



# 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 Moplahs 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 Mappilah 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

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

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

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