CHAPTER III

SREE NARAYANA GURU: THE POET AND PHILOSOPHER
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Who am I? From where and how does this world come into being? These are the two questions that philosophers of both the East and the West pondered over. Vedanta, “particularly Advaita Vedanta, admittedly represents the finality of Indian wisdom” (Swami Muni Narayana Prasad, The Philosophy of Narayana Guru 5) is the only science that has unravelled the mystery of the Universe. This Supreme Truth, the pearl of wisdom, that has dawned on the mind of the great seers during their experiential intuitive perception is embodied in the Upanishads.

The concept of mahavakyas of the Upanishads explains and illustrates the concept of Advaita. “isha vasyamitham sarvam yat kimcha jagathyam jagath” (God, the Supreme is everywhere) the opening verse of Ishavasyaupanishad, conveys the central theme of all the Upanishads. The Mandukya Upanishad says “ayam atma brahma” (individual self of man is Brahman). The Aitreya Upanishad proclaims “prajnanam brahma” (brahman is pure consciousness). The Taittariya Upanishad says “brahmavidyapnoti param” (the knower of Brahman attains the Supreme). The Chandokya Upanishad proclaims “tat tvam asi” (That thou art) and finally the Brahadaranyaka Upanishad proclaims “aham brahmasmi” (I am Brahman). Advaita Vedanta is the theory of non dualism based on Upanishads.

The absolute is one and the eternal having no end or beginning and basically it is the nature of knowledge and bliss. The word Brahman is derived from the root brh which means to expand the entity whose greatness, magnitude or expansion cannot be limited or measured. The word is used in the Rig Veda both in the masculine and neuter gender (Sashidharan Nair 21).
Sree Narayana Guru (1854-1928) whose life span spread over from the latter half of the 19th century and the former half of the 20th century, was a yogi, seer-poet and mystic. The religious tradition of India imbibed by him finds expression in his poems and the hallmark of Sree Narayana Guru’s Philosophy is Advaita. He has revalued Advaita Vedanta as expounded by Sri Sankaracharya. He has woven this philosophy of non-duality in the warp and woof of his poems. Advaita in its essence is a spiritual experience. A mystic through introspection and contemplation experiences the identity between the self (jiva) and the Infinite (Brahman). Sree Narayana Guru, as a true Advaiti, applied the pearls of this ancient wisdom to cultivate good values in human life and effected a transformation in the collective consciousness of the society. He revalued Advaita Vedanta to suit the requirements of his age. Even though he follows Sri Sankara’s Advaita Vedanta, he has a profound knowledge of the agamic philosophy and Kashmir Saivism and many of his poems bear testimony to this. This thesis focuses on Sree Narayana Guru’s philosophy of Advaita as propounded in his visionary poems.

Guru’s Philosophy is not argumentative or polemical in its approach…. It has a simplified way suited to its higher critical as well as intuitive speculation on contemplative values. It is full of precise definitions or definite intuitive personal experiences of the mystic contemplative. (Nataraja Guru, Unitive Philosophy 252).

The poems which he has written in Malayalam, Sanskrit and Tamil clearly portray the depth of his mystical experience. They stand out as compositions of great poetic merit, having attained the pinnacle of poetic beauty from a literary standpoint. These thought provoking poems, contemplative in nature, embody great visions. Poems like Atmopadesa Satakam, Darsanamala and Advaitadeepika are some of the poems in which Advaita darsana has been scientifically dealt with.
His mystical and intuitive visions are clearly delineated in his *Atmopadesa Sathakam*, (Hundred verses of Self-Instruction), a remarkable composition in Malayalam from all points of view. It is also striking as the delineation of the Vedantic Truth pouring out an admirable combination of his intuitive knowledge and spiritual experience. This poem elucidates the quintessence of vedantic thoughts which are revisualized to suit the scientific mindset of the modern, age. The Guru has explicitly woven an analytic and synthetic examination of human consciousness into this work.

The brightly shining centre of *Atmopadesa Sathakam* is the core or *karu*. Unitive and singular, it is dimensionless point. Like the seed it sprouts and grows into the flowers of the endless dualities of existence, day and night, the self and the other, sleeping and waking, pain and pleasure and so on. The gist of the practice involved with this study is the meeting and neutralizing the manifold dualities by attuning oneself to the non-dual core, the *karu* that infuses with life (xx).

*Atmopadesa Sathakam* is written soon after he got enlightenment, philosophically explained as ‘the great awakening’, or, as ‘the vision of the Absolute’, or as ‘the flash of Divine knowledge’, reported as illuminating his inner self during his meditation in *Maruthvamalai*. In this poem, he shows the different ways in which one should instruct One’s own self so as to realize the core of existence, which the Guru calls “*Karu*” or “*Arivu*”. This dawn of ‘Knowledge’ or ‘Realization’ or ‘Awakening’ answers the myriad unanswered questions in the minds of devout humans who are seekers after Truth, in what normally baffles the ‘ordinary’ minds regarding the relationship existing between the Universe and the varied forms in Creation – what is often described as “the Absolute Truth” by seekers. He has very effectively united the dialectical thoughts in the mystical plane. This poem “is primarily meant to be an aid to the contemplative aspirant in Self-knowledge rather than a regular textbook on the subject” (*Unitive Philosophy* 255). He
states that the understanding of the unitive wisdom is very essential in one’s quest for a higher ideal and also to lead a life of high ethical standards. The Guru vividly shows the distinction between the dualities. Here he accepts the dual elements to elucidate non-duality or Advaita. When realization dawns, the seer understands that the world with its infinite names and forms is the manifestation of the divine, then duality melts showing the existence of one Supreme Truth. For that realization to dawn upon, the Guru stresses the importance of inward perception or contemplation.

The main theme of this poem is “contemplative self realization”. Just as no difference is there between the waves and water in the ocean, by contemplation one should become one with karu. Contemplation helps one realize one’s self through reflection.

Contemplation is the culminating science which resolves this theme, the science dealing with Self- knowledge through reflection, again and again discovering and rediscovering it with newer patterns and with purport and background suited to the varying stages of history, just those universally human and timeless values which can help man to dwell at peace with himself as well as cordially with his brothers (Nataraja Guru, Life and Teachings of Narayana Guru 72).

Atmopadesa Sathakam encompasses a variety of themes like the realization of the Self, different ways of Sadhana, his own mystic experience and unitive wisdom. All these make this a poetic piece on Vedantic ideals. He uses the term ‘arivu’ to denote the non-dual wisdom and effectively proves that the prime cause of this Universe is ‘arivu’ or awareness. He visualizes arivu as the central point from which all the dualities arise and finally merge in ‘arivu’. The phenomenal world has emerged out of that Supreme arivu and this arivu which shines in and out of the body should be prostrated by restraining one’s five senses.

arivilumeriarinjidunnavan thannuruvil mothupurathumujwalikum

36
karuvinekannukalanjamulladakkitheruthreveenuvanangiothidenam
(AtmopadesaSathakam, 77).

Rising even above knowledge, what within the form
Of the one who knows, as equally without, radiant shines
To that Core, with the eyes five restrained within
Again and again prostrating in adoration, one should chant. (Trans Nataraja Guru 439)

In the 100th verse of Atmopadesa Sathakam, the Guru describes the final stage in which one realizes that one is not this, nor that, but one is that Absolute Truth, Saccidananda, in which one should slowly merge and become one with it.

sathumithumalla sadarthamallaham sa
chithamrithu thlinju dheeranayi
sadasasithi prathipathiyattu satho
mithi mrithuvay mrithuvayamarnnidenam (89).

Neither this, nor that nor the content of existence am I
But existence, subsistence, joy –immortal: thus attaining clarity
Emboldened, discarding attachment to being and non-being
One should gently, gently merge in Sat-Aum. (Trans Nataraja Guru 710)

The first verse refers to the seeker after higher Wisdom and the last verse marks the culmination of his search in the realization of the Absolute as an Existent Subsistent Value, as finally equal and non-different from the Self within each man or in human consciousness treated generally (Nataraja Guru, Unitive Philosophy 192).

The Guru, through various examples and analogies, shows how realizing the Absolute Truth is accomplished. The world is described as a mixture of the three gunas or
‘vaasanaas’: sattva, rajas and tamas. To realize the Truth, all these vasanas have to be wiped out. Towards this end, we are instructed to offer flowers to Shiva, the god who, in the legend had burnt these three gunas (trigunas) to ashes. It is also inevitable that the mind of man concentrates on the non-dual Brahman. In Vedanta, drik, dryshya and darsana constitute triputi. In Janani Navaratna Manjari, he clearly portrays the blossoming of triputi from that arivu or Brahman which in turn awakens in man the myriad desires to experience worldly pleasures which in turn make one sway like a rudderless boat in the ocean of prapancha. When one realizes the fact that one is the manifestation of Brahman, triputi (knower, known and the act of knowing) that veils the Supreme Truth melts and the cosmic consciousness pervades everywhere, shines in all its effulgence.

Only a true seeker can be expected to accomplish this. This Upanishadic thought is echoed beautifully in the following lines of Atmopadesa Sathakam.

_Tribhuvanaseemakadannuthingiveendum_  
_Triputi mudinju thelinjidunnudeepam_ (78)

Going beyond the boundaries of the three worlds, with all-filling effulgence,

When the tree-petaled knowledge had faded out, ever brighter shines that light;

(Trans Nitya Chaitanya Yati 27)

Here the Guru describes (turiya), the fourth and final stage, the experience of the non-dual Truth. In verse 28 he gives a vivid picture of the fourth stage. The first three stages are jagrat, swapna, sushupti (waking stage, dream, deep sleep) and these three stages are connected to the worldly experience while the fourth stage is beyond all the three stages.

The seventh verse of Mandukya Upanishad describes the turiya state.

_nāntaḥ-prajñam, na bahiṣṣprajñam, nobhayataḥ-prajñam_  
nā prajnañā-ghanam, na prajñam, nāprajñam;

_adṛṣṭam, avyavahārayam, agrāhyam, alakṣaṇam_,

...
acintyam, avyapadesyam, ekatma-pratyaya-saram,
prapañcopasamam, śāntam, śivam, advaitam,
caturtham manyante, sa ātmā, sa vijñeyaḥ.

Turiya is not that state which is conscious of the inner (subjective) world, nor of the outer (objective) world. It is not simple consciousness nor is it unconsciousness. It is unperceived, unrelated, incomprehensible, uninferable, unthinkable and indescribable. The essence of the Consciousness manifesting as the self in the three states; it is the cessation of all phenomena; it is all peace, all bliss and non-dual. This is what is known as the Fourth (Turiya). This is Atman and this has to be realized.

In the Mandukya Upanishad Sree Gaudapadacharya explains the experience in the turiya state.

Nivrthe sarva dukhanam
Isana prabhuravyayah
Advaitah sarva bhavanam
Deva sthuryovibhu smrithah (I-10)

In the turiya state all the sorrows disappear. The self shining, all pervading non-dual Truth alone shines in its effulgence.

According to Sree Narayana Guru, “it is an experience of one becoming enlightened of the being of oneself from top to bottom; it is also an experience of one becoming enlightened of the being of the world from beginning to end, or rather from the beginningless to the endless” (The Philosophy of Narayana Guru 32).

adimudiyattdithottu mouliyathnam
spudamriyunnathu thuryabodhmakum
jadamariveelithu chimda cheythu chollu
Bereft of bottom as of top, from bottom to the crest
What transparent awareness has, that is turiya consciousness;
The inert no knowledge has, what it cogitates tells
From in-between, is no knowledge at all, do mark! (Trans Nataraja Guru 557)

The same idea is reiterated in verse 59

\[
\text{Arivinevittatha jnanumilla yenne}
\]
\[
Ppiriyukillarivum prakasam matram
\]
\[
Ariyunnavanennu randumortha
\]
\[
Loruporamathinilla vadamethu (84).
\]
Apart from awareness I have no being;
As distinct from me awareness cannot remain
As mere light; both knowledge and knower, contemplation
Reveals beyond doubt as of one substance alone. (Trans Nataraja Guru 623)

A person who contemplates intuitively understands that he has no separate existence from ‘arivu’. When the ‘I’ gets rid of the imaginary World, then the ‘I’ in him disappears.
Both merge in the light of consciousness on contemplation, one comprehends the fact that both the knower and the awareness (arivu) are one. The dawning of the Supreme knowledge is portrayed succinctly in these lines.

\[
Dwanimayamay gaganam jwalikumenna
\]
\[
Lanayumathingalasheshamadryshya jalam
\]
\[
Punaravide tripitiku poorthi nalkum
\]
\[
Swanvumadangum swayam prakasham (83)
\]
Filled with word-content, that day the firmament shall radiant blaze,
And in it shall become extinct all the visionary magic;
Then too, that small voice completing tri-basic knowing

Shall cease and Self –radiance prevail. (Trans Nataraja Guru 608)

The sky appears with a radiant sound which will be followed by the appearance of all the objects in the Universe. Again there appear the three folds, the knower, the known and the act of knowing and the atman or arivu in which all the names and forms appear and disappear, shines. In verse 35 of Atmopadesa Sathakam, the Guru delineates his mystical experience.

orupathnayiramathitheyaronnay
varvathypole varum vivekavritti
arivine moodumanithyamayayamee
irukline iirnezhumathisooryanathre (81).

Like ten thousand suns coming all at once
The modulation of discriminating arises,
The veil of transience covering knowledge as many
Tearing this away, the primal sun also shines. (243)

The dawn of eternal awareness is compared to the rising of a ten thousand suns which tear the veil of maya which acts as a thick curtain concealing the truth from the ‘normal’ human being – until “this luring vision of enlightenment had led him nearer and nearer the Truth” (49). This state of supreme bliss is attaining jivanmukti and this experience is in more modern language called Cosmic Consciousness, the experience of the whole, the vision of the Supreme Unity, which he calls ‘arivu’ or ‘awareness’ which resides in all. “It is the vision of the Supreme Unity that characterizes all the stages referred to” (50). This final state of the mind of the realized soul, in which one ‘sees’ that there is “no second, and where only the one Truth that shines in all” is described as the experience of “Advaita”.

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The Guru practised Shankara’s *Advaita* in its true sense by making people aware of the underlying oneness in all beings and thereby effecting a radical change in the social structure of Kerala. Sankaracharya, the propounder of *Advaita*, “succeeded in giving *Advaita* the firm foundation of reason” (Tulaseeteerthan 11). In Sankara’s time the atheists denied the Self and identified it with the body, senses and the mind.

Sri Sankara’s mission in life was to defeat these men of deluded intellect in dialectical debates and make them accept the principles of *Advaita* enshrined in the Upanishads. This was the daunting task which the Acharya fulfilled within his short life-span of thirty-two years (11).

A close analysis of his poems reveals that the guru, a true Advaiti, has gone a step forward in applying the essence of *Advaita* to effect a transformation in the collective consciousness of the people and ameliorate the condition of his fellow beings.

Without indulging in violence, without expressing a word of hatred, he gently led the movement forward against the practice of untouchability. He made the down-trodden conscious of the inherent power within them and of the importance of education which would help them from oppression.

Narayana Guru is mostly known in India for his activities for the upliftment of the socially downtrodden, especially the oppressed class. In truth, his concern was not merely for the downtrodden, but for the human race as a whole. This concern of his was not as an active humanist, but as an enlightened seer who was the embodiment of the *Upanishadic* wisdom. The clarity of his vision of reality was such that he could revalue and restate that wisdom making it comprehensible to the mindset of the Age of science (Swami Muni Narayana Prasad, *Shorter Philosophical Poems of Narayana Guru* iii).
He used his spiritual attainments to create a new social order. Thus the social reformation he has brought is the outcome of his realization of the Absolute Truth. His concept of oneness is beautifully portrayed in verse 24 of *Atmopadesa Sathakam*.

\[\text{avanivannennariyunnathokkeyortha}\]
\[\text{lavaniyiladimamyorathmaroopam}\]
\[\text{avaravarathmasukhathinnacharikkunna}\]
\[\text{vayaparanuu sukhatinay varenam} \ (80).\]

“That man,” “this man” - thus, all that is known

In this world, if contemplated, is the being of the one primordial self;

What each performs for the happiness of the self

Should be conducive to the happiness of another. (Trans Nitya Chaitanya Yati 48)

On closely analyzing the ‘self’ in all (I, he, she), one would realize the truth that only one consciousness resides in all. Here the Guru propounds the non-dual wisdom, *tat-tvam asi*. In the third and fourth lines, he extends this philosophy to a practical plane by giving the advice that the *karma* one does for oneself should be useful to others. “Guru did not dismiss this world as Maya or illusion as Sankara did. But he considered this world and its affairs as part of the display of the Universal soul” (Sachidananda Swamy 154).

*Brahmavidyapanchakam*, a short poem of five verses, deals with Vedantic thought, the perception of one Reality and finally experiencing the eternal happiness. It is written in the form of a dialogue between a *sishya* and a *guru*. Swami Muni Narayana Prasad remarks that the first verse states the prerequisite qualities of a true seeker, who a true guru is, the importance of the rapport between the guru and the disciple and what kind of philosophical questions a disciple should ask. The second verse gives the most direct indication needed to the seeker, “you are Brahman indeed”. The next three verses expound in the guru’s own
way how *Brahman* or oneself in essence is *sat* (Existence), *cit* or (Consciousness) and *ananda* (Value experience) respectively. Verse one of *Brahmavidyapanchakam*, as Nataraja Guru remarks, is a summary and review of the first part of *Vivekachudamani*. The essence of these six hundred verses is effectively conveyed. It clearly shows how one can visualize and realize oneself as that Reality which manifests as oneself. That Reality in essence is but the unconditioned consciousness.

The quintessence of Vedanta is delineated in the second verse of this poem. The disciple’s question “Who am I?” is answered by the Guru “*tvam hi brahma*” (Thou art *Brahman*). The Guru then goes on negating the existence of senses, mind, intellect and physical body which are mere superimpositions on the *Atman*.

*tvam hi brahma na cendriyani, na mano*

*budhir na cittam vapuh*

*pranahamkrtayo ‘nyad apy sad avidya- kalpitham svatmani (Shorter Philosophical Poems of Sree Narayana Guru 25)*

Nataraja Guru remarks:

It is the flowering and culmination of the Vedanta trend of thought on the Indian soil. This composition has for its subject matter an Ultimate personal value which is appraised through contemplation dialectics. Immanent and transcendent realities are considered in such a way to reduce them all unitively in relation to Self-realization, to Brahman and the Absolute. The composition is a complete and positively conceived whole (375).

His seminal work in Sanskrit is *Darsana Mala, the Garland of Visions* and this poem as Nityachaitanya Yati remarks, is truly “a textbook on the science of the Absolute” (225). It embodies the core of Vedantic thoughts. *Darsana Mala* is divided into ten sections of ten verses, each written in a very clear, simple and lucid style.
His crowning achievement is the *Darshana Mala* in which the Guru rises far above what superficially might be esteemed as even his “own special note”, a statement which lifts philosophy above the philosophical, above the systems, pure and noble, treating of all systematized thought and philosophies in the light of Wisdom itself (Nataraja Guru 270).

Each section is a vision. He observes the unitive wisdom from ten different angles and it is impossible to find any disparity among the concepts. *Adhyaropadarsanam, Apavadadarsanam, Asatyadarsanam, Mayadarsanam, Bhanadarsanam, Karmadarsanam Jnanadarsanam, Bhaktidarsanam, Yogadarsanam and Nirvanadarsanam* are the ten darsanas which are the beads, and the thread that is used to make this garland, is the Absolute truth. In the first five sections of *Darsana Mala*, the Guru shows the relationship between the *prapancha* and the Absolute Truth, while the second half centres round the ‘I’ and the Absolute Truth. This is viewed again from five different aspects like *karma, jnana, bhakti, yogam* and *nirvana*.

In the *darsana “adhyaropam”*, (superimposition of the unreal on the real) he delineates the superimposition of the *prapancha* on the absolute Truth, the only existing reality. He describes in this *darsana* that the *prapancha* has emerged out of a single Absolute Truth which is an attribute of Lord Paramashiva, the creator of all creations.

In *Apavadadarsanam*, he closely examines the Absolute truth. He refutes the superimposed- the unreal- taken as the real. He does not approve of the existence of *prapancha* and affirms the permanance of the Supreme Truth which is the pure consciousness or *chit*. *Asatyadarsanam* (A vision of non existence) focuses on the mind and its quality to experience the *prapancha* which itself is non- existing. The non- existing mind experiences the non- existing universe through *maya*. In this *darsanam*, he states that *maya* is instrumental in creating the existence of the phenomenal world and that *maya* doesn’t
have an existence of its own nor does it have an existence separate from the Brahman. In Mayadarsanam, he shows the different phases of maya: vidya, avidya, para, apara, tams, paradhanam and prakriti. All these avaranas veil the Absolute Truth. The idea which is conveyed in Karmadarsanam is that all the karmas are done by the Atman, the creator of the universe, which is detached and self-luminous, and what is created is its own projection, the manifestation of its own self. Only in the context of an atmajnani, karma is done in pure detachment – this puts him in total harmony with the Universal Self, and he qualifies to see ‘Truth’ everywhere. This is what makes his actions unitive and resonate with wisdom.

In Bhanadarsanam the Guru portrays the Supreme consciousness as shining brightness.

Having become conditioned and shining as a specific conscious experience is known as bhana, literally ‘to become luminous’. How this bhana is structured to give the appearance of the world, is represented in more than one way by the Guru himself in different contexts….Bhana is any specifiable aspect of the shining process incessantly happening in cit. On the one side, it shines forth inwardly as subjective experiences forming the world of mental images, the world of knowledge’. On the other side, it shines forth outwardly as the objective world, the world of the ‘known’ (Swami Muni Narayana Prasad, The Philosophy of Sree Narayana Guru 53).

In Jnanadarsanam, he delineates the nature of knowledge. In the opening verse, he makes a broad division of jnana as sopadhika (has an upadhi-conditioned) and nirupadhika (does not have upadhi -unconditioned) are dealt with by drawing the example of a pot. When a person sees a pot, he opines that “this is a pot”, which transforms that object into an upadhi, and then the pot becomes a condition which modulates his awareness into the specific features of it. But the mud with which the pot is made of remains the same. In a
similar manner, when there is no conditioning, the Self remains as pure awareness or non-modulated intelligence and in that case *jnana* involved can be described as *nirupadhikam*.

In *Bhaktidarsanam*, he visualizes *bhakti as atmanusandhanam*; since *Atman* is *Brahman*, *Bhakti* is *brahmanusandhanam*. To attain *ananda* is the goal of everyone. Everyone aims at realizing *brahman* and *Brahman* is pure bliss, he defines *bhakti* as meditating on *ananda*. In verse one, he interprets *bhakti* as meditation on *Atman*, in two, as meditation on *Brahman* and in three as meditation on *Ananda*. He says that the essence of *atman*, *Brahman* and *Ananda* is the same as its core is Absolute Truth. *Bhaktidarsanam* ends with the Guru’s depiction of *parabhakti*, *bhakti* towards *paramatma*.

In *Yogadarsanam*, the Guru defines *yogam* as that state in which the mind always remains united to *chidatma* and merges with it which can be acquired by “*manoninedharoopoyam*”, controlling the mind. The mind should turn inward. In verse 2, he says that as long as *drik*, *drshyam* and *darsana* are there, the *sadhak* cannot even think of merging with the Absolute. As long as *vasanas* are there, the heart should be united with the *paramatma* which is beyond *triputi* and a *yogi* attains *yoga* when his heart has experienced the undisturbed depth of the silent spirit. A *yogis’s* experience is beautifully pictured by the Guru by comparing the mind to the bumble bee that sips the sweet honey-like sweetness of one’s own bliss and the fluttering ceases and it gets united. In *Nirvanadarsanam*, the Guru shows how an individual, by climbing up the ladder of *karma*, *jnana*, *bhakti*, *yogam*, finally gets liberated from *rajas* and *tamas* and gets merged in *Brahman*.

*Darsanamala* is a Pilgrim’s Progress. Though the flowers are each separate subjects of inquiry, they are all linked by the single thread of the Absolute. They begin with the initial questions about how everything here came to be and
conclude with the self-realization which is called Nirvana in the text (Swamy John Spiers 38).

Advaita Dipika, (Lamp of Non Duality) is a poem of 19 verses. This poem vividly portrays Advaita, one truth without a second as the only existing underlying Reality that blossoms into many. “Bringing forth the lamp of wisdom that dispels the darkness of avidya” (Swami Muni Narayana Prasad, Shorter Philosophical poems of Sree Narayana Guru 86). The first eight verses substantiate that one Supreme Truth exists which is the chit or consciousness. The next seven verses explain how the world though unreal is perceived by the senses. The concluding two verses emphasize on the kind of spiritual discipline which helps one solve the problem. This poem embodies the Guru’s deep insight and intuitive perception of the non-dual truth.

In this poem, his deep intuitive knowledge can be perceived in his delineation of the non-dual wisdom, the core of Advaita. This poem lights the lamp of Advaita to dispel the darkness engulfing the mind of the common man, drawing very simple examples from nature. He illustrates the existence of only one causal reality behind the apparent phenomenal world with its innumerable names and forms. This one Reality chit projects itself as the universe. To substantiate the existence of one Reality, he compares the Universe to a dream, the dream appears to be real, until the dreamer wakes up. On waking up he realizes that it was only a dream. An ajnanin who is in the sweet slumber of maya considers the world with its multiplicity of names and forms as real, but when the knowledge of non-dual wisdom dawns on him, he realizes that there is only one truth behind this multiplicity, that is chit or consciousness. This realization comes to him only when he does contemplation. Because of avidya, the world looms large.

Narayana Guru adopts a different approach in each work to unveil his philosophical vision. Atmopadesa Satakam, the most important and the most
comprehensive of his Malayalam compositions, is an attempt to answer the question, “Who am I? In *Advaita Dipika*, on the other hand, the reflections begin as a search for the causal Reality that underlies the world appearance (Swami Muni Narayana Prasad 75).

*Janani Navaratna Manjari*, a poem in nine verses, is a hymn which the Guru has composed in praise of Goddess Sarada. What is striking about this poem is that it had emanated from his heart as a *mantra* while he was consecrating the idol of the Goddess Sharada at Shivagiri. It is said that Earath Krishnanashan, one of the Guru’s disciples, has taken down this poem. Through this poem, he delineates his devotion to Goddess Sarada. He has woven the vedantic thought in this poem. He perceives *Arivu* or *Brahman* as Goddess Sarada, the unitive wisdom. In the very first verse he calls mother Sarada as (*onnayamamati*) cosmic consciousness. The *jiva* which falls into the ocean of myriad needs of material life is lost in the web of dualities. So the *sadhak* prays to the Mother, “O Mother, when will my inner being get merged within the domains of *Nadabhumī*?” (20) which is free from the tri-basis factor *triputi*. The self gets merged with the Supreme consciousness. In the fourth stanza he brings forth a few well-known analogies of *Advaita Vedanta*, *Tantra* and *Kashmir Saivism*. On contemplation, it is revealed that waves are nothing but water and the snake perceived on a rope is nothing but a rope and a pot is nothing but clay. He says the causal reality of this Universe is none other than the mother, the Supreme consciousness and the cosmos doesn’t have a separate existence from her. The feet of the mother is the root of all this phenomenon and the Guru begs to the Goddess to bestow on him the boon to know the real. He addresses her as “*rajayogajanani*”. Here one should not be mistaken that he has referred to *Patanjaliyoga*. Both *Pathanjali yoga* and *Sankayoga* are dualistic in nature. They are *purvapaksa* to *Advaita Vedanta* and *Tantra* which are non dualistic. *Rajayoga*
means *sivarajayoga* i.e. the *ultimate* union with *Siva* which can be attained through the grace of the Mother.

He perceives mother Sarada as performing a cosmic dance known as *lasya* in Indian classical arts and she has covered her body with a fine cloth which is constituted by time, space and causality and because of that no one is able to perceive her. This manifested world consisting of the five great elements, i.e., earth, water, fire, wind and *akasha*, is nothing but the mother who is the abode of the *Vedas*.

The Guru’s perception of oneness, his identification with the Absolute power, can be discerned when he perceives the deer, the fish, the river, the snake, the heaven, the earth, the man, the woman, the innumerable names and forms and even the ‘I’ in him and the ‘I’ in everyone as Goddess Sarada, the divine mother.

Meenayatham bhavathi manayatham janani

Nee nagavum nagakhagam

Thanayatham dhara nadee naariyum naranu

Manakavum narakavum

Nee namaroopamathil nanavidha prakriti

Manayi ninnariyumee

Njanayatham bhavathi he nada roopiniya

Ho ! nadakam nikhilavum (Janani Navarathna Manjari 91).

You became the deer, and the fish too,

The snake, and the heavenly bird likewise,

The firm earth, and the river also, woman as well as man,

Even the world on high and inferno, within your name-form couple,

Assuming varied natures, cognizes here,
As the "I", that too is even you!

O, one of word-content alone, all is comedy indeed! (97)

This poem is the Guru’s earnest prayer to the divine mother to bestow on him her blessings to help him come out of the triputi so that his jivatma can merge in that pure divine power.

*Kundalinipattu,* the Guru’s mystic poem, is the poetic expression of the divine ananda he has experienced in the acme of mystical experience. He has adopted an indigenous theme of a snake charmer making the snake dance to the tune of the pipe. Here the Guru uses the symbol of the snake to denote the *kundalini.* *Kundalini* is a reservoir of creative energy and it lies in the form of a coiled serpent at the base of the spine. The *kundalini* that lies in the *muladhara chakra* when awakened through meditation rises upwards through the *sushumna,* the central channel. Along this channel are placed additional channel networks called *chakras.* The six chakras are *Muladhara, Swadhishtana, Manipura, Anahata, Ajna* and *Sahasrara padma.* *Sahasrara padma* is the crown chakra. Nataraja Guru observes:

This is the centre of the thousand petalled lotus (Sahasrara padma), of the full radiance of positive wisdom in which all relative knowing becomes absorbed. This is like a burrow of a snake situated on high. And when the snake reaches this home on high it is lost inside it and all “becoming” is absorbed finally in “being.” Such imagery is underlying this composition (*Life and Teachings of Narayana Guru* 325).

The progress of the *kundalini* (the self) through these chakras elevates the *jivatma* to higher levels, brings different levels of mystical experiences and finally when the *kundalini* reaches the *sahasrara padma,* the *sadhak* gets profound mystical experience, and
merges into the cosmic power. The dance of the snake is symbolic of the rising of the kundalini to higher levels and this is addressed as “Dance cobra dance”. This poem can be discerned as the song that wakes up the coiled snake. The Guru exhorts the kundalini to dance the dance of bliss to merge with the cosmic consciousness, the Atman, the infinite power, and attain nirvana. Sankaracharya in his Nirvanaashtakam says

Na Mruthyur Na Sankha Na Me Jathi Bhedha,

Pitha Naiva Me Naiva Matha Na Janma,

Na Bhandhur Na Mithram Gurur Naiva Sishya,

Chidananda Roopa Shivoham, Shivoham

Atman has neither death nor caste distinctions, neither has father nor mother, neither has relatives, friends nor has guru sishya relationship; Atman is chidananda, atman is Shiva. In Kundalinipattu he brings in both the saguna and nirguna aspects of the divine. He visualizes the supreme power as Shiva and asks the kundalini to meditate on Shiva and dance, to see Shiva’s cosmic dance, to see Shiva’s body smeared with ashes, to see Shiva wearing spotted leopard skin, to chant the name of Shiva who has burnt the God of Love to ashes, and dance. Then he brings in the nirguna aspect of Brahman, Aum, the pranavamantra from which the whole world has originated. The Guru requests the kundalini to realize that we are that Aum with which mantras begin, the infinite power which can neither be created nor destroyed.

Aum and all the rest that form

The essence of ten million charms

We now do not know and so keep on, and Dance Cobra dance! (Trans Nataragja Guru 322)

The very same pranavamantra, “Aum”, fills the entire World. He requests the kundalini to understand this. Shiva is Aum with attributes. There is nothing equal to that, either in this world or beyond that. The frequent chanting of pranavamantra distances one from all other
thoughts and brings in an experience of peace and love and makes one soar high into the realm of Supreme knowledge. He instructs his Self to be in a higher plane, chiidakasha. The merging of the kundalini in the sahasrarapadma, a moment of realization, is perceived as the union of jivatma and paramatma. Though this poem is in the form of a series of instructions given to the self or kundalini, it encompasses profound philosophical thoughts, the progress of the self from lower planes annamayakosa to anandamayakosa.

Of all the poems he has composed, Daiva Dasakam in Malayalam, (Ten verses on God) is the simplest, embodying his entire philosophical vision. Its centenary was celebrated globally on December 31, 2014. The universal appeal of this prayer is profound. He describes the deepest secrets of wisdom coupled with intense devotion. He addresses the Supreme Power as daivame, in the opening lines of this poem and he is shown as the navigator who rescues man who is tossed in the ocean of misery and sorrow. God is perceived as drik, the inner consciousness, the creator, the created and the myriad creations, and the substance of which all creation is made, then He is seen as maya, the maker of maya, the enjoyer of maya and the remover of maya; He is existence, consciousness and bliss and also present, past and future and is beyond time and space. He is that supreme power which fills the inside as well as the outside, that transcends all knowledge and in the concluding lines the Guru says that each one of us has to merge in the ocean of His glory. The idea that he has propounded in the 100th verse of Atmopadesa Satakam is beautifully portrayed in the 10th verse of “Daiva Dasakam”.

The Guru’s oeuvre conveys the philosophy of non duality and it embodies his mystical experiences. They are noted for a special glow of vision. Peter Oppenheimer says:

Narayana Guru was a thorough going scientist in his approach to truth and at the same time a mystic and a poet in his vision and exposition. His philosophy was not expounded through lengthy discourses, but presented in pithy verses meant for singing and soaring high and delving deep (xiii-xiv).
Permanence of Absolute Truth and transience of the phenomenal world is the main theme of his compositions. He uses the term *arivu* to denote consciousness or the Absolute Truth.

This one consciousness is termed *cit* in Sanskrit, and Itself is the essential content of *Brahman* or *Atman* of Vedanta, often defined as *sat-chit-ananda*. (Existence-Consciousness-Value-experience). As sat (Existence or Reality) It appears as the existence of the visible world, subjective as well as objective; as chit (Consciousness), It manifests both as *vidya* (true knowledge) and *avidya* (untrue knowledge); as *ananda* (Value experience). It becomes conditioned as happiness and suffering (Swami Muni Narayana Prasad, *Shorter Philosophical Poems of Narayana Guru* 143).

His poems expose the fact that the only underlying Reality, the Supreme Power, *arivu* blossoms into the Universe with its umpteen names and forms. The first four verses of the poem *Arivu* elucidate that only the consciousness or *chit* alone really exists. This consciousness resides in the knower and the known. This *chit* assumes the form, the objects, the individual and the phenomenal world. These apparent forms undergo changes but *arivu* remains changeless and it is self luminous. The creative urge of the *arivu* gets actualized as the visible world. “To be more precise in Vedantic terms, it is the core Reality that unfolds itself as the subjective experience as well as the objective experience. For this reason the Ultimate Reality is neither subjective nor objective” (Swami Muni Narayana Prasad 9). In verse 1 of *Advaita Deepika* the Guru describes the world comprising a variety of names and forms.

*Perayiram prathibhayayiram innavatril*

*aral yazhum vishwam ayiramam prapancham* (Advaita Deepika 74)

Names in their thousands, mental images in their thousands,
And corresponding inalienably emerging objects in their thousands

(Advaitadeeppika, Trans Swami Muni Narayana Prasad 74)

The phenomenal world appears to be real because of the existence of the knower or the perceiver. The known can have existence only in the presence of a knowing consciousness and the consciousness unfolds itself into objective knowledge, “arivill ennal iiliy-/ariyappetum-ennat untit- ennalum”.

Sankaracharya in his work Brahmajnanavaleela describes drik and drishyam having opposite nature; Drik is brahman and drishyam as maya. What is known exists only in the presence of the knower. The world we perceive is unreal in the absence of the perceiver.

Ner alla drishyamitu drikkine neekki nokkil
Veralla vishwamarivam maruvil pravaham
Karyattil nilppat iha karana-sattayenne'
Veralla viciyil irippatu variyatret! (Advaita Dipika 74)

Unreal becomes the visible world seen devoid of the perceiving subject.
None other than a mirage seen in the desert land of
Consciousness is this world.
None other than the causal substance is real in the being of effects,
Just as what is real in waves is water alone. (Advaita Deepika, Trans Swami Muni Narayana Prasad 78)

What exists is the consciousness or arivu. The mind that sees the universe makes it real. Drik alone is real. Drik is nothing but pure consciousness. This pure consciousness remains veiled by maya and remains imperceptible. The prapancha, the projection of the Atman, does not have real being and what really exists is that pure consciousness in its effulgence. This phenomenal world is the projection of that arivu, it appears as mirage seen in a desert.
Verse 33 of *Atmopadesa Satakam* clearly delineates the reason behind the creation of this world.

*Arivu nijasthiyirangarindanay*

*Dharamuthlaya vibhutiyanju thane*

*Mariyumavasthayilerimarivattam*

*Thiriyumatadasam thiranjidunn (Atmopadesa Satakam,81)*

Knowledge to know its own nature here, has become earth and other elements; spiraling up, back and turning round, like a glowing twig it is ever turning. (Trans Nitya Chaitanya Yati 67)

*Arivu* manifests itself as this Universe and other names and forms to make its own nature known. The Guru makes this explicit by drawing the example of a fire brand when it rotates, instead of the firebrand, only a circle exists. By citing this example, he makes it clear that the *prapancha* emerges from that one Absolute truth.

The same idea can be discerned in *Taittiriya Upanishad:*

He desired let me become many. Let me be born. He heated himself upon this desire. On being heated up he created all this, whatever is here. Having created it, into it, indeed, he entered. Thus he became both the actual and the beyond, the defined and the undefined, the founded and the unfounded, knowledge and non-knowledge, the true and the untrue. II.6.3

The permanence of the Absolute Truth or *Atman* is scientifically dealt with in verse 3 of *Advaita Dipika:*

*vasassu thanthuvithu panjiyithadi moola*

*bhotha prakhathamithumorkkiliprakaram*

*bhothathil ninnu vilasunnu marusthalathu*
padhassupole paramavadhi bodhamatre. (74)

Clothes are nothing but yarn; yarn is nothing but fibres;
Fibres are nothing but primeval elements clinging together;
Thus envisioned on and on, it becomes revealed
That everything becomes apparent out of one consciousness,
As water is seen flowing in a desert land.
Ultimately what exists thus is Consciousness alone.

The existence of One Absolute Truth as the cause of everything is explicitly stated by drawing the example of cloth. A piece of cloth when analyzed appears to be yarn which in turn again analysed turns out to be fibres. Fibres when again analysed turn out to be panchabhutas (physical entities). These are appearances in the consciousness just as one perceives the existence of water in a desert. The only causal Reality of this universe is the cit or consciousness or arivu. The same idea is conveyed in Apavadadarshanam verse 7.

Vibhajyaavyavam sarva
Mekaikam thatra dryshyathe
Chinmatramakhilam nanya
Dithi mayaviduurakam (83).
Being a rsi of the ancient wisdom tradition of India not withstanding, Narayana Guru was a product of the Age of Science and his thinking was imbued with its spirit. Analytical searching is the method most familiar to science. Even such an enquiry leads us to the conclusion that the one causal substance that underlies the appearance of everything is nothing but consciousness, and that is what Guru underscores in this verse with all the preciseness of a scientific mind (Swami Muni Narayana Prasad 82).
He compares the desert to arivu as the cause and the effect is prapancha. This concept of cause and effect is clearly expounded in Atmopadeshashatakam and Darsanamala. In Apavadadarshsnam of Darsana Mala he clearly delineates the cause and the effect.

Annya karanath karyam
Asdethadathkhilam
Asat kathamuthpathi
Ranuthpannasya ko laya (Darsana Mala 107)

Cause and effect are not separate. Effect does not exist apart from cause. Seen from that angle prapancha is non-existing. Can there be an origin for the unreal when it is non-existing? When it is non-existing, can it be destructed? He says that prapancha is the effect and chaithanya is the cause.

As a true Advaiti, the Guru has dealt with the sat-karana vada (the theory that cause is alone real). “Cause is seen as the substance that constitutes and controls the (antaryamin) the being of effects. Effects have no existence of their own; it is the existence of cause that appears as the effect” (44). Just as the pot is not separate from mud, the phenomenal world is not separate from its cause. Just as a snake is superimposed on a rope, the phenomenal world is superimposed on the Atman or arivu.

In Aadhyaropadarshanam of Darsana Mala, he very clearly states the idea of superimposition. The word Aadhyaraopam means vastuni avasthu aaropam which means attributing the non-existing to the existing. In this darsana, he delineates how the world is manifested and who the creator is. This is carefully shown by drawing many examples to show how this prapancha is created by Lord Shiva, who is none other than Saccidananda. He says that as a dream, as a tree coming out of a seed, as the magic shown by a magician, as an artist drawing a picture, as the yogic power of a yogi, as one wakes up from sleep, the prapancha has emerged out of a single Absolute Truth. Here Sree Narayana Guru’s deep
erudition in Kashmir Saivism is evident. In Kashmir Saivism, Shiva is the only reality which is the absolute self or Infinite pure consciousness. He is the foundation of all knowledge, the Supreme eternal light, the self shining pure consciousness on whose iccha (will) the whole cosmos is created.

In Adhyaropadarshanam, he calls the unitive wisdom as Lord Parameswara while he uses the term arivu’ to denote the Supreme truth in Atmopadesa Shatakam. The unreal World which has no existence of its own is superimposed on the Atman which is the only underlying Reality. Lord Parameswara by his Will created this world as in a dream which was non-existing. In the second verse the Guru equates Prabhu to a magician who with the effect of maya created the World. This darshana ends in advaita darsana. Brahma, Vishnu and Maheswara are one and the same.

Sri Sankara in Dakshinamoorthy Sthotra clearly elucidates how the Lord like a magician and a yogi has created the prapancha out of his own will that remained unmanifest before its creation, just as a tree remained dormant in its seed. The power of maya which is in the Brahman manifests itself as time and space and blossoms into the prapancha.

\[ \text{bljasyAntarivAnkuro jagadidam} \]
\[ \text{prAngnirvikalpam puna:} \]
\[ \text{mAyAkalpitadeSakAlakalanA} \]
\[ \text{vaicitryacitrIkritam} \]
\[ \text{mAyAvIva vijrumbhayatyapi} \]
\[ \text{mAHAYogIva ya: svecchayA} \]
\[ \text{tasmai SrIgurumUrtaye nama ida} \]

The innumerable names and forms are superimposed on the Absolute Truth which is non-dual. What we perceive as prapancha is just a superimposition or projection of the
Supreme Truth. This unreal prapancha which is superimposed on the real is experienced by the non-existing mind through maya.

In Brahmaidyanpanchakam the Guru teaches the shisya

\[\text{sarvam drsyam jadam idam tvatth param nanyato}\]

\[\text{jatam na svata eva bhati mrgatrsnabham dari darshsanam (26)}\]

The world has emerged from you not from anywhere else, it is created by the non-existing mind, “but seen from the view of the Ultimate Reality, an imagined one” (Swami Muni Narayana Prasad, Shorter Philosophical poems of Sree Narayana Guru 35). The appearance of the world is just like water in a mirage.

Maya is the root cause of appearance and existence of the world. A difference can be discerned in the maya concept of Sri Sankara and Sree Narayana Guru. In Sri Sankara’s Vedanta, the word sat alone is real and it is Brahman. The word asat means non-existence. But maya is considered neither sat or nor asat, therefore, in Advaita Vedanta maya is considered as sat- asat- vilakhsna or something indefinable (anirvachaniya) and it is alternatively termed as mithya).

All the apparent dualities- such as one-many, subject-object, cause-effect, vidya-avidya, para-apara- are its effects. For Narayana Guru avidya also is thus an effect of maya, although with Sankara it is more or less a synonym for maya. Put otherwise, the knowing function of Consciousness become manifest, appears both as vidya and avidya. Narayana Guru, though an avowed proponent of Sankara’s philosophy of Advaita, deviates slightly thus in this detail (48-49).

In the opening stanza of Mayadarshanam, the Guru characterizes maya as the unreal. To bring a positive approach to this subject, he depends not only on Advaita Vedanta but tantra and Kashmir Saivism. In Mayadarsanam, he has included many entities like vidya, avidya, para, apara tamah, pradhanam prakriti.
praguttaner yatra abhavo
mudiva brahmana prthak
na vidyate brahma liye
sa maya ameia vaibhava (Darsana Mala 110)

Before the production of the pot, there is no pot, there is only clay. Similarly, before the emergence of the world, there is only Brahman. This is something that cannot be measured. Maya is not different from Brahman in the beginning. Thus maya and brahman are the same. The Absolute of the Guru has already been seen as Paramashiva and maya as Paramashiva’s own power.

The Absolute in the Guru’s system is Paramasiva as in the Tantric philosophy. He is Existence, Consciousness and Bliss. He has Maya a power of his own, not much different from his own consciousness. Actually, the Absolute in the scriptures also is said to be Mayin or one who possesses the power called Maya. This Mayin is the Supreme Lord- Maheswara who is all powerful. The guru holds this view and says that the Absolute as well as the Supreme Lord who is capable of creating this wonderful phenomenon, can be called by any such Supreme names such as Brahma, Vishnu, Siva, Para and so on (Karunakaran 141).

The one Absolute truth from which the prapancha is manifested is described as Vishnu, Brahma, and Maheswara and prapancha has emerged from that power, the Supreme Brahman.

dhanaviva vado yasmath
praduraseedido jagat
sa brahma sa sivo vishnu
sa para sarva yevah sah (Darsana Mala 107)
In the third section *Asatyadarsanam* of *Darsana Mala* he elucidates

*Mayaiva jagadamadi karanam nirmmitham thaya*

*Sarvamhimayinonanya dasatyam sidhijalavat*

*Mayaiva jagadamadi karanam nirmmitham thaya*

*Sarvamhimayinonanya dasatyam sidhijalavat* (109)

The power of *maya* which is involved in the *Atman* creates the impression of the phenomenal world and *maya* which doesn’t have a separate existence of its own is instrumental in creating the existence of the *prapancha*.

In *Janani Navaratna Manjari* he perceives the *prapancha*, comprising, air, stone, sea and void as the sport of *maya* which is nothing but pure awareness.

Verse 51 of *Athmopadesa satakam* pictures *maya* as a tree. And the two creepers that spread over and cover the tree are the feeling of ‘I’ and the ego which emerges from the *arivu*.

*Arivilirunnorraahanda yadyamundaay*

*Varumithinodorrithanda vaamayayum*

*Varumivarandulapangalpole maya*

*Maramakhilam marayppadarmnidunnu* (*Athmopadesa Satakam* 83).

From awareness the “I” sense first emerged;

Comes then with it “This” ness as counterpart beside.

These like creepers twain do cover entirely,

The whole of the *maya* tree to hide. (Trans Nataraja Guru 605)

In *Mayadarshanam* *maya* is defined as

*Na vidyathe ya sa maya vidyaavidya paraapara*

*Thamah pradhanam prakrtir bahudha saiva bhasathe* (*Darsana Mala* 110)
Maya along with its effects (para, apara, vidya, avidya, tamas pradhanam prakriti) is unreal, has no separate existence from the Mayin. Mayin is none other than arivu. In Daiva Dasakam Guru says

\[
\text{neeyallo mayayum mayaviyum mayavinodanum}
\]
\[
\text{neeyallo mayaye neekki sayujyam nalkumaryanum. (Daiva Dasakam, 120)}
\]

Thou art Maya, Thou create maya,

You find fun in creating maya

You remove the veil of maya

And bestow bliss. (Verse 6 Daiva Dasakam)

Man considers the unreal world as the real. This ignorance creates the notion that the world exists. Maya is the source of the world, the separateness that we perceive, and the dualities are nothing but maya which is not separate from arivu. Sankaracharya delineates maya in Vivekachudamani like this:

\[
\text{avyaktham parameshashakti}
\]
\[
\text{vadyavidya trigunaathmika para}
\]
\[
\text{karyanumeya sudhiyaiva maya}
\]
\[
\text{yaya jagatsarvamidam prasuyathe}
\]
\[
\text{Sanapyasannapyubhayathmika no}
\]
\[
\text{Bhinnapybhinnapyubhayathmika no}
\]
\[
\text{Samgapyanogapyubhayathmika no}
\]
\[
\text{Mahathbhuthanirvachaneeyarupaa (201)}
\]

Maya is that which is unmanifest or nescience is the power of the Lord Parameswara. It has no beginning and comprises three gunas. This can be inferred by one who is endowed with a clear intuitive mind. It is this maya that projects the entire prapancha. That maya is
neither existing nor non-existing nor both. It neither has parts nor partlessness or both. It is the most wonderful and not verbally describable.

The primal source of “creation” itself being Maya (and its consequent evils) all the determinative creative necessities (God monotheist or gods many) or demiurges theologically desired, are comprised under the general title of Maya – effect; while the negation of Maya which is the aim of yoga as understood in Vedanta brings us to pure adviata or Non-duality without even the need for the God(s) (Nataraja Guru 196).

The first five *darshanas* in *Darsana Mala* delineate the relationship between *prapancha* and the Absolute truth. In *Apavada darshanam* he closely examines the truth by refuting what is superimposed. He states that the *prapancha* is itself *saccitananda*, the projection of the Absolute. This *darsana* ends with the assertion that the only Truth existing is *Saccitananda*. By refuting the non-existing and the unreal, he drives home the fact that the only existing reality that alone shines is *ananda* or pure bliss. The first verse of *Asatyadarshanam* shows how this non-existing *prapancha* is experienced.

*Manomayamidam sarvam na manah kvapi vidyathe*

*Atho vyomneeva neeladi drishyathe jagadathmani* (*Darsana Mala* 108)

The non-existing mind experiences the non-existing universe through *maya*. All the changes, pain, pleasure and experiences appear in the mind which experiences the *prapancha* which is subject to change. But the only Truth that remains changeless is *Saccitananda*. ‘*Manomayamidam sarvam*’, ‘*sankalpa kalpitham dryshyam*’, ‘*manasa ananyaya sarvam kalpyathe vidyam jagat*’ depict that *prapancha* is nothing but the creation of the will and the mind. The Guru depicts the transience of the phenomenal World and affirms the permanence of *arivu* and to realize this absolute Truth, one has to indulge in contemplation, which reveals the truth that the phenomenal World is non-existing and
avidya projects it. In Advaita Dipika the Guru says “Aaraykileeyulakamillithavidya” (87). “Closely examined, this world is found non-existent, it being mere avidya” (87).

But a life which is distanced from the knowledge of the self makes the underlying truth appear in manifold names and forms.

In Adhyaropadarshanam, the Guru says

\[ \text{Yadathmavidyasankochath thadaavidyabhayankaram} \]

\[ \text{Naamaroopathmanathyrtam vibhatheeha pishchavath} (105) \]

He stresses the importance of atmavidya and the lack of it causes avidya. Avidya appears as multitudinous names and forms which make ghost like appearance evoking fear. One who has realized the atman is an atmajnani. For an atmajnani, prapancha appears as a mirage and a forest in the sky. An ignorant person is compared to a small boy who is unable to differentiate between what is real and unreal.

In Darsana Mala the Guru is interested in imparting a positive discipline called atmavidya- a Sanskrit term meaning ‘knowledge of the Atman or Self.’ It is only through the acquisition of true knowledge that a man can be freed from what he sees as nauseating or sorrowful condition which are bound to arise during the span of his conscious life on earth” (Nitya Chaitanya Yati 158).

The Guru defines Atman like this.

\[ \text{Irulilirunnariyunnathathma} \]

\[ \text{Arivathuthanathanamaroopamyum} \]

\[ \text{Karanamodindriya karthrkarnmmamayum} \]

\[ \text{Varuvathu kanka mahendrajalamellam (Atmopadesa Sathakam 80).} \]

What in darkness remains aware, the Self indeed that is;

And knowledge that which as name and form,

As senses with inner-organ, as actor and action,
Looms here as everything, like great Indra’s magic, lo! (Trans Nataraja Guru 555)

Atman is that which knows itself and enjoys bliss in deep sleep. It blossoms into a variety of names and forms in the jagrat state. “A word derived from the verb root at, meaning to pervade the being of something (ad vyapane), it signifies the Substance that pervades the being of all that has come into being” (Swami Muni Narayana Prasad 9). This Atman itself is sachichitananda. The Guru in Darsana Mala says

sarvam hi sacchidanandam

neham nanasti kimcana

ya pashyathee ha naneva

mrithyum mrithyum sa gachathi (Darsana Mala 108).

All is indeed sacchidananda. In this oneness, there is no many, one who perceives many in the Absolute will go from death to death. In the last three verses of Brahnavidyapanchakam, the Guru visualizes Atman or Brahman as sat in essence, chit in essence and ananda in essence. “Vyaptham yena caracaram ghata- saravadiva mrt sattaya”. The Guru says that it is this sat that pervades the changing phenomenal World just as the pot and other utensils are made up of clay. The one reality that fills the being of everything is Atman, the cause of this phenomenal World, and the pure consciousness “within which the entire world pulsates”(39), “yasya antah spuritham”. The same idea can be perceived in the verse 4 of Janani Navaratna Manjari. On contemplation it is revealed that the waves are nothing but water, the snake superimposed on a rope is nothing but the rope and the pot is nothing but clay. The causal reality of the Universe is Brahman and he attributes that reality as the divine mother Sarada in Janani Navaratna Manjari.

Vedantins at the same time admit the existence of one causal Substance that is pure Consciousness in essence. Its mysterious power to unfold itself as matter
and mind, as time and space, is also admitted. Admitting any mysteriousness is repugnant to true scientists, whose thinking is always linear, as a very-long cause- and-effect-chain. Instead of resorting to this linear way of enquiry as in science, Vedanta perceives all these, from the galaxies to the human brain, as the manifestations, of the one causal substance, and as inseparable from that Substance or Brahman. Appearing as all the cosmic systems and everything in them, it does not undergo any intrinsic change. It is like gold undergoing no intrinsic change when it is in different kinds of ornaments. Ultimately, creation, sustenance and dissolution are not real. They are mere appearances emerging in the one substance Atman or Brahman as a result of the beginningless and endless creative self-manifestation it undergoes. When one manifested form disappears and another appears, we merely think the former was a distinct entity and it died, and a new distinct entity born. Really what exists always is Atma alone (Swami Muni Narayana Prasad 44).

This Atman is neither born nor ever it dies. In Bhagavat Gita Bhagavan says:

\[
Na\ jayathe\ mriyatheva\ kadachi\\
Nnatam\ bhutva\ bharitha\ van\ a\ bhuyah\\
Ajo\ nityah\ shasvathoyam\ purano\\
Na\ hanyathe\ hanyamane\ shareere\\
\]

That Reality is never born: nor does It ever die
Once having been, It does not cease to be either
Unborn, eternal, perpetual, ancient
It is not destroyed at the destruction of the body.

This Atman is the causal reality of the phenomenal world. In verse 4 the Guru says that Atman is chit in essence:
Srstvedam prakrter anupravasati yeyam yaya dharayate

Pranati pravivikta- bhug bahir aham prajnas susuptau yatah (48)

Here the term *pratipat* is used to denote consciousness which is created from its own *prakriti* and this enters the being of the same world. The same consciousness becomes the knower of the world, enjoyer of the innumerable objects. The same consciousness is always conscious when one is in deep sleep. “The *pratipat* or unconditioned consciousness, which really cannot be understood, becomes understandable in its conditioned form is cause and effect” (54). In the last verse of *Brahmavidyapanchaka*, *Brahman* is portrayed as *ananda*, the eternal bliss. The *sishya* is taught “*khilam tvam asisaccvinmatram ekam vibhu*” –you are that *vibhu* . “*vibhu* means that which all the beings (*bhutis*) have their being” (*sarva-bhuti-samyukte-vibhuh*) (70). This realization of the *Atman* or *Brahman* is the aim of human life for which an intuitive perception of the pure unconditioned consciousness is imperative which will lead to the realization that the “*I*” and the “arivu” are one and the same. In *Atmopadesa Sathakam* the Guru says that one should become one with that consciousness which pervades everywhere, then one understands

“*What that one consciousness is* 

**Even That you are**” (Trans Swami Muni Narayana Prasad 81)

When the mind is transcended by contemplation, the dualities vanish and the Absolute Truth shines in its effulgence. The Guru in verse 96 and 97 of *Atmopadesa Sathakam* vividly portrays non-dual wisdom that shines in its effulgence.

* anuvumankhanda asthi nasthiyenni
* ngane vilassumnlrubhagamayi random;
* anayumananthara masthi nasthiyenni
* yanubhavavum nilayattu ninnupokum (*Atmopadesa Satakam* 89)

The atom and the infinite thus, as being and non-being
Do both from either side shine forth; this experience too
Of being as well as non-being shall thereafter be extinct
And devoid of foundation, forever, both shall cease to be! (Trans Nataraja Guru 706)

\[\textit{anuvarinvmahimavilangamilla}\]
\[\textit{thanayumankhandavu mannu putnamakum;}\]
\[\textit{anubhaviyathariveelankhandamam chid-khanamithu mounakhanamrithabthiyakum}. (89)\]

Within the glory of wisdom, the atom, bereft of parts shall extinct become.
And infinite too, shall that day its perfection attain;
Without directly experiencing this cannot be known, this boundless
Stuff of pure intelligence, this silence-filled ocean of immortal bliss. (Trans Nataraja Guru, 707)

The state of pure bliss, nirvikalpasamadhi is elucidated in these lines. An athmajnani who experiences this state will remain merged in the Atman and for him the Universe appears as a thought in the Atman and he experiences saccidananadam. Such an atmajnani is described in Janani Navaratna Manjari as a bee drinking the nectar of unlimited experience of the supreme bliss.

This Knowledge of the Supreme Truth can be attained not by \textit{sruti} (hearing) or \textit{yukti} (logic) but only by experiencing it. This experiential awareness can be attained when one becomes one with \textit{arivu}.

\[\textit{Viralatavittu vilannumammahatta}\]
\[\textit{Marivilamarnnumatramayidenam} (77).\]

Merging into that infinite supreme knowledge, become that alone. (Trans Nitya Chaitanya Yati 7)
An *atmajnani* perceives the Universe as a mirage, while an ignorant person considers it true.

*Mareechikavath prajnasya jagathathmani bhasathe*

*Balasya sathyamithi cha prathibimba mivibramath*

Verse 50 of *Athmopadesa Shathakam* delineates the experience of a realized soul.

*Nilamodu neerathu polekattuteeyum*

*Veliyumahakriti vidyayum manassum*

*Alakalumaaziyennu vendayalla*

*Ulakamunarnnarivaymaridunnu* (83)

With earth and water, air and fire likewise,

Also the great void, the ego, cognition and mind,

All worlds including the waves and ocean too

Do they all arise and to awareness change. (Trans Nataraja Guru 601)

The earth along with water, air, fire, sky, the ego, knowledge and mind, the world including the waves and ocean, transform into *arivu* and the names and forms do not exist. What the Guru explains in the above verse is his own experience. In *Chitjadachindanam* the realization of the divine truth is again pictured as the rising of ten million suns thereby eclipsing the earth, fire and water and everything.

*Should Ten million suns rising all at once*

*Eclipse the earth, fire and water and all else*

*That ascendant presence of Thine*

*Radiant ever abide* (Trans Nataraja Guru 339).

*An atmajnani* is always conscious that he is *Brahman* and the same power resides in all beings of the universe. But the ignorant cannot fathom out the Supreme state of a yogi.

What a yogi perceives is the same consciousness in everyone.
Arivilirunnaparathwamarnnnidathi

Yarivineyingariyunnathenniye than

Paravashanayariveela pandithan than

Paramarahasyamitharu parthidunnu (84).

The wisdom that ever remains non-other to the Wisdom

Than the knowing of which just as such, here, what

By heterodox disadoption one can never come to know,

Such, the supreme secret of the pundit, who is here to see? (632)

An athma jnani who has realized the fact that vidya and avidya arise as the effect of maya, goes beyond these dualities by contemplating on the pure arivu and experiences the tuiriya state. A realized soul understands that everything is the manifestation of that Absolute Truth through introspection, while one who takes everything as real without introspection falls a victim to utter confusion arising out of maya.

Sakalathumullthuthanne thathvachinda

Grahamithu sarvavumekamay grahikkum

Akamukhamayariyakil mayayamvan

Paka palatham brhamamekidunnu para (88).

All things are real enough; the philosopher, however

Grasps all things here as One; when not viewed

Through the inward eye, that great tribulation

Which is maya, yields much puzzlement, indeed! (689)

Sree Narayana Guru describes a yogi in Municharyapanchakam

Swaveshmanne pulina bhoomi ptrashta pranthare

Kwa va vasathu yogino vasathi manasam brahmani

Idam marumareechi ka sadryshmathma drshtyakhilam
A yogi wherever he lives, whether in his house, or in the forest, his mind will remain constantly fixed on *Brahman*. He is conscious that this *prapancha* is just a mirage in a desert. A *jnani* clearly understands that the phenomenal world is a temporary projection of the *Atman* and based on this realization, he is able to realize that the world is an illusion while a materialist takes this world as real.

He makes it clearer in his *Advaita Deepika*

\[
\text{jnanikku sthulaku chithu sukha swroopam} \\
\text{anandamallanruthamajnanithuprakasham} \\
\text{kanunnavannu sukhamsthithayumnabhanu} \\
\text{manarkkanadhanirularnoru shoonyavasthu (75)}
\]

In the perception of the enlightened,

What appears as the world is but *sat* alone.

It is *chit* as well, so is it *ananda* in essential content.

It never is insubstantial.

Yet it being is not evident to the unenlightened.

The existence of the sun, easily perceptible to the sighted,

Is simply a darkish vacuity for the sightless? (Trans Swami Muni Narayana Prasad 101)

For a realized soul the *prapancha* will appear as blissful. For an ignorant, the *prapancha* does not appear as blissful. The *Saccidananda* appears to be unreal and non-existing. Such a person is comparable to a blind man looking at the sun. An *atmajnani* does every action with an awareness of pure detachment and he is in harmony with the Universal self and sees the Absolute Truth everywhere and his actions are unitive and resonate with
wisdom. The ignorant who are lost in the material world are unable to see that the Supreme Power in every one. In Bhagavat Gita, Bhagavan Krishna says

\[ Na \text{ mam dushkrino mudhah prapadyante naradhamah l } \]

\[ Mayayapahrta-jnana asuram bhavam asritahi ll \quad (\text{VII. 15}) \]

Those men who indulge in evil actions do not attain me as their wisdom is taken away by \textit{maya} and they embrace the demoniac nature.

The Guru also brings in the transience of the body and the permanence of the \textit{Atman} in his poem \textit{Kundalinipattu} when he instructs his Self to realise the fact that the eternal \textit{atman} is within this transcient body.

This body here no truth it has;  
Owner another in it resides  
Such wisdom do thou gain, and thus  
Dance, cobra, dance! (Trans Nataraja Guru 323)

In his \textit{Atmopadesa Sathakam, Advaita Dipika and Darsana Mala} he propounds the philosophy of \textit{Advaita} effectively and also conveys the idea that the aim of such a realization is also a search for happiness and that happiness and, the joy that one gains in life, should be helpful to others also. All these spiritual poems are the products of a mind which has had a strong conviction of the spiritual truth gained from intuitive knowledge.

In the Malayalam literary scenario, the Guru opens a new genre by using the poetic medium to express his intuitive experience. His simple interpretation of the non-dual philosophy enriches the Malayalam poetry and raises the art of poetry to a very sublime level. The Guru, a mystically inspired poet of high aesthetic sensibility, portrays his visions in a very simple language and his success as a poet lies in his effective handling of the lofty philosophical visions in a language rich in meaning and making it comprehensible for the common readers. His mastery of words in illustrating his deep philosophical visions in a
language clothed in figures of speech and examples drawn from nature enable the readers to comprehend the philosophic thoughts which he has woven in them. As a true seer-poet, he shows the Absolute Truth in its entirety.

His works are also noteworthy for their musical quality. What is most striking is his skill in using rhyming words, alliteration and assonance which inevitably bring in the musical quality which even a casual reader cannot miss. The most outstanding aspects of his poems are an amalgamation of bhakti, mysticism and Advaita.

Of the many great lyricists who have contributed to the World of music, Sree Narayana Guru’s position is unique because of the poetical and musical quality with which he presented the gems of Vedantic philosophy (Revamma 434).

The visions of the poet enlivened in his poems have had a profound influence on the intellectual, spiritual and social life of the readers and the society at large. His poems have worked the magic of serving as a force to change the outlook of the society itself, elevating the minds to the people to levels sublime. They have undoubtedly endeavored to illumine the minds of the followers of the Guru, to bring to all ardent readers the knowledge of the Upanishadic wisdom, to impart to one and all a sense of the ‘truth’ of the ‘reality’ of the mundane world to help them live life more meaningfully. They have also opened the gates to all who care to know what a life of Universal brotherhood, sans caste and religious distinctions, is. It will be no exaggeration to say that these poetic works have been what a lighthouse is to the sailor lost at sea and a rudder to those in rudderless boats on the merciless waves of the sea … to men and women of all walks of life giving them direction first and then the great solution to come unscathed through the ‘misery of life’. In particular, the Guru’s teachings have awakened a society from its nescience and marked a revival in the stream of thought in his native Kerala. Very earnestly, the Guru has tried to impart to all mankind what he himself had imbibed from this universe of the Creator.