CHAPTER VII
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TEMPLE ENTRY MOVEMENT

From the earliest times the temple of Travancore and other parts of Kerala and their precincts were treated as sanketam grounds and were not open to the non-caste Hindus. Like all other temples the Siva temple at Suchindram was not accessible to all classes of Hindu Society. Down to a very recent date, the agamic prescriptions and time-honoured customs were most meticulously observed in this temple. Even among the caste Hindus there were restrictions; some sects could not go to all parts of the temple. There were graded limits. The Vellalars, Nairs, Chettis etc., were permitted to go into the Ardhamandapa and the Tirucurra Mandapa and not into the Garbhagruha, the Sanctum Sanctorum. The Vairavis, Calias, potters and oilmongers were allowed to go up to the Dhavajastaambha, but not beyond. A Nambudiri with the Customary caste mark and wearing clear clothes alone could go into the Garbhagruha and offer worship.

2. Ibid.
The Temples occupied a highly conspicuous place in the life of the Hindus. Generally the temples and their custodians commanded vast influence through the possession of immense treasures, ownership of large estates, regulation of markets and credit, dispensation of key position and contracts, celebration of festivals, promotion of art and letters and above all, in the fixation of social status. They became the makers and breakers of social status in the locality. The rights to enter certain parts of the temple, the right to participate in certain ceremonies and the order of precedence in certain rites and festivals were the important visible expressions of the accepted hierarchy of communities and individuals in society. In the ancient period the people had accepted religion as the unwritten constitution for the ethical and civic norms of social life. The temples consecrated to the Brahmanical deities, especially to Siva and their precincts, were considered as Sanketam grounds, and reserved exclusively for the caste Hindus. Such temples remained out of bounds for the non-caste Hindus. Though the non-caste Hindus were regarded as members of the Hindu society,

4. Temple means a place by whatever name known which is dedicated to or for the benefit of or used as of right by, the Hindu community in general, as a place of public religious worship and includes subsidiary shrines and mantapams attached to such place. (Home Dept. Proceedings, 13 August 1947, National Archives, New Delhi).
who professed the same Hindu customs and manners, believed in the same sacred books, and worshipped the same gods, they were not permitted entry into the temples. Physical cleanliness, intellectual attainments, economic means, high status in life did not help the non-caste Hindus to enter the prohibited areas near the temple. The Brahmins cunningly manipulated customs and conventions, administrative and socio-economic system and brought the entire society under the provision of their Shastras.

Among the caste Hindus, the Pujaris (priests) mostly Brahmins, were alone permitted to enter the inner shrine of the Garbhagruha of the temple. People who assumed the status of the Kshatriyas were allowed to approach upto the steps in front of the Garbhagruha for devotional acts like reciting Vedas, Mantras and prostrating in front of the image. They were allowed to go as far as the steps of Namaskaramandapa. People who belonged to the category of Sudras went upto Pradkshinavazhi outside the Nalmapalam, but not nearer. According to Karikagama Shastra, the Vaisyas and the sudras were allowed to worship god from the Bhadramantapa, the other castes at the entrance of the Gopuram, and Chandalas and Patitas outside the Gopuram; but they were not permitted to enter it. The Karanagama Shastra stated that women, in their menstrual state, and Chandals, were not to be allowed to enter the parkaras; and
when the idol was taken out in procession during the utsava (festival) time, they were not to come within a range of 100 cubits from the idol. As per the popular belief violation of these rules would deprive the idol of its divine effulgence, cause the death of the king, bring ruin to the village, and allow no crops to grow.  

The Smiritis like the Dharmasastras of Manu and Yajnavalkya condemned the use of liquor as one of the five greatest crimes or panchamahapatakas. Irrespective of their economic status, people connected with certain professions were labeled as untouchables and subjected to severe social disabilities. They were prohibited from touching or coming near the upper caste people owing to tindal or distance pollution. They were not permitted to use freely the public roads and wells. They were strictly prohibited from entering the compounds of temples consecrated to Brahmanical deities.

6. Manu XI, 55 Saying a Brahmin, drinking intoxicating liquor, theft, committing adultery with the wife of a (are) they Say, the great crimer and association with those (who commit there crimers is also a great crime (Edward W.Hopkins, Hindu Polity, The Ordinance of Manu, Ludhiana.
They brought their little offerings of fruit, flowers and confectionery which they handed over to a temple priest and waited outside the shrine till he came out again, and after returning the baskets or trays in which they brought the offerings, dismissed them with his blessing. It should be pointed out in this connection than Hindu worship is not congregational and the worshippers, even if they belong to "clean" castes and are able to enter the temple do not make offerings personally. A Hindu temple is not intended for a congregation, but is a shrine for the idol and for the performance of ceremonies by priests, and offerings are made not by the votaries themselves but by priests acting on their behalf.\(^7\)

The Governments controlled by the caste Hindus preserved the Sastric rules and age-old customs in their pristine purity. They openly expressed their fear that laxity in this matter would destroy the social structure and disastrous consequences would follow.

Consequently they acted as the "trustees" of the privileges of the caste Hindus. Accordingly they indentified these privileges with the laws of the land and refused to effect any innovation in the existing order that pressed hard upon the self – respect and honour of the inferior castes.

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The privileges of the caste Hindus became the disabilities of the non-caste Hindus; and the Government wanted to perpetuate this arrangement by denying the right of the lower castes to walk along the roads around the temples and worship in the temples. Inspite of their massive strength, the non-caste Hindus accepted the spite of their massive strength, the non-caste Hindus accepted the spiritual and temporal predominance of the caste Hindus and gave implicit obedience to all their arbitrary laws. They were afraid of questioning the long-established system.

Among the territorial divisions of India, Kerala which is situated in the southern part of the Indian Peninsula became the most complicated centre of caste system and the severities connected with it. The present Kerala state comprise the former princely states viz. Travancore and Cochin other than Malabar. The Brahmins and the Kshatriyas who represented the highest strata of the social ladder formed the Savarnas or caste Hindus. But the Hindu theory of Varnashramadharma was not familiar to the southerners. There were no genuine Kshatriyas or Vaisyas in Peninsular India and the use of these categories in this area referred only to local castes which had successfully claimed Vaisya or Kshatriya status.

In Kerala the Nayars claimed themselves as the caste Hindus and placed themselves in the social hierarchy next to the Brahmins. The non-caste Hindus like the Ezhavas, Mukkuvas, Arayas, Pulayas and Parayas constituted the Avarnas. They were generally regarded as untouchables, unapproachable and even unlookables. They were subjected to several social disabilities and considered as polluting communities. Commenting on the miserable situation of these people Col. Macaulay wrote; “if the poor wretch who tills the soil and reaps the grain should happen accidentally and ignorantly to cross any Nair in his path, the monster draws his sword and kills him on the spot with impunity; the insecurity of property and miserable servitude of the peasantry in parts of Maharastra, Arcot countries, and in some Poligar Palaiyams are well known but the state of the most oppressed of the inhabitants of those parts is a state of independent and exalted happiness when contrasted with the wretchedness and degradation of the beings in human shaps who have the misfortune to be born in Malabar or Travancore.”

“and come across the villains, they cry, Po Po, that is, that they should get out of the way, otherwise, if they should chance to touch they would resent it, and would strike them.” Barbosa also stated that if the peasants did not change the


way the Nair might kill them without penalty.\textsuperscript{12} The enormities committed by the upper caste were such that the lower castes feared them like chickens at the sight of the kite.\textsuperscript{13} Abbe Dubois recorded "the state of bondage is at its worst along the coast of Malabar, as are several other customs peculiar to the country. The reason is that Malabar owing to its position has generally escaped the invasions and revolutions which have so often devastated the rest of India and has thus managed to preserve unaltered many ancient institutions which in other parts have fallen into disuse".\textsuperscript{14} According to Ward and Conner "their name is connected with everything, revolting, shunned as if infested with the plague, the higher classes view their presence with a mixture of alarm and indignation, and even towns and markets would be considered as defiled by their approach".\textsuperscript{15}

\textsuperscript{12} Durate Barbosa, \textit{A Description of the Coast of East Africa and Malabar}, London, MCM XXI, p.129.

\textsuperscript{13} Report of the Travancore District committee of the L.M.S., 1864, Santhapuram Mission district, p.4.

\textsuperscript{14} Abbe J.A. Dubois, \textit{Hindu Manners Dustoms and Ceremonies} Oxford, 1897, P.57.

\textsuperscript{15} Ward and Conner, \textit{Geographical and tatical memoir the surrey of Travancore and cochin}, Travancore sirkor press, 1863, p.140.
Having seen the extreme rigidity of caste rules and their harsh enforcement in Kerala, Swami Vivekananda called it as a ‘veritable lunatic asylum of India.’\textsuperscript{16} Gandhiji expressed the view that in a place so beautiful so lovely, there should be unlovelines in man against man was and is a matter of deepest grief to me. The world outside has a right to measure Hinduism by its manifestation in this state. Unfortunately even for all India there is not much credit to the state in the matter of untouchability.\textsuperscript{17}

Inspite of the best efforts of the Christian missionaries and other social reformers, most of these social disabilities continued without much apparent change even in the early decades of the 20\textsuperscript{th} century. Among the sundry cruelties, the ban imposed on the entrance into the Brahmanical temples and the movement near its premises continued to be observed with added rigour. As a direct impact of the western education when the Arvarnas relied the myth of casteism, they began to assert their individuality and to claim their legitimate status in the Hindu society. They proceeded to convince the people that the denial of elementary rights of citizenship to them amounted to a great injustice. They advocated Temple Entry as one of the effective means of removing untouchability.


\textsuperscript{17} Madeva Desai, \textit{Epic of Travancore}, Ahmadabad, 1937,p3-4.
The Ezhavas, who formed the major non-caste Hindu community, spearheaded the Temple Entry Movement in Kerala. They derived inspiration from the teaching of Sree Narayana Guru, a Saint turned philosopher who hailed from the Ezhava community. Sree Narayana Paraipalana Yogam founded by the Guru took the leadership of the movement, of course supported by some progressive minded Nayars. In 1905 one Kochu Kunju Channar, an Ezhava member in the Legislative Assembly raised the question of permitting the Ezhavas to walk along the roads passing near the Haripad Temple. His appeal went without any favorable response. Again in 1916 Kumaran Asan, the founder Secretary of the of the Sree Narayana Dharma Pari Palanayagam drew the attention of the government and demanded the removal of tindal palakas (the prohibition boards) placed near the temples.

Unapproachability in general and the prohibition to walk along these roads in particular had been made the subject of specific petition in the Assembly. When Government refused to remove these social evils, the Avarnas further claimed their right of entry and worship in all Sircar temples in opposition to the long established custom and usage.

18. T.K. Ravidran, Vaikom Satyagraha and Ghandhi, Trivandrum, 1975, pp.16-18
In 1919 T.K. Madhavan pleaded in the Assembly for the removal of untouchability and unapproachability, but the Dewan disallowed the motion on religious grounds.\textsuperscript{22} He made systematic campaign both in and outside the Legislative Assembly. From that time onwards the question of entry of all classes of Hindus into all Sirkar temples without caste distinction was placed before the Government for their immediate consideration. But instead of considering the issue, the Government prohibited the members from discussing it on the floor of the Assembly.\textsuperscript{23} It was in 1922 the government finally conceded to the demands of the Avarnas and permitted discussion on the question of temple entry.

The Government issued an order stating that Avarnas should be kept at a distance of 64 feet from the outer walls of the temple. Further, they pointed out that there was nothing illegal in placing notice boards restricting the use of such roads by the Avarnas even though the road belonged to Government and was maintained with the public exchequer money.

\textsuperscript{22} Sri Mulam Popular Assembly Proceedings, 1919, p.88.
\textsuperscript{23} Ibid,1921, p148.
The *Avarnas* continued their struggle with added vigour. The anti-untouchability committee held a meeting on 6 February 1924 at Quilon under the chairmanship of K. Kelappan, a caste Hindu, and in that meeting, Vaikkam was selected as the centre to launch the struggle. Vaikkam, was known for its famous temple dedicated to Lord Siva. The roads around the prakara (outer wall) of this temple were used for ceremonial processions and therefore access to *Avarnas* had been denied. But no restriction was made against the Christians and the Muslims for using those roads. The committee decided to organize a procession of men of all castes and to march through the roads round the Vaikkam Temple to worship at each *Gopuram* on the next morning. Wide publicity had been given about the procession in Travancore and all over India. The orthodox Brahmins of that locality made representation to the Government urging that prompt measures should be taken to protect Vaikkam temple from pollution. The District Magistrate thereupon issued a prohibitory order in favour of the *Savarnas* by saying that the lower castes had no right to the roads, leading to the Vaikkam Temple. In spite of the prohibitory order on 30 March 1924, the Congress workers carried out a procession peacefully; through the road. Among them three volunteers, a Pulaya an Ezhava and a Nayar dressed in Khadar courted arrest and afterwards they were sentenced to six months simple imprisonment.24

The Government followed an uncompromising attitude towards the popular demands. Sri Mulam Thirunal, the Maharaja of Travancore, was not in favour of throwing open the roads at Vaikkam to the Avarnas. He wanted strict adherence to the caste rules and customs. Moreover the Congress interference in the affairs of Travancore was deeply resented by him. The Satyagrahis decided not to take out a large procession, but to send only three or four volunteers at a time through the controversial road. The methods continued until 10 April 1924. Afterwards the Satyagraha was suspended for a few days in order to avoid confrontations between the Satyagrahis and the orthodox oppositionists. When it was resumed with added vigour the Government authorities barricaded the road and left police guard to prevent the entry of the Avarnas. They adopted cruel measures to crush the spirit and to check the movement of the Satyagraha volunteers. Cases were reported of police squeezing the testicles and injuring the private parts of Satyagraha volunteers. A large number of reckless youngsters and drunkards were hired
by the temple authorities to defend their time-honoured customs. The Government tried to portray the Vaikkam issue as a religious dispute and not as a religious dispute and not as a question of civil rights. They held that “the Congress agitators have no right to ask the government to settle religious disputes. If such disputes affect civil rights, there are the courts, of law and recourse must be had from them for the vindication of such rights.” But the courts were unable to make any improvement in the situation. It was not the equality or morality of the case that prompted the courts to refuse the demands of the Avarnas but the validity and practice of existing customs. In the words of Sadasiva Aiyar “A Court of Law cannot reject a custom because it is not in accordance with the principles of equality or individual notions of right and wrong. Courts of law have recognized and enforced customs of this character although they may be repugnant to generally considered notions of what is just and proper”.

The agitators took meticulous care to avoid violence, still Government was driven to the desperate exigency of employing brute force. But the visit of Mahatma Gandhi and his conciliatory talks with both the parties led to an


agreement which came into force on 7 April 1925 withdrawing the
prohibiting order passed in 1924. But Satyagraha still continued to be offered
nominally. Finally the roads were open on three sides of the temple. On 23
November 1925, the Satyagraha was called off on the basis of a settlement
arrived at by the Government. Accordingly all the roads, around Vaikkam
temple with the exception of two lanes leading to the eastern approach road,
one from the south and the other from the north were open to all castes
without distinction. But they were not permitted to have a glance of the deity
in the Garbagruha.

It was certainly an anomaly and a negation of civil liberty to deny the
Avarnas the right to walk along the streets used by the caste Hindus who were
held responsible for the existence of these civil customs, such as
untouchability among the Hindus.²⁷ The liberal mined reformers, felt that the
total exclusion of Avarnas from the temple was a blot on Hinduism, and its
early removal was indispensable.²⁸ Also they tried to convince the people, in
general that the denial of elementary rights of citizenship to them amounted to
a great social injustice.

27. Speech of K.N. Kesavan Nambudripad, Proceedings of the Sri Chitra

28. S.R. Venkataraman, “The All – India Hamjan sove sang” (The Indian
levieq, July-1937, P.426).
They advocated temple entry as of the means of removing untouchability.\textsuperscript{29} It was brought up before the assembly at its twelfth session by Kumaran Asan who drew the attention of the Government to this evil and referred to roads in Suchindram and demanded the removal of the prohibition boards (Sign boards \textit{Pala Key}) placed near this temple.\textsuperscript{30} As early as 1916, when some members of the Assembly brought in a resolution asking for all temples to be thrown open to all classes, and they were not permitted to open the issue of Temple Entry and allred topics.Kumaran Asan then adverted on the existence of notice boards near certain temples, prohibiting the entry of non-caste Hindus beyond certain limits in the approach roads on that score.

During this time the Satyagraha at Vaikkam created a stir all over the State. One of the high lights of this Satyagraha was the \textit{Savarna Hindu Jatha} from Vaikkam to Trivandrum under the supreme command of Manaath Padmanabha Pillai. A similar procession of about eighty caste Hindus including

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\textsuperscript{29} C.B. Agarwal, \textit{The Harijans in Rebellion}, pp56-57.
\textsuperscript{30} Proceedings of the Sri Mulam Popular Assembly, Travancore 11\textsuperscript{th} to the 15\textsuperscript{th} sessions, 1916, p.120.
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Brahmins, Vellalar, and Nairs marched in military order from Kottar to Trivandrum under the leadership of Dr. M.E. Naidu. Both met at Trivandrum and a Memorial was submitted to the Regent Setu Lakshmi Bai on 12 November 1924. It was announced later by the Maharani that the approach roads adjacent to the Vaikam Temple were formally opened to all Hindus, irrespective of caste. But this concession was not extended to the Avarnas in the case of other temples in Travancore. The degraded classes namely Valangai and Idangai were strictly prohibited from directly making gifts to the temple. The Avarnas like the Ailavas, Nadars, Pariahs, Pulayas and Kuluvans who wanted to worship in this temple had to stand a furlong away from the outer wall limits. Any person who disobeyed these provisions was liable to be punished. The depressed classes were not only prohibited to enter the Suchindram temple; but also to use the roads, around it. They were debarred from walking through the streets.

34. Reports of the Temple Entry Committee p.8.
where the caste Hindus lived and Bamboo screens (Teru – Marraccon) were put up at the entrance to all the (main streets) proclaiming prohibition of entry to the forbidden classes.\(^{37}\) they were not allowed to go in procession or drive a carriage or go with open umbrellas in streets.\(^{38}\) The road leading from the eastern side of the Suchindram village to kakkad.\(^{39}\)

\[\text{38 Speech of Paul Daniel, Travancore Legislative Council Proceedings, Vol.III, P 726.}\]
\[\text{39 Nripasekhara Valanallur was the early name of Kakkad (K.K Pillay, op.cit, p.292)}\]
Even then it was not accessible to the Pariahs of kakkad on account of its proximity to the temple. The Pariahs of kakkad were not even permitted to drive their bullock-carts through this road. If they wanted to do so, they had to leave their carts in the hands of the caste Hindu drivers for driving them on a payment of four cash. One YessuRetna, a Salvationist was assaulted at Suchindram by the Sudras for having passed along a path intended only for caste Hindu. An English man and his wife who were going along the kakkad road were seriously assaulted by the inhabitants of Suchindram. Another incident took place at Ciramadan a village near Suchindram. There were instances when untouchables like the pariahs were persuaded to transgress the pollution limits deliberately so that cases could be filed against them.


A Similar agitation was conducted at Suchindram near Cape Comorin. This was also aimed at securing the right of way along the roads surrounding the Siva temple at Suchindram. The Satyagraha commenced on 19th February 1926 under the leadership of M. Subramonia Pillai, M. E. Naidu, H. Perumal Panikkar, P.C. Thanumalya Perumal and Gandhidas etc.\textsuperscript{45} Immediately after the commencement of the Satyagraha, the opponents headed by S.K. Velayadhan Pillai took all steps to thwart the movement. They put up barricades on the roads leading to the temple, and Satyagrahis sat on the road and they were prevented from going further prohibitory orders had been issued by the District Magistrate to the leaders.\textsuperscript{46} Even then the Satyagraha Volunteers violated the order and proceeded towards the temple precincts. When people from nearby villages began to gather the venue of agitation in large numbers, the volunteers, tried to force entry, they were prevented by the Police. Then the Government prohibited M.E. Naidu, the leader, of the movement from making public speeches or taking part in public meetings or entering specified areas.\textsuperscript{47}

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46. \textit{Ibid, Letter (judicial) dated 19, February,1926.}
47. \textit{Travancore Legislative Council Proceedings, Vol. IXI, p.681.}
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Following the arrival of Gandhi into the area and his negotiations with the Government, the latter promised that the roads at Suchindram would be opened to the Avarnas within a month after stopping the Satyagraha. But the strong pro-Savarna attitude of the Government ignored the promise given to the Satyagrahis. Though the Satyagraha was stopped, in spite of the promise, the roads continued to remain closed and the appeals made at various public meetings fell on deaf ears. It was therefore decided on 12 May 1926 to resume the Satyagraha again at Suchindram. On that day the leaders were arrested and sentenced to rigorous imprisonment for a year. On appeal, the High Court acquitted them and directed that the streets around the Suchindram temple should be accessible to all irrespective of caste, as a matter of civic right.

During the festival time, contradictory to the High Court’s Order, Mr. Pitchu Iyengar, District Superintendent of Police, brought the Police

force and prevented the Avarnas from entering the streets around the temple. Besides, the Satyagrahis were stopped from holding public meetings in and around Suchindram. When the Satyagrahis advanced towards the temples ignoring the Police barricades they were lathi-charged by the Police, and alarm and terror spread in every part of Suchindram.

The Temple Entry Movement which gathered momentum in the southern parts began to spread to the northern parts of Kerala. The famous Lord Krishna temple at Guruvayaur in Malabar controlled by the Zamorin of Calicut became an important centre for the Temple Entry agitation. The Temple was exclusively reserved for the Savarnas. In May 1931 the Kerala Pradesh Congress Committee met at Badagara and decided to commence satyagraha for the entry into the Guruvayur. K.Kelappan moved a resolution to renew the agitation in the annual session of the All India Congress Committee held at Bombay in 1931. The session approved the resolution and Gandhi extended his blessings.


Before the beginning of the agitation K. Kelappan along with his friends like Moyarath Sankaran Nampiyar, A.K. Gopalan, Madhavannar, Subramanian, Tirumump and Hariharan toured throughout Ponnani taluk and addressed several public meetings. They sought popular support to organize a mass upheaval against the long established custom. A jatha of the volunteers started from Cannanore and reached at Guruvayur on 31st October 1931 was celebrated as Temple Entry day all over Kerala and outside accompanied by processions, meetings and bhajans. It marked the beginning of satyagraha in front of the temple. That days programme ended with a public meeting in the evening just opposite to the satram of the temple. They soon changed the mode of the Satyagraha, and started a bhajana programme of chanting devotional songs sitting in the western side of the temple. In the course of the Satyagraha the leaders like K. Kelappan used all friendly overtures. He appealed to the Zamorin; At present you are not burdened with ruling over


the country. Now a golden opportunity to rule over the hearts of 75 lakhs of people await you, an opportunity to remove the tears of the suffering Keralities, an opportunity to rejuvenate Hinduism. I request you to avail this opportunity and to bless the poor and downtrodden.\textsuperscript{53}

But soon the authorities attacked the Satyagrahis, and A.K. Gopalan, one of the prominent leaders of the agitation was wounded. It was retaliated with added force by the supporters of the agitation. It caused great alarm to the temple authorities and they closed the temple and suspended the usual procession of the deity. The Satyarahis marched around the temple and took bath in the tank without any opposition. Further on 29 December 1931 they tried to enter the temple by attacking the guards. They threw a bomb in the midst of the crowd and dispersed it. In this context on 4 January 1932 the All India Congress Committee was declared unlawful and the Kerala Pradesh Congress Committee was dissolved. The Temple Entry Committee formed by the KPCC was also dissolved on 6 January 1932. Through the

mediation of District Magistrate of Malabar, the temple was reopened for worship on 28th January 1932. When the matter was referred to the Sub Divisional, Magistrate of Malabar, the magistrate permitted the untouchables to use all roads except the one which was running from the eastern and western gates to the north along the sides of the temple.54

The Dhajana Satyagraha (prayer fast) continued for ten months in from of the temple. When the temple authorities refused to settle the problem amicably, the satyagrahis under the leadership of K.Kelappan decided to sit until the opening of the temple for the non-caste Hindus. On 20 September 1932, Kelappan started his fast for “death or victory” in the scorching sun without any pandal. People in and outside Kerala held meetings, processions and sent telegrams extending support to Kelappan. On the same day the students of the local schools and colleges boycotted classes and entered the Ramaswami temple at Tali and the temple at Chalapuram in Calicut with beedies in their hands.55 The leaders appealed to the people to celebrate the 25th September 1932 as

54. The Hindu, 6 April, 1932.

55. Ibid, 22 September, 1932,
“Guruvayur Day” by holding meeting all over the Madras Presidency passing resolutions by requesting the trustees of the Guruvayur temple to permit all Hindus to enter the temple and praying to save the life to Kelappan.\textsuperscript{56}

On 25\textsuperscript{th} September 1932 a session of the Indian National Congress met at Bombay resolved that “henceforth amongst Hindus no one shall be regarded as untouchables by reason of his birth and that those who have been so regarded hitherto will have the same right as other Hindus in regard to the use of public wells, public schools, public roads and all other public institutions.. that it shall be the duty to all Hindu leaders to secure be every legitimate and peaceful means, an early removal of all social disabilities now imposed by custom upon the so called untouchable classes including the ban in respect of admission to temples”\textsuperscript{57}.

A public meeting held at the Town Hall, Calicut and on the same day passed three resolutions requesting the Zamorin and temple authorities to throw open the Guruvayur temple and other temples of Malabar to all

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Hindus and prayed for saving the life of Kelappan. They submitted the resolutions to the Zamorin at the head of a procession which numbered more than one thousand. On 26 September the delegates of the backward communities like Tiyas, Pulayas and Mukkuvar conducted a special conference in the Edward Memorial Hall, Cannanore, and demanded Temple Entry throughout Malabar and also the eradication of untouchability. On 27 September the Women's Indian Association in Madras met at the Patheon Gardens, Egmore and expressed their sympathy over Kelappan and sent an appeal with 250 signatures to the Zamorin to let the temple open to the Avarnas. K.T.Kunhiraman Nambiar of Koodahi started fasting to persuade his uncle to throw open his family temple to the non-caste Hindus. On the same day Madhusudanan Tangal of Mattanur permitted the untouchables to worship in his temple.

The caste Hindus who opposed the Temple Entry Movement met at the residence of K.P.Raman Menon and represented to the Zamorin to adhere to the existing systems. The Zamorin replied "any innovation opposed to the

58. The Hindu, 27 September, 1932.
60. Under Secretary Safe Secret File, 813, 6 February, 1923.
old traditions immediately be misapprehended and misrepresented. The
decision of which will affect every household in the Indian State of Cochin
and Travancore as well as in Malabar. Only getting approvals of the rulers of
Cochin and Travancore would not be worth”.

Following the deterioration of the health of Kelappan, anxiety spread
both in and outside Kerala. He took only water with salt four times a day.
People arrived from different parts of South India and extended their
sympathy. On 23 September Madhavan Nayar came and advised him to
withdraw the fast. Kelappan who was unable to talk, wrote in a slate that he
was not prepared to suspend it. The early telegrams of Gandhiji and other
leaders also went without any favourable response. On 26 September
Kelappan issued another appeal to the Temple Entry workers of Kerala to
conserve their energy to make the Savarnas to tell the Zamorin to open the
Guruvayur temple for the untouchables. On 28 September they made violent
speeches at Guruvayur and directed the audience

61. The Hindu, 22 September 1937.
62. The Hindu, 24 September 1932.
63. Ibid, 26 september, 1932,
to rush to the Zamorins palace to cut off his head and throw it into the sea. The District Magistrate took immediate precautionary measures for the protection of Zamorin, and he left his palace and went to Kottakkal. 64

When matters went beyond the control of the Zamorin, he sought the help of Gandhiji to withdraw the fast of Kelappan for a short period. 65 The District Magistrate thought of arresting Kelappan under section 144 Cr. P.C but the Government of Madras objected it. On 29th September 1932 Gandhiji again sent a telegram to Kelappan requesting him to suspend the fast and restart after three months if the matters were not settled within that period. 66 Finally on 2 October 1932 at 8 a.m. Kelappan ended the fast and the and the Congress workers suspended the Satyagraha for three months.

On 15th December 1932 the Kerala Pradesh Congress Committee conducted an unofficial referendum in the Ponnani taluk to ascertain the public opinion of the Savarnas on Temple Entry to the Avarnas. Among 274654 Voters, 15, 568 voted in favour of Temple Entry. The Government of Madras of failed to fulfill their promise within the stipulated time.

64. Under Secretary Sab Secret file 805, 16 December 1932.
65. Indian Express, 30 September 1932.
66. Swarajya, 30 September 1932.
It once again led to the beginning of the fast on 8th May 1933 noon which lasted up to 29th May. On the same day the high caste Hindus of Payyannur opened their Shanmuga Bhajan Mutt to the Harijans and on 28 May more than 450 Harijans took bath in the Sreekanteswaram temple at Calicut. They offered prayers and received freedom from the temple. When matters remained without any hopeful improvement, the Servants of Untouchable Society, Poona, formed the Malabar Harijan Sevak Sangh in April 1933 under the Presidentship of K.Kelappan. They established sub-committees throughout Malabar, built new roads, wells, schools and hostels for the depressed. On 10 January 1934 Gandhiji again came to Malabar and spoke in several public meetings stressing the need for Harijan uplift and Temple Entry Propaganda. In August 1934 an “All Kerala Board of Harijan Sevak Sangh” was formed and made a joint appeal to the government of Travancore, Cochin and Malabar to open the temples to the Avarnas.

67. *Fortnightly Reports*, 27 December 1932,
68. *Ibid*, No.821, 10 August 1933.
In Travancore the matters began to take a favorable turn and it assumed a different dimension. The Maharaja constituted a Temple Entry Enquiry Committee which submitted its report on 11 January 1934. In the absence of any definite recommendations, in February 1934, the Government made an announcement which opened the roads, wells and tanks to all castes. Even after the announcement, the Ezhavas continued to intensify the struggle with an open threat of mass conversion mostly to Christianity. Realising the pulse of the people, and further to strengthen the Hindu majority finally on 12 November 1936 a proclamation was issued which opened all the Government temples in the State to all Hindus.

But the situation in Malabar continued without any apparent change. On 31 May 1935 Rao Bahadur M.C.Raja tried to introduce a Bill for the removal of social disabilities among certain classes of Hindus. But before the consideration of the bill M.C.Raja ceased to be a member of the Assembly. On 29th March 1936 K.Raman Menon, in the meeting of the

Malabar District Harijan Sevak Sangh decided to organize a Temple Entry Committee. They held meetings, discussions, and deputations under the auspices of these committees. They appealed to the Madras Legislative Assembly to amend the Hindu Religious Endowment Act and to pass the Temple Entry Legislation for Malabar. It resolved to celebrate Temple Entry Day on 26 September 1937. On that day the supporters and workers pledged to continue the agitation till the enactment of the Temple Entry Legislation for all Hindus. They declared that if the Government of Madras was not going to introduce the Temple Entry Legislation in the forthcoming session of the Legislative Assembly, a jatha from Malabar would be organized to march on foot to Madras to make representation. On 9 June 1938 the people of Malabar again observed the “Malabar Temple Entry Day”. On that day public meetings were held in all important cities of


75. *Harijan*, 3 August 1936.


Malabar and passed resolutions asking the Government of Madras to enact the Temple Entry Legislation. On 10 June, the Committee members met C.Rajagopalachari, Premier of the Government of Madras and presented a memorandum asking him to pass the Temple Entry Legislation.\footnote{Ibid, 13 June 1938.}

Finally on 30 August 1938, the government of Madras introduced the proposed bill before the assembly and published the bill for referendum.\footnote{Ibid, 21 August 1938.} The Malabar Temple Entry Committee carried out intensive fieldwork to educate the people about the provisions of the bill.\footnote{Ibid, 8 November, 1938.} But the opposition of the Savarnas continued unabated, and they severely condemned the proposal, and formed an association called ‘the Guruvayur Savarna Sabha.’\footnote{Ibid, 20 September, 1938.} On 13 October 1938 an anti-temple entry meeting was held near Angadipuram, which severely criticized the introduction of the bill.\footnote{Ibid, 14 October, 1938.} The Zamorin of Calicut expressed his opposition and submitted a memorial to

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the Government of Madras demanding the withdrawal of the Bill. He stated
that so far as Malabar was concerned there was no necessity for such a bill,
the method proposed was most unsuitable and fictitious, and its result would
be the destruction of religion and private property, creation of discontent and
dissatisfaction among the Hindus of Malabar.\textsuperscript{84} Some 25,000 \textit{Savarnas} of
Malabar submitted a petition to the Government of Madras in which they
recorded; we cannot give our consent to throwing open the temples to
\textit{Avarnas}, rejecting the well considered views of many learned men who are
held in great reverence in matters pertaining to religion and accept the views
of certain reformers who have no knowledge at all in these matters. If the
Government exercises compulsion, it will amount to forcible deprivation of
our right and our property".\textsuperscript{85}

After a long period of trials and tribulations by the end of November
1938, C. Rajagopalchari introduced the bill and explained the salient features.
He concluded that the temples could be opened to the excluded

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{84} \textit{Ibid}, 17 November, 1938.
\item \textsuperscript{85} \textit{Ibid}, 19 November, 1938.
\end{itemize}
classes, not for the exercise of their rights, but joint worship by all, nation might be one and indivisible. In the subsequent discussions R.M. Palat a member in the Legislative Assembly criticized the bill and said that he had a mandate from his constituency which disapproved the bill. So the bill was put to vote. One hundred and six members voted for and only R.M.Palat and G.Krishana Rao voted against\(^4\) the motion. Thus the bill was referred to the Select Committee to submit its report before 5 December 1938. On 4 December the select committee submitted in report after considering all the petition for and against the Bill. The Assembly enacted the bill and forwarded to the Governor.\(^86\) Thus with the signature of the Governor of Madras, the Temple Entry Act, 1938 came into force.

The Temple Entry Act granted equal rights to all classes of Hindus in matters of worship and the use of the public taps, wells, tanks, rest houses etc. It marked the beginning of a new epoch in the socio – religious history of the Hindus. It rather liberated the Hindu gods and goddesses from the grip of the caste Hindus and made available to the non-caste Hindus. But even after the formal opening of the temples, the caste Hindus continued to control the administration of the major temples.

\(^{86}\) \textit{Ibid, 9 December 1938.}