4. Vaikom Satyagraha

Why in News?

- The year 2024 marks the centenary of the Vaikom Satyagraha, Chief Minister of Kerala and Tamil Nadu is jointly inaugurated the centenary celebrations.

Highlights

- The princely state of Travancore had a feudal, militaristic, and ruthless system of custom-ridden government, some of the most rigid, refined and ruthless social norms and customs were seen in Travancore.

- Lower castes like the Ezhavas and Pulayas were considered polluting and various rules were in place to distance them from upper castes.

- These included a prohibition, not just on temple entry, but even on walking on the roads surrounding temples

- Madhavan presented the issue as a resolution at the Kakinada meet of All India Congress Committee. Subsequently, it was taken up by the Congress Untouchability Committee formed by the Kerala Pradesh Congress Committee in January 1924.

- Madhavan, K.P. Kesava Menon who was the then secretary of Kerala Pradesh Congress Committee and Congress leader and educationist K. Kelappan (also known as Kerala Gandhi) are considered the pioneers of the Vaikom Satyagraha movement.

- Christian missionaries, supported by the East India Company, had expanded their reach and many lower castes converted to Christianity to escape the clutches of an oppressive system that continued to bind them.

- Maharaja Ayilyam Thirunal, took many progressive reforms.

- Most important of these was the introduction of a modern education system with free primary education for all – even lower castes.

- Forces of capitalism and these reforms created new social hierarchies – which were not always congruent with traditional ones.