

# Sree Narayana Guru

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## In News

164th birth anniversary of Sree Narayana Guru is observed on 2nd September.

## Sree Narayana Guru

- **Narayana Guru (1856 – 1928)** was a social reformer.
- He has been credited with transforming the social fabric of Kerala and changing the beliefs of Keralites in ways unimaginable at that point in time.
- He was born into an **Ezhava family** in an era when people from such communities, which were **regarded as Avarna**, faced much social injustice in the caste-ridden society of Kerala.
- He was a **pioneer reformer who rejected the caste system** and stressed the equality of man. He also gave the universal message, **“One caste, one religion, one God.”**
- Educated by his father and at a nearby school, Narayana or ‘Nanu’ as he was called was influenced by Vedanta.
- He also **taught Sanskrit to students** at a local school with close associate Chattampi Swami.
- **Chattampi Swami introduced Guru to Thycattu Ayyaavu, a Hatha Yogi.** From Ayyaavu, Guru learnt Hatha Yoga and other philosophies, which had a deep impact on him.
- From an early age, Guru was drawn towards asceticism. **He lived as a hermit in a forest at Maruthwamala for eight years.**
- In one temple he consecrated at Kalavancode, he

kept mirrors instead of idols. This symbolised his message that the divine was within each individual.

- He contributed many important literary works, the most influential being Atmopadesa Satakam which he composed in 1897.
  - In 1904, he chose Sivagiri in Varkala to pursue his spiritual deeds.
  - Guru built many Hindu temples which were open to people from all castes and religions.
  - He was also a keen educator and stressed on the importance of education for all. He taught Sanskrit and the Upanishads to students from all castes, including the 'low caste' students who were not permitted to study the scriptures.
  - He travelled all over Kerala and the Madras State visiting people and spreading his message of unity and 'one God'. He believed that the ultimate goal of all religions was the same and it was pointless for people to fight over caste and religion.
  - **Rabindranath Tagore also had met Narayana Guru.** In Tagore's words, "I have been touring different parts of the world. But I have never come across one who is spiritually greater than Sree Narayana Guru".
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- **Dr Palpu, a devotee of Guru, established the Sree Narayana Dharma Paripalana Yogam (SNDP Yogam) in 1903 to further Narayana Guru's message.**
  - Sree Narayana Guru breathed his last on 20 September 1928. This day is observed as Sree Narayana Guru Samadhi in Kerala and is a public holiday there. His birth anniversary is also celebrated as Sree Narayana Jayanthi.

## **Social reform movements**

- He led a reform movement in Kerala, rejected casteism, and promoted new values of spiritual freedom and social equality.
- He stressed the need for the spiritual and social upliftment of the downtrodden by their own efforts through the establishment of temples and educational institutions.
- In the process, he denounced the superstitions that clouded the fundamental Hindu cultural convention of caste.
- He preached the 'oneness' of humanity, crossing the boundaries of caste and creed.
- In 1888, he installed an idol of shiva at Aruvippuram in Kerala in his effort to show that the consecration of god's image was not a monopoly of the brahmins. This is popularly known as **Aruvippuram movement**.
- **In one temple he consecrated at Kalavancode, he kept mirrors instead of idols.** This symbolised his message that the divine was within each individual.
- He also founded an **Advaita Ashram in Kalady**.
- He also lent his **support to the Vaikom Satyagraha** which was aimed at temple entry in Travancore for the lower castes. **Mahatma Gandhi met Guru during this time.**