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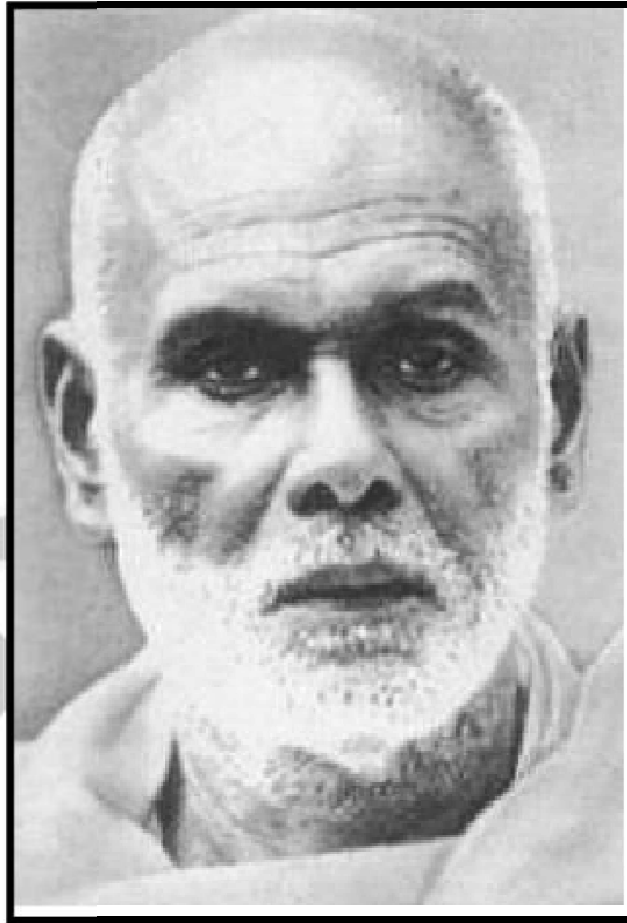
SHRI NARAYANA GURU: A SPIRITUAL ICON WHO REDEFINED SOCIAL BOUNDARIES

WHY IN THE NEWS?

The statement by Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan regarding Sree Narayana Guru has sparked controversy, particularly from the BJP, which accuses the CM of insulting Hinduism. During a speech at the annual pilgrimage to Sivagiri Mutt in Varkala, Vijayan stated that Narayana Guru had “reconstructed Sanatana Dharma” by challenging the caste-based system and promoting a secular, humanistic worldview. Vijayan argued that attempts to label Guru as a proponent of traditional Sanatana Dharma misrepresent his beliefs, stating that Guru’s philosophy, exemplified by his famous dictum “One Caste, One Religion, One God,” goes against the hierarchical caste system that defines Sanatana Dharma. The CM emphasized that Guru’s teachings were modern, progressive, and secular, and any attempt to present him as a religious leader or adherent of the traditional system was an insult to his true legacy.

SHRI NARAYANA GURU:

- 1. Born:** August 20, 1856, in Chempazhanthy, Kerala, into an Ezhava family, which was considered part of the lower caste in the caste-ridden society of Kerala.
- 2. Early Education:** Studied under Chempazhanthi Mootha Pillai in the traditional gurukula system, where he was introduced to the basics of various disciplines.
- 3. Further Studies:** At the age of 21, he studied Sanskrit, Vedas, and Upanishads under the guidance of Raman Pillai Asan, expanding his spiritual knowledge and intellectual capabilities.
- 4. Spiritual Travels:** Traveled across Kerala and Tamil Nadu, meeting prominent reformers like Chattampi Swamikal. During this period, he also learned yoga and meditation from Ayyavu Swamikal, deepening his spiritual practices.
- 5. Meditation & Enlightenment:** For eight years, he meditated in the Pillathadam cave at Maruthwamala, a secluded area surrounded by dense forests, where he attained spiritual enlightenment and clarity about the social inequalities of the time.
- 6. Social Reformer:** This period marked his transformation into a social reformer. He began advocating for equality, education, and spiritual freedom for the oppressed castes, challenging the rigid caste system and the social injustices that prevailed in Kerala society.



SHRI NARAYANA GURU'S CONTRIBUTION:

1. Social Reforms:

Fighting Caste Discrimination: Guru promoted equality for all, famously stating, "One caste, one religion, and one god for all." He led a movement against caste discrimination and untouchability in Kerala.

Aruvippuram Pratishta (1888): By consecrating a Shiva idol at Aruvippuram, Guru challenged Brahminical traditions and broke caste barriers, marking a pivotal moment in social reform.

Inclusive Temples: He built temples accessible to all castes, making spiritual spaces open to everyone, regardless of social status.

Education for All: Guru focused on providing education to the marginalized, founding schools that emphasized enlightenment for the oppressed communities.

2. Freedom Movement:

Influence on Gandhi: Guru's fight against untouchability inspired Mahatma Gandhi. Gandhi's efforts to eradicate untouchability were strongly influenced by Guru's ideas.

Vaikom Satyagraha (1924): Guru's disciples played a key role in the Vaikom Satyagraha, demanding the right for lower castes to access temple roads, a successful struggle for social justice.

Sivagiri Pilgrimage: Guru's legacy lives on through the Sivagiri Pilgrimage, a significant event that continues to promote social justice and spiritual harmony.

3. Literary Work:

Philosophical and Spiritual Writings: Guru's major works, including "Atmopadesa Śatakam", convey profound spiritual teachings based on Advaita Vedanta and emphasize compassion, truth, and unity.

Translations and Interpretations: He translated important works like the Thirukural and Ishavasya Upanishad, interpreting them in line with his vision of universal truth and spiritual equality.

Timeless Influence: His writings continue to inspire thinkers and spiritual leaders, promoting peace, love, and unity across religious and social boundaries.

4. Other Contributions:

All Religions Conference (1923): Guru hosted India's first interfaith conference, advocating for religious harmony and peaceful coexistence during a time of increasing communal tensions.

Promotion of Industrialization: He supported industrial and agricultural growth, emphasizing the importance of development for social progress.

Inclusive Spirituality: Guru initiated followers from all religions, emphasizing that the truth of spirituality transcends religious barriers.

5. Legacy:

SNDP Yogam: Founded by Guru in 1903, the Sree Narayana Dharma Paripalana Yogam remains a major organization advocating social equality and education.

Statues and Memorials: Monuments and statues in his honour, such as the one in Kaithamukku, Thiruvananthapuram, continue to remind people of his contributions.

Commemorative Stamps and Coins: Guru's legacy is celebrated with commemorative stamps and coins, including one issued by the Government of India and one by Sri Lanka.

Cultural Impact: Films like Sree Narayana Guru and Yugapurushan have immortalized his life and teachings, spreading his message to future generations.

CONCLUSION

Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan's recent statement on Sree Narayana Guru has sparked controversy, with the BJP accusing him of insulting Hinduism. Vijayan emphasized that Guru's teachings, including his famous motto "One Caste, One Religion, One God," challenged the caste-based hierarchy of Sanatana Dharma, promoting a progressive, secular worldview. This perspective reflects Guru's legacy as a social reformer who advocated for equality, education, and spiritual freedom, breaking caste barriers and influencing India's freedom movement. His work continues to inspire movements for social justice, interfaith harmony, and inclusive spirituality, solidifying his status as a transformative figure in Indian history.

PRELIMS QUESTION:

Q. With reference to Sree Narayana Guru's contribution to literature, which of the following statements is/are correct?

1. Guru wrote philosophical works based on Advaita Vedanta.
2. Guru's translation of the Thirukural was aimed at advocating religious tolerance and unity.

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

- A. 1 only
- B. 2 only
- C. Both 1 and 2
- D. Neither 1 nor 2

Answer: C

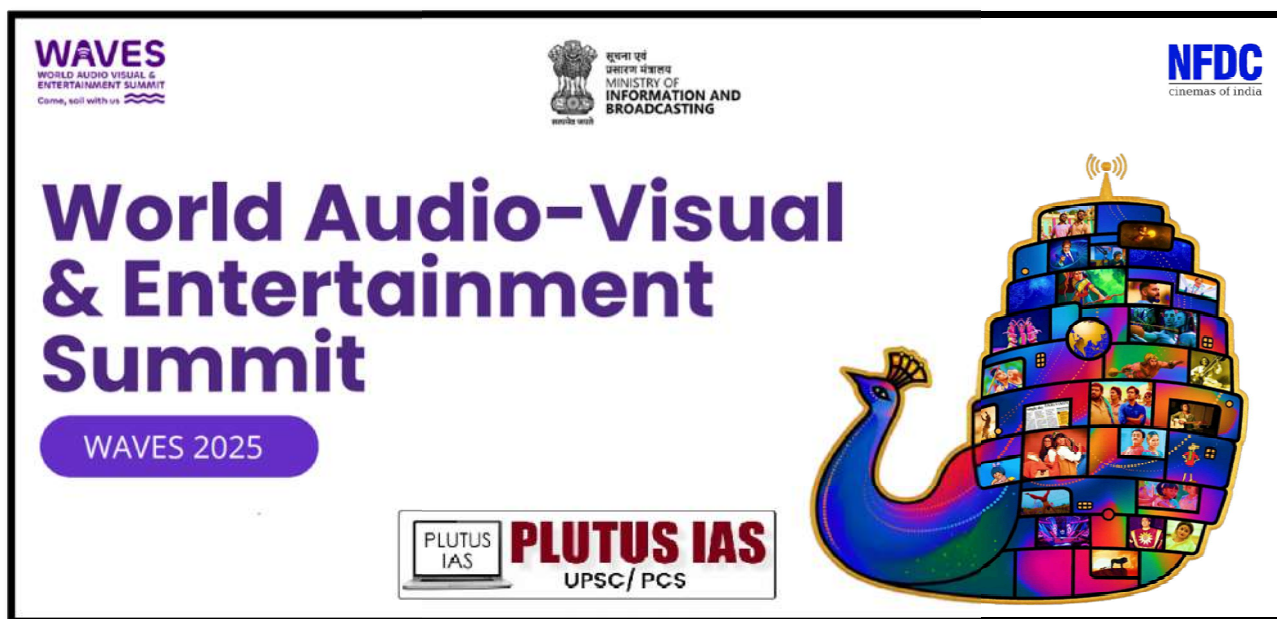
MAINS QUESTION:

Q. Discuss the significance of Sree Narayana Guru's philosophy in challenging the caste-based social system and promoting religious harmony. Analyze how his teachings continue to shape Kerala's social and cultural landscape. (250 words, 15 marks)

PRELIMS BIT: WAVE SUMMIT

WHY IN THE NEWS?

Prime Minister of India Shri Narendra Modi, in the 117th episode of 'Mann Ki Baat,' shared exciting news about a major milestone for India's creative and entertainment sector. Addressing the nation, the Prime Minister announced that India will host the World Audio Visual Entertainment Summit (WAVES) for the first time next year.



WHAT IS WAVE SUMMIT?

The World Audio Visual & Entertainment Summit (WAVES) is a key forum for fostering discussions, collaboration, and innovation in the Media & Entertainment (M&E) industry. The event will unite industry leaders, stakeholders, and innovators to explore opportunities, address challenges, promote global trade, and shape the future of the sector. The WAVES Summit is set to be a global platform for India's creative talents, promoting collaborations and highlighting the country's potential as a hub for world-class content creation. It will also showcase India's progress in animation, gaming, entertainment technology, and both regional and mainstream cinema. The Prime Minister's call to action emphasizes the government's dedication to nurturing India's creative economy and establishing its position as a global leader in media and entertainment.

INDIA AND WAVES SUMMIT:

- 1. First-Time Host:** India will host the World Audio Visual Entertainment Summit (WAVES) for the first time in February 2025.
- 2. Global Platform:** WAVES will serve as a global platform to showcase India's creative talents and foster collaborations within the media and entertainment industry.
- 3. Focus Areas:** The summit will highlight India's advancements in animation, gaming, entertainment technology, and both regional and mainstream cinema.

- 4. Prime Minister's Support:** Prime Minister Narendra Modi emphasized the role of young creators and professionals in the summit, calling for active participation from all sectors of the creative industry.
- 5. Cultural Significance:** Modi stressed the importance of the event in making India a global hub for content creation and strengthening its position in the media and entertainment sector.
- 6. Encouraging Youth Participation:** The Prime Minister encouraged young creators, established artists, and professionals in TV, animation, gaming, and entertainment technology to take part in the summit.
- 7. Global Collaboration:** Leaders and creative minds from around the world will gather to discuss challenges, opportunities, and the future of the industry.
- 8. Tributes to Legends:** Modi paid tribute to Indian cinema legends such as Raj Kapoor, Mohammed Rafi, Akkineni Nageswara Rao, and Tapan Sinha for their contributions to the industry and cultural heritage.
- 9. Cultural and Economic Impact:** The summit is seen as a key step in enhancing India's global influence in the entertainment and creative sectors while contributing to the nation's economic growth.

PRELIMS QUESTION:

Q. With reference to the World Audio Visual & Entertainment Summit (WAVES) and India's engagement with it, consider the following statements:

1. India will host the WAVES Summit for the first time in February 2025.
2. The WAVES Summit will exclusively focus on Bollywood cinema and ignore other regional industries.
3. The Prime Minister has emphasized the importance of youth participation in the creative economy during the WAVES Summit.

How many of the above-given statements are correct?

- A. Only one
- B. Only two
- C. All three
- D. None

Answer: A

Ritik singh

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