

>

Title: Need to set up a chair in the name of Mahatma Ayyankali, the great social reformer at the Central University, Kasargod, Kerala.

SHRI KODIKUNNIL SURESH (MAVELIKKARA): Mahatma Ayyankali was a great leader of dalits in Kerala, who were considered untouchables in the caste riddled Indian society in the southern part of India. He fought against the system of untouchability and pioneered many reforms to improve the lives of the dalits. He was in the forefront of movements against casteism. When he demanded educational facilities for dalit children, his demand was turned down. He started a school in order to teach dalit children. This school, too, was burnt by upper caste people. In 1907, he led a strike at Venganoor which lasted for one year. In recognition of his leadership abilities, the then Maharaja of Travancore nominated him to the Sri Moolam Legislative Assembly (Prajasabha) in 1910. His efforts for upliftment of dalits and downtrodden were admired by other great social reformers and thinkers like Sree Narayana Guru. In 1937 when father of the Nation, Mahatma Gandhi visited Venganoor, he praised the efforts of Mahatma Ayyankali. In November 1980, our late Prime Minister Shrimati Indirā Gandhi unveiled the statue of this great social reformer and thinker at Vellayambalam Square in Trivandrum.

The Dalit community for whom Mahatma Ayyankali fought throughout his life celebrated the Centenary of his nomination to the Sri Moolam Legislative Assembly or Prajasabha, recently.

It is a matter of great interest as to how an illiterate person like Mahatma Ayyankali could successfully led a mass movement against social evils and for the upliftment of dalits. I, therefore, request the Union Government to set up an Ayyankali Chair after the name of this great social reformer at the Central University, Kasargod, Kerala so that the whole nation could know about the work done by Mahatma Ayyankali for the upliftmen of dalits and downtrodden.