

# Narayana Guru's view on Religion

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## **Abstract:**

Anyone who advocates for reform of a certain area of our society is said to be a social reformer. India is a country where we are privileged to have many great social reformers like Ramakrishna Paramhansa, Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Swami Vivekananda, Narayan Guru etc. All of them are able to bring revolutions by making changes in the society. A few of them have taken up the challenges for the introduction of girls' education and widow's remarriage. The contributions of social reformers simple yet eminent souls towards humanity are really extraordinary. Their activities and thoughts guided the nation to a new beginning. Among the great social reformers Narayan Guru is regarded as one of them.

Narayan Guru was a great social reformer in India. He has done many social activities to change the social problems in our country. Narayan Guru felt that the three problems are the resistance of our progress Classism. Narayan Guru was a great patriot who dedicated his life for the service of his country. But he did not allow his love for India to limit his love for humanity.

Narayan Guru holds that all human beings are equal. Without any distinction of caste, religion, nationality or gender all human being are equal. Many youth of our country were inspired by the ideas of social-service and character-building of Narayan Guru. NarayanGuru dedicated his life for teaching and guiding the society. In this paper, I shall try to explain the Narayan Guru's view about religion.

**Key words:** Society, Renaissance, Spiritual, Social reformation, and Religion.

Narayana Guru is also known as Shree Narayana Guru Swami. He was a Hindu saint & social reformer of India. Guru was born in an Ezhava family, in an era when people from backward communities like the Ezhavas faced social injustice in the caste ridden society of Kerala. Gurudevan, as he was known among his followers, led reform movement in Kerala, revolted against caste system and worked on propagating new values of freedom in spirituality and social equality which transformed the society of Kerala.

Whenever one individual losses another, the contention among nations and communities ends. Religions can never beat one another, on the grounds that there is no contention. Assuming this strict conflict is to end, all religions should be educated with legitimate judgment. Then, at that point, it will be uncovered that there is little contrast between them in the primary standards. The religion we instruct is the religion that is uncovered. "This is the religion of the Guru." a definitive objective of all religions is self-acknowledgment. Ignorant about this reality, blind individuals should perceive reality without contacting the elephant, as they do in different ways, as do admirers of different contentions. For one who accepts that my religion is the essential fact of the matter, the

reality of another religion is deficient. His deception won't end until he discovers that all religions are the main truth. No religion can defeat another religion and win. There is no limit to this strict conflict.

Shree Narayana Guru is revered for his Vedic knowledge, poetic proficiency, openness to the views of others, non-violent philosophy and unrelenting resolve to set aright social wrongs. Narayana Guru was instrumental in setting the spiritual foundations for social reform in Kerala and was one of the most successful social reformers to revolt against caste system in India. He demonstrated a path to social emancipation without invoking the dualism of the oppressed and the oppressor.

The Guru's extraordinary message that 'one caste one religion and one god is man' is the most examined in the public arena. Many individuals characterize this condition as the most straightforward condition in math. As far as some might be concerned, this message resembles a trademark. The trademark might be like their condition. The 'one caste' in the extraordinary message of the Guru isn't only one of the positions that we normally practice. To comprehend it, one needs to be familiar with the philosophical universe in which the Guru's Caste Index is uncovered. The caste of one is determined by its characteristics. Those side effects should be steady with reasoning, science and rationale.

The Guru did not say that caste should be violated or denied. Rather, he advised that "Do not ask for caste and do not think" and that the thought of caste should go away. For this purpose, he has written works which declare the caste as a manifestation of the philosophy of consciousness. Human beings are a nation because the origin, birth and appearance of all the people in the world are irreversible. There is only one religion for such a man. There is only one God. For reproduction, any organism mates with the same species. The body shape, appearance, sound, smell, appearance, food and temperature of each breed of breed are different, each of which is a different species. This is the revelation of the biological, philosophical and universal guru of the nation.<sup>1</sup>

Etymologically, religion means 'to bind back'. The word religion is derived from the Latin words 're' and 'legare' or 'ligare'. The corresponding Sanskrit word for religion is dharma which means 'to hold' or 'to support'. Matam is the original word Narayana Guru used for religion. This word means also 'opinion', 'idea', 'belief' or 'view'. In the Bhagavad Gita also, the word 'matam' is used as 'confirmed opinion'.

Narayana Guru uses the terms Ātma, Arivu, Consciousness, Karu and God to denote the one Reality. This one Reality alone is what religions refer to as God. It is when man feels the unavailability of living consciously relating himself with this Reality, or the necessity of finding himself one with the whole, that religions find place in human life. The ultimate goal of all religions is ensuring happiness in human life by helping man find himself one with the whole in actual life.

The Guru's concept of religion is given in his Ātmopadesa Satakam (One Hundred verses of Self-Instruction), verses 44-49<sup>2</sup> which is known as Guru's critique of religion.

Verse 44 reads.

The many faiths have but one essence;  
Not seeing this, in this world, like the blind men and the elephant,  
Many kinds of reasoning are used by the unenlightened who become distressed;  
Having seen this, without being disturbed, remain steadfast.

Guru declared in this verse that the content of all religions is essentially one and the same. Those who argue for or against any particular religion are compared to the well-known story of a few blind men seeing an elephant. Guru says, one religion becomes respectable and another despicable only because of the partial understanding that people have about religion. Guru's kindly concern for universal welfare has been aptly expressed in verse 45.

One faith is despicable to another;  
The karu described in one is defective in another's estimation;  
In the world the secret of this is one alone;  
Know that confusion prevails until it is known to be thus.

Controversy arises between doctrines of religion in defining the highest truth each wants to uphold. The Guru uses the term 'karu' in a most comprehensive sense, which can cover several aspects of the absolute such as the transcendent, the primeval cause, the substance that evolves into all moulds and the overall norm of all evaluations.<sup>3</sup>

Verse 46 reads.

To vanquish (a religion) by fighting is not possible; no religion  
Can be abolished by mutual attack; the opponent of another faith  
Not remembering this and persisting in his fight,  
His own doom shall he in vain fight for, beware!

The Guru defines religion in verse 49.

All beings are making effort in every way, All the time, for the happiness of the Self;  
In the world, this is the one faith;  
Pondering on this, without becoming subjected to sin, be controlled.

In this verse Guru defines religion as "the quest for Self-happiness (AtmaSukham). The greatest common factor in all conscious and unconscious behavioural motivation is the search for happiness. Yogis seek kaivalyam, Jnanis seek self-realization, Buddhists seek nirvana, the Christian goal is salvation; these are all different names for the sumumbonumof everybody's search. Many people do not adhere to any religion yet they too have formulated their own philosophy and scheme to achieve supreme happiness in life. Narayana Guru uses the compound word Self – happiness (AtmaSukham).<sup>4</sup>

The Self or Atma is the pure and unconditioned consciousness manifested in all human beings, which is sat, cit and ananda. Ananda as understood by the Guru and Vedanta in general is not mere happiness, it is, rather the norm that enables us to measure and discern each event as pleasurable or painful, and makes one capable of treating both pleasure and pain with a sense of equanimity as a natural part of life. This search for happiness is one and same in all, at all times, in all the ways and everywhere, irrespective of the differences in caste, religion, God, ideology, language, nation etc. This oneness is the one religion (ekamatam) of Narayana Guru.

Religion itself must be unitively or scrutinizing comprehended. There is a vertical or unitive and an even way to deal with issues. The flat when pushed, isolates and separates, while a similar issue drew closer upward or unitively tracks down an answer for clashes and spells compromise. The great target of examination is to settle and accommodate duality in each stage and accordingly wipe out struggle at each progression we take

throughout everyday life, all through the whole human exercises or interests. Unitive arrangement empowers us to see the value in that the quintessence of all religions is something very similar. This unitive methodology is referred to toward the West as persuasive insight. In India, this has been known as the Advaita approach which is non-double in character. The Guru showed this insight, however lived as an exemplification of that intelligence moreover. This intelligence needs to observe articulation in everyday exercises of the individual concerned too.

A careful scrutiny of Narayana Guru's religion will reveal the neutral normative nature of the position he maintains in his attitude which is intended to be fully universal and scientific, neither taking the side of the believers nor the sceptic, the orthodox or heterodox of any traditional context of any time or any part of the world. It is here the Guru's religion excels in being unitive and scientific.<sup>5</sup>

Happiness is the brilliant string of human qualities which gives solidarity and significance to the entire of life. It brings all religions or statements of faith under its single influence. The Guru not just presents here the blissful possibility of One Religion for all humankind, more than that requests that each man embrace this mentality so he could discover a sense of harmony of psyche for him and accomplish the objective of joy. In Guru's vision of things to come of the parcel of the humankind, the answer for clashes between religions as belief systems that are shut and static can come just when the open dynamic and unitive, thoughtful or widespread way becomes clear to the psyche of the over-simplification of men. Subsequently the pondering approach to taking care of the human issues should be developed to an ever increasing extent.<sup>6</sup>

## References :

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5. Cf. Omana, S, Narayana Guru's Concept of One Religion (EkaMatam) - A Panacea For Religious Rivalries, International Journal of Advanced Scientific Research and Management, Kerala, 2017, p. 44
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