CHAPTER VI

CRUSADE AGAINST TEMPLE ENTRY

In South Travancore, most of the Temples were consecrated to the Brahminical deities especially to Lord Siva and Vishnu. The low caste people were compelled to worship the local deities. They came upto the entrance of the temple gopuram and worshipped the Gods but the Brahmins had the right to enter the inner shrine or Garbhagraha of the temples as they were considered the priestly class in the society.\(^1\) The Nairs were allowed to approach upto the steps in front of the Garbhagraha for devotional purpose; but others below the Nairs did not have the right to enter the temple. Socio-Religious Movements of the 19\(^{th}\) century inspired the non-caste Hindus to demand for their legitimate status within the fold of Hinduism.\(^2\) Of them


Temple Entry Movements which was started in South Travancore by the Non-caste Hindus to secure the freedom of worship in the Brahminical Temples was an important one.

6.1 Revolt at Kumaracoil, 1854

Kumaracoil is situated at the Velimalai hills in the Kalkulam Taluk about 15 Kms northwest of Nagercoil and three Kms east of Thuckalay. It lies within the jurisdiction of the Padmanabhapuram Municipality. At Kumaracoil a portion of the people were Nadars and the presiding deity is known as Kumaran. In this famous Temple, it was the usual custom during festivals the caste Hindu devotees used to walk on fire for claiming divine powers. The Non-caste Hindus were also regarded as the members of the Hindu society with common faith; but they were not permitted in this Temple like other temples in South Travancore. The wealth and education gained by the Nadars, the Social reforms of the reformers induced confidence, and made them to oppose the intolerable system. Consequently these people started a movement at Kumaracoil to enter into the temple.

Vellayan Nadar, a resident of Kumaracoil decided to enter the temple. He performed the same formalities as high caste people did. After prayers and

---

3 Gopalakrishnan, M., Gazetteer of India, Tamil Nadu State, Kanyakumari District, 1995, p.1180.
Poojas, he jumped into a large fire pit and danced in the flames for half an hour. Emerging out of the pit unscathed and followed by 12,000 Nadar devotees, he and his followers entered the Temple. The caste Hindus especially the Nairs and the Brahmins resisted their entry and it led to an open fight in which more than a hundred and fifty persons died. It was pioneering movement in Travancore against the unequal caste and social systems. Physical cleanliness, intellectual attainment and economic status never helped the non-caste Hindus to enter the prohibited areas near the Temple. The non-caste Hindus particularly the Nadars, were generally quiet progressive minded people who co-operated with the Christian missionaries. Because of the education given to them their life style was changed. The teachings of Vaikunda Swamigal, which helped a lot to break the unwanted and unworthy restrictions. After seeing their progress, the high-class people requested the Government to put an end to this. The Government in turn passed an Edict of 1857. The edict of 1857 was issued by Dewan Krishna Rao during the reign of Maharaja Uttram Tirunal Marthandavarma (1847-1860). This edict prohibited the Nadar converts and the Hindu Nadars from using the roads leading to the temple and the roads used by high caste people. It also required

6 *Ibid*.
them to make use of the roads and ways assigned for the low caste people.⁸
This edict further worsened the situation, and the low caste people considered that the attitude of the Nairs, was a stumblingblock to their progress. Therefore, at their instigation the missionaries brought before the Government of Madras, the disabilities and sufferings of the under-privileged classes.⁹

6.2 Thickanamcode Incident

Thickanamcode village in South Travancore is situated 20 Kms west of Monday Market. At Thickanamcode there was an Ammancoil. On 10 March 1859, the Nadars carried the ashes of a deceased member of their caste for immersion, accompanied by music and blowing conches through the way. The Chettis and other caste Hindus who had already assembled at the spot prevented the Nadars from proceeding and directed them to use the path which is outside the village. As a result a scuffle occurred in which 18 persons received serious injuries.¹⁰

T. Madava Rao, the Dewan of Travancore wrote to General Cullen, the British Resident of Travancore that “a large number of Shanars having, contrary to usage endeavored to carry with music the bones and ashes of a

---

⁸ Cover File No 215, English Records, Kerala Secretariat, Trivandrum.
deceased Shannar by the road which lies close to the village Pagoda at Thickenamcode. The Chetties opposed it and tried to prevent the procession. Mutual attack and scuffle started. In the meantime, the Shanars plundered the jewels from Pagodas, to the value of 4731/2 Panams and having wounded 18 Chetties”.

On 28 March 1859 Shungoony Mennon, the deputy Peishkar, examined the proceedings held by the district police of Eraniel and found out that the case was of a serious nature, and directed the Police officer to settle the case peacefully.\textsuperscript{11} So a special Commission was set up and it gave the judgement in favour of the Chetties. Four Nadars got imprisonment with hard labour for periods varying from 1 to 3 years, and seven others were fined Rs.30 each.\textsuperscript{12}

6.3 Panjalingapuram Incident

Panjalingapuram is a place near Agasteeswaram in South Travancore which was dominated by Brahmins, people of other castes were denied entry to the roads there. On August 19, 1868, William Lee, a Missionary of the L.M.S. who was passing through the road in Panjalingapuram was assaulted


\textsuperscript{12} Political Proceedings, 1859, Vol.III, Letter, General Callen to Otcrrost, 20 June 1859, Tamil Nadu Archives, Madras, p.32.
by Brahmins for using that road. So a complaint was made to the Travancore Government. After examining the whole case, the Government drew the attention of the Raja to the principle laid down that “the streets of all towns are the property, not of any particular caste, but of the whole community and that every man irrespective of his caste or religion has the right to the full use of them, provided that he does not obstruct others when using them”.

The Resident of Travancore was advised by the Madras Government as “Strongly urge upon His Highness the adoption for the future of this principle as that which is done worthy of an enlightened Prince”. So an enquiry was soon instituted to investigate the extent and nature of disabilities to which the low caste people were subjected in Travancore.

Accordingly the Resident asked the Dewan to furnish “full and specific information as to whether the low castes in Travancore were still subject to any substantial disabilities and oppression. According to his information, the Resident wrote the following report to the Madras Government.

1. Low caste people were not permitted to use roads open to the public of higher castes.

---

2. They were not permitted to enter and approach within a certain distance of any courts and public offices.

3. They were excluded from Government schools.

4. They were excluded from the public services.\(^{15}\)

After analyzing the Report of the Resident, the Madras Government made instruction to the Travancore Government for the immediate removal of all impediments, facing the lower classes including pollution or *theendal*, which were the root cause of all the disabilities.\(^{16}\)

### 6.4 Incident of Vadiveeswaram

Vadiveeswaram was a Brahmins dominated village at Nagercoil. They never allowed the depressed classes to enter the streets. In that village, Rev. James Duthie, a missionary of the L.M.S. made arrangements for the marriage of a Brahmin widow,\(^{17}\) and so the Brahmins of the village entered the houses of the widow and threatened her father. In spite of the threat the marriage took place. From that day onwards the Brahmins considered the Christians as outcastes and they were strictly prohibited from entering into the Brahmins

\(^{15}\) *Political Proceedings, April 1870, No.23, G.A. Ballard to the Acting Chief Secretary to Madras government*, dated 9 March 1879, p.173.

\(^{16}\) *Political Proceedings, No.24 order dated 23 April 1870, Tamil Nadu Archives Madras*, p.8.

\(^{17}\) *Annual Report of the L.M.S. for the year 1872, Travancore District Committee 1872*, p.5.
streets. After this marriage a serious incident took place in 1872. When two Zenana workers entered the street at Vadeveeswaram, they were beaten to death by the Brahmins.\textsuperscript{18} The L.M.S. records state that “their umbrellas were wrested from their hands and broken before their eyes, their cloths were torn and mud was thrown at their faces, and strong hard working men pushed them down into the tank and killed them.” The L.M.S. Missionaries took it as a offence and complaints were sent to the Travancore and Madras Governments and the Madras government instituted reinvestigation of this matter.\textsuperscript{19}

6.5 Circular order of 1884

According to this circular order, Dewan Rama Iyenger declared that, all classes of people can use Temple roads and public places. But even after the circular order of 1884, disabilities in the use of public roads and places continued. Nadars, Christians, Europeans etc. were prohibited from using Temple roads when religious processions were taken out.\textsuperscript{20} The people wanted the privilege of total freedom from the stigma of caste and complete abolition of all-religious prejudices.

\textsuperscript{18} Report of the L.M.S. on Zenana and school work for 1873, Nagercoil, p.8.

\textsuperscript{19} Political Proceedings, 20 April 1873, Acting Resident in Travancore and Cochin to the Chief Secretary to Government, Fort St. Geroge, Madras.

\textsuperscript{20} Cover File No. 1622, The petition of P.C. Joseph and other Christians of South Travancore to T. Rama Rao, 7 March 1892.
So several petitions were addressed by the Christians Missionaries to the Madras Government on this matter.\textsuperscript{21} However, they were of the view that the Travancore Government had gone to its utmost extent in this direction.\textsuperscript{22}

6.6 Cheramadam incident

Cheramadam was an important place in South Travancore, and Vellalas dominated this village. On 27 August 1892, a member of the Salvation Army officers was going on horse with a number of Parayas on foot at 10 o’clock through the Non-Brahmin dominated Cheramadam village. After seeing their arrival, the Vellalas joined together and assaulted them mercilessly. This incident went to court and the offenders were only fined.\textsuperscript{23}

6.7 Kurichi Incident

Kurichi was a small village situated very near to Suchindrum Temple. It was thickly populated by Nanchil Nadu Vellalas, and they never allowed the low caste people to walk through the streets. They were also highly jealous of the activities of the Salvationists in and around Suchindrum, and therefore the Salvationists were also not permitted to walk along the Vellala streets with chapels, umbrellas, and turbans. If any one violated this rule, severe

\textsuperscript{21} Cover File No. 3679, Political department, G.O., No 925, 8 December 1837, Government of Madras.

\textsuperscript{22} Political Proceedings, June 1891, 33-34, Letter to the Secretary of state for India, 26 June 1891.

\textsuperscript{23} Tamil Journal “Pore Satham” January 1983, Nagercoil, p.10.
punishments were meted out to the offender.\textsuperscript{24}

There were instance of violation. Colonel Jesuretnam, a member of the Salvation Army, rode on horseback along this street. The villagers chased the horse and cut off its tail. They also threw stones at the Colonel and wounded him severely and chased him. Chodalaimadan and Mallan Thamby were the main culprits and Colonel Jesuretnam took shelter in a nearby school. Later a case was filed and they were made to pay a fine of Rs. 50 with one month rigorous imprisonment.\textsuperscript{25}

6.8 \textit{Kakkad Incident}

Kakkad is a small village in Nanchilnadu, near the Suchindrum Temple, and the people who lived in this village were mostly Harijans. In order to reach the Cape-Comorin-Nagercoil Trunk Road, the people of Kakkad had only one road which passed through the Temple of Suchindrum. This road was maintained with public funds for public use. But the Parayas of Kakkad were not permitted to enter this road on account of its proximity to the Temple. They were not permitted to go along the road even in their bullock-carts. If they had to go along the road in bullock-carts they were asked to get down at a certain point because of the nearness of the Temple. Then they had

\textsuperscript{24} \textit{Travancore Law Report}, Vol.X., Trivandrum p.34.
\textsuperscript{25} \textit{Cover File No. 1627}, 1893 Letter dated 13 January 1893, English Records Central Archives, Trivandrum.
to engage caste-Hindu to take their carts to the other end, that is far away from the Temple. But the Harijan had to walk to the other end through a circuitous route to get back their bullock-carts and had to pay four cash for each cart.\textsuperscript{26} Britishers were also considered as out-castes in Travancore society, and they also were not allowed to pass through these Temple roads. If any Britisher passed through this road, they were subjected to petty mischief like throwing of stones, abuse etc. But a cruel incident took place in this Kakkad village. An English man and his wife, who were passing along the Kakkad road were beaten to death by the high caste people,\textsuperscript{27} and this incident created so much of distress in the Kakkad village and later the offenders were caught and punished.

\textbf{6.9 Osaravilai Incident}

Osaravilai was an important place in South Travancore, and was inhabited by Nanchil Nadu Vellalas and an Ammancoil was situated in this Village. A road runs from this village to Veppanvilai Cheri. It was inhabited by the Paraya community. After conversion to Christianity the Parayas of Veppanvilai cheri was much improved in their outlook and their occupations. Many of them gave up ploughing, planting of paddy fields sweeping,

\textsuperscript{26} Cover File No. 1627, English Records, Central Archives, Trivandrum.

\textsuperscript{27} Travancore Legislative Proceeding, 1893.
harvesting and watering. This created annoyance in the minds of the Vellalas of Osaravilai. Further the youth of the Cheri dressed well and passed through the Ammancoil road with musical instruments on festive occasions created discontent among the Vellalas of Osaravilai.

On 13 May 1909, a marriage procession of the Parayas with the display of musical instruments went through the streets of the Vellalas. The procession was escorted by the Kottar Police Inspector, because they passed through the Ammancoil road. The Vellalas thought that it was a calculated attempt to wound their social and religious feelings. So they planned to prevent the marriage party, and assembled near the Ammancoil with sticks and knives. Even though the marriage party proceeded through the street assisted by the Police Inspector, they were driven back by the Vellalas, and some of the low caste men and women were assaulted. The Vellala protesters upturned the bullock-carts, and threw away the marriage items like fruits, betels, rice etc. in the adjoining paddy fields.

Though the Policeman interfered, the protest continued for more than an hour and in the meantime the Magistrate of Kottar rushed to the spot and filed a case against twelve persons, and panic continued for a week in the

28 File No. 40/133 of 1907, Judicial section, Kerala Secretariat, Trivandrum.
29 File No. 40/133 of 1907, Judicial section, Kerala Secretariat, Trivandrum, Typed copy of the judgement, copy to Chief Secretary of the Government 25 October 1909, Kerala Secretariat, Trivandrum, p.3.
village and then it fizzled out. This incident clearly shows that the Temple roads were only used by the Savarnas, and the low caste people had no right to use it,\textsuperscript{30} and so the agitation continued for a long period.

\textbf{6.10 Suchindram Satyagraha}

Suchindram is a pilgrim centre situated on the southern bank of Palayar. It is situated at a distance of eight miles to north-west of Kanyakumari.\textsuperscript{31} Suchindram is an enchanting village surrounded by paddy fields, coconut groves, tanks, the river, channels and the delightful flower gardens. Strictly speaking Suchindram means the place where “Indra” attained \textit{Suchi} or purification.\textsuperscript{32} In Suchindram the Trimurtis Brahma, Vishnu, and Siva were together worshipped for the first time. But the earliest name of the Temple was the shrine of Konnai Adimathar (Siva).\textsuperscript{33} Later the Temple was called Suyampulingam of Trinity, and was built in the Dravidian style and contains numerous inscriptions of great archaeological importance. In this Temple, the restrictions prescribed in the agamas were most meticulously observed. The Nampoodiri Priest alone was allowed to go inside the

\textsuperscript{30} Busi, S.N., \textit{Mahatma Gandhi and Babu Saheb Ambedkar Crusaders against caste and unsociability} (Reprint), Hyderabad, 1998, p.28.

\textsuperscript{31} Velupillai, T.K., \textit{The Travancore State Manual}, Vol.IV, Trivandrum, 1940, p.646.

\textsuperscript{32} Padmanabhan, A., “\textit{Suchindram Temple}”, \textit{Ashrapandana Mahakumbhabhisheka vizha Malar}, Nagercoil, 1984, p.56.

Garbhagraha for poojas.  

A member of the Vattappalli Madam is permitted to go up to the portico of the Garbhagraha. The so-called higher castes among the non-Brahmins like the Vellalas, Nairs and Chettis were permitted to go into the Ardha Mandapa and the Tirucurras Mandapa to the back of the Garbhagraha.  

The Vairavis, Chaliyars, Potters, and oil mongers were allowed entrance within the precincts of the Temple up to the Dhavajastamba, but not beyond. The Ezhavas, washerman and Barbers were admitted into the streets but not inside the Temple. But the Nadars, Pulayas, Parayas, Pallans, and the Kuravas were strictly prohibited from entering in the streets of Suchindram.  

Teru marachans were put at the entrance of all the main streets proclaiming the prohibition of entry to the depressed classes. Teru marachan means bamboo screens. It was used for preventing the entry of the untouchables into the streets where the high caste people resided. These restrictions imposed on the low caste people for centuries, attracted the attention of the leaders, and they fought for their just rights to enter the

Temples and Temple roads. It was during this time the Vaikam Satyagraha was started in 1924. It gave inspiration to the people of South Travancore to fight for their rights.

6.11 Vaikkam Satyagraha

The Vaikkam Satyagraha was a major struggle of the Temple Entry Movement not only in Kerala but throughout other parts of Travancore. Its aim was to get the right to approach the roads of the Vaikkam Temple to the Avarnas of the Hindu community. The important leaders of this movement were T.K. Madhavan, Mannath Padmanabhan and K. Kelappan.\(^{39}\) Mahatma Gandhi also visited Travancore in 1925, to encourage the Vaikkam Satyagraha.\(^{40}\) Narayana Guru also extended his support to this movement and gave Rs.1000 as gift. E.V. Ramaswamy Naicker from Tamil Nadu also participated in this Satyagraha and went to jail thrice for this purpose. So he got the title “Vaikkam Veerar” (Hero of Vaikkam).\(^{41}\) Due to the all round efforts of the leaders, the Vaikkam Temple roads were formally opened to all Hindus irrespective of caste.\(^{42}\) But this concession was not extended to the Avarnas in the case of other Temples in Travancore, and hence this movement


\(^{42}\) *File No.D.Dis, 783/785*, General Department, English Records, Kerala Secretariat, Trivandrum
was spread into various centres like Kumarakoil, Suchindram in South Travancore for getting all the Temple roads to be opened for the Avarnas.

In January 1926 a Satyagraha campaign was organized at the Suchindram temple in South Travancore for gaining the right of entry into the Temple roads.\(^43\) Earlier attempts of the outcastes to cross the street ended in severe opposition and prosecution. Satyagrahis who entered the prohibited areas of the Suchindram Temple were strongly oppressed by the caste Hindus.\(^44\) Led by M.E. Naidu, the Satyagraha continued for about a month and it was withdrawn on receiving assurances from the Government.\(^45\)

On the account of the pressure exerted by a few orthodox Hindus the government evaded the issue. On October, 1927, Gandhiji visited Travancore again and held discussions with the Dewan M.E. Watts on the question, and tried to seek a peaceful settlement of the Suchindram Satyagraha; but failed.\(^46\)

Erode Venkatappa Ramaswamy Naicker was the Socio-Religious reformer of Tamil Nadu in the 20\(^{th}\) century. He did not like the suppression of low caste people in the name of religion. He participated in the Vaikkam


\(^{44}\) File No.62/1926, confidential section, English Records, Kerala Secretariat, Trivandrum.


Satyagraha for the cause of Avarnas, and heard about the Suchindram Satyagraha, and he participated in this movement too. Day by day the situation worsened and many persons including Erode Venkatappa Ramaswamy Naicker were imprisoned.

The campaign resumed in May 1930, and Gandhi Raman Pillai became the leader, and was arrested because his followers entered the prohibited areas of Suchindram Temple and sentenced to one year rigorous imprisonment.

The problem of untouchables became a matter of concern to the Congress leaders also. In a conference of the Indian National Congress held in Bombay on 25 September 1932, they passed the following resolution “... Henceforth amongst Hindus no one shall be regarded as untouchable by reason of his birth . . . that it shall be the duty of all Hindu leaders to secure of every legitimate and peaceful mean for the removal of social disabilities now imposed by custom upon the so-called untouchable classes including the ban in respect of admission to Temples.

The Suchindram Satyagraha and the pressing demand for the right of Temple entry for the lower castes both from the right thinking men of the

---

47 File No. D.Dis 1475, 1926 Judicial Department, English Records, Kerala Secretariate, Trivandrum.


higher castes and the lower castes led to the appointment of a committee of enquiry. The appointment of the committee with U.S. Subramaniya Iyer, Retired Dewan of Travancore, as the President of the Committee was announced by the Government of Travancore on 8th November 1932. The total members of the committee were 9 and it included two low caste people also. It submitted its report on 11th January 1934 and it stated that all the people irrespective of caste had the right to use public roads, wells, ponds and inns. It suggested the government to issue a Proclamation for Temple entry but it was opposed by caste Hindus vehemently.

Since they had no right to enter Temples, most of the Ezhavas and Nadars wanted to join Christianity. Sir, C.P. Ramaswamy Iyer the Dewan of Travancore realized the critical situation of the Hindu religion and came forward to issue a Proclamation about this matter.

6.12 The Proclamation of 1936

As already pointed out that the Report of the Temple Entry Enquiry Committee impressed the government of the need for throwing open the temples, roads, chatrams, wells and tanks to all irrespective of caste.

Moreover, the mounting pressure from the reformists led to the promulgation of the historic Temple Entry Proclamation. On 12 November 1936, at the instance of C.P. Ramaswamy Iyer, the Dewan of Travancore, Maharajah Sri. Chitrai Thirunal issued the said proclamation on his 25th birth day.\textsuperscript{53} The text of the proclamation is as follows: “Profoundly convinced of the truth and validity of our religion, believing that it is based on divine guidance and all comprehending toleration, centuries, adapted itself to the Hindu subjects should by consolations and solace of the 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 or worshiping at the temples controlled by us and our Government.”\textsuperscript{54}

The twenty-one rules and conditions mentioned in the proclamation were laid down by a proclamation dated 24 November 1936. These rules were laid down for clarification and for proper implementation. Expressions like “Temple” Chief Officer of Devaswom” were explained, and the powers of the officer specified. Rule four said that the permission to enter the temple would


\textsuperscript{54} \textit{Ibid.}, p.51.
be limited and it wouldn’t allow entry into the ‘Srikoil’ ‘Tidapally’ (Kitchen) and other previously restricted areas.  

The necessity for such conditions can be correctly understood only by those who know that the temples of Travancore have always been exceptionally clean and tidy and that inside them one feels a rare spiritual exaltation. With a view to securing such cleanliness and holiness in the temples, certain unwritten rules have been enforced from time immemorial. For example, men wearing shirts and garments other than the traditional dhoti and ‘angavasthram’ are not admitted. Such restrictions are intended to induce a pious attitude in the worshippers and to enhance the spiritual efficacy of Travancore temples. These conditions led to the formulation of rules that would safeguard the maintenance of that spiritual atmosphere for which the temples of Travancore have justly been famous. The rules, however, were to be applied to all persons irrespective of their clan or the communities to which they belonged.

The rules provided for the observance and maintenance of the customs and usages relating to worship and ceremonies obtaining in temples. They specified the classes of persons who should not enter the temples. Persons who are not Hindus, those who are under pollution due to birth or death in

---

55 The Regulations and Proclamations of Travancore 1112 M.E. Vol.IX, 1937, p.3.
their families, drunken or insane persons, women at certain times, professional beggars, persons suffering from contagious diseases were not to enter the temple. Taking meat into the temple, smoking within the premises, carrying cloth, umbrella and kerosene lamb would be disallowed. The Chief Devaswom officer has powers to grant or withhold permission depending on customs and traditions. The chief officer has powers to pass orders for arrest against those who violated the rules. If anyone contravenes the rules or commits any offence which requires purificatory ceremonies, he shall be punished by a Magistrate, the expenses involved for purificatory ceremony shall be imposed on that man as fine as per rules. In matters regarding clarification or interpretation of any of those rules the decision of the Dewan shall be final. The rules prescribed in general terms, the dress of the worshippers and the objects which they were prohibited from carrying into the temples.

The proclamation occupied a unique place in the socio-religious life of Travancore because of “the sublimity of its conception, the loftiness of its ideals and the magnitude of its effects.” It has been rightly stated “no act of reform of any ruler in India has so far stirred the hearts, roused the enthusiasm or evoked the gratitude of the people to the extent that this momentous

56 The Regulations and Proclamations of Travancore 1112 M.E. Vol.IX, p.3.
57 The Regulations and Proclamations of Travancore 1112 M.E. Vol.IX, p.580.
proclamation has done.”

Mahatma Gandhi said, “I verily believe that when all else Travancore is forgotten, that one act of the Maharaja, the proclamation, will be remembered by future generations with gratitude”. To him the proclamation was a miracle of modern times. He also congratulated the Travancore Durbar and its advisors for the magnanimous act on their part. According to C. Rajagopalachari it was “easily the most non-violent and bloodless revolution in the history of man in recent years.” According to Sardar Vallabhai Patel, the Maharaja’s Proclamation was the greatest of the achievements of Gandhiji in regard to the eradication of untouchability. Sir, C.P. Ramaswamy Iyer, summed up the implications and significance of the proclamation in the following words: “In the first place, it may be justly and legitimately viewed as a means by which certain excrescence that had crept into Hindu Society and Hindu life were swept away. Secondly, it was one of the inevitable steps towards the union of all India without which Union of India cannot stand forth as one of the great powers of the world, powers not from the point of view of the bomb and the dynamite and the submarine and the aeroplane, but from the spiritual and the intellectual point of view. Thirdly

58 The Temple Entry Proclamation Memorial Souvenir, 1942, p.1
60 Ibid.
61 The Temple Entry Proclamation Memorial Souvenir, 1942, p.2.
and above all, the proclamation is not confined to India alone. It is a Gospel of Equality before the eyes, of God, asserted on behalf of humanity, by a great example of human tolerance and human faith, an example of which is represented in the life and in the person of his Highness the Maharaja. The Temple-Entry Proclamation is to be viewed from several angles not only as a Hindu act, not only as an Indian act, but as an act of the liberation and sublimation of humanity.  

T.K. Velu Pillai characterised the proclamation as the “Spiritual Magna Carta of Travancore.” The proclamation was “applauded as a charter of religious liberty, and as a document of first-rate importance in the annals not only of Travancore, but of Hinduism. It marked a milestone in the progress of the backward communities. All walks of life were thrown open to them as freely as the higher castes.” In commemorating the Temple Entry Proclamation, a set of stamps numbering four with different nominations namely three chuckrams, one chuckram and eight cash, twelve cash and six cash was issued in 1937.

The citizen of the state resolved to commemorate the historic proclamation by erecting a statue of the Maharaja. Accordingly Devi Prasad

---


65 Travancore Directory for 1938, p.556.
Roy Chowdhury was commissioned to get the bronze statue of 13½ feet cast by an Italian firm. The statue was erected in the Iron Villa Grounds within the Fort, Trivandrum. The foundation stone of the pedestal was laid by the Maharaja of Bikaner on 26 January, 1939 and the statue was unveiled by the Maharaja of Dholpur. Another statue, erected by the citizens of Madras, was unveiled by Lord Erskine, Governor of Madras, on 28 October, 1939. On that occasion, Sri. P.S. Sivaswamy Iyer observed: “That this great reform should have been introduced in a country like Travancore which has long been the home of the most exclusive orthodoxy will be a matter for marvel . . . The impetus given by the proclamation to the Temple Entry Movement all over India been very far-reaching”. 66

According to The Times of India, The Temple Entry Proclamation introduced a change in the Hindu society by ‘destroying the last vestige of discrimination against two million human beings.67 The Trivandrum Daily News describes the proclamation as an act of social justice to the untouchables in the state of Travancore and the Magna Carta of a resurgent Hinduism purified, enabled and equipped to prosper and conquer.68

67 The Times of India (Bombay), Press Comments on The Temple Entry Proclamation Memorial Souvenir, Trivandrum, 1942, p.126.
The Proclamation put an end to the long standing crude and harsh customs and conceptions of the Travancore society. C. Rajagopalachari aptly said that “this Proclamation brought about a silent and bloodless revolution in the Hindu Society.” Thus the popular revolution against the inhuman customs and practices were crowned with success at the end.

---

69 Temple Entry Proclamation Memorial Souvenir, Trivandrum 1937, p.2.