



## IMPACT OF VAIKOM AND SUCHIDRAM SATYAGRAHAS IN TRAVANCORE- AN HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

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**ABSTRACT** *The chief social evil in Travancore, as elsewhere in India, was caste. Though the traditional caste system was not in vogue in Travancore, the Brahmins held the highest place in society. And owners of all land in the country they depended upon the Nairs for the proper management of of the land. The Nairs grew into a warrior class protecting the interests of the Brahmins to form the upper class. The Ezhavas or Tiyas, the Nadars, the pulayas and the parayas were the low caste. These low castes were subjected to glaring disabilities on account of the peculiar social customs which were very strictly followed in Travancore. The treatment which the untouchables received at the hands of the caste Hindus from time immemorial was unsympathetic and even inhuman. Broadly speaking the people of Travancore divided into Avarnas and Savarnas. The avarnas were low castes such as the Adidravidians, Alvans, Aryans, Baratars, Chakaravars, Ezhavas, Kaniyans, Kuravans, Nadars, panas, pulayas, parayas, velan, vedann etc.*

**KEY WORDS:** TRAVANCORE, SATYAGRAHA, TEMPLE, VAIKOM SATYAGRHA, SUCHIDRAM SATYAGRHA, TEMPLE ENTRY PROCLAMATION

**INTRODUCTION** They were strictly prohibited from entering into the temples and using public wells, tanks and chatrams (rest houses). Equal opportunity of education and employment was denied to the Avarnas. Unapproachability was also very severe in Travancore. Francis Day says that, Ilava (Ezhava) must keep 36 paces from Brahmin and 12 from a Nayar while a Kaniyan would pollute a Nambudiri Brahmin at 24 ft., 96 paces as the4 distance for a Pulayan from Nair. Not only untouchability and unapproachability, but also unseeability was also in vogue in Travancore.

**Temple Entry Restriction** Temple entry restrictions were one of the important events in the history of Travancore. The privileged class people did not allow the unprivileged caste people to enter in the *Garpagraha* of the temple and also Brahmins did not allow the unprivileged caste people to use the temple roads and they were to stop even in the paths leading to them before they reached the pollution in distance.

The roads in the temple premises were not open to the non-Hindus particularly unprivileged communities. If they reached near to temple they were considered as the sinner and they brought behind the king for the capital punishment. The privileged class lived very luxuriously and they followed certain customs and traditions in the temple. The temples were become under the control of *Kariyakats* (Temple Administer). The Kariyakars were only the privileged class.

### Vaikam Satyagraha



### VAIKOM TEMPLE

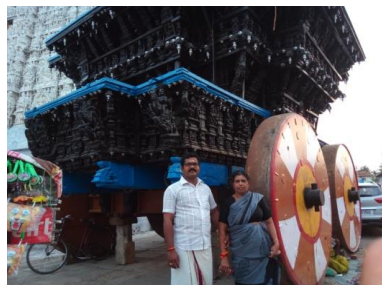
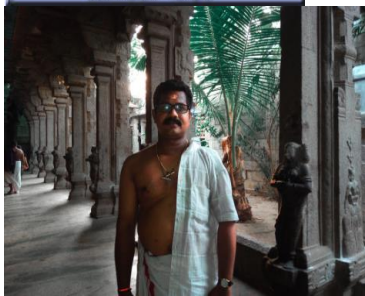
Vaikom is Hindu temple, around that temple there were roads used for the ceremonial processions of the temple, not providing access to low Hindu caste. But no such restrictions to Christians and Muslims on these roads. Some leaders wanted to eradicate the untouchability and get rights of avarnas to enter in to the temple, in December 1923, the Indian National Congress session was held at Kakinadu. In this session, Ezhava leader T.K. Madhavan circulated a letter demanding creative action for the eradication of untouchability in India. In this letter, he proposed the formation of a special all India Committee met again and formed provincial committee to undertake constructive programmed to fight against Congress met at Ernakualm on 20<sup>th</sup> Januaty 1924 and formed an Anti-Untouchability Committee under the leadership of K. Kelappan, T.K.Madhavan, V.Sankaran Nambuthiripad and K. Velayudhan. This committee chose Vaikom as one of the place for starting the Anti-untouchability movement. On 29<sup>th</sup> February 1924, anti- uochability committee met at Vaikom which was attended by people of different castes. On 20<sup>th</sup> March 1924, the Sathyagraha was started and it was continued for twenty months.



Leaders of Vaikom satyagraha -Gandhiji inVaikom-Satyagraha E VRamasamy Naiker  
The satyagrha was spread very soon not only among the minds of Travancore people,

but also the total nation. They conducted propaganda and public meetings in several places. Their main aim was to wake for the temple entry for Daliths and freedom to move on the public roads without any discrimination. On 10<sup>th</sup> March 1925 Gandhiji visited Vaikom and a result of an agreement with the Government and Gandhiji, all the roads except the eastern side of the temple were opened to Avarnas. Thus the Vaikom temple entry was a great success.

#### SUCHIDRAM SATYAGRAHA



**Thanumalaya** temple (Brahma, Vishnu and Maheswara) at Suchindram was not providing access to all class of Hindu society. Even among the Caste Hindus, there were restrictions. Some sects could not go to all parts of the temple. The avarnas like Ezhavas, Nadars, pulayas and Parayas who longed to worship in this temple had to stand even furlong away from the outer wall limits. Any person disobeyed these provisions was liable to be punished. The depressed classes were not only prohibited to enter the temple, but also to use the roads it. They have no right to walking through street where the caste Hindu lived. Bamboo screens (Teru-Meraccan) were put up at all the entrance of the street. The people of the Suchindram were looking up to the government and the caste Hindu for a long time to remove this custom and liberate them from the orthodox opinion. Under the leadership of M.E. Naidu the temple road entry satyagraha at Suchindram committee was formed. M. Subramania Pillai, H.Perumal Panicker, P.C. Thanumalaya Perumal and Gandhidhas were the prominent persons of this committee. M.E. Naidu forced the urgency of the reform on the attention of every individual with the display of huge posters, distribution of leaflets and holding the meetings. On 30<sup>th</sup> January 1926, the satyagraha was started, Later E.V.Ramaswamy Naicker the social reformer of TamilNadu also participated in the Satyagraha. The gradual agitation and dedication of the leaders like M.E. Faidu, H.Perumal, P.C.Thanumalaya Perumal, C. Muthu Swamy and Govindaraja Naidu, the

people got the rights of temple entry. Finally, settled by *the* **HISTORIC TEMPLE ENTRY PROCLAMATION ISSUED BY SREE CHITHIRA THIRUNAL MAHARAJA ON 12<sup>TH</sup> NOVEMBER 1936.**

**TEMPLE ENTRY PROCLAMATION (12<sup>th</sup> November 1936, (27<sup>th</sup> of Thulam 1112 Malayalam era) By His Highness the Maharaja of Travancore)**



Profoundly convinced of the truth and validity of our religion, believing that is based on divine guidance and on an all comprehending toleration, knowing that in its practice it has, throughout the centuries, adapted itself to the needs of changing times, solicitous that none of our Hindu subjects should, by reason of birth or caste or community, be denied the consolations and solace of Hindu faith. We have decided and hereby declare, ordain and command that, subject to such rules and conditions as may be laid down and imposed by us for preserving their proper atmosphere and maintaining their rituals and observances, there should henceforth be no restriction placed on any Hindu by birth or religion on entering of worshipping in the temple controlled by us and our Government.

**CONCLUSION** Temple Entry Proclamation of 1936 was a major landmark in the long chain of social reforms commented with the unprivileged classes. Despite pressure from powerful quarters against this step, Sree Chithira Thirunal of Travancore had the courage and vision to issue the proclamation, by which he won an abiding place in the history of the state. The temple entry proclamation of 1926 provided by many liberal minded Hindu leaders all over India who had been awaiting such a proclamation was termed it a, “Modern Miracle in Travancore”. He also said this was “An instance of the Mass conversion of caste Hindus”.

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