Chapter : 6

NARAYANA GURU’S CONCEPTION OF ONE CASTE, ONE RELIGION AND ONE GOD

There is a call for globalisation in the present era. It aims at a kind of unity, harmony, co-operation and worldwide able communication. Economical globalisation has a currency. In this background, it aims at international market, international economy, international interaction. But still, we are not matured enough for contemplating spiritual globalisation and world Government.

Sri Narayana Guru has thought of spiritual globalisation and a kind of world Government long ago, that is during 19th century itself. Rushis and Yogis are all time thinkers, since they are great visionaries. They can visualise past, present and future. When the upanishad says ‘Vasudaiva Kutumbakam’ which refers
to one family system on the entire existence. This refers to spiritual globalisation; spirit or consciousness is one but forms are many. Another upanishad says: ‘Neha Nanasti Kinchana’,¹ that means, there is no multiplicity what so ever. Such a unitory existence was being visualised by the Rishis. Narayana Guru, following such as Rishi-tradition, has therefore envisaged the concept of **one caste, one religion** and **one God** in the entire universe. It is because the entire universe is created by God and He is present everywhere. Guru quotes an upanishadic statement “Tatsristva Tadevanu Pravishat”² which means, God has not only created the universe but also he himself entered into it. If God has himself enters and pervades whole of existence, where is Brahmin and paraiah (untouchables)? Where is Brahmin and Sudra? Where is varna and avarna? All these differentiations are but the creation of fools says Narayana Guru. Hence,
he has advocated one caste, one religion, one God. This means the fundamental unity of blood of the human species, the uniformity of the truths of all the religions and the common goal of all human kind.

Narayana Guru says: there is no difference between one man to another man and man to woman at all. All differences are created by lunatics and fanatics. There is a basic unity among the human beings both physically as well as scientifically. In a plant there are roots, trunks, branches, leaves, flowers and fruits etc. Apparently there seems to be difference but the sap in it is flowing all through the entire tree. It is only sap which makes the tree united and one; so also among the human beings colour may be different, name, height, etc. may be different but the Pure Consciousness is same and common to all. Philosophically there is one caste of human beings and no more. Even scientifically
our body is made up of five mahabhutas (Earth, Water, Air, Fire and Akasha). There is another system brain, heart, so on and so forth, they are all common factors which all human beings are sharing. The blood is same in all; we cannot find kerosene in some bodies instead of blood. Hence, even scientifically there is unity among the human beings and therefore humanity as such belongs to only one caste.

Narayana Guru has admitted in his institution/ashrama all people irrespective of caste, creed and sect, since, he was great committed humanist. All the students used to live together dine together and study together. They never thought of any caste or creed. Like Plato, commune theory formed a universal group and brought out new social revolution under the leadership of the great Guru Narayan.
Sri Narayana Guru was not a religious fanatic, but believed that every religion seeks human happiness. Established in different countries at different times religions appeared to be different, but the goal of them is the same. All religions attempt to uplift souls. For Guru, the non-violence of Buddhism, Brotherhood of Islam, and Universal love of Christianity are equally important and inter-related. According to guru, Hinduism is the unity of a number of religious sects like Vaidika, Puranic, Sakta, Saiva, Samkhya, Yoga, Vaisesika and Vedanta etc. Sectarian differences are common to all religions, he points out that, in the course of time the wise used to select different doctrines from the teaching of their predecessors and combined them. Thus, a new religion comes into existence and named after the man who started it. Then, by this argument Narayana Guru says that all these religions are one because their goal is
the same, that is, the welfare of the world.

Narayana Guru says:

Religions are in essence one;

as blind men dispute about the elephant

the ignorant with Varying arguments stray

Behold and stray not, be at peace

In fact, religion is the art of living through right action; we have to live our daily life in harmony within ourselves and with others and to lead a life of peace and happiness. It means, a way of life that which supports the entire universe and it is the supreme means of providing eternal bliss of man.

Yajñavalkya smriti says: “Ahimsa Satyamasteyam Soucha mindriyanigrahah Danam da^odaya ksanti Sarvesha dharma sadhanah”
Means: Non-violence, truth, non-control of mind and senses, charity, compassion etc are the basic principles of Dharma or religion.

The Guru from his theological interpretation of one God and one religion, further asserted that there is one caste. It has been recorded that his dictum was: "Ask not, speak not, think not of caste." Narayana Guru argued vehemently for the establishment of universal brotherhood. Men immersed in ignorance thinking that there are different religions and castes. Just as, there is only one jati or universal cowhood in all cows, similarly in all men there is only one jati or universal humanity. A man can born any where and can produce human beings, so they all belong to one species. As cowhood is one jati or universal in all cows, humanity is the one jati or universal in all human beings. When this truth is rightly grasped, race and caste
differences based on untruth are destroyed and will develop a universal friendliness and oneness. Sri Narayana Guru says that differences among men are due to language, dress etc., but not due to race and caste. Therefore, intermarriage and inter-dining may be voluntarily done among men. In his own words: "whatever may be the difference in man’s creeds, dress, language etc. because all of them belong to the same kind of creation, there is no harm at all in their dining together or having marital relations with one another.

Hindu religions and the chief theologians or interpreters of them have employed static laws on the basis of myths and superstitions and made the individual enslaved to them. They deceive themselves, their fellow men and ordinary people by their myth-making and keep society in closed morality. Narayana Guru gave a revolutionary interpretation and a new orientation to the
vedantic tradition and integrated its teaching with the social needs and requirements. Guru developed a theoretical understanding of the ancient wisdom and derived the practical implication of them and thereby advocated practical and religious ideas that unite all mankind. He says:

Acts that one performs for one’s own sake should also aim the good of other men.⁹

A casual incident in a train on the way to Madras throws light on his attitude. A young Indian in European dress was sitting in the compartment. He asked the Guru seriously,

“What is your name?”

“Narayana”

“Of what caste are you?”

“What do you think? Guess!”

69
‘I cannot make out from your appearance’

‘If you do not know by sight, how can you through hearing’?

On hearing a report of this from Guru at Madras a young firebrand blurted out that the so called sacred thread of the twice born should be burnt. The Guru commented ‘If there are half a dozen youth of such enthusiasm, the curse of caste can be exercised. No special proof is needed to believe that all human beings belong to the same jati’. A dog, on seeing another, recognises it as one of its own kin. Every animal has this instinct except man. Only he has doubts. He is inferior to beasts.

The Guru was totally against the system of segregating people on the basis of their hereditary profession. In fact, he was against the very idea of making a profession hereditary. Should the son of a thief
become a thief? Making a profession hereditary is fundamentally the denial of a man’s freedom of choice. If a priest’s son likes and wants to become a priest, let him become one. It does not need to be branded as hereditary and restricted to a frame work of caste. The problem comes when he does not want to become a priest. If his right to choose a profession is taken away and he is compelled to do something which he does not like, he will degenerate into a slavish imitator.

The Goal of all religions is same. Religion have the role of creating in the human soul the trend to ascend. Ones the trend is set, they themselves will seek and find the ultimate truth. Religions are only the guides to help one seek rightly. To those who have attained the supreme, religion is not at all authority, they themselves are authority to religion. Did Lord Buddha preached the path to Nirvana after studying Buddhism? He sought
and found the way to salvation and then preached. It subsequently became Buddhism. Did Buddhism, do any good to Lord Buddha. That only means, a realised soul is above religion and it is only from such soul religion emerges. Hence all religions emerged out of such a realised souls and therefore Sri Narayana Guru says the principle underlying all religions, eternal values are equal significance and all religions are representing one or the other such eternal truth. Depending upon time and circumstances one may become more important and other truth may become less important. Hence to bring peace and harmony on earth, Narayana Guru has prescribed the study of all religions with open mind and equal attention.

Narayana Guru has not recommended conversion as the remedy for the solution of the religious conflict. By conversion one may get material comfort and some
status in the society, but he remains as religious and not otherwise. To be religious means to be spiritual and to be spiritual means to realise one’s own-self, that is what exactly needed in the name of religion. This notion is common to all religions. Hence he advocated the concept of one religion = unity and diversity. If one realises unity and diversity he attains true salvation.

Narayana Guru, a God intoxicant saint advocates that ‘God is all, God alone is ‘the one who has realised the God can see the presence of God everywhere.’ Some time Guru used to say one’s own potential is one’s own ‘God, your God is your-self. This is true if and only if we explore the divine within us, the kingdom of God is definitely within us. The knowledge or Arivu according to Guru is God itself.11

Brahmavidya means this God realisation or attainment of advaitic knowledge. Attainment of
awareness or knowledge is the realisation of the knowledge, none dualism of the self and the supreme, the Atman and the Brahman. When such a realisation downs upon oneself he will embrace all, see the unity of life, this is what Narayana Guru says the essence of existence. Thus such God is the protector, benefactor, supporter, leader and guide all in one. He is the creator, the creation and the instrument of creation. He is eternal omnicient, omnipresent and omnipotent. He is reality and illusion. He is the creator and destroyer of illusion, illusion itself, exponent of reality and reality itself. He is all in all. Just like water cannot separated from the wave, God cannot be separated from life.

Narayana Guru has not separated God from life. For him life is God, God is life and man himself is God. Guru was great humanist, he could identify God with man. If he says God is somewhere who transcends, man
and nature hiding incl no one would have accepted his views. If there is a God, He must be one and must be present every where. If there were more than one God there would have been fight among themselves, which not God at all. Hence there must be one and only one God. If that one God is staying in one particular place He will not be considered as supreme, he will be limited being like us. Hence he must be existing every where as an essence. As Gita puts Sutremani Ganaa common thread which is immanent principle in many pearls.¹³

Narayana Guru, a saint-philosopher and prophet has maintained all through the conception of one caste, one religion and one God in order to bring harmony, peace and global understanding in the human kind. He was a great humanist, secular saint and socio-religious reformer.
Foot notes:

1. *Isavaṣa Upanishad*, III.13

2. See, *Katopanishad* VIII.25

3. See, *P. Parameswaran, Narayana Guru, the prophet of Renaissance*, (New Delhi: Suruchi Sahitya, 1979), P.76

4. See, *Satchidanda Swamy (ed), Dsri Narayana Gurudev, the Jnanani of action* (Varkala, Brhamavidyalaya 1996), P.15


7. See, II.14


11. Ibid, p.59

12. Ibid, p.67

13. p.69
Map of Vaikkom Temple