



Moplah Rebellion

Why in News

Recently, a political leader claimed that the [Moplah rebellion](#), also known as the **Mappila riots, of 1921** was one of the first manifestations of the [Taliban](#) mindset in India.

Key Points

▪ 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.

▪ 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.

▪ The Revolt:

- **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 Mappillah 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.

▪ Reasons:

- **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.

- **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.

Major Pre-Independence Agrarian Revolts

Santhal Rebellion (1855-56)	The Santhals take global pride in the Santhal rebellion where over 1,000 Santhals and leaders of Sidho and Kanho Murmu rose against domination and battled against the vast East India Company (The Britishers).
Indigo Revolt (1859-60)	It was a revolt by the farmers against British planters who had forced them to grow indigo under terms that were greatly unfavourable to the farmers.
Pabna Uprisings (1872-1875)	It was a resistance movement against the oppression of the zamindars . It originated in the Yusufshahi pargana, which is now the Sirajganj district within greater Pabna, Bangladesh.
Deccan Riots (1875)	The Deccan peasants uprising was directed mainly against the excesses of the Marwari and Gujarati money lenders . The ryots suffered heavy taxation under the Ryotwari system . The land revenue was also raised by 50% in 1867.
Pagri Sambhal Movement (1907)	It was a successful farm agitation that forced the British government to repeal three laws related to agriculture. Bhagat Singh's uncle Ajit Singh was the force behind this agitation.
Peasant Movement in Oudha (1918-1922)	It was led by Baba Ramchandra , a Sanyasi, who had earlier been to Fiji as an indentured laborer. He led a peasant's movement in Awadh against Talukdars and Landlords. He demanded reduction of rent, abolition of Begar and the boycott of landlords .
Champaran Movement (1917-18)	The peasantry on the indigo plantations in the Champaran district of Bihar was excessively oppressed by the European planters and compelled to grow indigo on at least 3/20th of their land and sell it at prices fixed by the planters. In 1917, Mahatma Gandhi reached Champaran and defied the orders of district officials for leaving Champaran .
Peasant Agitation in Kheda (1918)	It was chiefly directed against the Government . In 1918, the crops failed in the Kheda district of Gujarat but the government refused to remit land revenue and insisted on its full collection . Gandhiji along with Sardar Vallabhai Patel supported the peasants and advised them to withhold payment of revenues till their demand for its remission was met.

Moplah Rebellion (1921)	The Moplahs were the Muslim tenants inhabiting the Malabar region where most of the landlords were Hindus. Their grievances centred around lack of security of tenure, high rents, renewal fees and other oppressive exactions. The Moplah movement merged with the ongoing Khilafat agitation.
Bardoli Satyagraha (1928)	It was a movement in the independence struggle led by Sardar Vallabhai Patel for the farmers of Bardoli against the unjust raising of taxes.

[Source: IE](#)

PDF Refernece URL: <https://www.drishtias.com/printpdf/moplah-rebellion>