



SREE NARAYANA GURU AND S.N.D.P.YOGAM

Dr. PRAVEEN. O.K

Assistant professor, Department of History

SREE KERALA VARMA COLLE, THRISSUR, KERALA, INDIA.

ABSTRACT

Sree Narayana Guru had a wider vision of Social services at the comprehensive development of the individual and the society. The path of generosity is broad and self-centered and the path of miserliness is narrow. A generous man should help his fellow's men and it would lead to a various life. Narayana Guru reached Sivagiri in the month of January 1903. Kumaran Asan makes a reference to the arrival of Guru at Sivagiri in the first volume of Vivekodayam. Guru's presence at Varkala attracted people from far and wide. They came to see him just at Aruvippuram years back. He used to talk these people about the peculiarities of the place and the special features of Varkala Tunnel, Varkala spring, green plantation and trees, land, lakes and proximity to sea and of course about the importance of the Junardhana Swami temple. He liked the place and expressed his desire to have an ashram there. Late Guru becomes a permanent settler there. Of course, he used to travel to other places as well but continued to stay at Varkala.

INTRODUCTION

Sree Narayana Guru was one of the epoch making seers of the present century, who has dynamically effected a radical change in the social, moral and spiritual value, vision and behavioral patterns of his contemporaries in India. Among the socio-religious reformers of modern India who clamored for social justice, the name of Sree Narayana Guru occupies a permanent place. His life and mission brought out far reaching changes in the year 1854 A.D at Chempazhanthi, in the suburb of the city of Trivandrum. He has not received this aura of worldwide attention, although he was also one of those in the socio-religious reformers and Gurus in South India, especially in and around Kerala. He was an embodiment of all that is good in human life. The impact of the activities of Sree

Narayana Guru are so varied that it has reflected the whole Kerala in the field of education, society, religion, economy, politics and culture. In 1903 he founded [Sree Narayana Dharmma Paripalana Yogam (SNDP)]. *Sivagiri* is one of the most parts of the Indian sub- continent that plays a dominant role in socio-religious history of the modern world. It is citadel of spirituality of which is located at *Varkala* near *chiranyinkil* taluk in the district of *Thiruvananthapuram*. Sree Narayana Guru selected this isolated hilly area for his meditation and centre of his activities and established an *Ashrama* there. Soon it rose in to prominence as a spiritual centre and become the venue of *pilgrimage*. After leaving Aruvippuram Guru did not stay at a place long. Like *Lord Buddha* and *Sankara*, Guru had unquenchable ‘wanderlust’. He never remained in one place for long.¹ He travelled incessantly. In the course of Guru’s extensive travels, he was searching for suitable area to establish an *Ashramam*, of the many places pronounced for the natural beauty, which the Swami had visited, the one that attracted him was a neglected hill-top later named as ‘*Sivagiri*’ at Varkala.² It enchanted him. His visit to Varkala becomes more frequent around 1903. In the beginning, he sat near a *jack tree*. In due course Guru made temporary *parnasalas*³ there with palm leaves and stayed there.

1. Social Reform Activities of SNDP Yogam

Sree Narayana Guru dedicated himself to the cause of social and moral regeneration of the backward communities in Kerala. The achievement of the SNDP Yogam in the direction of social reform is noteworthy. The Yogam against superstitions, irrational customs, caste system etc.

The reforms of the Guru under the auspices of the SNDP Yogam not only raised the social position of the *ezhavas*, but also brought many economic advantages to the community. Narayana Guru and the leaders of SNDP Yogam were much concerned about the uplift of women, as it would naturally bring about improvement in social life. With this purpose, the Women’s Association was setup, and its conference became a regular feature of the annual general meetings of the Yogam. Considering the importance of the youth in the society, the Youth Association was also reformed¹

2. SNDP Yogam and the religious reform movement

The one of the important attempt of the Yogam was to remove the disabilities of the *ezhavas* in the religious field. The programme of activities that concerned the leaders of the Yogam included building of new temples and ashramas, demotion of traditional temples, cessation of the worship of lower deities and

spirits discontinuance of animal sacrifice, abolition of the singing of obscene songs in some temples and promotion of brotherhood between ezhavas and other low castesⁱ. The Yogam inspired the people to construct more temples and gave propaganda to the activities of Narayana Guru. Consequently, a large number of temples were built all over Kerala, because it was partly on the basis of religious supremacy over the lower castes. Dr.PalpuObserver; “The activities of the Yogam have been chiefly directed in the religious link”. This will be evident from the fact that the number of temples and mutts opened in different parts of the land, from Mangalore to South Trivancore, is now as many as fifty and more are in course of construction.... The practical advantages to the community from these institutions are numerous ...” prominent leaders of the community promote the ezhavas to construct more temples because temples were considered a necessary element in the religious life of everyoneⁱⁱ. There were also schools and libraries attached to these temples. Ezhava leaders claimed that, apart from serving religious purpose, the temples would also help to bring together people of different ranks in life in terms of equality and brother land and promote mutual understanding and goodwill. They encouraged personal cleanliness, purity of thought and conduct and dissemination of moral instruction even among the most illiterate. Thus the temple movement helped to increase co-operation and love among people, and feeling of equality and self-respect Narayana Guru wanted ezhavas to admit all classes of people in the temples consecrated by him. He believed in the oneness of mankind and disregarded the difference between castes. The denial of admission of non-caste Hindu to Saravana temples, and the injustices and inequalities in the name of religion, promoted him to consecrate temples.

3. SNDP Yogam concern for the economic prosperity of the Ezhavas

The Yogam gave great importance to the economic prosperity of the community. As the majority of the ezhavas were engaged – in agriculture and industrial activities, the Yogam did its best to improve and encourage the agricultural and industrial pursuits of the community. In 1904 the Yogam announced that its second annual general meeting would be held in conjunction with an industrial and agricultural exhibition at Quilon, 1914 some mills, factories

and minor industrial concerns had been established by the members of the ezhava. Community in different parts of Kerala especially in Travancore. To promote trade and commerce, a company named “Malabar Economic Union” was formed and registered on the model of, ‘Mysore Economic Union’. To make people more self-relevant in financial matters, chit fund institutions were made popular. All these activities of the Yogam brought about economic progress to the community³

4. SNDP Yogam and Political Activities

The SNDP Yogam fought for establishing equality and social justice in the legislative assembly and the council. In the second year of the establishment of SreeMoolam popular Assembly, the ezhava community was given representation in it by nominating KumaranAsan said, “Ezhavas are given representation in the assembly. Representation of the Yogam which consists of prominent members of the ezhava community means representation of tiya community. So all branches of the Yogam should convince meetings of the members of the Samajams and should inform their opinions and grievances if any, to the Yogam secretary, the Yogam should represent the opinion and grievances of ezhavas of Travancore. From these words, it is clear how the Yogam planned to utilize this nominationⁱⁱⁱ. The later activities of the Yogam proved that they used the legislative as a forum to present their grievances before the authorities and seek redress⁴

At the 8th annual general meeting of the Yogam, a resolution was passed requesting the Maharaja to extend to the SNDP Yogam the same privilege of sending a representation every year to the assembly, as was granted to other registered organisations, and the government granted the demand as contributed a great deal to the removal of the educational and other disabilities of the ezhava community.

5. SNDP Yogam and the educational activities

The SNDP Yogam has done service for the educational progress of the ezhava community. SahodharanAyyappan stated that, “Most of the government schools were places where ezhavas were not admitted”^{iv}. So the Yogam concentrated attention on the removal of the obstacles in the way of education and employment. Even in the lath century, Dr.Palpu started the movement to get all

schools opened to ezhavas. The formation of the SNDP Yogam augmented the movement^v. The first attempt of the Yogam in the educational field was to prepare the way for admitting ezhavas to government and government aided schools⁵

The Yogam was much concerned about the education of ezhava women⁶ The Yogam pointed out that it was impossible to achieve social progress without educating women. So, through the representatives of the Yogam in the assembly, they requested. The government to open government schools for girls to ezhavas and other backward communities⁷

Establishment of Ashram and Sivagiri

Narayana Guru reached *Sivagiri* in the month of January 1903. Kumaran Asan makes a reference to the arrival of Guru at Sivagiri in the first volume of *Vivekodayam*⁸ Guru,s presence at Varkala attracted people from far and wide. They came to see him just at Aruvippuram years back. He used to talk thse people about the peculiarities of the place and the special teatures nof Varkala Tunnel, Varkala spring, green plantation and trees, land, lakes and proximity to sea and of course about the importance of the *Janardhana Swami temple*. He like the plce and expressed his desire to have an ashram there. Late Guru become a perminant settle ther. Of course, he used to travel to other place as well but continued to stay at Varkala.⁹

The sivagiri became a centre of attraction with the arrival of Narayana Guru. After establishing his ashram at hill top he almost stayed permanently therw. He named the place as “*SivagiriKunnu*” the Hindu God Siva is Believed to be in ‘Kailas’, the topmost spot of the universe. Siva being the favourite God of Guru, he naturally named hill in the name of Siva. Thus this place is known as Sivagiri.¹⁰

Sivagiri: A Spiritual Centre

The purpose of the all great men is to make the world a happy place to live, by establishing universal fraternity. Guruu,s life was dedicated to this purpose. It was a great yoga. His life was full of activities to achive this goal. The main centre’s of such activities of Guru were *Aruvippuram*, *Sivagiri* and *Always*.⁷ He started from Aruvippuram . Guru wanted *Sivagiri* to be a spiritual centre. Ultimately Sivagiri turned to be thew centre of everything connected with Guru, his teaching, his message etc. In 1087(M.E.)(1912). Sivagiri was duly developed to be religious centre contemplated by Guru. The consecration of Siva and Devi were the main functions to convert Sivagiri as religious centre.

The Sivagiri Installation

It is recorded by historians and biographers of Guru that such a splendid function as Sivagiri Installation of *Siva* and *Sarada* were done before in the long history of SNDP Yogam. A description of the function is given in 1087 Edavam Edictorial vivekodayam as "The important function of installation of Sarada Devi was done on 19th Medam 1087 (M.E.) (19th MAY 1912) on 18th Tuesday night about 3 o'clock. Guru and some thantries (pujaris) and Sanyasins came after bath and started the ceremony. Siva prathishta was done at 4 o'clock and Sarada prathishta at 5 o'clock.

Sarada Mutt

Sarada (Saraswathy) is the Goddess of *Wisdom, Janna* or *Vidya*. The place where *Sarada Devi* installed is called '**Sarada madom**'. *Sarada Mutt* is quite different from other conventional temples established by Guru.⁸ It is a septagonal building constructed with smooth tiles and windows with colorful glasses. Indistinct with other temples, it has windows. There are two doors in front and back side of the mutt. The front door, which opens towards the idol, has blue glass panes and the back door was made of plank.¹¹

It is a cute pagoda like *Sreekovil* inside a circular enclosure with a half wall and yard spread with snow-white sand. The beaming idol of the Devi is a medaled idol, idol of the Goddess being sculptured as in standing pose, with foot fixed in a beautiful lotus.¹⁰ On the wall behind the idol of Goddess Sarada there is depicted the symbol 'Om'.¹²

Parnasala

On the right side of the sarada mutt there is a parnasala roofed with coconut leaves. The room inside the parnasala contains an idol and a picture of Sree Narayana Guru. There are many pictures of guru and other historic personalities, on the walls of the circumambulating corridor of the parnasala. It includes the pictures from Jesus Christ to Sai Baba and from Gandhiji to Tagore.¹² It was treated as the resting place of Sree Narayana Guru. The prominent personalities LIKE, c. Rajagopalachari, Watts, and many others had met with Guru there.¹³

Very near to that parnasala, there is a mutt of Guru where Gandhiji, Tagore, C.F. Androse and others held discussion with Guru. The articles used by Guru are kept there even today. This is the venerated abode of Guru. Next to the Validika mutt there we can see the *Samadhi mandapam* of this principal disciple Swami Bodhananda.¹⁴

Mahasamadhi Mandapa

The most attractive and spiritual part of the structural constructions at Sivagiri was the marvelous concrete designed structural building, known as 'Maha Samadei Mandapa'

erected in the top most of *Sivagiri hill*. It is the penacle of peace and brotherhood, where the soul of Guru rest in place.¹⁵

Brahma Vidyalaya

The dream of Guru to start a centre for imparting philosophical, spiritual and theological education relating to all sects was materialized in the farm of Brahma Vidyalaya. It is the centre of higher learning in spirituality.¹⁶ It attempts to inculcate the spiritual qualities of teacher especially good behavior, fair customs and manners, mercy and tender heart, devotion and peity and scholasticism among the students.¹⁷ The students who joined in Brahma Vidyalaya are known as Bramacharis.¹⁸ The Brahmacharis underwent process of rigorous training. To them education is not a mere physical exercise but spiritual exercise.¹⁹ They were strictly guided by the rules and regulations put forward by the Guru.²⁰The Guru's exalted ideal was soon to materialize in one of the great confluences in the history of spiritual movements the *Sivagiri pilgrimage*.²¹

Conclusion

Sree Narayana Guru and his revolutionary social reformist movement have a unique place. SNDP Yogam succeeded in getting open the roads around the Vaikom Temples to all castes, Yogam to get the temples open to the lower castes. Yogam mainly focused on right to equality. Sree Narayana Guru had a wider vision of Social services at the comprehensive development of the individual and the society. The path of generosity is broad and self-centered and the path of miserliness in narrow. A generous man should his fellow's men and it would lead to a various life. Narayana Guru reached Sivagiri in the month of January 1903. Kumaran Asan mekes a reference to the arrival of Guru at Sivagiri in the first volume of Vivekodayam. Guru,s presence at Varkala attracted people from far and wide. They came to see him just at Aruvippuram years back. He used to talk thse people about the peculiarities of the place and the special features of Varkala Tunnel, Varkala spring, green plantation and trees, land, lakes and proximity to sea and of course about the importance of the Junardhana Swami temple. He like the plce and expressed his desire to have an ashram there. Late Guru becomes a permanent settle there. Of course, he used to *travel to other place as well but continued to stay at Varkala*.

END NOTES

1. Narayana Guru's earliest disciples like Swami Sivalinga Das, Swami Santhalinga and Sankaran Paradesi were the members of Sivagiri Sahodaryam, Kumaran Asan "Education", Vivekodayam, 20 Jan, K10, Book.5, P.31.
2. Letter No. F. No.116B/Oct.6, 1912 from Diwan P. Rajagopalachari to Narayana Guru recorded in Vivekodayam, Nov. 1st, 1913, P.26.

3. Speech of Dr. Palpu LMS, the SNDP General Body meeting held at Allepey. Paravoor Kesavn reported on March 8, 1910.
4. Probhodhini, 25 May 1938, P. 9, 36th report in 1939
5. File No. D.DB. 662/45/C .5, English Records.
6. Weekly Secret Bulletin, Vol. 3, No. 5, 19 Dec. 1936 and No. 52, 26 Dec. 1936 and Vol. 4, No.1, 2 Jan 1937.
7. Temple Entry Proclamation File No. D. DB, 875/12/11/1936, English Records
8. T. K .Velu Pillai, *Travancore State Manual*, Vol. I, p. 884.
9. *ibid.*, p.84.
10. C. R. Kesava Vaidyar, *Sree Narayana Chintakal* , p.82.
12. Central Archives, Fort, Trivandrum, Mathilakom records, Vol.62, Churuna.2165, Ola.367, Year 1992 ME (1749 AD).
13. "For the sake of fellows-men, uncasing day and night instating strives the kindly ma...."Guru, One hundred verses of self Instruction, Poem23p.293.
14. Narayana Guru, Dharmam Verses23,p.111.
15. File.no. D.Dis.350 dated 19 August 1926. The sivsgiri Mutty.
- 16.K.K.Mohanan,Sivagiri Charitham(Mal.). Thiruvananthapuarum,2007,p.23.
17. Kumaran Asan, sree Narayana Guru, Viverkodayam, March31st, 1903,p.26.
18. M.K. Sanoo, Narayana Guru,p.82.
19. *Ibid.*
20. Vivekodayam, Edvam edition, 1087(1912).
21. Somu Jacob, Charitra Smithikalude Sivagiri, Yoganada, (mal.), December 16 1998, thiruvananthapurtam,p.69.

BIBLIOGRAPY

1. Primary Sources

- i. File No. Ro.O.C.No. 6102/45/General Sivagiru Pilgrimage
- ii. File No. 10/10, Resolution passed at the SNDP Yogam, 1946
- iii. Letter showing the conversational talk between Narayana Guru with T.K.Kittan writer and Valla bhassery GovindanVaidyar.

- iv. File No. 50C.S. Vol.III (1914)
- v. File NO. 9/9, Sivagiri Theerthayathra Festival to Pilgrims 1946
- vi. File No. 57, 1947, Pilgrime convention at Sivagiri Mutt.

2. Secondary Sources

Anchutha Menon,C., Sivagiri Theerthadanaam, sivagiri Mutt, neyyattinkara, 1935.

Govinda Vaidyair Vallabasseri, Sivagiri Theerthadanam, Kottayam,2002.

Kittan, T.K., Sivagiri Theerthadanam,Kottayam,1930.

Kujakkan, K.A., Sivagiri Charitam,Thiruvananthapuram,2007.

G. Rajendran, Ezhava Community and Kerala Politics, P.27.

Vivekodayam, Vol.1, No.6, 1905, P.110.

Vivekodayam, Vol.9, No.5,6, 1943, P. 186 and Nos. 11,12,1913.

www.File://G:Biography by Dr.S.Omana.htm.
