CHAPTER - II
UNTOWUCHABLES AND TEMPLES

STATUS OF TEMPLES

Temples have a unique place in the history of Kerala. All aspects of life and quintessence of Hindu knowledge had been influenced by the institution of temples. According to P. Madhavan, as spirituality is the important part of our national life, the culture, art, literature, science, philosophy, administration and in brief all sides of human life here were growing by depending upon the temples. The construction of cities and villages was planned by depending upon the temples. Each of the village or locality in Kerala has a temple for worship. Pilgrimages to such popular temples like Siva temple at Ettumanoor in Travancore, Kurumbha Bhagavathi temple at Kodungallor in the Cochin State and Sree Krishnaswami temple at Guruvayoor in the British Malabar District were an important feature of this land. In short, the influence of temples has touched all spheres of human life in Kerala.

As Hindu religion was part and parcel of the Cochin, Travancore states and British Malabar District, each of the

royal dynasty in Kerala had their tutelary deities. The Travancore royal family had Attingal Bhagavati, Pazhayannoor Bhagavati for the Cochin rulers and the Zamorins of Calicut had the Thiruvalangattu Bhagavati. This the deities and their temples got a status of royalty from very ancient times in Kerala. The rulers also were competent in the case of acquiring temples or some authority in connection with temples. "To have Kshetra Sambandham, or authority of some kind or other in connection with temples, was considered a great honour by princes and chiefs and the wonder of it was that they intrigued and fought to obtain it, irrespective of the situation of such institutions even outside their domain". The rulers also had taken great care to preserve those temples. The temples contributed much to the development of temple arts such as Koothu, Koodiyattam, Kathakali and so on. The inscriptions in temples installed by the ancient rulers for the commemoration of important events in their times, helped us to know about the history and culture of Kerala in ancient times. So the temples


were the sources of all round welfare of Kerala.

PLAN OF A TEMPLE

The location of a Kerala temple gives us a beautiful picture. "They were located in the best possible sites—available, either on the top of a hill, on the verge of a large lake, or by the side of a running stream embosomed in the exuberant foliage of majestic trees, surrounded with groves and tanks for the refreshment and devotion of worshippers". Temple sites and premises, wells, tanks and gardens attached to temples were appurtenances of the temples. P. Balakrishnapillai observes, "That the temples in Malabar radiate an air of sanctity and spiritual power, rarely met within similar institutions elsewhere, is imainly due to the efficacy and regularity with include the Tantric rites and poojas are conducted in them. Added to this is the proverbial cleanliness and purity of the Kerala temples which have often elicited admiration and respect from foreign pilgrims and travellers. So an atmosphere of purity was the hall mark of Kerala temples and temple premises.


Temples in Kerala were built on a square plan surrounded by walls on all sides. There were gates on four sides of the wall. In the centre of the walled area is the principal shrine or Srikovil containing the image of the deity. The Srikovil is usually a small rectangular building with a conical or pyramidal tiled roof. The Srikovil is usually raised a few feet higher than the surrounding buildings such as the Mandapa; and its door is reached by a number of steps known as the Sopana. Inside the walled area enclosed by low verandhas or halls with tiled or thatched roofs, the Srikovil is also consisted of a Pranala for drainage of water. Sri. A. Sreedhara Menon says that "It signifies the provision made architecturally for the discharge of abhisheka water from within the sanctum sanctorum (garbhagriha) both for drainage and ritual utilisation by the devotees". Some portions of these halls are used as store-rooms, dining halls, kitchens etc. In between the Nalampalam and Srikovil there is an open air-space and before the Srikovil there is a small rectangular raised Mandapam or a platform with tiled roofs and pillars on four sides, without walls. Outside the Nalampalam is the Dipasala or the hall of lights consisting of a rather narrow space all around the walls. In between the Nalampalam and outer walls, there are entrances on four sides.

The main entrance to the Nalampalam is within the eastern Gopuram or entrance. The Balikkalpur or the place of sacred stone installed in between the Nalampalam and Flag staff or Dhvija Stamba. Pradakshina Vazhi or paved path surrounded by the Nalampalam is before the flag staff. The dancing hall is attached in most of the temples outside the Nalampalam. In front of the entrance is a dipastambam, a brass or bellmetal pillar for a lamp, close to the bathing tank, and a little to the south of the sacred peepal tree with a platform or tara round it. This was the general plan of an ordinary public temple in Kerala.

**Daily Routine in a Temple**

The pooja was performed in a Kerala temple by the priest after having purified himself with meditation and prayer. The number of daily Poojas varies considerably in different temples according to the importance of each temple. The maximum number of daily Poojas was five and the minimum one. The five Poojas were the Ushapooja, Ethirtapooja, Pantheeradipooja, Uchaappooja, and Athazhapooja. After purifying himself, the

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8. Lighted oil lamp is inevitable for Poojas. The poojas performed by the offerings of water, flowers, sandal paste, camphore etc. with silent utterances of mantric words.
priest opens the temple in the morning before sunshine by ringing the bell before the Srikovil for waking the deity and opens the Srikovil. Soon he removes the Nirmaliam and performs the ceremonial bath of the idol or Abhisheka. After it, he decorates the idol and Ushapooja is conducted. In some temples, there is Pantheeradipojja in between the Ushapooja and Uchapooja and in certain others Ethiratapooja before Pantheeradipojja. Uchapooja is conducted at noon and there after the temple is closed. The temple is reopened in the evening before sunset and Athazhapooja is conducted in the early part of the night. The main ceremony in connection with the Ushapooja, Uchapooja and Athazhapooja is Sree Bali. At this time a procession carrying the portable idol of the deity is also held with the

9. Nirmaliam means the idol of the deity with yesterday's dress and offerings of flowers.

10. Before the Poojas Pantheeradi, Uchapooja and Athazha Pooja Sree Bali is conducted and offered Nivedyams such as cooked rice, Payasam etc; to the deity and closed the Sreekovil for Prasanna (delighted) Pooja or Alankara decorating the deity and opens it within a few minutes.

11. Sree Bali—the portable idol of the deity is taken outside in procession round the temple at the close of the morning, noon day and early night. At this time Pooja is offered at the Valia Balikal (The big sacrificial stone) and to the Devatas installed in the Balivattom (the square stones installed near the Balikkal).
accompaniment of drums and other musical instruments or with Pancha Vadyam. After the procession of the Athazhapooja, the portable idol is installed in the Srikovil and the Srikovil is locked by the priest. In regard to the proper time for the performance of the daily poojas, The Travancore Devaswom manual of 1935 gives the following account: - "(1) In temples where there is only one pooja it must be performed as far as possible in the morning between 6 A.M. and 10 A.M. or when this is not possible, in the evening between 5 P.M. and 8 P.M. (2) In temples where there are 2 poojas, the first pooja must be performed between 6 and 10 A.M., and the evening pooja between 5 and 8 P.M. (3) In temples where there are three poojas, the morning pooja must be performed before 6:30 A.M., Uchappooja between 10 and 10:30 A.M. and the Athazha pooja between 7 and 8 P.M. (4) In temples where there are four poojas, the first pooja must be performed by 6:30 A.M., the 2nd by 8:30 A.M., the Uchappooja by 11 A.M., and Athazha pooja between 7 and 8 P.M. (5) In temples where there are 5 poojas, the Usha pooja should be finished by 6:30 A.M., the Ethirapooja by 7:30 A.M., the pantheeradi Pooja by 8:30 A.M., Uchappooja by 11 A.M. and the Athazha pooja between 7 and 8 P.M." These are the regular routine poojas in a temple.

Besides these, the temples also have Ulsavams or temple festivals. The number of Ulsavams celebrated vary from temple to temple. For example some temples have only one Ulsavam in

in a year whereas there are certain other temples celebrating two, three or four Ulsavams every year according to the peculiarities of each temple. During this time, the rituals are more elaborated. Special ceremonies are also conducted on certain fixed days like Sivarathri, Navarathri, Vishu and Ashtami Rohini.

Expiatory rites were conducted in temples such as purificatory ceremonies when a pollution was caused to the temple or on account of maramath works, certain Nimithams (events) for removing the evil effects of pollution. The Travencore Devaswom Manual of 1935 describes the name of some general Nimithams which caused pollution to temples, such as (i) Births and deaths (ii) Dropping of Urine, blood & c. (iii) Entry of prohibited birds and animals like owls, eagles, dogs, asses, camels, pigs, monkeys & c., into the Garbha graham. (iv) Entry of degraded men (v) Formation of honey combs, mush rooms, beehives & c., in the peetum (vi) Laughing, Crying, Perspiration & c., of the image (vii) Dismemberment, decay or motion of the image (viii) performance of pooja by black magic or manthras not applicable to the Devatha & c., (ix) Touch of the image by thieves. (x) Anointing of the image by paste of chilli, mustard, blood & c (xi) Omission to perform poojas when there is no pollution (xii) Conflagration of the pancha prasadas (xiii) Falling down or breaking of the Dhwajam or its flag or conflagration of the Dhwajam (xiv) pollution to tanks and wells (xv) striking of the temple buildings by
lightning and destruction, either totally or partially, of the same by earthquakes. (xvi) Eclipse during Utsavam. (xvii) falling of the Sreebali image, during processions. (xviii) Nimithams relating to seed sprouts. (xix) Nimithams relating to Homas. (xx) Nimithams relating to Kalasoms and (xxi) other Nimithams. The purificatory ceremonies varies according to the nature of pollution. Sudhi Kalasam is performed just before utsavam and other ceremonies and on occasions of pollution to be removed by punnyaham. Other purificatory ceremonies such as Dravya Kalasam and Naveekarana Kalasam which performed in accordance with the nature of pollution to the temple.

PURPOSE OF WORSHIP IN A TEMPLE

As spirituality is the crucial part of Indian life, the attainment of theological knowledge was the aim of each people in Bharata Varsha or in the land of Hindus. The western world seeing the human beings as only physical creatures, but in our land, our cultural heritage proclaims that the physical

13. ibid., Ch.V, P.73.

body of man is only an outer wrap. For the enlightenment of the universal spirit inside the human beings, that is the 'Brahma Chaitanya', one should patiently enter in his or her inside through many stages for entering alliance with the Universal soul. In this sense, the human body represents the universe. The universe is the soul of almighty God which contains all the atoms in the universe and the light of this soul is more than other living beings. In Kerala, the temples in each locality is a clear model of the representation of the universe. The five matters in the plan of a temple, the outer walls, the space in between the eastern entrance up to the flag staff, Dipasala, Nalampalam, the Sacred Stones round inside the Nalampalam representing the Sthoola Sareeram or outer wrap of the God. The Sri Kovil and the image in it represents the Sooshma Sareeram or the inside spirit of the God.

The temple worship helps individuals to develop their spiritual strength. The temples are the treasures of universal spirit created through the Vedic and Tantric rituals. When going to the temple with speech, body and mind centred on the divinity whose presence is installed in the image or symbol,  

15. Sree Devi Mahatmyam, (Malayalam), Com. Brahma Sree Kandyoor Mahadeva sastrikal (Sree Rama Vilasampress & book depot, Guillon, 1969) Ch.1, P.131, W.38, 41 refers that the special knowledge or the knowledge about Brahma Vidya has belonged only to such people who are trying to attain it, and not to the whole people because of their ignorance due to 'Maya' that is one aspect of the supreme power which is an obstacle to know the supreme power; birds and animals have the subjective knowledge such as knowledge on food, sleep, fear etc. in respect of their section like men, so the subjective knowledge is equal in men, birds and animals; and it is very difficult to remove the obstacle of maya power to know the true knowledge.
the devotee becomes part of the architecture of the Mandapa whose interior he traverses, in which he also may pause and gaze at the images that confront him; images which are carved on the pillars, the capitals and on the ceiling; guiding him onwards to the main image or symbol in the Garbha griha, or upward to the dome and its central point. At the time of worship, the body of the devotee and the temple will symbolically make connections and at the same time, the mental communion between these two symbols will cause sympathetic mantric vibrations in the body of devotee. It proves the possibility of the attainment of one’s goals through worship for persons without any mantric or Tantric rituals. The communion with the God might have awakened root of the spiritual strength or Kundalini Sakti of the devotee. So the temples were created by our forefathers for the uplift of the spiritual, physical, individual, social and overall welfare of common people. In this sense, P. Madhavan states that the temples are a Psycho-Engineering Scheme easily enabling devotees to attain good results of worship.

18. Ibid, pp. 71 & 73
19. Ibid., p. 73
Mode Of Worship In A Temple

Sanctity was the hallmark of Kerala temples so that the purity is essential for the worshipper. It was obligatory on the part of worshippers to enter the inner precincts of the temple only after taking bath and wearing clean clothes.\textsuperscript{20} The worshipper who goes into a temple has first of all to pass through the main outer entrance or Gopuram. In ordinary temples this consists of an ordinary door way with a small roofing over it. By passing the Gopuram, the worshipper reaches before the flag staff or Pradakshina Vazhi. From the flag staff he enters the Belikkalpura and then to the Nalampalam; and thus to the open air space before the Mandapam. "The atmosphere of the Mandapa is charged not only with the scent of flowers, burning oil lamps, and the incense coming from the sanctuary, but is tense with the impact of the pillars and carvings."\textsuperscript{21}

Before the Mandapam, the devotee stands in front of the shrine, bows with joined palms mutters a silent prayer. Having made his prayer, the devotee performs Pradakshinam and again mutters his prayer before the deity and makes Namaskarams for the blessings of the deity.\textsuperscript{22} At the end of worship,

\textsuperscript{20} A. Sreedharan Menon, Social and Cultural History of Kerala, Ch.III, P.195.


\textsuperscript{22} Pradakshinam or circumambulation is that the devotee walks round the Sreekovil and comes before the shrine bows with joined palms before the deity and mutters his prayer. The devotee makes 1,3,7 in small numbers and 21,41 or 101 Pradakshinas according to his wishes. Namaskarams—Prostrating before the image in worship.
the Santikaran or priest would give the devotees Prasadam and Thirtham, that is, Sandal paste and flowers used in the Pooja of the image; and the holy water in which the idol is bathed. After getting the Prasadam the devotee leaves the temple. The devotees come with or without offerings such as oil, ghee, flowers, fruits etc. for the deity. The Kanikka or depositing of coins in hundies is a common offering in all temples. The prasadams received by the devotees, the sandal paste applied to the forehead, the chest and both shoulders and the flowers placed on the head in the hair. "To the twice-born he (Santhikaran or Priest) pours the Teertham (holy water) into their palms, which they piously drink, after which they are given sandal paste and flowers... To the Nayars these are given Plantain leaves and cups made of the leaves, and the prasadam alone thrown on the floor for the worshipper to pick up." The lower castes did their worship from outside of the outer walls in temples without getting a chance to see the idol of the deity.

**LIMITS IN WORSHIP**

According to the temple customs in Kerala only the Brahmins were engaged in performing pooja (services to the image itself) namely; Tantries, santikars etc. and they alone had the right to enter into the Srikovil or inner-shrines. Below them stands

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the status of other Brahmins and Kshatriyas who were allowed to approach upto the steps in front of the Srikovil known as Sopanam. The high castes and even the rulers of the state inspite of their high position and dignity had their own limitations in entering certain portions of the temples. They were also allowed to go on to the Namaskara Mandapa in front of the Srikovil for reciting Vedas, Mantras etc. and prostrating before the image for worship.  

Below them stands the position of Ambala Vasis and high class Nairs who were allowed to enter into the temple like the other Brahmins and Kshatriyas but not allowed to go on to the Namaskara Mandapa. Below them stands the position of low class Nairs, non-Malayali castes and non-Malayali brahmins like the Gouda Saraswats. They were allowed to enter up to the Pradakshina Vashi (The paved way round the Nalampalam of the temple). Below them stands the position of the unapproachable castes who were allowed to come inside the outer walls of the Pagoda while those Hindus whose touch alone caused pollution were permitted to do so.  

But the conservative account of worship in public temple, the members of Pulaya community had the right to worship far away from the temple walls; the member of Thiyya community had access for worship at a less distance than the pulayas; and


the members of chetty, Veluthedan Nair had access up to the Gopuram for worship. Besides these limits there were temporary access to Hindus of all castes in certain times and circumstances like the ceremonial pollutions such as death or birth in the family, and women under their monthly periods had no access into temples.

To understand the limits of worship easier, the plan of an ordinary temple drawn by the supervisor of Hindu Religious Endowments Board sent to its secretary in connection with temple Entry Bill Renewals, would be helpful in the study of temple entry limits of various classes in the society. The prescribed plan of the temple is the following.


Plan Of An Ordinary Temple Drawn By The Supervisor Of Hindu Religious Endowments Board In 1938.
The supervisor of the Hindu Religious Endowments Board explains it as, "The above is the plan of an ordinary temple in Malabar. No.1 is the Srikovil of Garbha-graham, a building in which the idol is placed, ordinarily only the Poojari can enter in this. No.2 is the Nalampalam where in ordinary temples Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Samantans, Ambala Vasis and Nairs can enter and worship. All those who could touch a Nair without polluting him could enter this. Castes whom a Nair cannot touch without being polluted, but can approach him as near as will not touch him without polluting him, can enter the Mathilakam, No.3. The castes who could enter Mathilakam were Gouda Brahmins, Non-Malayalee caste Non-Brahmin Hindu Vannathan, Vilakathaluvan, Chalyan, Kosavan, Variyan, Ezhuthachan and some others."28 This explanation of the supervisor proves that those castes who were denied entry to the temples were the untouchables or unapproachable classes among the Hindus in Kerala. So it is clear that Freedom of worship in temple was not allowed equally to all Hindus at this time because of the prominence of casteism.

28. ibid.
ACCESS ON TEMPLE PREMISES BY THE UNTOUCHABLES

The low caste Hindus were not allowed to do any occupation or passage on Devaswom lands on the ground of vicinity to a Hindu temple. They were allowed to do any occupation on such lands only if any custom existed for such occupation or by the special order of the Diwan. The Devaswom porambokes were given only to caste Hindus for temporary occupation in connection with Ulsavams and other festivals. The rule behind this ideal was that the caste Hindus should not give these porambokes to any prohibited classes by employing them in any manner. The caste Hindus only had the right to obtain the Devaswom lands by issuing Devaswom pattahs of the rent due to the Devaswom on lands included in one's pattah. In the matter of Devaswom or temple porambokes, the fundamental principle followed was that if there was a road leading to caste Hindu temple, and that road belongs to a section of caste Hindus and even if it was only to be used by high caste Hindus, it will be a poramboke. The Ernakulam temple in Cochin state was a poramboke and there were so many other porambokes like this, which were not obviously reserved for the use of the whole public.


30. Temple porambokes included tanks, festival grounds, roads and lanes attached to temples.

Denial of Access into temple compounds.

During the time of temple entry movement, the low caste Hindus were denied entry to public offices and courts near the temples or the public offices with the temple compounds. The lower castes were also denied employment in some public departments. These bans created many disabilities to the untouchable castes. When one member brought the matter of difficulties of untouchables in regard to public offices at temple premises, to the notice of the legislative assembly of Travancore in 1923, the Divan replied that "If any office is inaccessible on account of the fact that it is near a temple, it should be brought to the notice of the Government and the Government will then take the necessary action to make it accessible." The public departments such as the palace, the military and the Devaswom, denied employment to them because of polluting the savarnas. Appointment of officers in direct charge of the Hindu religious institutions under sirkar management could be held only by caste Hindus, was the rule. In Travancore, the low castes were denied employment in the Revenue Department.


till 1922, because the Devaswom matters were a part of the Revenue Department. In 1920, as a result of the report submitted by the Devaswom Separation Committee, the Devaswoms were separated from the Land Revenue Department. The reason that forced the Government for such an action was two problems: one started by caste Hindus for the better management of the Devaswoms and the other started by non-Hindus and non-caste Hindus for the removal of civil disabilities. The lower castes then got access into the Land Revenue Department of Travancore and not into the separated Devaswom Department.

Temple Roads.

The untouchable castes were not permitted to pass through the roads surrounding the temples. Since the uplift scheme for the depressed classes taken by the Government in Kerala, the lower classes got access to public roads except some important ones relating to temples and palaces. The members of other religions like Christians and Muslims were freely allowed to go over these prohibited roads to avarnas in some places. Mr. N. Kumaran, council member of Travancore observed that the most distressing and intolerable disability at this

time was the prohibition of lower classes from passing along some roads situated near temples and palaces. For example, the Hindu untouchables like Chovan, Cheruman, Velan etc; and non-caste Hindus were prohibited from passing through the roads surrounding the Oorakam Ammah Thiruvati temple. For reasons of pollution, the lower castes of Hindus were prohibited from passing through the surrounding roads of Irinjalakuda Koodal Manikam temple by the order of District Magistrate of Cochin state. When the question of ban on public roads came in the Travancore Sri. Moolam Assembly, the president answered that there was no objection to any class of people passing through the high ways and other public roads. "There are however, certain minor restrictions imposed by custom in a very few localities." The roads within the fort at Thrippunithura in Cochin were also not open to the untouchables during the first year of the 1930.

For understanding the ordinary condition in relation to untouchables and temple roads, speech of Mr. A. Govinda Menon, member of the Travancore Legislative council is given below. He says "I can only quote an instance that came to my notice just a few months ago. In our place, there is a Government temple just by the side of which one day a pulaya happened to pass. One of the Nayars, I am sorry to say that he belongs to my own community, caught him and belaboured him. He was a labourer of a christian gentleman of good means. The pulaya went and informed him about this occurrence. Next day, he took to the catholic church, just converted him and asked him to go about the temple. He said that, if even then he was belaboured, he would see as to what should be done. The pulaya did accordingly and the man who beat him and all his associates were all satisfied to let him pass by! That is the state of affairs, the Hindu religion is far worse than the christian religion or the Mohamedan religion or any other religion in the world." 40

FAVOURING CUSTOMS OF POLLUTING CASTE'S ENTRY INTO TEMPLES

On certain occasions, the polluting castes were allowed access into some temples. Some examples of such customs are the following:- The idea of such customs may be obtained from

the account of the seven days festival at the Pishari temple near Quilandy 15 miles north of Calicut given by Mr. Fawcett.  

The deity of the temple is Bhagavati and the temple festival is fairly representative of the Hindu community. The temple priests there are Mussads, Nambuthiris and they purify the temple before and after the festival. The representatives of the untouchable castes like Tiyan, Mukkuvan, Kammalan, Vannan and other artisan and untouchable castes, each of whom has their own appropriate caste function to perform in connection with the temple. "On the morning of the fifth day a man of the washerman (he is also a tailor: Vannan) caste will announce to the neighbours by beat of tom-tom that there will be made a procession of Bhagavati issuing from the gates of the temple and passing round about... he holds a little land on nominal terms from the temple property, in consideration for which he must fulfill certain requirements for the temple as on occasions of festivals."  

"Early on the sixth day the headman of the Mukkuvans (fishermen)... together with the blacksmith and the goldsmith, comes to the temple followed by an interested crowd, but accompanied by no orchestra.


42. Ibid., op. cit. P. 256.
or drums. To the Arayan is given half a sack of rice for himself and his followers, a silver umbrella belonging to the temple is handed over to him to be used when he comes to the temple again in the evening. To the blacksmith is given the temple sword. The goldsmith receives the silver umbrella from the Arayan, and executes on it any repairs that may be needful; and in like manner the blacksmith looks to the sword. "In the afternoon [6th day festival] the headman of the Tiyans called the 'Tandan', comes to the temple followed by two of his caste men carrying slung on a pole over their shoulders three bunches of young coconuts, an appropriate offering, the Tiyans being those whose ordinary profession is climbing the coconut palm, drawing the toddy, securing the coconuts &c." "Early on the seventh and last day, when the morning procession is over, there comes to the temple a man of the Panan caste. He carries a small Cadjan umbrella which he has made himself, adorned all around the edges with a fringe of the young leaves of the coconut palm. The umbrella he brings should have a long handle and with this umbrella in his hand he performs a dance

before the temple. In the afternoon [7th day festival] a small crowd of Vettuvars come to the temple carrying with them swords, not very dangerous ones, and about ten small baskets made of cocoanut palm leaves, containing - salt... These men dance and shout in much excitement, cutting their heads with their own swords in their frenzy. Some of them represent devils of some kind of inferior evil spirits, and dance madly, under the influence of these spirits which they represent. Then comes the Arayan as on the previous day with his little procession, and lastly comes the blacksmith with the sword. This festival is an excited custom which allowed temple rights to the untouchables. Such a type of festival also existed in Malabar which was held at Kottior in North Malabar. Though it is a festival for high and low, these do not mix at Kottior. The Nayars go first, and after a few days, the Nayars having done, the Tiyans, and so on. A curious feature of it is that the people going to attend it are distinctly rowdy, feeling they have a right to abuse in the vilest and filthiest terms everyone they see on the way... but they use personal violence to person and property all along the road.  

In the Cochin state, the Kodungalloor Bhagavathi temple festivals—Thalapoli festival in Makaram (January-February) month which was formerly (till about 1900) celebrated 7 days as festival; lately it has been reduced to 4 days. The fifth, sixth and seventh day festival of this temple was conducted by the Aryan, Kanakkaś and Cherumans but now it has been ceased. During the Meena Bharani festival in this temple, which started from Kumba Bharani day up to the Meena Bharani day (about 27 days), there were no restrictions or prohibitions for any Hindus to enter this temple for worship. It was so even before the time of temple entry proclamation that each of the castes had special rights in this temple festival. There were no purificatory ceremonies in connection with their entrance.

In Travancore the Kuravas, an unapproachable caste in Kerala, had access into the compound walls of the Vettikavala


49. V.M. Madhava Panicker, Kodungalloor Sree Kurumba(Malayalam) Bhagavathi Kshetra Charitram, (Deviprines, Kodungalloor First Ed. 1982 March) Ch. IV, p. 22.

50. Dr. V.R. Chandran, Sree Kodungalloooramma, Ch. 2, p. 112.
temple in Travancore. They should enter up to the Kallittattu which stands outside the eastern pradakshina vazhi. In the south eastern corner of the premises close to the compound wall a small area was demarcated and enclosed by a dwarf-wall, to which alone they were said to have admission. They conducted here as offering a dance called Kuravakali. The entry was unrestricted and no purificatory ceremony was performed on that account. The other temples mentioned in this connection were the Savarna temples of Kumarkoil and Sabarimala in Travancore. The Avarnas, it is said, freely enter these temples. In the Savarna temples of Sasthamkotta, Ayiroor Puthiakavu and Ambalapuzha, Non caste Hindus were said to have entry on particular days. Some witnesses reported to the Temple Entry Enquiry committee that the Pulayas had admission to the outer premises of the Sasthakotta temple within the enclosure walls on a particular Saturday of the year known as Pula Saturday. The Devaswom authorities contradict the


It is reported in it that there was no pollutionary distinction between the higher caste Brahmins and lower caste Pulayans in the case of worship at the Sabarimala temple in Travancore before the beginning of temple entry movement in Kerala.
statement and state that the pulayas regard the 4th saturday of the month of Dhanu (December - January) as an auspicious occasion to worship the deity of this temple, and they accordingly make offerings to the god, waiting outside the enclosure walls at a distance of about one furlong from the western Gopuram. 53

In the Ayiroor puthiakavu temple, there was an annual festival called patayani, during which, it is alleged that a few Ezhava families enter up to the outer premises and proceed as far as the Nalampalam to touch it with a sword. 54

Another example of the Avarnas entry into temples on some occasions was in the Ambalapuzha temple at the time of Pallippana ceremony. In the Ambalappuzha temple, on the last day of a ceremony called pallippana performed every twelve years, velans (An Avarna community) enjoy the privilege of entering within the compound wall and proceeding as far as the Manthrasala in the outer premises for the purpose of a semi-religious function known as Velan-Pravarti. "The velans coming for this rite are ceremonially received by Ambanat panickar, a member of a local Ezhava family, who has also the duty of supplying the

54. Ibid.
toddy necessary for a part of the rite.\textsuperscript{55} On the close of this rite, a purification ceremony on the highest scale (Dravyakalasam) was performed to remove the pollution.

The polluting castes had also access into the Guruvayoor Temple at the British Malabar district on a particular time. The court order about Guruvayoor temple roads proves that, for one day in the year, during the Guruvayoor Ekadasi day, the Guruvayoor temple was thrown open to the low caste Hindus for worship.\textsuperscript{56} These were some examples to show the customs which existed in Kerala in relation to untouchables and temples.

Supply of Articles and Services to temples by Avarnas

The services of the polluting castes was necessary for temples. The services of the artisan class or Kammalans were essential for the construction of temple in early times. L.K. Anantha Krishna Iyer says that, when the services of the members of all the sub-divisions (Kammalans) are required for the construction of a temple, they bathe early morning, go to the temple, and stand near the ballikallu (sacrificial stone), when the tantri (priest) gives them each a holy thread (Poonanul) and two garments, one of which is worn round the loins like the Brahman Priest, and the other tied round the head. As they enter the outer enclosure, a cow that has just

\textsuperscript{55} ibid., op.cit., P.41.

\textsuperscript{56} In the High Court of Judicature at Madras, dated 14-6-1931 Order: Crl. Revn. Petition No.270 of 1932, (Modifying the order of the court or the sub Divisional Magistrate of Falghat dated 4-4-1932 and made in H.C. No. 20 of 1932.), P-14.
delivered a calf and is tied to a pole is let loose, and in
the event of her attacking any of them, he is not enlisted
for the work, which shows that he is not fit to work in a
holy place." The services of panans were required at the
time of Karkitakam (July-August) for a ceremony in Trichur
Vadakkunnathan temple. In the first week of the Karkitakam
month, a panan with his wife, provided with a drum and cymbals
(Kuzhithalam), goes to the western gate of the Trichur temple
after midnight, sings sacred songs standing underneath a
banyan tree and receives five measures of paddy, half a measure
of rice, some gingelly oil and a coccoanut from the temple
authorities as remuneration of their services. These were
some examples of their services to the temples in Kerala.

The services of Pulayans also needed in the proper
celebration of general festivals such as Pooram Vela, Vittu
iduka, Mandalam Vilakku etc. The pooram vela was an important
festival held in the village Bhagavati temples. L.K. Ananatha
Krishna Iyer describes the festival as that "It is a festival
in which the members of all castes below Brahmans takepart,
and it is held either in Kumbhom (February-March), or in
Meenom (March-April). The cherumans of the northern parts as

57. The Cochin Tribes and castes, Vol.I, Ch.XVIII, opcit,
P.353.
58. ibid, Ch.X, PP.177-78.
well as the Pulayans of the southern parts of the state, attend the festival, and join the procession after a sumptuous meal and toddy drinking according to their custom. Toy horses are made and attached to long bamboo poles, and these are carried by the people to the neighbourhood of the temple. As they go, they leap and dance with the accompaniment of pipe and drum. One among them who acts as a Velichapad (devil-dancer) goes in front of them, and after a good deal of dancing and loud praying in honour of the deity, they return home.\footnote{59}

Vittu iduka was another festival celebrated on the day of Bharani, the second lunar day in Kumbhom (February-March) in connection with Bhagevathi temple in villages. Standing at a distance from the village authorities, the Pulayas offer prayers to Kali and put the paddy grains, which they have brought, on a bamboo mat, spread in front of them, after which they return home.\footnote{60} The Kathiru festival celebrated in honour of the village goddess in the month of Vrischikam, (November-December) was an important festival in the Chittur Taluk of Cochin State. During the time of this festival, the Pulayans

\footnote{59. \textit{ibid}, Ch.VI, \textit{Op.cit.}, p.112}
\footnote{60. \textit{ibid}, p.114.}
and other low caste men were freely allowed to enter villages
and worship in the village temples which generally occupy the
central positions in those villages. 61

Another festival which favours the entry of low caste
Hindus into temples was the Mandalam Vilakku or forty-one
days festival held in Bhagavati temples from the first of the
month Vrischikam (November-December) to the tenth of Dhanu
(December-January). "The forty-first day, the day on which
the festival terminates, is one of grand celebration, when
all castemen attend the temple." 62 These practices and services

61. ibid, PP 114-15. The author says that "A special feature
of these festivals of the presence, at the temple of
the village goddess, of a large number of dome like
structures made of bamboo and plantain stems, richly
ornamented and hung with flowers, leaves, and ears of
corn. These structures called Sarakoodams, and small
globular packets of Palmyra leaves (Kathir koodus)
containing handfuls of paddy rolled up in straw, are
fixed on a pair of parallel bamboo poles, and carried by
the Pulayans, who, with pipe and drum, start in procession
from the various farms surrounding the village, early enough
to reach the temple about dusk in the evening, when they
all merge into one great concourse of people, shouting
and dancing, and setting of fire works as they advance.
The former are arranged in beautiful rows in front of the
village goddess; when Bengal lights are lighted, and fire
works as they advance. The former are arranged in beautiful
rows in front of the village goddess; when Bengal lights
are lighted, and fire works again exhibited. The latter
are thrown away among the crowds of spectators all along
the route, and also on arrival at the temple. The spectators,
both young and old, scramble to obtain as many of the
packets of corn as possible to obtain as many of the packets
and carry them home. They are then hung in front of the
houses, for it is believed that their presence will help to
promote the prosperity of the family, until the festival comes
round again next year. The greater the number of trophies
obtained for a family by its members, the greater it is
believed, will be the prosperity of the family. The crowds
then disperse. At night the Pulayans and other serfs who
have accompanied the procession to the temple are, in the
majority of cases, fed by their respective masters at their
houses, and then all go back to the farms".

62. ibid, op. cit, P. 115.
of low caste men in regard to temples proves that the rigidity of casteism and the practice of untouchability and unapproachability was not in consonance with the pure Hindu culture. It also reveals that the institution of casteism, acted here in the past only on the basis of profession of individuals. Certain articles made by the polluting castes were also necessary to the temples. The temple Entry Enquiry Committee, reports that some witnesses have referred to them instances of non-caste Hindus supplying the Kanniakumari, Vaikom and other temples with Kodikayaru (Flagstaff rope), Kodikoora (flag), Udayada (cloth for the deity) etc., as vestiges of the old custom of non-caste Hindus entering into temples and taking part in Utsavom, Vishu and other functions. 63 From days of old, the making of cloths, ropes, bows and arrows and such other articles was the profession of communities like panans (weavers), Ezhavas, carpenters and other teendal classes. But the articles they manufactured were freely used by savarnas without any idea of pollution attaching to the articles themselves. Like the Savarnas, the temples also were utilising these articles and they were using them right because the makers there of were men of having the right to enter the temples but because the articles themselves were declared by the smritis as having no

These accounts prove that there was no pollution for the articles prepared by the polluting castes from ancient times. The impurity came into their articles was only an interim one came into the social life of Kerala.

THE NECESSARY OF TEMPLE ENTRY

Rigidity of casteism and the practice of pollution may not have been in consonance with the religious structure of ancient India of time immemorial. Caste rigidity and the practice of pollution was a further growth as a curse to the Indian culture. The deity is considered as the highest paramount power in Hindu culture and at the same time people worship the deity with human attributes as the defender of the universe. The Brahmin represented as the highest spiritual ideal in Hindu culture, a Brahmin by qualities and not by birth alone.

"It was a time when orthodox Brahmins, and others following their example, observed the rules of unapproachability or distance pollution. But that is a thing of the past in the life outside the temple, in the vast majority of cases. It was suggested that the deity is conceived not as a Brahmin but as a Kshartiya; and reference was made to the marks and

64. ibid.
emblems of royalty in certain temples". But in later periods, birth determines the community of a person by forgetting the qualities of a person to become a higher caste or lower caste. The Kshatriya symbol of the deity represents as the defender of whole people without any distinction. So these principles bound upon the deity and brahma were not favourable to the practice of pollution and rigidity of casteism in temples.

The entry of untouchable castes was a must at the time; their ban on entry into temples would cause the disappearance of Hindu culture and religion from the earth. Most of the English educated persons were not in familiar with the basic principles of Hinduism and there was no religious educational facilities in English educational institutions. As a result, the orthodox status of temples and Hindu religion diminished. Besides, the foreign religious missionaries were trying their best to propagate their religion in Kerala. The context of this situation would lead to the fall of Hindu culture if not temple entry is allowed to the avarnas. The temple entry freedom to all Hindus in such a situation would result into the unity and strength of Hindu religion in Kerala against the social evils upon Hindu culture. The rigidity of caste system

was the foundation of the practice of untouchability and unapproachability. This was the cause of several social evils such as undue restrictions in eating and drinking, unsuitable matrimonial matches leading to physical degeneracy, the decline of mechanical arts and industries and the general degeneration of the community in economic position which has resulted in poverty and misery.66 K. Parameswaran Pillai and M. Govindan warned in their report that, "The feeling of superiority and inferiority in regard to the castes must go and everybody must be made equal not only in the eye of law but also in social and religious matters. This can be achieved only by temple entry being given to all classes of Hindus on equal terms without distinction of caste or colour."67

The above said discussions indicate that the temple worship and temple entry of the polluting castes were not a strange custom prevailed here from time immemorial. The segregation of one section of Hindu society from temple


worship might have been the cause of the fall of sanctity of Hinduism at this time. Temples were stood for the all round welfare of human beings so that the denial of entry into temple for one section of Hindus could not have completely fulfilled the functions of temples in Kerala. Besides human welfare, national prosperity was one of the important functions of temple. In this sense, the ban on one section of Hindus into temple entry was not a correct decision of the Orthodox Hindu Society in the past. Services of all sections of society were needed for the national prosperity. By forgetting a section, it was impossible to achieve national prosperity. So the temples which were the centres of human life here must have been a necessity to open to all Hindus without distinction of caste. In short, the denial of temple entry to lower caste Hindus resulted in making obstacles for the national welfare. In such a situation, the transmission from the darkness of untouchability and unapproachability evil to the light of equality and unity among Hindus could be happened in Kerala only through the temple entry freedom to all Hindus.