

UNIT 21 – UPSC - Moplah Rebellion

India's History : Modern India : Moplah (Muslim) rebellion in Malabar : 1921

Moplah Rebellion



The history of Mujahid movement in Malabar goes back to the mid-1920s after the fall of Ottoman Empire and Khilafat in Turkey. In 1921, the Malabar Muslims, known as Moplahs, started a rebellion against the British raj that they treated as enemies of Islam. The British suppressed the agitation of Moplah Muslims in connivance with the Hindu landlords and deported some leaders of the rebellion to Andaman Islands. The leaderless mob had been floating aimlessly. In early 1940s, the Indian National Congress veterans like Late Mr. Abdurehiman, and even Mahatma Gandhi termed the rebellion as "Freedom Struggle." But some myopic communal historians depicted it as an "anti-Hindu aggression," quoting some isolated incidents from here and there in their apparent bid to give the Movement a communal hue.

The Moplahs were illiterate and in their perception English was the language of their enemy and hence education in that language a taboo. They hated even their mother tongue, Malayalam, which they viewed the language of upper-caste Brahmin landlords who treated Moplah Muslims and other lower-caste communities as slaves solely to work in their paddy fields, rear cattle, and do all other manualwork on a pittance. Further during the Moplah rebellion, these landlords helped the British to suppress the uprising against them. On this grudge, Moplahs were reluctant to send their children to schools. Instead, the children were admitted to madrasahs run by obscurantist mullahs. A few of them could read and write Malayalam, that also exclusively written in Arabic script only. The Muslim periodicals, had very few readers, since they were printed in the script of Arabic-Malayalam.

It was during this time that some educated Muslim youths, who had been influenced by the views of Wahabi Movement, came forward to persuade these obscurantist parents to send their children to schools and get them educated. Gradually, the Muslim community in Malabar, who had been immersed in steep poverty, illiteracy, ignorance, and superstitions, could grasp the value of education and the importance of their mother tongue, Malayalam and also the official language, English. Education gave them a new status. The children of the bigot parents were clever, mature and vigilant in fortifying the dignity of their community and the country. Often they proved as real patriots, while comparing them with the upper-caste Brahmin landlords who had been supporting the British rulers as their protectors.

