoke in praise of the Sahodhara Sangham and Ayyappan as follows: “Among the several duties of the Yogam a significant one is the fight against casteism which is a cause of the deficiency of Hindu religion. The Sahodhara Sangham works on the basis of this. Its main goal is to work with a brotherly attitude towards all castes were considered as high are lower than us in all matters like inter dining etc. The secret of its Dharma is to eradicate that inferiority complex which contracts the consciousness and nerve-joints of the Pulayas and Parayas by inter dining and freely mingling with them and to help the free growth of their soul. I am very glad to see that this movement which caused much displeasure and several untoward incidents and conflicts arising there from, is now day by day acquiring much popularity. There might not be many who have not heard of the name of Mr. Ayyappan, the leader of this trying movement. I state here with much pride that there is nothing astonishing in the fact that the community which gave birth to Sree Narayana Guru also gave birth to this virtuous and brave youth”.

Sahodharan Ayyappan had no intention to reduce the tempo of the struggle against casteism through the Sahodhara Sangham following the lifting of boycott against himself and others. An editorial in the Sahodharan of Chingam M.E.1102 with the title (1927) ‘united’ pointed to the need of strengthening the work of Sahodhara Sangham. It was reiterated that the aim of the Sangham was to work for the removal of caste discrimination and promotion of brotherhood. For that, the Sangham had to get rid of all beliefs and customs that separated
people into various sects on the basis of caste, religion etc. and that prevented inter dining and inter marriage between them. The Sangham at Pallippuram would function as the central institution for all other Sanghams. It was a registered organization which was to be strengthened by increasing its wealth and members. It was to publish books and pamphlets and arrange talks to carry on the propaganda work. It was declared that the essential ideas of the Sangham were communal harmony, universal, brotherhood and perfect humanity.49

He believed that caste was the greatest obstacle to any progress in India and particularly Kerala. The real freedom of India would be attained only when caste distinctions were removed. Sahodharan Ayyappan believed that any struggle for the political freedom of the country would be meaningless without achieving its social freedom. So social freedom must precede political freedom. And that could be achieved only by the eradication of casteism. The apprehension of Sahodharan Ayyappan was not baseless. Even in the twenties of the 20th century, students of depressed classes were not admitted in the hostel attached to the Maharaja’s College in the Cochin State. A demand for the opening of the hostel for students of all castes was opposed in the Legislative Council.50 One honourable member of the Council demanded that the hostels were to be maintained on caste basis. The reason he held for the demand was that the people of the state were against the idea of cosmopolitan messing. The member himself did not consider as desirable the idea of common mess and interdining for students of different castes.51 Caste remained the most divisive force in Kerala society. Sahodharan Ayyappan put emphasis on this aspect of caste and aimed at the destruction of it and created the spirit of oneness inspired by patriotism and nationalism as a way to achieve the welfare of the people in general. Social unity of the people was believed to be a pre condition for it.

Similarly the restrictions attached to inter marriage were a significant preservatory factor of the caste system like the one on inter dining. Elimination of this taboo was as
essential as that of inter dining to shake the foundation of the caste system. So it was included among the objectives of the Sahodhara Sangham.\textsuperscript{52} Ayyappan advocated it for several reasons. First of all he found the restrictions as irrational and anti-historical. It was compulsory that the Kshatriyas, Kings and Nambudiris with the exception of the eldest son, should marry from other castes. Inter marriages had many laudable advantages. It would promote friendship and co-operation between different communities. The people would be forged together. Such a unity was essential for the success of democracy. It was essential not only to remove the disabilities of lower castes but also for the attainment of the welfare of the whole society.\textsuperscript{53} It continued to remain an area of great challenge.

Sahodharan Ayyappan argued that religion, science, reason and experience all put-forth the fact that inter marriage is advantageous to man. As all religions advocated equality of man, inter marriage is not against religion. Marriage is desirable between those who have no blood relations at all or are of very distant blood relations, according to science. So inter marriage is better than marriage with kinship groups. The lesson of history is that inter marriage has many benefits. The Nairs of Kerala derived benefits from their marriage relations with the Nambudiris. Similarly the all round progress of the Christian community is because of the blending of various races. An important reason for the spectacular progress of the Japanese is the expansion of social limits of marriage. There is no ban on the marriage relations with any race for the Japanese.\textsuperscript{54}

He continued to advocate inter marriages as a solution to the communal tension from which emanated communal problems. The rightful solution for the communal tensions was to allow the individuals of different communities to lead a mingled social life and thereby help to widen social consciousness of the individual beyond the limits of his own community and gradually even to destroy such limits. For that the taboo on inter marriage and inter dining between different communities should be got rid of. The legal impositions on inter marriage
should be eliminated. Inter marriage and inter dining should not be confined to communities within a particular religion, but might be encouraged between different religious sects too. People should not be allowed to develop sectarianism whether based on community or religion. Religion should be made a personal affair and caste should be destroyed.\textsuperscript{55}

The Sahodhara Sangham did not give much importance to the spread of inter marriage as that of inter dining. Unlike inter dining, inter marriage was not easy to be put into practice. It involved long term implication. It could not be materialized by mass or group participation. It was a question of permanent relations between two individuals. Its success depended on social, economic and psychic factors. Instances of such marriage solemnized under the auspices of the Sahodhara Sangham never could go beyond a single one. That was conducted in Palluruthy on 1 Chingam M.E.1104 (16 August 1928). It was between an Ezhava bridegroom and a Pulaya bride. The Sangham was not inducing them for such a marriage or showing any unreasonable enthusiasm for it to secure credit. But the Sangham found that the Ezhava youth was not under the spell of emotion and both of them were determined to do so even by changing their religion. When they left Palluruthy later it was alleged by some newspapers that it was due to harassment from their own people. Actually they left for Trichur seeking employment though they had to face some opposition in the beginning at Palluruthy. Both of them got minor jobs in an Ezhava temple at Trichur.\textsuperscript{56} Still the Sahodhara Movement had the courage to initiate the spirit of inter marriage.

Despite practical difficulties Ayyappan was not ready to abandon the propaganda in favour of inter marriage as a means to bring about social harmony. Moreover, he was of the opinion that marriage is for the sake of marriage rather than for any social reform. Even so it is desirable that those who engage in inter marriage could utilize such marriage for social reform. To bring about such a result inter marriage should be without changing the religion or caste of either or both of the couple. What is to be changed is religion and caste. Inter marriage after changing religion or caste would only help to strengthen their existence. The
lofty goal of inter marriage is to create a casteless society. His conviction that intermarriage would help in the destruction of caste was very strong. But he never failed to point out the possibility of its undesirable results.

Sahodharan Ayyappan advocated inter caste marriages; but preferred them to be arranged ones is crucial in the light of his conception of social change. Inter caste marriages springing from romances were often youthful decision taken on the spur of the moment, earning the animosity of relatives from both communities. He realized that these isolated exercises were doomed to failure due to their very unsocial nature. Such failure in turn would cast a slur on the high ideals he espoused by setting negative examples. His own conception of arranged marriages, on the contrary, demanded that the social consciousness of both families be elevated in this process. Thus if inter caste marriages had to be an instrument against caste, they had to be conducted in the spirit of co-operation than empty protest. It was almost like the Self Respect marriages conducted under the auspices of E.V.Ramaswamy Naicker.

Like E.V.Ramaswamy Naicker, Sahodharan Ayyappan also believed that inter marriages had to be popularized for the removal of casteism and he had no vain hope that the mere practice of it would bring an end to casteism. For to a certain extent, the attitude of castelessness is necessary for the success of such marriages. Inter marriages would become popular with the process of caste elimination and caste elimination would be possible with the popularity of intermarriages. They are mutually complementary.\textsuperscript{57} Such marriages should be calculated to inject the spirit of self respect in the minds of the people.

Restrictions on intermarriages were not harmful as restrictions on inter dining. Though the former had the effect of perpetuating division between sects, it did not cause much social disabilities and hardships as the latter in social and public life. While the first did not involve
any denial of equality or justice directly the latter did so. On practical side disabilities and privileges associated with caste were the real impediments to inter marriages. Therefore its elimination had to come first for the success of inter marriages and inter marriages could not be a first step to the removal of casteism. The marriage of Sahodharan Ayyappan with Parvathy was an eye opener on the issue. The people noted that even for the great champion of inter-marriage, it was not mandatory but only optional. Hence, the call for intermarriage did not create as much enthusiasm as that of inter dining. But it seems that he gathered inspiration for the conduct of intermarriages without much expenses and rituals from the similar marriages conducted by the followers of the Self Respect Movement during those days.

Notes and References:
3 Interview with Koru Vaidyar, an eye witness, on 18.03.1983.
4 Abhimani, op.cit.
5 K.A. Subramaniam, op.cit., p.18.
6 Interview with Koru Vaidyar on 18.03.1983.
9 K.A. Subramaniam, op. cit.
10 C.K. Gangadharan, op. cit., p.31.
13 M.K.Sanu, op.cit., pp.82-84.
15 Sahodarn, I, No.1 Kanni, M.E. 1093, North Parur, p, Front Flap.
16 Ibid., p.6.
17 Ibid.
20 K.A. Subramoniam, op.cit., p.158.
27 K.A. Subramanian, *op. cit.*, p.27.
29 Pulakotti means Pulaya-Ezhava, Kotti is a nickname for an Ezhava as one who taps toddy.
35 K.A. Subramanian, *op. cit.*, pp. 36-37.
37 *Vivekodayam*, vol. XIV, No. 1, Medam - Edavam M.E. 1092, p. 47.
40 Sahodaran, I, No. 1, Kanni M.E. 1093, pp. 5-7.
43 Sahodaran, II, No. 6, Chingam, M.E. 1094, p. 88.
46 Interview with Sri. M.C.Damodaran Master, Cherai (former Secretary of Vijnana Vardhini Sabha) on 15.2.1984.
48 P.S. Velayudhan, S.N.D.P. *Yoga Charitram*, Quilon, 1978, p.c.VII.
50 *CLCP*, 1925, 1, 7 August 1925, pp. 686-692.
51 *Ibid*.
52 Sahodaran, Valsaraprathi, M.E. 1103, p. 2.
55 Yuktitvadi, XIII, No. 12, Karkidakam, M.E. 1117, p. 368.
56 K.A. Subramaniam, *op. cit.*, pp. 61-62.
57 Sahodaran, XXXII, No. 23, September 1953, pp. 5-6.
58 Interview with Mrs. Parvathy Ayyappan on 23.5.1987. During the interview Mrs. Parvathy Ayyappan told her love with K. Ayyappan before marriage.