

Sadhu Jana Paripalana Sangam (SJPS)

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Abstract

The Sadhu Jana Paripalana Sangam(SJPS) was formed under Ayyankali's leadership in 1907.The organization was not meant for any single caste but it unified all the depressed servile people (sadhu janam). Thus, Ayyankali was successful in creating a platform for the Dalits for the first time. Ayyankali established the Sadhu Jana Paripalana Sangam with a view of activating his community to seek the path of progressive change and reform. He began the first step towards the social emancipation of his brethren. There were violent clashes on several occasions but Ayyankali was went upon putting an end to the obsolescent practice of social discrimination. The militant attitude of this fearless fighter had telling effect, and the caste Hindus were forced to move in accordance with the social change of the time. The Sadhu Jana Paripalana Sangam also palyed an important role in the contemporary social movements. The SJPS and its activities can be considered the genesis of the emergence of modern Dalit consciousness in Travancore.

Keywords : sabha, samuday akodathi, pada, sangham, kanakk an, sadhu jan am

Introduction

The formation of the Sree Narayana Dharma Paripalana Yogam, the Nair Service Society, the Namboodiri Yogakema Sabha and the Muhammodiy a Sabha influenced Ayyankali. The Ezhava movement or the eloquent speeches and humanitarian activities of a lower caste organization named Sadhu Jana Paripalana Sangam (SJPS), on the model of Sree Narayana Dharma ParipalanaYogam. The Sangham had its inception in 1905 as “Chit Sabha”, later in 1907, it was renamed and registered as Sadhu Jana Paripalana Sangam. However, as the title indicated , it was not an organization to look after the interests of the Pulay as alone; it had greater aims and functional scope. But after the death of Ayyankali, there were differences of interest among his followers, which invited split in the organization. This led to the formation of

the Pulayar Maha Sabha, Cheramar Sangham, Ahakrita Varga League and the like. The SJPS brought solidarity among the depressed castes and unified them under the title of *sadhu janam*. Their welfare one of the first things that Ayyankali achieved through the sangham was the enforcement of six-day work in a week for the untouchables a revolutionary setup in those days.

Objectives of the Sadhu Jana Paripalana Sangham

The main objective of this organization was to bring the untouchable poor together and work for these low castes. The low caste people had been work in for their masters day and night all round the year, and never had a day's rest. Ayyankali asked the Pulayas to work in the fields of their land lords only six days in a week and observe Sunday as a holiday. On Sundays, Ayyankali organized meetings and other common functions which both men and women belonging to the untouchable communities, mainly the Pulayas, joyously attended. This new freedom, which they achieved through their struggles, was something exhilarating for these people. In each and every functional meeting, Ayyankali charged a small subscription from the members of the Sangham. Which enabled the association to buy a small plot of land within three years. As a organizer of the untouchables, Ayyankali established his mark.

Activities of the Sadhu Jana Paripalana Sangham

It consisted of 24 sections. Various programmes for social, economic and educational development of the Dalits were also included in it. Moreover, the organization gave preference and emphasis to discipline and cleanliness. Ayyankali himself was the first secretary and all branches, working in different part of Travancore, functioned under his control. The secretary of the Sadhu Jana Paripalana Sangham was called Kanakkan. The first executive committee of the Sangham started functioning with Thaivilaku Kali, Moolayil Kali, Thomas Vadyar, the brothers of Ayyankali named Chathan, Gopalan, Velayudhan and Velukutty as members. The Sangham started functioning very secretly for away from public places.

One of the main activities of the Sangham was to organize meetings on some hill-sides or maidans in the early stages because the Savarnes objected to public meetings of the untouchables. At these meetings, the leaders took classes and educated the audience on their rights and duties and the importance of education to everyone. Because education of their children was the aim of the Sangham, the leaders urged the people to observe cleanliness, temperance and self-control. It was the vision and mission of the Sadhu Jana Paripalana Yogam. The Sadhu Jana Paripalana Sangham also had policies of its own. The SJPS gave much stress to educational progress, cleanliness, and possession of the land for the landless, which were the primary needs of the untouchables. Ayyankali was the first to raise the slogan "land for the tillers of the soil".

So the information of the SJPS was a landmark in the history of the Pulayas, or of the out castes in general.

Branches of the Sadhu Jana ParipalanaSangham

Thus, within eight years of its inception, several branches of the SJPS were established at different part of Travancore. Branches under the leadership of K.M.Pappan, Chemputhara Kali, Chothikuruppan, Perunna Mylan and Manthrakutty were highly influential in the Northern part of Travancore. There were more than seventy two branches established in the premises of Changanassery. Karumban Daivathan, who was a native of Aranmula, helped Ayyankali to establish branches there. In all these places, they bought plots and established institutions for the Pulayas.

Ayyankalipada

Under the auspices of the Sadhu Jana ParipalanaSangham, a youth organization of the Pulayas known as Ayyankalipada was formed by Ayyankali. It rendered valuable services conducive to their future programmes. Whenever the honour and self respect of a Pulaya was challenged. Ayyankalipada intervened effectively, creating tension and law and order problem. This youth organization under the leadership of Ayyankali defined the caste restrictions and walked along the prohibited roads in his native place Venganoor. Besides, the Sangham interfered in many places, for setting issues, and led many agitations in places like Manacaud, Kazhakuttom, Pallippuram, Kaniyapuram, Kandala and Urootmbalam.

Samudaya Kodathi

Dalits were not given the rights to make proper use such redressal mechanisms since the 'upper' castes were the court functionaries. The exclusion of Dalits by the 'mainstream' legal system necessitated them to establish a separate judicial body to sort out their pleadings and complaints. Besides, the caste ridden courts subjected the Dalits to brutal punishments. Therefore, in order to amicably solve the problems of the Dalits Ayyankali established a Samudaya Kodathi (Community Court) at Venganoor and its local offices functioned in every branch of the SJPS. These courts had all the paraphernalia of regular courts, advocates, judges, bench clerks, warrant sepoy, warrant sepoy and so on. Those preferring an appeal of the decisions of these lower courts could approach the Supreme Court at Venganoor where Ayyankali was the Judge. Punishments given by the court to the guilty persons included imposition of fines, excommunication and so on. Being under the direct control of the SJPS, the

community court functioned well and dispensed justice. The functioning of these courts further integrated the Dalits with the SJPS.

Conclusion

Thus a good beginning was made by the Sangham, enlisting the co-operation of the Travancore Government. The Dewan was convinced of the genuine requirement of the Pulayas and this change in governmental attitude was for the good Sangham and the Pulaya community. The annual session held in the Jubilee Hall at Trivandrum won the attention of the government and the public. Through the sessions, Ayyankali won the admiration of the government officials, by which he became the unquestioned leader of the Pulayas as well as the chief organizer of the Sadhu Jana Paripalana Sangham. The SJPS provided a forum for Dalit community to meet, discuss problems and chalk out plans for their solutions. Organizational base and organized strength provided them an uncommon confidence to face situations of any kind- be it from the orthodox Hindus or from the partisan government officials. Ayyankali and a corps of Pulaya youths, who were ready to face any situation, kept constant vigil and left their inevitable impact on the society and state. After the death of Ayyankali this Sangham also declined.

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