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News: Vaikom Satyagraha

- Recently, India commemorated the centenary of Vaikom Satyagraha, a pivotal movement in India's history that challenged untouchability and caste oppression.

Vaikom Satyagraha

- Vaikom Satyagraha, a nonviolent agitation, unfolded in Vaikom within the princely state of Travancore, Kerala precisely a century ago spanning from 30th March 1924 to 23rd November 1925.
- This movement stood as a formidable protest against the entrenched practices of untouchability and caste discrimination that had long plagued Indian society.
- The movement was triggered by the prohibition of people from oppressed classes, especially Ezhavas, from walking on the roads surrounding the Vaikom Mahadeva temple.
- Efforts were made to negotiate with authorities, including Maharani Regent of Travancore, to open temple roads.
- It was the first among the temple entry movements in India, setting the stage for similar movements across the country.

- It emerged amidst the growing nationalist movement and aimed to foreground social reform alongside political aspirations.

Key Figures

- It was led by visionary leaders like Ezhava leader T K Madhavan, K.P. Kesava Menon, and K. Kelappan.
- Erode Venkatappa Ramasamy, revered as Periyar or Thanthai Periyar, played a crucial role, mobilising volunteers, delivering speeches, and enduring imprisonment, earning the title 'Vaikom Veerar'.
- The movement gained more power when Mahatma Gandhi reached Vaikom in March 1925 and held discussions with leaders of various caste groups.

Strategies and Initiatives

- The Satyagraha initially focused on opening the roads surrounding the Vaikom temple to people from all castes.
- Leaders of the movement strategically chose nonviolent methods, inspired by Gandhian principles of protest.

Outcome

- The Vaikom Satyagraha led to significant reforms, including the opening of three out of four roads surrounding the temple to people of all castes.

Aftermath and Legacy

- In November 1936, the Maharaja of Travancore signed the historic Temple Entry Proclamation, which removed the age-old ban on the entry of marginalised castes into the temples of Travancore.
- The Vaikom Satyagraha led to a division in perspectives, with few viewing it as a Hindu reformist movement, while another saw it as a fight against caste-based atrocities.
- Memorials, including the Vaikom Satyagraha Memorial Museum and Periyar's Memorial, were established to commemorate the movement's significance.