



Malabar Rebellion

For Prelims: Malabar Rebellion, Variamkunnaathu Kunhahamad Haji, Mahatma Gandhi, Non-Cooperation Movement, Tipu Sultan.

For Mains: Malabar Rebellion, Modern Indian History, Indian National Movement.

Why in News?

Recently, the **Indian Council for Historical Research (ICHR)** has deferred its decision on a recommendation to remove the **1921 Malabar Rebellion (Moplah riots) martyrs** from the list of India's freedom fighters.

- The recommendation also included the names **Variamkunnaathu Kunhahamad Haji** and **Ali Musliyar**.

What is the Indian Council of Historical Research?

- **About:**
 - It is an **autonomous organization**, established under Societies Registration Act, 1860 in 1972.
 - It is under the **Ministry of Education**.
- **Objectives:**
 - To bring historians together for exchange of views.
 - To give a national direction to an objective and scientific writing of history.
 - To promote, accelerate and coordinate research in history and ensure its dissemination.
 - The council also provides grants, assistance and fellowships for historical research.

What is the Background?

- In the **sixteenth century when Portuguese traders arrived on the Malabar coast**, they noted the Mappilas to be a mercantile community concentrated in urban centres and fairly segregated from the local Hindu population.
- However, **with the rise in Portuguese commercial power**, the Mappilas found themselves a competitor and increasingly started moving inland in search of new economic opportunities.
- The **shifting of the Mappilas led to a clash of religious identities** both with the local Hindu population and the Portuguese.

Who was Moplahs/Mappilas?

- The name Mappilla (lit. son-in-law, anglicized form Moplah) is given to Malayali-speaking Muslims who reside along the entire length of the Malabar Coast of northern Kerala.

- By 1921, the **Moplahs formed the largest and fastest growing community in Malabar**. With a population of one million, 32% of that of Malabar as a whole, the Moplahs were concentrated in South Malabar.

What was Mapillah Revolt?

- **About:**
 - Fuelled by the **fiery speeches by Muslim religious leaders and anti-british sentiments**, the Mopillahs launched a violent rebellion. Numerous acts of violence were reported and a series of persecutions were committed both against the British and the Hindu landlords.
 - While there are some who call it a **case of religious fanaticism**, there are others who look at it as an instance of struggle against British authority, and then there are others who perceive the Malabar rebellion to be a peasant revolt against unfair practices of the landlords.
 - While **historians continue to debate on the matter**, the broad consensus on the episode notes it to have started off as a struggle against political power, which later took on a communal colour.
 - Most of the **landlords were Namboodiri Brahmins** while most of the tenants were Mapillah Muslims.
 - The **riots led to the mass killings of over 10,000 Hindus, raping of women**, forced religious conversions, destruction or damage of nearly 300 temples, loot and arson of properties worth crores of rupees and burning of houses belonging to the Hindus.
- **Support:**
 - In the initial stages, the movement had the support of **Mahatma Gandhi** and other Indian nationalist leaders, but as it turned violent they distanced themselves from it.
- **Collapse:**
 - By the end of 1921, the rebellion was crushed by the British who had raised a special battalion, the Malabar Special Force for the riot.
- **Wagon Tragedy:**
 - In November 1921, **67 Moplah prisoners were killed** when they were being transported in a closed freight wagon from Tirur to the Central Prison in Podanur. They died of suffocation. This event is called the Wagon Tragedy.

What were the Reasons behind the Mapillah Revolt?

- **Non-Cooperation & Khilafat Movement:**
 - The trigger of the uprising came from the **Non-Cooperation Movement** launched by the Congress in 1920 along with the Khilafat agitation.
 - The anti-British sentiment fuelled by these agitations affected the Muslim Mapillahs.
- **New Tenancy Laws:**
 - After the death of **Tipu Sultan in 1799** in the Fourth Anglo-Mysore War, Malabar had come under British authority as part of the Madras Presidency.
 - The British had **introduced new tenancy laws** that tremendously favoured the landlords known as Janmis and instituted a far more exploitative system for peasants than before.
 - The new laws **deprived the peasants of all guaranteed rights to the land**, share in the produce they earlier got and in effect rendered them landless.

[**Source: TH**](#)

