Chapter: 8

NARAYANA GURU'S REFORMATIVE VIEWS ON MARRIAGE SYSTEM

The ancient Hindus conceived man's life in four specific stages, namely, Bramacharya ashrama, Grahasta Ashrama, Vanaprasta ashrama and Sanyasa ashrama. Grihya sutras generally begin with Vivaha (marriage) Samskara. Hindus considered that Vivaha is obligatory on every person, for the birth of a son is said to enable one to attain moksha. Manu considers “marriage as a social institution for the regulation of proper relations between man and woman.” In the Hindu society, marriage is a religious necessity for both men and women. It is because sex is not a luxury but necessity like food and cloth. It cannot be curbed but be regulated. It can be regulated only through marriage. Lord krishna
says; “कषिणे कामान्त्यिम्” means ‘I am Kama not opposed to dharma. Kama should be regulated through dharma’ and it is not only in Hindu structure of the society (even muslims, Sikhs and Zoroastrians also follow this) such a religious touch is given to marriage. It is marriage of two souls not only of bodies. Hence there is a spiritual touch.

There are eight forms of marriages they are (1) Brahma (2) Daiva (3) Arsha (4) Prajapatiya (5) Asura (6) Gandharva (7) Rakshasa and Paisacha. The first four methods are religious which are good (approved methods), the rest are inferior methods.² Among different kinds of marriages polygamy and mock system were common among backward community in Kerala. One of the silliest traditional system of marriage was ‘Kettu Kalyanam or Minnukettu.
Sri Narayana Guru was himself victim of Talikettu, which is a sort of child marriage. Since marriage function will take place between age of 1 to 9. The relatives of bridegroom will tie a thali to the child girl in the name of a boy. Sri Narayana Guru has opposed this system. He introduced 'an arranged marriage after the attainment of age of 19 to girl and 20 to boy. Sri Narayana Guru has arranged intercaste marriages, inter religious marriages and international marriages.' He has encouraged love marriages. In fact, he has strongly supported the love marriages which destroyed the foolish boundaries of caste, religion, creed, etc. In order to establish just and equal society, casteless and classless society, Love marriages are the only means because the child which takes birth from such a couple will not have any caste, it will be universal human being embracing the race of only humanity. This oneness of
caste was must to reach harmony, peace on earth. That may be the reason why Sri Narayana Guru has strongly supported love based marriages and not caste based marriages. Love marriage more or less Gandharva marriages, though, traditionalist treat Gandharva marriage as inferior system of marriage, Sri Narayana Guru treat it as a most superior kind of marriage.

Sri Narayana Guru has fought for the widow remarriages,\(^4\) Arya Samaj in the North and Sri Narayana Guru in South were the Champions for the widow remarriages. But, Sri Narayana Guru brought some changes in it, that is the thali (mangalya) of the first husband should not be taged at the time of the second marriage.

Sri narayana Guru was the supporter of Simple marriage system, He has opposed traditional way of marriage ceremony conducting five days, three days etc.
Instead, he advised to finish marriage ceremony within a day by mutual garland of the bride and bridegroom and giving feast to the thickest relatives and friends.

Being a social reformer Sri Narayana Guru has a greatest responsibility to mould the society. This moulding business, first, will start with marriage itself and then education and social organisation and then socio-religious and political movements, thus Sri Narayana Guru has brought a social revolution to build a holistic society.
Foot Notes:

1. *Manu*, ix, 25

