



His Highness Sri Padmanabha Dasa Vanchi Pala  
Sri Rama Varma  
Maharajah of Travancore  
*(In Temple Costume)*

# THE EPIC OF TRAVANCORE

BY  
MAHADEV DESAI.

*"I verily believe that when all else about Travancore is forgotten, this one act of the Maharajah—the Proclamation—will be remembered by future generations with gratitude." —GANDHIJI*



NAVAJIVAN KARYALAYA  
AHMEDABAD

**First published 1937**

**Published by Jivanji Dahyabhai Desai,  
Navajivan Karyalaya, Gandhi Road, Ahmedabad  
Printed by Balubhai Maganlal Desai,  
Mani Mudranalaya, Kalupur, Ahmedabad**

## The Proclamation

*" Profoundly convinced of the truth and validity of our religion, believing that it is based on divine guidance and on all-comprehending toleration, knowing that in its practice it has throughout the centuries adapted itself to the need of the changing times, solicitous that none of our Hindu subjects should, by reason of birth, caste or community, be denied the consolation and solace of the Hindu Faith, we have decided and hereby declare, ordain and command that, subject to such rules and conditions as may be laid down and imposed by us for preserving their proper atmosphere and maintaining their rituals and observances, there should henceforth be no restriction plac'd on any Hindu by birth or religion on entering or worshipping at temples controlled by us and our Government."*

## PREFACE

I am indebted to Srimati Sarojini Naidu for the title of the book. Soon after our pilgrimage to Travancore she happened to pass through Wardha and had summoned me to see her at the station. She was full of praise for what had happened in Travancore, and said in her characteristic way: "What has happened is of an epic character. And no doubt the Epic Fast was not undertaken in vain."

The seven chapters in the first part briefly summarise the struggle for the abolition of untouchability in Travancore. The second part contains Gandhiji's speeches—an important discourse given in 1925, three speeches made in 1927, three speeches during that memorable Harijan Campaign of 1933-34, and all the 27 speeches during the last pilgrimage to Travancore. "It is God alone who can arm the word that I speak to you with the power to shoot like an arrow and make a lodgment in your heart," he said in the course of his speech at Trivandrum in 1934. "If you can believe the word of a man who is perpetually seeking after truth, believe me that throughout all my waking hours, and if I can say so, during my sleep also, my one constant prayer to God is that He may give that power to my words, so that the Hindu heart may be touched and it may be purged of the virus of untouchability

and Hindus and Hinduism may be saved from the impending doom."

There is no doubt in my mind that the Travancore Proclamation was in answer to this prayer. The ten days of pilgrimage in January this year were linked each to each in prayer and piety. May that prayer be answered furthermore is the prayer of one who was privileged to be a humble participant in that pilgrimage.

I dedicate this brief history of one of the most nonviolent struggles for religious emancipation to the people who carried it through so bravely and so nobly.

Wardha  
19th March 1987

MAHADEV DESAI

P. S. : I am indebted to Sir C. P. Ramaswami Aiyar and the Archaeological and Devaswam Departments of the State for the photographs and for plenty of valuable information placed at my disposal. Much of the information about temples is drawn from Shri Nagammayya's valuable Travancore Manual and from a note drawn up for me by the Archaeological Department and revised by Rao Sahab Mahakavi Ulloor Parameshwar Aiyar.

M. D.

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