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K.C.VAMADEVAN

Born on 15 Aug. 1925 in Manacad. Thrown out of school for participating in the 1942 Quit India movement. His father was a document writer and he was the first of 10 children in his family. K.C.Vamadevan joined the Indian Army in 1943 and remained in it till 1946. Then after coming out of the army he got attracted to the Kerala Socialist Party. Then the party told him to start working with the agricultural workers. Then RSP

his party put him with estate workers. The unions with which he was associated were the – PWD Workshop Workers Union; the PWD Road Mazdoor Union; Trivandrum Private Press Workers Union; Vijaya Mohini Textile Mill Workers Union; Kerala Waterworks and Drainage Employees Union; Kerala Waterworks and Drainage Employees Union; Travancore Govt. Press Workers Union; Kerala State Road Transport Mechanical Workers Union; Kerala Construction Workers Union.

In 1964 quite by accident K.C.Vamadevan met some temple employees and saw and discussed with them their pitiable conditions from the pujari downwards to the sweeper and drainage worker in the over 1,120 temples in Kerala in 1964. Then there were over 7,000 employees working full time in the temples. Their situation was bad in the sense that there was no security of job as anyone could be thrown out by the Temple Devosam Board which was in those days from the British days controlled by the Maharaja, Hindu members of the Cabinet, and some Legislative Assembly members. Thus in 1964 he started the Travancore Devosam Employees Union which was one its kind in the country and it pretty soon got most of the temple employees from the Brahmin pujari downward to the low caste sweeper and drain cleaners who would clean the temple surroundings and premeises as temple entry to low castes was opened up in the 1940s itself under the advise of the Diwan of Travnocore state i.e. Sir. C.P.Ramaswamy Iyer. The maharaja under great pressure from social reform movements by the low castes and threats of mass conversion out of Hinduism forced the maharaja to allow all the low caste employees to also be recruited and enter the temple premises. The most amazing thing about K.C.Vamadevan is that he is himself a low caste but from 1964 had become the recognised leader of all the brahmin pujaries also fighting for the improvement in their conditions of work in the temple under the Devosam Board of whom they were employees.

In 1965 K.C.Vamadevan started a state level march from one end of the state to the main temple i.e. the Sri. Padamanabiah Temple the temple reserved only for the Maharaja of Travancore. K.C.Vamadevan led many struggles for the temple workers and forced the govt. to give them proper scales of equal to normal state govt employees and all benefits. Now if you want to be a temple employees you have to give an exam.

The other unions he is associated with are- Rubber Fed; State Textile Mills; Construction workers; Road Mazdoor unions and Press workers unions. Overall K.C.Vamadevan is one of the seniormost TU leader in Kerala and still a dynamic man though in his 80s.



K.C.VAMADEVAN, Temple employees of Kerala.

K.C.Vamadevan belongs by his own admission to a shudra community but paradoxically his greatest name to fame is that he is known all over Kerala as the leader of temple employees in the state and so he says his caste and communist ideology did not prevent him from the pandits and namhoodrees of the highest caste accepting him as their leader in their fight for better conditions which he did finally achieve for them over the course of his struggles for them in the last over 35 year of his TU life. K.C.Vamadevan in the course of his interview narrated his life in the struggle for improving the lot of temple workers whose pitiful condition he came to know just by chance when he met one in the 1960s and since then he has been working for them and for them he is a father figure. In his interview he narrated how in the 30s and 40s till independence even today's high caste Nairs were not allowed inside the temples in Kerala which were the exclusive preserve of Brahmins and he said the likes of him who was a shudra was totally banned. Yet he narrated in the course of the freedom movement all this changed and social reform movements created an almost casteless society in Kerala and it was because of this that a shudra like him got acceptance even amongst the temple priests. He narrated all the agitations and all the interesting bits and pieces of Kerala's history and particularly the history of the caste system as it operated in Kerala. Apart from the temple workers who were his main arena of TU activity K.C.Vamadevan also a towering leader of the PWD Workers Union in Kerala, then the Water Works and Drainage Workers Union, and Construction workers, PWD Road Workers, Private Press Workers of Trivandrum, Govt. Press Workers, Textiles and many others, though these were his main. He narrated in detail the TU activity in all these different unions.