Chapter – 7

THE ROLE OF S.N.D.P. IN SOCIAL CHANGE AND RECONSTRUCTION OF HUMAN SOCIETY

S.N.D.P. means Sri Narayana Guru Dharma Paripalana Yogam or sangam. Narayana Guru through his socio religious teachings and writings has become so famous in the socio-religious and political scenario of Kerla during 19th century that all the young people turned towards the reformative movements of Sri Narayana Guru and voluntarily they have redesignated their former youth association (it is called Vivatu sangha) as S.N.D.P. It was registered as a joint stock company in January 1903 with Sri Narayana Guru as life time president. A periodical vivekodayam (The name is tribute to Swamy Vivekananda) started as the mouth piece of the yogam, Kumaran Asan was its
Eminent scholars and social workers like T.K. Madhavan, Sahodaran Ayyappa, C. Krishna, M. Govindan and others were behind the Guru to lead S.N.D.P. After the name of its founder Sri Narayan Guru founded the Shivagiri Matt at Verkala in 1904. In course of time it developed into a place for pilgrimage, meditation and workshop. Though the Guru consecrated to Sharada Devi is unique in its architecture and it is the only temple consecrated by the Sri Narayana Guru. Sri Narayana Guru after the establishment of S.N.D.P. started Socio-religio-cultural movement through Kerla State. To begin with he has built up various temples throughout Kerla, they are, for example, Shivagiri Matt at Varkala, Shiva temple at Aravipuram, Lord Subramany temple at Muttakad near Kollum beach, Jaganath temple at Tellicherry, Shiva temple at Trichur, Srekanteshwar temple at Calicut,
sundareshwaran temple at Kannur and Gokarnatheshwara temple at Mangalore, etc. etc. Sri Narayana Guru established more than sixty temples. A.K. Pavitran observes "The Guru laid the axe are at the dead root of tradition, which for ever three thousand years has sapped the vigour and vitality of the people".

He also comments at another place:

"By himself consecrating the temples the Guru challenged the authority of those who denied his right to do so, and exposed the fallacy of the religious texts, which prescribed such prohibition.”

All these temples are the religio-cultural and Educational centers. S.N.D.P. has appointed men of lower castes as priests challenging the supremacy of the Bramhins. They have started schools attached to these temples. Sri Narayana Guru states as follows "Temple is
not only the place of worship and meditation but also the
centre for education and enlightenment”. 4 Sri Narayana
Guru has given most attention for the education and
spreading knowledge to the people. Education is the
sole tool for the attainment of individual freedom and
self respect. Through education a poor can raise up
social Economical and Cultural standard and
untouchability also can be annhilated. Sri Narayana Guru
says: ‘Knowledge is supreme bliss. Realisation of the
inner self that glows is all human beings as the true
knowledge ........ not to argue and win but to know and
make known should be our motto’. 5

S.N.D.P. has took it as challenge to build up equal,
just and free society for that, under the leadership of Sri
Narayana Guru the first revolutionary steps was mass
education both formal and informal, spiritual and
materialistic. They have foresight to invite expert and
leaders to deliver lectures on all aspects of human life; on Organisation, Agricultural, Trade, Handicrafts, Medical and Technical education etc. So that all people in society should know every thing what is going on in the human society, this has felicitated the people around. Sri Narayana Guru in Kerala State to acquire sufficient knowledge to destroy ignorance and to acquire practical knowledge to destroy poverty.

The starting of the SNDP was a milestone in the social revolution of Kerala. Sri Narayana Guru was the protagonist of the movement. The SNDP take more interest to implement what the guru advised: schools were open, first attached to temples and then separately, libraries and reading rooms. In the beginning these were operated with the income from the temple, but later, the community came forward for supporting these institutions donating from rich persons. In course of time
the schools developed into colleges, Vocational training institutions, teacher training colleges, etc., just a little short of university.

Through the assoication Sri Narayana Guru's voice was against to the social evils and introduced new reforms. The first secretary of the SNDP was Dr. Palpu and next secretary Kumaran Asan gave a strong cultural base for the yogam. Sri Narayana Guru’s reform work through the Gagette or Vivekodyama, the mouth piece of the S.N.D.P. yogam was started in the name of Swami Vivekananda.

Backward-class conference was held at Paravur (Quilon District) under Sri Narayana Guru’s chairmanship. At the conference, has advised to stop the evil practices like talikattu (child marriage) pulikuti (a custom and drinking part at the time of seventh month
of pregnant woman) Tirandiukul (a custom at the time of Girls maturity)

S.N.D.P. was against to alcoholic consumption. Sri Narayana Guru say's "Liquar is poison, brew it not, vend it not. The tappers body stinks, clothes stinks, his home stinks and whatever he touches stinks." This policy has become very efficient among backward class people who were mostly toddy tappers by profession. This measure has stabilise the economy of entire human community. Not only the economy but the moral and dignity of the people also were uplifted by this single measure.

Sri Narayana Guru warns the people saying "Toddy tapping is a horrible melody. When one organ is affected by leprosy the entire body becomes polluted. In the same way the entire community is affected by a few of the members taking to this profession. We amputate
the affected limbs similarly the tappers should be cut off from society. They can be taken back on their renouncing the trade." By the advise of the Guru many gave up their traditional profession of toddy tapping and took to other job. Hence the practices of toddy tapping and drinks was stopped more or less in Kerala State. During Sri Narayana Guru's period the oppression, suppression and all the evils of caste system of Hindu tradition were at their peak in Kerala like other parts of India. Villages were divided into different residential areas. The Brahmins and the upper caste were the land lords and the professional castes and untouchable were treated as slaves or serfs. These people had to live in their own residential areas. They were not allowed either to walk in the main streets or to enter the temples in the village. Along with social awakening in that region, Sri Narayan Guru has initiated various
movements to establish the natural and human rights to be suppressed and oppressed. He fought the rights to suppressed communities to walk in the main street and to enter into Hindu temples.

Then, S.N.D.P. took leadership to fight for the rights for the backward community people. That has started initially through writings and representations. S.N.D.P. used to protest and give representation to rulers and Government. News Papers articles and editorials apply major role in organising, educating and awakening the people. An editorial dated 29-3-1924 published in Malyala Manorama is worth mentioning here: "if a venerable sage like Sri Narayana Guru and his disciple Mahakavi Kumaran Asan were driven away from the roads around the temple by a drunken upper caste buffoon in the name of caste, can people take it lying down? If they rise up in revolt can any authority
stop them by force?" This shows the evil practices of the higher caste people in caste ridden society. They have still insulated Sri Narayana Guru and his disciples and hence resulted in Vaikam Satyagraha. The aim of Vaikam Satyagraha was to irradicate untouchability. This has drawn attention of Mahatma Gandhi and he was supported satyagraha. Indian national congress has full support for this movement, so temple entry to the untouchables was accepted. It was a movement to purify the Hindu Society of its blemishes and this was what Sri Narayana Guru also attempted through his action and message: "The will to suffer and sacrifice that should be there. But there is no need to get drenched or strave, enter where entry is banned and face the consequences. Take plows without giving them. If a fence is raised in your path, do not turn back, jump it. Do not stop with walking through the road, enter the
temple, enter every temple, every day, every body. If the offering of pudding is ready it. Go to the place where free food served in the temple: and sit along with others. Let the Government be informed of what you intend to do, one should not feel shy of laying down, one's life. Those who thinks another's touch pollutes him should not let left unmolested in their so called cleanliness.”

The main achievement of Vaikam Satyagraha were, 1) Eradication of untouchability through temple entry and 2) Communal harmony. Thus A.K. Pavithran remarked that the Guru's mission was to establish social Justice:

“The Success of the Vaikam Satyagraha moment and the issuing of the historic temple entry proclamation of Travancore were the outcome of the campaign
initiated under the inspiration of the Guru for the establishment of social justice”.10

The progressive minded Savarna and Avarnas came together with Christian and Muslims and even Sikhs. It is to be remembered that many savaranas played the role of active leaders till the withdrawal of Satyagraha and this has demonstrated the basic unity of the people. The statement of George wood cock regarding the change that has taken place in Kerla in recent years is noteworthy. He says: "The change that has taken place during recent years in Kerla is suggested by the fact that it was a Nambudiri Brahmin in Trivendrum who first spoke to me about Sri Narayana Guru, the respect which he showed reflected the almost universal esteem which Kerlans of all communities now feel for the great backward class teacher. He became one of the Malayali Saints, ranking besides Shankar and
Kulsekharan Alwar in the popular imagination and maxim around which all his teaching revolved: one caste, one religion, one god became an idea for thousands of caste Hindu's as well as for Sri Narayan Gurus own people.""11

Thus, S.N.D.P. has brought a total revolution in the Kedal soil in particular and spread entire country in general. It has transformed the human beings from within, purified the hearts of the people removing all ideas and concepts which are baseless like caste, creed, community etc. S.N.D.P. also has brought total revolution outside the individual domain by eradicating inequality, untouchability and unspiritual and unscientific ideologues. It has given most important education and enlightenment. It has given call for the hard work, improvement of the agriculture, trade, handicraft and industry development in order to fight
out with poverty. Another development of S.N.D.P. was stoppage of todday tapping and alcoholic consumption. This has improved economical condition of the people and helped keeping good health and morale. Hence S.N.D.P. in this direction, has brought a revolutionary change in the society, which has destroyed class-caste ridden social structure and established equal society, which is free from all kinds of exploitations.

Ramaswamy Periyar from Tamil Nadu has also sought such a change but his movement was not spiritual. Sri Narayana Guru's movement was spiritual since he was true Advaitian who has realised the oneness in all unity in diversity. It is true that Advaita as religion has great message to convey this world. It is from Advaita, Sri Narayana Guru drawn the principle of one caste, one religion and one God, which has taken new shape under
the leadership of Sri Narayana Guru in the name of S.N.D.P., to bring entire change in the society by reconstructing the society in entirety. This is exactly spiritual globalisation, which Sri Narayana Guru did not named but since this is the era of globalisation we are honour to honour Sri Narayana Guru as a first man to bring spiritual globalisation to this earth.
Foot Notes:

1. See, Dr. M.S. Jayaprakash: *A Study of the Ezhavas in Kerala* (Kollum: Gurukula publication, 1999), P.71.

2. A.K. Pavithram: *Narayana Guru and one world*, P.7

3. Ibid., P.21


9. Ibid, P.105
