CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

The social history of India is a systematic and objective study of the society beginning with the Indus valley Civilization. It takes a leap into the pristine past to distinguish between the myths and realities associated with the origin and development of a social order and religion and makes a critical assessment of the various schools of philosophical thought in India.

The philosophical outpourings of the ancient sages of India are called Darśanas. Darśana means both vision and the instrument of vision. The Darśanas are broadly classified into two: Nāstikadarśanas and Āstikadarśanas. Nāstikadarśanas are Cārvāka, Baudhā and Jaina, which do not accept Vedic authority. Āstikadarśanas are Sāṅkhya, Yoga, Nyāya, Vaiśeṣika, Mīmāṁsā and Vedānta. They accept the authority of the Vedas. These different systems of philosophies are the different methods of interpreting the truth. Each of them aims at solving the problems and sufferings of humanity. This vast wisdom helped India to develop a great culture, which aims at a peaceful, affluent and blissful world.

The 6th century BC was an age of intellectual stir and philosophical enquiry throughout the world. It was the age of Buddha
in India. Many of the religions were based on regional customs and rituals. Buddhism emerged as the most important among the new religions of the time. Many factors contributed to the rise of this new religion. The new religion arose to meet the pressing popular demand for a religion they could comprehend and practise. It was a reaction to the caste system and the Brāhmaṇical domination of society. The Brahmins were a privileged class. The common people stood against the social inequalities which made their lives miserable. They wanted to return to the old, simple, and unselfish life. In fact, the way of life upheld by the Buddhist was a concrete expression of these thoughts.

An analysis of the ancient sources including the Buddhist and Jain literature, Ashoka’s edict, travellers’ accounts like Megasthenes and Chinese pilgrims and Patañjali’s account it can be said that two prominent religious traditions in India were Brāhmaṇism and Śamaṇism. Those Arabic documents belonging to the second century AD also confirm the same traditions was prevalent in the country.

The structure of Brāhmaṇism much more established in its nature. This constructed out of a systematic hierarchical form and deep rooted into priesthood. The ritual traditions and belief systems
were formalised with the existing agencies of the religion. The unequal and unquestioning nature of this religion monopolised the authority of Vedas. The entire philosophy of this faith was moulded for the benefits of those who hold power. The possibilities of language for controlling power effectively utilised this religion. This denied the accessibilities of masses and generated the power in to the hands of few.

Śramaṇas propagate an entirely different view from Brāhmaṇas towards their religion. Śramaṇas are those who lived in poverty and practiced an experienced version of religion rather than the textual authority authorised by Brāhmaṇas. They are beggars as per the definition of the term. Instead of living within an institutional form of religion Śramaṇas had chosen the policy of down to earth in their lifestyle. They denied the authority of Brāhmaṇas and rejected the textual religion. The language they used was popular in nature which may popularise their ideas. The rigidity of caste divisions and ritual practices do not affected them. They were out of all these conventional frame works of Brāhmaṇic religion which may reduce the chances of hierarchy amongst them. The practices of untouchability and idol worships in temples are established practices
in the prevalent society. Through the popularisation of the idea of humanitarian concepts they were demystified the conventional paths.

The major difference between the two faiths was its purpose. It can be said that the Brāhmaṇic religion was effectively utilised the power of religion which include various kinds of authoritative as well as agencies in nature. So in this sense religion used for power. At the same time the Śramaṇas deconstructed the so-called Brāhmaṇic religious paths and the ultimate purpose of their faith was some sort of spiritual enquiry. This unconventional nature promoted social justice and equality in its character which may revolt the established religion.

Buddhism and Jainism evolved out of the strong rejection of the existing hegemonic clutches of Brāhmaṇism. They were questioned the authoritative nature of religion and textual claims which charted by the priesthood. The collective idea of these faiths was the equality amongst the different sections of the society. This collective social change encouraged the oppressed communities and popularised these faiths among the masses. Similarly the traditions of Bhakti and Sufi movement were another important revolt against the established forms of religions in the medieval period.
Buddhist philosophy is very practical and highly rational. The Buddha kept himself away from the fruitless discussions regarding the Ātman and the Brahman, and dealt with the problems of the world. He rejected the Vedic ceremonials, the caste system and ignored the existence of God. The doctrines of Buddhism were summoned up in the Four Great Truths, the Āryasatya and the Eight-Fold-Path. Thus greater emphasis was laid on a life of moral purity. These were enforced strictly on the Saṅga. They were designed to develop a cogent and disciplined mind in a healthy body. They formed the Buddhist Dharma. The Buddha gave the world the message of peace, love, goodwill and compassion. Buddhism thrived in this land from the 5th century BC to the 3rd century AD.

The Age of the Pallavas (3rd century A.D.) was an age of Hindu religious revival. Buddhism and Jainism declined as testified by Hieun Tsang during this period. The Hindu recovery or renaissance was largely due to the efforts of the great religious leaders, especially the Nāyanārs (Śaivite saints) and the Ālwārs (Vaiṣṇavite saints). These saints developed the bhakti cult, urging the people to worship a personal God - either Śiva or Viṣṇu in physical form. They came from all castes and classes, from the princes to the fishermen and from the Brāhmins to the Caṇḍālas. There were in all 63 Nāyanārs. Sekkilar’s
‘Periya Purāṇam’ tell us of the lives and works of the Nāyanārs and their hymns. The early Nāyanārs included Tirumūlar, Appar, Sambandhar, Sundarar and Mānikkavācagar. They spread the Bhakti movement in India.

The South Indian school of Śaivism is called Śaiva Siddhānta. It is based upon twenty eight Śaiva Āgamas. The fundamental concepts of Śaivism are Pati (Śiva), Paśu (the soul) and Pāśa (bond). Pati is the creator of the world. He is independent while the Paśus are dependent. He is conscious while Paśus are unconscious. So Śiva is different from the Paśus and their Pāsas. Śiva is the supreme reality. The Paśus are dependent on him. The Pāsas abide by him.

In the beginning of the 20th century, there was a great social change in Kerala – a late bloom of the Indian cultural and political renaissance. It focused on the abolition of discriminations like untouchability and unapproachability. Many of the social reformers fought against those social evils. Among them, Śrī Nārāyaṇa Guru occupies a prominent place. He was a saint, a seer, a yogi and a social reformer. His magnetic personality attracted and influenced not only the seekers of reality, philosophers and social reformers, but also the common man.

Śrī Nārāyaṇaguru is a perpetual source of spiritual, moral and social inspiration to mankind. Although he is physically absent now,
he lives forever in the minds of the masses. The philosophy and works of Guru have an incomparable status. He developed his visions and thoughts about life and the eternal reality on the basis of non-duality of Reality.

The philosophy of ‘Advaita’ was the fundamental basis of Guru’s philosophy. He practiced this theory in his everyday life and popularised among the people. Advaita accepted the idea of unity of existence and refused the differences. The adaptation of Advaita philosophy in the life of Guru was not just mere its theoretical sense, instead of that he followed throughout the discourse of his life and everyday practices. This kind of consciousness restricted the different forms of cruelty and unnecessary ritual practices among the community. The light of unity of existence which is realised by Guru popularised among his world. The ultimate intention of this imagination was a world of uniqueness. The Advaita philosophy of Guru included the consciousness of Advaita Vedānta, its practices in everyday life, sense of love towards all human beings and social services.

A large number of interpretations and studies have come out on the works of Śrī Nārāyaṇaguru and his philosophy. Broad interpretations of his philosophies as well as the theories in his
philosophy have already been discussed. Questions on the relevance of the present study, while they are existing, are, significant.

Guru, who was a poet, philosopher, spiritualist, materialist and social reformer, contained in him a persona which could influence people over the decades. The aim of this study is to ascertain how far the Buddhist and Śaivist ideas influenced Guru’s philosophy in the light of his works and the studies about him and also the different ramifications of his philosophical principles. Some scholars have pointed out the influence of these two systems in the ideas of Guru’s philosophies as well as those of the technical terms in Guru’s works. The prominent scholars who studied him and who have pointed out the influence of the Buddha and Buddhism in the works of Guru are Dr. K. Sugathan (Buddhanum Nāṇuguruvum, Mathrubhoomi Books), Dr. Dharmaraj Adat (Śrī Śaṅkaranum Śrī Nārāyaṇaguruvum, Chintha Publications) and Dr. T. Bhaskaran (Śrī Nārāyaṇaguruvum Mānavikatayum, Śivagiri Math Publications). Other publications during the third Cempazhanti Śrī Nārāyaṇa convention 2012 April 30-May 1, 2 are Śrībuddhanum Śrīnārāyaṇanum by Ācārya Śaṅkarānanda Bhāratī, Matetarabhāratavum Gurudevadarśanaṇṇāḷum by Prof. M. S. Jayapraksh, Gurudevan; Gurudevacaritaṇṇāḷile Abaddhaṇṇāḷ by Dr. K. Sugathan, Daivadaśakavum Divyāṇubhūtiyute kāyasaundaryam: Uṇarvinte Kaittiri by Dr. K. G. Poulse.
The ideas, which the Buddha and Buddhism adopted to suit to the requirements of the age and social situations, have greatly influenced Guru. If the differences and contradictions between the ages are set away, Guru faced an almost similar social situation as the Buddha. Guru can be observed to have mentioned of Buddha and Buddhism in many of his conversations and compositions. It was Buddha’s ideals and principles that Guru adopted to annihilate superstitions, falsities, corrupt practices and the inequalities of caste observations. They can be divided into three.

Firstly, there are the Buddhist heritage and culture which influenced Guru’s person and the resultant changes in Guru’s action-plan. Second, is the influence of Buddhist humanism in Guru, whose literary and social works reveal that Buddha’s humanism has influenced Guru. Thirdly, certain similarities can be observed between the Buddha and Guru. They are made clear through Guru’s disciples who had an inclination for Buddhism as well as through the references to Buddhism mentions in Guru’s conversations with his disciples and followers.

This study which extends from the Buddha, who lived during the sixth and fifth century B. C., to Śrī Nārāyaṇaguru, who lived in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries AD, is proof for the remnants of Buddhist humanism and culture existing deep-rootedly in India. Both
these masters focused the human being who is the embodiment of brotherhood, dharma, ahimsa, compassion and morality—the converging point where everyone unites despite the differences of caste, religion, region or complexion in their words and deeds. This study also attempts to bring out the similarities in their struggles for truth and justice.

Many instances of Guru’s inclinations and interests towards Śaivism and Śaivist ācāryas have already been brought out by various scholars. Guru’s stotra works, translations and temple consecrations are ample proofs for the influence of Śaivism in him. It can be observed that Śaivist Siddhas and Śaivist Philosophies pervade through his works. Śaivist glory is so evident in Guru’s stotra compositions – around fifteen on Śiva, seven on Subrahmanya and five on Devi, who are Śivakuṭumba Devatas. Śaivist philosophy is beyond caste and religion. The broad world-view in Śaivism and the Śaiva ācāryas such as Appar, Jñānasambandhar, Sundaramūrti, Māṇikya vācagar and Nāyanārs as well as the Śaivist literary works, Tevārams, Tirukkural, Tirumantram, Ozhivilōṭukkam and Tiruvācakam had influenced Guru to a great extent. Guru has employed in his works many of the technical terms of Śaivism with the same meaning and connotations of that philosophy. Pati, paśu, pāśam which are the most important among the 36 principles of the Śaivist philosophy are abundantly used in Guru’s works. The influence of Śaivist
asceticism can also be observed in the ascetic practices that Guru adopted.

Dr. T. Bhaskaran, one of the outstanding commentators of Guru’s works like Śrīnārāyaṇaguruvinte Sampūrṇaṅkṛtikal, Gurudarśanagarimā; Vaikharī; has aptly recorded that the Śaivist inclination in Guru is the result of Śaivist philosophy’s influence on him. Scholars like Dr. Dharmaraj Adat, N. Anantharaman, K. P. Appan, Swami Dharmachaithanya, Nithyachaithanya Yati, Muni Narayana Prasad, Dr. A. Gopinathan, Dr. Geetha Suraj, Dr. K. S. Radhakrishnan and Dr. B. Anjali have also studied and recorded the Śaivist influences on Guru.

Although many works have been produced from a general and popular angle about the influence of Śaivism and Buddhism in Guru’s life and works, no serious research has been done on the topic till date. Hence, an attempt is being made here to bring out the impact of Buddhism and Śaivism on Guru, as well as their role in the formulation of Guru’s philosophy. The original Tipiṭaka (Pāli version) of Buddhism and the key texts of Śaivism are being quoted. Earlier interpreters and their explications are also being depended upon to make this attempt worthy of further exploration in future.