

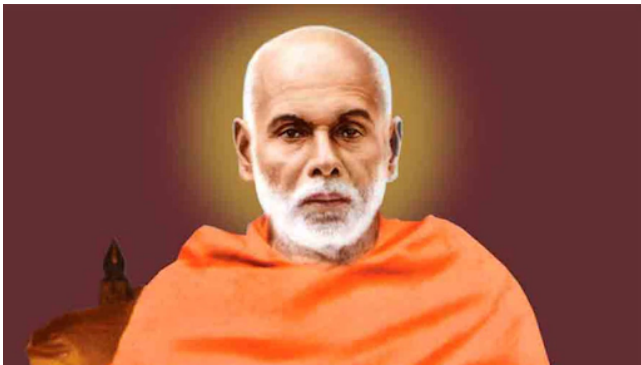


Sree Narayana Guru

Why in News

Recently, the Prime Minister paid tributes to Sree Narayana Guru on his birth anniversary.

- Earlier, the **Vice President of India** launched **“Not Many, But One”**, an English translation of poems of Sree Narayana Gurudev.



Key Points

▪ Birth:

- Sree Narayana Guru was born on **22nd August, 1856** to Madan Asan and his wife Kuttiamma in Chempazhanthy, a village near **Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala**.

▪ Early Days and Education:

- His family belonged to the **Ezhava caste and was considered ‘avarna’** according to the social mores of the time.
- Right from his childhood **he loved solitude** and always indulged himself in deep contemplation. He was **intensely drawn to worship at the local temples** and composed hymns and several devotional songs.
- From an early age, **he was drawn towards asceticism**. He lived as a hermit in a forest for eight years.
- He **learned** Vedas, Upanishads, literature, logical rhetoric of Sanskrit, Hatha Yoga and other philosophies.

▪ Important Works:

◦ Against Caste Injustice:

- He gave the famous slogan **“One Caste, One Religion, One God for All”** (Oru Jathi, Oru Matham, Oru Daivam, Manushyanu).
- In 1888, he **built a temple dedicated to Lord Shiva at Aruvippuram** which was against the caste-based restrictions of the time.
- In one temple he consecrated at Kalavancode, he kept mirrors instead of idols. This symbolised his message that **the divine was within each individual**.

- **Against Conversions:**

- He **taught equality but felt the inequalities should not be exploited** to carry out conversions and therefore generate strife in society.
- He organized an **All-Region Conference** in 1923 at Alwaye Advaita Ashram, which was reported to be the **first such event in India**. This was an **effort to counter the religious conversions Ezhava community was susceptible to**.

- **Others:**

- Later, in 1903, he established the **Sree Narayana Dharma Paripalana Yogam (SNDP), a charitable society** as the founder and president. The organisation continues to mark its strong presence to this day.
- In 1924, the **Sivagiri pilgrimage** was established to promote the virtues of cleanliness, education, devotion, agriculture, handicrafts, and trade.

- **Philosophy of Sree Narayana Guru:**

- He became **one of the greatest proponents and re-evaluators of Advaita Vedanta**, the principle of non-duality put forward by [Adi Shankara](#).

- **Literary Works:**

- He wrote various books in different languages. Few of them are: **Advaita Deepika, Asrama, Thevarappathinkangal, etc.**

- **Contribution to National Movement:**

- **Against the Societal ills:**

- A remarkable social reformer, he was in the **forefront of the movement for universal temple entry and against the societal ills like the social discrimination of untouchables**.

- **Impetus for Vaikom Agitation:**

- He provided the **impetus for Vaikom agitation** which was aimed at temple entry in Travancore for the lower castes. It drew **nationwide attention and appreciation from Mahatma Gandhi**.

- **Unity through his Poems:**

- He captured the **essence of Indianness in his poems** which highlighted the unity that lies **beneath the world's apparent diversity**.

- **Contribution to Science:**

- Emphasized the practice of ideals of cleanliness, promotion of education, agriculture, trade, handicrafts and technical training.
- His **Adyaropa darsanam (Darsanamala)** explains the creation of the universe.
- **Daivadasakam and Atmopadesa satakam** are a few examples of how the mystic reflections and insights closely resemble recent advances in physics.

- **Current Relevance of Philosophy:**

- Gurudev's philosophy of Universal Oneness has **special relevance in the contemporary global context** where the social fabric of many countries and communities are being eroded by hatred, violence, bigotry, sectarianism and other divisive tendencies.

- **Death:**

- He died on **20th September, 1928** and the day is observed as **Sree Narayana Guru Samadhi in Kerala**.

