

Malabar rebellion

August 21, 2021

In news- August 20, 2021 marked the centenary of the Malabar rebellion.

About Malabar rebellion-

- The **Malabar rebellion** of 1921 is also known by the names **Moplah riots, Mappila riots**.
- It was **uprising of Muslim tenants against British rulers and local Hindu landlords (Janmis)**.
- As the British had appointed high caste Hindus in positions of authority to get their support, this led to the protest turning against the Hindus.
- It began on August 20, 1921 and went on for several months marked by many bouts of bloodstained events.
- It has often been perceived as one of the first nationalist uprisings in Southern India.
- For many scholars, the rebellion is primarily a peasant revolt against the colonial government.
- The heavy-handed suppression of the Khilafat Movement by the colonial government was met by resistance in the Eranad and Valluvanad *taluks* of Malabar.
- In the initial stages, the movement had the support of Mohandas Gandhi and other Indian nationalist leaders, and a number of clashes took place between Khilafat volunteers and other religious communities, but the violence soon spread across the region.
- The main leaders of the rebellion were Ali Musliyar, Variankunnath Kunjahammad Haji, Sithi Koya Thangal, M. P. Narayana Menon, Chembrasery Thangal, K. Moideen Kutty Haji, Kappad Krishnan Nair, Konnara Thangal, Pandiyatt Narayanan Nambeesan, and Mozhikunnath Brahmadathan Nambudiripad.

British response to rebellion-

- The colonial government took a heavy-handed approach towards the rebellion.
- Colonial troops were sent to the area and martial law imposed.
- One of the most noteworthy events during the rebellion later came to be known as the “**Wagon Tragedy**”, in which 67 out of a total of 90 Mappila prisoners destined for the Central Prison in Podanur suffocated in a closed railway goods wagon.

Impact-

- The rebellion of Mappilas inspired by religious ideology and a conception of an alternative system of administration by the Khilafat government dealt a blow to the nationalist movement in Malabar.
- The exaggerated accounts of the rebellion engendered a counter campaign in other parts of the country against ‘fanaticism’ of Muslims.
- The thrust of the post-rebellion Muslim reform movement in Malabar was a rigorous campaign against orthodoxy.

Land ownership in Malabar-

- Malabar’s agricultural system was historically based on a hierarchy of privileges, rights and obligations for all principal social groups.
- The **Jenmi (Janmis)**, consisting mainly of the **Namboothiri Brahmins and Nair chieftains**, were the highest level of the hierarchy, and a class of people given hereditary land grants by the *Naduvazhis* or rulers’.
- The Verumpattakkarar, generally Thiyya and Mappila classes, cultivated the land but were also its part-proprietors under the *kanakkarar*.
- These classes were given a *Verum Pattam* (Simple Lease) of the land that was typically valid for one year.
- According to custom, they were also entitled to one-third or an equal share of the net produce.