



# Role Of The Malayala Manorama Newspaper In Kerala's Freedom Movement (1891-1936)

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## Introduction

The "Press" become a powerful mirror in all complex process of modern life. It exchange the idea on whole world in the shortest time. Government, Executive, Judiciary and the press are the four important pillars of the society. So it is called a powerful social institution. The press has been glorified as the Fourth Estate, and it played an important role in National Movements in Kerala. It played a vital role in strong weapon and information propaganda. This article explain the role of Malayala Manorama in Kerala's freedom movement. It create public opinion on socio-economic issues and it focuses on Government activities. The press played an active support in freedom movement.

**Key words** : Civil Rights , Fourth Estate , National Press , Freedom of Speech , Avarnas

## Struggle for Equal Civil Rights

Political situations progressed in Travancore after the submission of Malayali Memorial 1891 and Ezhava Memorial 1896. Powra Samathvavada Prakshobhanam (struggle for Equal Civil Rights) was a major struggle during the time of Kerala. After the event of Malayali Memorials Non-Malayali Brahmins were given in Government jobs. Gradually Malayalis also acquired qualification, irrespective of caste and creed.

But Muslims, Christians, and the backward classes were denied of government jobs. No appointments were given to the Land Revenue Departments Temples and Devaswoms were also attached to this department.

The representatives of this communities joined and formed the Civic Rights League. Its ,meeting conducted at Kottayam on 5<sup>th</sup> April 1919. Adv.E.J.John of the Travancore High Court was preside by it. A well known leader was T.K.Madavan he became a great personality in SNDP and Indian Natinal Congress. His impressive speech analyzing various aspects of the issues, and submit a petition to the Government, separation of Revenue and Devaswom Departments. Finally Government had to declare backward communities and non-Hindus were eligible for the appointment in new Revenue Department. Hence a petition signed by 26000 persons was submitted on 1<sup>st</sup> January 1920 under the leadership of Diwan M,Krishnan Nair and K.C.Mammen Mappillai. It was a fifth signatory of petition. There are three main demands:

- (a) All departments, appointments were given to all citizens irrespective of caste and religion.
- (b) All public institutional benefits should be available to all communities.
- (c) The backward classes faced by the problem of untouchability, it should be abolished.

### **Vaikkom Satyagraha**

Vaikom Satyagraha is the first struggle in Kerala led by Indian National Congress and the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi. It is a milestone in history of Kerala. T.K.Madavan, is a leader of INC and Secretary of SNDP took the initiative of this struggle. In 1923 Indian National Congress held in Kakinada in Andhra Pradesh and a personal contact with Gandhi. This session adopted a resolution, the country took constructive was held at Ernakulam in 1924 February. Its convener was K.Kelappa, T.K.Madavan, Karur Neelakantan Nambuthirippad, T.R.Krishna Swami Aiyar were the members. Vaikom was selected as the centre for the programme.

In a Vaikom Temple's the public roads were closed to lower castes of Hindus like Parayas, Arayas, Ezhavas etc. On 30<sup>th</sup> March 1924 the sathyagrahis started the agitation was to open the roads to all. During the time of social reformers like Chattampi Swamikal, and Sree Narayana Guru created a strong support in favour of eradication of untouchability in Kerala. E.V.Ramaswamy Naicker parpticipation in the struggle and arrested and imprisonment. The forefront leaders of this agitations like T.K.Madhavan, Kelappan,

K.P.Kesava Menon and Mannath Padmanabha. On 9<sup>th</sup> March 1925 Gandhi arrived at Vaikom and finalized the terms of compromise with Mr.Pit, the police commissioner of the state. Then he visited Regent Maharani and Sree Narayana Guru. On 23<sup>rd</sup> November 1925, the Satyagraha was withdrawn on the active participation of Gandhi.

The National Press and all the news papers in Kerala strongly supported the satyagraha. Malayala Manoram and Mammen Mappillai were the forefront agitator's on 21<sup>st</sup> October 1921 entitled 'Temple Entry of Ezhavas'. The editorial says: "T.K.Madhavan, editor of Desabhimani visited Gandhi he told Madhavan that Ezhavas should enter the temples, if they do their wish can be realized". Manorama's active participation in temple entry is a wider angle. The role of manorama, to eradicate caste differences in our society.

Manorama wrote an editorial strongly supporting the agitation on the previous days. It entitled "Removing untouchability in Travancore". Manorama said: "The policy of non-violence was adopted by the depressed classes, it is advised by Gandhi. The government may also know the situation, and Gandhi paid attention on this issues. The British Government more powerful than one government, gives more attention to this superman. We believe that our Government consider the serious situation."

The editorial advises that Gandhiji's non-violence policy was adopted by satyagraha manorama predicts that struggle will be continued as more vigour, and warns to Government to Gandhiji's involvement. Manorama wrote an editorial entitled "Mahatma Gandhi". The praise given to Gandhi by manorama is worthy. It says: "Praising by all people's irrespective of caste and religion." Romain Rolland, is considered as the living author in the world and wrote a book in French interpreting his ideals and praising his qualities Unambiguously'. It translated into many languages No other person presently living in the world, he is an emperor, head of the religion and a literary man had receiving popularly, love and respect that is possessed by Gandhi."

Gandhi visited Kerala four times Manorama wrote editorials and welcoming him and gave wide range of coverage in his speech and programmes. On 2<sup>nd</sup> October 1924, N Kumaran, General Secretary of SNDP Yogam, presented a resolution at the Travancore Legislative Council demanding to open all the public roads in the Vaikom Temple to all people irrespective of caste and colour differences. Mammen Mappillai

strongly supporting the motion C.V Kunjuraman wrote in Kerala Kaumudi “Nobody could support the motion as K.C.Mammen Mappillai by his speech”. The Legislative Council was rejected the motion by the majority of one vote. In an editorial of Manorama entitled “The motion on freedom of travelling”. Manorama demanded to the government to overlook the decision of the council, it does not reflect the wishes of the society. It rejected due to the official strength votes and the majority of a single vote. Manorama wrote the ‘the shameful’ stand of Government. In the editorial entitled “Vaikom Satyagraha” it says: ‘When Indians are fighting against the foreign force for in equal rights of a citizens we are also doing the some demand, it is a shameful. When agitation was withdrawn manorama wrote: “It is sure that the Satyagrahis are very much satisfied as freedom of travelling is permitted even though temple entry is not allowed. We believe that this kind of struggle found in Kerala will be ended without any delay”.

Manorama says temple entry of lower classes, and eradication of untouchability are more important in history of Kerala. It support further struggles for temple entry at Guruvayoor, Suchindram and so on. It welcomed the Temple entry proclamation of Travancore Government.

### **Suchindram Satyagraha**

Satyagraha was started at Suchindram Shiva Temple on January 1926. Now it was in Kanyakumari in Tamil Nadu. It protecting the rights of untouchables to walk around the roads surrounding the temple. This agitation was led by M.Subramonian Pillai, M.E Naidu, H.Perumal, P.C.Thanumalaya Permal and Gandhians. The Satyagraha was opposed by Nairs and Vellalas. At finally the government agreed the demand of satyagrahi, to open the road within a month. But due to the opposition of the Nairs and Vellalas the government ignored the promise.

During the time Manorama wrote an editorial titled as ‘Satyagraha at Suchindram’. Manorama said, “The government will pay attention to this problem and take a positive attitude on freedom of travelling without any delay”. Government ignored the demand of agitators and not taken any step favourable to the strikers. As a result satyagraha was restarted on 12<sup>th</sup> May 1930 it continued for several days. In the second phase the leader of satyagraha was Raman Pillai. Manorama wrote an editorial. “Many struggles in different places like Vaikom for this aim which made unnecessary troubles for the people. The duty of government is to avoid such controversial issues for future. To take a final decisions on the subject is better to convene

a meeting of leaders of both sides. There is a strong public support towards the satyagraha movement of suchindram.”

The Government handles the issues in violent way, but the demand of the satyagraha are most legitimate and minimum. The manorama opposed the government approach and accept the feeling of the public. Manorama’s stand can be termed as democratic.

### **Guruvayoor Satyagraha**

Vaikkom Satyagraha was conducted to freedom of movement on the public roads near the temples. But the Guruvayoor Satyagraha was started to get the temple freedom ie, opened to all Hindus including untouchables. On 31<sup>st</sup> November 1931 the, Guruvayoor Satyagraha was started. It was under the leadership K.Kelappen, and its organization by Kerala Provincial Congress Committee. Satyagraha’s captain of Volunteer corps was A.K.Gopalan, he was attacked the high caste Hindus. On 22<sup>nd</sup> September 1932 Kelappan started fasting. It made serious situation in Guruvayoor and Kelappan was physically weak day by day. For the request of Gandhi Kelappan break the fast. On 2<sup>nd</sup> October 1932 Kelappan ended the fast and Satyagraha was suspended. Gandhi gave an assurance to Kelppan that he would fast with him.

The Kerala provincial congress among the Hindus in Ponnani Taluk to uphold their views on question of temple entry. This referendum was a victory of the congress. The 20,163 Hindus were favour of temple entry, and the majority of them were women, they were traditionally conservatives. The satyagraha failed to achieve the entry of temples in Hindus and untouchables. As a result in favour of temple entry tremendous public questions was formed not only in kerala, but in the whole country. On 12<sup>th</sup> November 1936 Raja of Travancore to issue the proclamation of Temple Entry.

Malayala Manorma gave an active support to Guruvayoor Satyagraha. It published photos of Kelappan and A.K.Gopalan. Ending the Satyagraha Manorama wrote an editorial entitled “The end of penance at Guruvayoor”. Manorama praised Kelappan his great sacrifices, like Kelappan no other person till date there. On 5<sup>th</sup> October 1932 Manorama wrote another editorial entitled “Mr.Kelappan”. It is a biographical sketch of the leader. It was concluded that many people heard of Mr.Kelappan is the beginning of Guruvayoor Satyagraha. He was a great man of immaculate heart lofty principles and ideas.

## Nivarthana Agitation

In Travancore 6<sup>th</sup> November 1931, Maharaja Sree Chithira Thirunal was crowned. Sir C.P.Ramaswami Aiyar was appointed as the adviser of Raja. He became the lawyer of Madras presidency, Manorama and some other news papers were against about the appointment. Manorama wrote in editorial: “We cannot accept the consequences of this unprecedented appointment”. Balakrisnapillai Editor of Kesari weekly criticized the appointment.

Sir C.P.Ramaswami was fought against the democratization of the state administration. On 28<sup>th</sup> October 1932 a royal declaration was issued for constitutional reforms. On the basis of this declaration Travancore came to have a bicameral Legislature, this is Legislative Reforms Regulation. Sree Chitra State Council was Upper House and Sreemulam Assembly is Lower House, Sir C.P was made the president of Upper Lower Houses, all the powers under the head of the Dewan. The voting system for the Lower Houses was extended to men and women. They were paid land tax of Rs.5 or more or municipal tax of Rs.one or more or income taxes. A retired military officers in the state were also entitled to franchise. 70% of the population like Ezhavas, Muslims, Christians etc were dissatisfied the declaration. Various organizations and meetings of Christians, muslims and Ezhavas demanded to adult suffrage. The public meeting of Christians at Trivandrum, K.C.Mammen Mappillai participated in it.

For the formation of an organization on 17<sup>th</sup> December 1932 the representatives of Ezhavas, muslims and Christians assembled at L.M.S Hall, Trivandrum. All Kerala joint political congress (AKPC) was formed. On 25<sup>th</sup> June 1933 declared the word Abstain (Nivarthanam). The Malayalam word Nivarthanam (Abstention) was coined by I.C Chacko. Under the leadership of K.C,Mammen Mapillai and 16 leaders presented a memorial to the Raj on 7<sup>th</sup> December 1933. On 11<sup>th</sup> May 1935 a leader of the joint political congress and the General Secretary of S.N.D.P Yogam, C.Kesavan made a speech at Kozhenchery in Pathanamthitta. The speech was provoking Sir.C.P.Ramaswami Aiyar and the government.

Manorama published a detailed report of the speech and his presidential address was covered in full four columns. The content of speech as follows:

“We don’t want Sir.C.P such a motion was presented in Thirunakkara maidan in Kottayam. He became the burden of this land, the catholic congress and SNDP have already demanding his dismissal”. on

7<sup>th</sup> June 1935 C.Kesavan was arrested and put into jail. Manorama protest against the arrest and wrote an editorial. “We are also the part of the struggle and going on in the whole state and people”.

On the same time Habibulla retired 1<sup>st</sup> October 1936, Sir.C.P appointed as his successor. Manorama welcomed the appointment of Habibulla. C.Kesavan was released from the jail and reception was given to him at Alleppey on 3<sup>rd</sup> October 1937. Mamean Mappillai president over the party. C.Kesavan ‘The uncrowned King of Kerala today.’ It described of K.C.Mammen Mappillai.

### **Temple Entry**

Temple Entry was a milestone in the history of social progress in Kerala. The proclamation issued by sreechithira Tirunal Maharaja of Travancore on 12<sup>th</sup> November 1936. It is a brave and social reformation after the prohibition of sati in 1829. According to Gandhiji the proclamation was a “miracle of modern times”. Raja would live in memory of people, which is the peoples Charter of spiritual emancipation. To Rajagopalachari, it was “easily the most non-violent and bloodless revolution in the history of mankind”. His view is that no ruler in India since the time of Ashkoa had passed to the people a happier message. SNDP, Yogukshema Sabha of Kerala Brahmins, Nair Service Society and I.N.C took a active participation in this agitations. An Ezhava leader, C.V.Kunjuraman wrote an article about the ‘temple entry to untouchables’ in 1917 December issue of Desabhimani edited by T.K.Madhavan. The article create a strong agitations among the people of Ezhavas.

Gandhi visited Travancore and he met Sree Chithira Thirunal, a boy aged 12 in the presence of his mother. Gandhi asked the prince in soft way “can you end the practice of untouchability and allow all to enter\_the temples when you will take over the administration of Travancore?” ‘definitely’ : The prince answered enthusiastically. Chithira Thirunal became the King of Travancore in 1931. During the first five years of his administration he was unable to keep the assurance given to Gandhi. The Dewans of this period Augstin, and Habibulla did not give any support for Temple Entry proclamation. But Sir C.P.Ramaswamy Aiyar who took a charge of Dewan 1936 was a strong in favour of Temple Entry, Raja’s conditions for taking the post of Dewan was “to declare temple entry for untouchables as the first step of his administration”. Under the chairmanship of V.S.Subramania Aiyar on 8<sup>th</sup> November 1932 the Government of Travancore had appointed an eight members of committees to enquire the report on the question of temple entry. The

committee submitted its report on 11<sup>th</sup> January 1934. The Committee supported the avarnas in educationally, socially, and economically. It suggested pollution or theendal should be removed by an appropriate way. Two members of the committee like Mr.Changanacherry K.Parameswaran Pillai and Mr.M.Govindan in their report immediate opening of the temple.

The Kerala Provincial Board of the Harijan Sevak Sangh organized a campaign. It conducted on 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> May 1936, All Kerala Temple Entry conference at Trivandrum. They submitted a petition to the Dewan on 3<sup>rd</sup> November demanding temple entry for Harijans. C.V.Kunjuraman wrote a book in 1936 'Ezhavarude Mathaparivarthana Samrambham' (The religious conversion movement of Ezhavas) C.V. with some other Ezhava leaders who were met Bishop Moore of CMS Church at Kottayam and conducted secret talks. Sir C P keenly observing the issues, and he advised the Raja to issue the temple entry proclamation in this context. In this circumstance, the Raja issued 12<sup>th</sup> November 1936 as a Temple Entry Proclamation. It was the time of 25<sup>th</sup> birthday of Raja and 57<sup>th</sup> birthday of the Diwan, Proclamation is a "Truth and validity of our religion, it is based on divine guidance and all comprehensive toleration. It laid down and imposed by preserving proper atmosphere and maintaining their customs and rituals. No restriction placed on Hindus by birth or worshipping at the temples controlled by our Government."

Malayala Manorama and the editorship of K.C.Maman Mappillai supported the struggle. SNDP leader T.K.Madhavan, C.V.Kunjrman, and Kumaran Asan became the supporters of Mamman Mappillai. In 1921 Manorama wrote 'Temple Entry to Ezhavas'. For the formation of a committee for temple entry by meeting at Sivagiri presided by Kumaran Asan. The editorial quoted the advice of Gandhi to Ezhava that "they should enter the temples also realized their goal for it".

## **Conclusion**

The Malayala Manorama helped to develop national feelings among the people of Kerala. People stood united to fight for their freedom struggle under the efficient leadership of Kerala Society. The press had played a vital role in political social, economic and cultural factors of the society. It is a powerful weapon of the society to hold the destiny of the people. Thus the press became a central medium through the western ideas of freedom and democracy.



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