



Mains Practice Question

Q. Discuss the significance of the Vaikom Satyagraha in the context of India's social reform movement. (150 words)

20 May, 2024 GS Paper 1 History

Approach

- Introduce the Vaikom Satyagraha
- Highlight its significance covering key personalities involved
- Conclude suitably.

Introduction

The **Vaikom Satyagraha**, which took place in **1924-25** in the princely state of **Travancore** (present-day Kerala), was a significant event in India's social reform movement. It played a crucial role in the struggle **against untouchability and caste oppression**.

Body

Significance of the Vaikom Satyagraha:

- **Pioneer in Temple Entry Movements:** It was the first major **mass agitation** demanding the entry of lower castes into Hindu temples and surrounding roads, which were prohibited due to the notion of caste pollution.
 - The issue of temple entry was first raised by **Ezhava leader T.K. Madhavan** in 1917, and the **Indian National Congress** later took up the cause of anti-untouchability.
 - It ultimately led to the **Temple Entry Proclamation in Travancore (1936)**, allowing lower castes into temples and set the stage for subsequent temple entry movements across India.
- **Spotlighted Non-Violent Protest:** The Satyagraha, led by figures like **K. Kelappan**, employed Gandhian principles of **nonviolent civil disobedience** and **peaceful protest**.
 - This lent greater legitimacy and momentum to the movement.
 - It also gained **nationwide attention** and inspired future social reform movements.
- **Inter-Community Unity:** The movement brought together people from various religions and castes. Christian Leaders like **George Joseph** and social reformer **E.V. Ramaswamy (Periyar)** **participated**, showcasing a united fight against social inequality.
 - This solidarity was crucial for sustaining the movement for **over 600 days**, despite facing counter-agitations and violence from caste Hindus.
- **Foregrounding Social Reform:** Amidst the growing nationalist movement, the Vaikom Satyagraha brought social reform and the eradication of untouchability to the forefront of the political agenda.

Conclusion

The Vaikom Satyagraha served as a catalyst for further reforms and laid the foundation for the **constitutional abolition of untouchability** in independent India.

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