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Vaikom Satyagraha

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Why is in news? T.N. plans to observe 100th anniversary of Vaikom protest

Vaikom Satyagraha was a social protest against the **oppression of people of the lower caste and untouchability** in a place near Travancore known as Vaikom.

The movement began on **30th March 1924**.

At the **Vaikom Mahadeva Temple**, there was a board that **denied the entry of "lower caste" people** (avarnas).

The Satyagrahis made batches of three and entered the temple. They were resisted and arrested by the police.

Gandhiji, Chatampi Swamikal and Sree Narayana Guru supported the movement.

The movement gained prominence in the whole of India and support came from far and wide.

The Akalis of Punjab supported by setting up kitchens to provide food to the Satyagrahis.

Even **Christian and Muslim leaders were in support of the movement**. However, Gandhiji was not entirely convinced by this as he wanted the movement to be an intra-Hindu affair.

On Gandhiji's advice, the movement was taken back temporarily in April 1924.

After discussions with caste Hindu people failed, the leaders again started the movement. Leaders **T K Madhavan and K P Kesava Menon** were arrested.

E V Ramaswami Naicker (Periyar) came from Tamil Nadu to support the movement and then he was arrested.

On 1st October 1924, a group of savarnas (forward castes) marched in a procession and submitted a petition to the Regent Maharani Sethu Lakshmi Bai of Travancore with approximately 25000 signatures for allowing entry to the temple for everyone.

Gandhiji also met with the Regent Maharani. This **procession of savarnas** was led by **Mannath Padmanabhan Nair**. Beginning with about 500 people at Vaikom, the number increased to approximately 5000 when the procession reached Thiruvananthapuram in the month of November 1924.

On **23rd November 1925**, all the gates of the temple were opened to Hindus except the eastern gate. In 1928, backward castes got the right to walk on public roads leading to all temples in Travancore.

This was the first time that an organized movement was being conducted on such a massive scale for the basic rights of the untouchables and other backward castes in Kerala.

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