

MALABAR SPECIAL POLICE FORMULATION AND SUBSEQUENT AMALGAMATION: AN EXPLANATION IN TERMS OF COLONIAL MODERNITY AND MICHELLE FOUCAULT'S THEOREM

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Received: 09 Dec 2018

Accepted: 17 Dec 2018

Published: 28 Dec 2018

ABSTRACT

History now and then can be considered as the interplay of various factors, primarily negative and positive. This aspect is very much evident in anything which one tends to research or ponder into hitherto unexplored realms of knowledge pertaining to a certain period or event having dire historical significance. The same is applicable to rebellions and suppression, not only confined to a certain area but also in other regions thereby encompassing the whole world. However, this phenomenon is prevalent among once-colonized nations during the imperialist phase. Most of these colonies are independent today, proving their restless struggle against the authoritarian regimes (imperialist nations) to regain back their integrity and freedom. Among these nations who struggled for their ultimate freedom India attains a predominant position as it was colonized by various other countries for more than three centuries devaluing its humans and exploiting its sources completely making it difficult for their future generations to revive and proclaim a position for itself in the world and catch up with the advancing phase. Hence, the struggles portrayed by the inmates of India to get rid of British yoke deserve special mention in this regard. Among such struggles pertaining to national movement, Malabar rebellion attains primordial role as the same into being as a result of various ideologies influencing the same society in different ways which ultimately culminated into a rebellion after the intermittent change of two ruling authorizes over the same population, namely the mysoreans and British. When the rebellion was at first initiated against they only had one thing in mind that is to suppress the rebellion with an iron hand thereby preserving their power or authority in the region of Malabar which however was ceded to them by Mysoreans. For this purpose, they formulated an efficient force by name Malabar Special Police using the prospects of Colonial Modernity and used them as a colonial tool by injecting communal feelings (Nair MSP force against Mappila Muslims) in them every now and then. MSP became successful in curbing the rebellion though they had to resort to violence as a part of the endgame. After the rebellion was over the same force was utilized to curb many minor and major outbreaks in India from time to time until its amalgamation to the mainstream police force in the year 1956. Curbing of the Naxalite movement can be considered as one of the major achievements of Malabar Special Police in the post independent era of India. The research paper, however, attempts to delineate the various phases starting from its origin, evolution and final amalgamation in terms or viewpoint of various theories, concepts and ideologies radically influencing its entire course and allowing one to view the entire set of events from a brand new perspective.

KEYWORDS: *Agrarian, Colonial Modernity, Foucault, India, Kerala, Malabar, Malabar Special Police, Naxalite, Political Ideologies, Power, Strata, Strategy*

INTRODUCTION

Malabar Special Police vis-a-vis MSP was formulated and reorganised based on certain criterions mainly thrusting upon the need of the time when viewed from the British Colonial masters who governed our nation for a much longer period of time. This in fact, can be viewed as a by-product of colonial modernity which in essence denotes a critical engagement with the present time based on its characteristic difference from the previous epochs and its potentiality to produce change. The term modernity claims its origin to say late fifth century CE in Europe. This very concept expresses itself through different dimensions, of which one is colonial modernity stating the changes that crept in ever since the inception of colonial rule in a certain region leading to significant transitions in the society. Varying changes that happened in the Malabar society can be explained in terms of this theory. The duality offered by this particular theory played a crucial role in the events that changed the course of history as such. Political situations that existed at that point of time also influenced to develop certain ideologies that further led to the formation of strategies to protect and maintain the law and order of a certain place or to contain an angry mob from overthrowing the existing power apparatus forever. It was the conglomeration of these theories that led to the ultimate formulation of a force that can ensure the same. However, ever since its formation only one theory guided its course and that theory was none other than the theory of Michel Foucault stating about the power¹ and the measures one needs to take to exercise those powers in a disciplined manner. Further Michel Foucault also attempts to provide a clear cut picture about the freedom of people and the way it need to be channeled in a “ righteous” manner using a force most probably a police force ensuring this through the ever existing process of “ crime and punishment system”. Likewise towards the end when Malabar Special Police completed its main task of suppressing the rebellion it came in direct conflict with the ideologies of Naxalites ²who were anti-feudal in character and held on themselves close to the ideological concept of existentialism leading them to resort to most violent measures history had ever seen. However, the same can be viewed as a reaction against the atrocities that were conducted against the landlords with the help of administrators and the force that were in fact supposed to protect their rights rather than denying it by siding with unjust perpetrators. Hence it is pretty much clear that it was various theories that monitored the entire course of events leading to the formation and its final amalgamation in the year 1956.

POLITICAL AGENDAS AND PRE-REBELLION MALABAR

Pre- rebellion Malabar was a bone of contention as far as the political authorities and their ideologies were concerned. First of it was under local rulers and later things began to drastically change as it came under the control of Mysoreans as a part of their occupation in this region. Their administration was much more favorable to Mappila Muslims who formed major portion of the society who took the professions related to agriculture. In short, they were part and parcel of the agrarian society that existed in Malabar prior to the mysorean occupation. However, with the arrival of mysoreans the control of agrarian society directly came under the control of government which was mostly enjoyed by Nair landlords. Another important cause of the disturbances in Malabar was the profound changes that came upon society in general and the Brahmin and the Nayar communities in particular, as a result of the Mysorean occupation.³ This political ideology depicted by mysoreans by taking the power away from Hindus and providing more power to Muslim mappilas created a rift in the society mostly based on communal feelings. This however got further aggravated when Malabar was ceded to British by the treaty of Srirangapattanam where political control over this region was transferred by Tipu Sultan to British owing to a defeat at the hands of the latter. This particular change seriously affected the very nature of the society as the mappilas were once again devoid of their basic rights. As we see in Malabar, the most undiluted form of the highest,

the most abstract religion of Southern India, side by side with the most entirely primitive. The *Nayars* have much of both.⁴ Further, the old system was brought back where feudal lords played a crucial role in exploiting the farmers and this time it was with the help and aid of the British. Thus, a rampant change in the political ideologies and the corresponding agendas seriously affected the chemistry of the society paving the way to a rebellion initiated by the masses against the British and authoritarian figures who acted on behalf of them namely Nair feudal lords. The changes thus made led to a series of repercussions in the form of agrarian outbreaks from 1800 to say early 1900s. These oppositions were however curbed with an iron hand as they lacked continuity; proper leadership and planning. It can be considered as 'single acts of resentment' from the part of the agrarian mob from Malabar.

BRITISH ADMINISTRATION AND FORMATION OF MSP AS A DIRECT RESULT OF COLONIAL MODERNITY

British administration in colonies like India and the erstwhile world were a clear depiction of modernity as such transgressing the whole social concepts projecting out a kind of dualism that tends to explain each and every aspect of the society as such. This very part sometimes favored certain individuals while obstructed the usual course of others. Whatever may be the case it did impact the society in the dimensions which a normal human can only imagine about. Though Malabar at present, is mentioned to areas lying between Palakkad and Kazargode, it mainly constituted of northern states of Kerala and some coastal regions of Karnataka when it was under the jurisdiction of British East India Company.⁵ In fact, more regions were added to it after Anglo-Mysore war, which eventually resulted in the culmination of modern Malabar ever since the formation or reorganization of Kerala state. There are many controversies that exist regarding the real agendas behind the creation of Malabar Special Police and the way in which it served the colonial powers in suppressing the rebellion. There is absolutely no doubt in the fact that it was created to safeguard the British interest in Malabar. However, it also helped to suppress the rebellion which went completely out of control such that a rebellion which started as resentment against the British rule in the Malabar region finally ended up in community conflict and atrocities have done against innocent children and women creating an utterly chaotic and difficult situation in the same. In fact, The Mappila 'outbreaks' could be viewed as expression of powerful resistance to the British political set up brought about as a part and parcel of colonial modernity which empowered the *jenmies* and *kanamdars*, who most often represented the upper strata of the Hindu caste hierarchy, to oppress and exploit the cultivating tenants through rack-renting, high renewal fees and frequent evictions.⁶ One of the reasons behind the creation of Malabar Special Police was to safeguard the revenue settlement policies followed by British in Malabar. Ever since the time Malabar came into the hands of British as an end result of Anglo-Mysore wars, they began to follow a revenue policy which led to widespread discontent among the peasants, especially the Muslim/ Mappila peasants. These measures which they adopted were totally against the policies followed by peasants of Malabar under Mysorean hegemony. The group of lower castes who were thus compelled to accept these rigid separations and subordination included all of those who cultivated or worked as agricultural laborers on the land controlled by members of the upper castes.⁷

This particular force was in fact used as a colonial tool to carry out the biddings of British in Malabar region which however was mostly related with revenue collections and suppression of any kind of rebellious activities against them. For this very reason, they could not really work on the part of justice and ensure that rights and freedom being protected and preserved as stated by Michel Foucault throughout his theorem. Malabar Special Police acted as if they were

some private owned special task force, who were entrusted to get the job done at any cost possible without failure. Even the selection procedure of the same bear's testimony to this fact as they mostly recruited those personals who possessed good physical features but at the same time were illiterate as they don't want anyone to think before they carry out their orders mercilessly. More so, to inject more communal feelings and hatred among each other they mostly recruited men from Nair community to fight their Muslim counterparts. The strategy of British that stressed on playing one against the other worked as one can witness MSP seeking their revenge mercilessly against the civilian population in the later stages of the rebellion Peasants had to suffer a lot of harsh treatments from the part of landlords as well. These, however, can be ascribed to colonial modernity. Apart from changes affecting the material conditions of social life, modernity implies a rupture or a distortion in the continuity of established beliefs, customs, attitudes and the hierarchy of norms and values that determine the nature of social interactions.⁸ This finally led to frequent Mappila outbreaks from 1836 to 1898, which became unbearable for the then existing British force to handle, which eventually led to the formation of Malabar Police Force as a para-military force by 1884. It is stated that almost 31 minor and major outbreaks eventually took place against the policies of British regime. As an after effect, Madras government appointed Thomas L. Strange as the special commissioner in 1852 to investigate the nature of Mappila outbreaks that took place in Malabar so far.⁹ Besides, Logan's report on agrarian relations of Malabar played an important role in understanding the backwardness pertaining to this field as well as their internal issues related to poverty. This further helped him as well as the British to put forward certain suggestions to elevate their pathetic situation, which however could not attain success as desired by the authority. One of the main objectives of colonial powers was to preserve their interest along with that of landlords and local chieftains. They were acting on behalf of the British even in collecting taxes or in other activities related with the execution of orders for them. Hence, when a problem arose in the way of peasant unrest and resultant outbreaks, it became the sole responsibility of the British to uphold the interest of those who serve them in every way possible. On account of their total non-acquaintance with the customary law and the mounting exigencies of the political situation in Malabar, the early British administrators had to adopt certain make-shift arrangements in the political, judicial and revenue administration.¹⁰ As far as the law that was followed in Malabar region is considered, it was at first based upon ancient scriptures, customs, beliefs etc., however, ever since it came under the sway of British power they enacted a law system which they usually practiced on other areas that came under their control. As a matter of fact, their laws were customary in nature and were more related to revenue policies. Furthermore, they took a keen interest in enacting Cornwallis system, first established in 1793 and subsequently extended to Madras in 1802. Cornwallis was bent on eradicating the evil effects of the old system of administration and introduced an altogether new system, based on distinctive features such as separation of revenue and judicial functions of district collector, inauguration of regular system of appeals, entrusting of magisterial duties to judge etc., which indirectly initiated the formation of a new special police force based on new set of rules formulated by judicature under British regime. Malabar, in the late eighteenth century, was indeed the domain of violent responses from indigenous people or rebels, especially some local rulers and Mappila chiefs.¹¹ This was another reason behind the creation of Malabar Police Force as if answering the call of that particular time period.

MICHEL FOUCAULT'S THEOREM IN RELATIVE TO THE REBELLIOUS EVENTS OF MALABAR

According to Foucault, the concept of freedom is an elusive one in philosophy. It lies at the center of at least two very different sets of philosophical problems. One concern the metaphysical status of human beings. The other concerns

their political status.¹² the concepts stated above came in collision with each other or can be considered as the interplay between the both when it came to the events that transpired in Malabar region. People insisted on freedom from the metaphysical viewpoint however it went in direct contrast with those restrictions in the society set forth by the British authoritarian regime who were governing them at that point in time. Movements Khilafat inspired them to against the authority stating about the injustice of the former. This movement, which started as an emotion in support of Turkey and began to spread widely all over across the Muslim world. These emotions began to influence the Indians through the anti-British activities of Muhammad Ali and Shaukat Ali, popularly known as Ali Brothers. These emotions fostered anti-British feelings in the minds of people. In Malabar, as the majority of the population consist of peasants and that also of Mappila peasants, it began to take a different turn in Malabar, which was fatal enough to affect their control over this region. Thus, when Malabar Special Police was formed, they were given specific instructions to curb the spread of such kind of feelings among the masses of Malabar. Moreover, Congress heldperiodical meetings to formulate plans for nationalist movements which however became a real headache for the British Mahatma Gandhi also played a pivotal role in this, as he championed the cause of Khilafat¹³ movement and put it on the same ground as that of Non-co-operation movement. In fact, by supporting the Khilafat movement he aimed at building up a Hindu-Muslim unity among the people of India..This in turn, proved fatal for British who often played one community against the other to maintain their rule over specific areas. Educated class began to view the policies of colonial powers critically. They tried to instigate the feelings of people in Malabar against the British. Meetings also played its own part in raising the mass consciousness against the British. One such meeting is that of the Manjeri Conference held on April 28th, 1920 which influenced the locals especially Mappila Muslims to fight for their nation against alien domination. As a result, Tenur, Vengara, Pulikkal, Tirur, Tirurangadi, Mambad all these places witnessed the organization of such Khilafat conferences. British were left with no option rather than tackle the same using legislation and the execution of the same using MSP forces without a second thought on any kind of orders given by their colonial masters.

Foucault's theory of power suggests that power is omnipresent, that is, power can be found in all social interactions. As he put this in 1977," it seems to me that power is 'always already there, that one is never 'outside' it played one against the other to preserve their colonial interests. This statement simply means that power plays a crucial role in all social relations weather it is in containing it or expanding the same.¹⁴ British used the same in containing the same by simply using power and its essential components of power to suppress an insurgence from the part of a united front of Hindus and Muslims united by a national cause as such. When they saw these two communities uniting under the banner of Khilafat and Non-co-operation, they soon tried to disrupt such meetings and conferences which can bring them together as a united force against the British. Besides, they also began to bar religious meetings as it can add more support to rebellious activities, initiated by their religious leaders. The Thirurangadi mosque, popularly known as the *kizhakkepalli*, had become an important religious center and had gained considerable prestige and popularity under Ali Musaliyar. The Mappilas who assembled for the morning *namaz* found to their dismay that their entry was barred by the army and the police.¹⁵Even during the rebellion they played the same trick by deploying more Nayars in the force for creating communal hatred against each other. They were also able to create a perception among the mappilaMuslims that Hindus were helping the British against the British. British controlled the economy of Malabar through revenue settlement mainly by exploitation of peasant class with the help of *jenmies*(landlords) and local chieftains. They also affected trade in the Malabar region through their profit making trade policies. They wanted to maintain this scenario as long as Malabar was

under their control. Hence, when peasants questioned their revenue policy through frequent outbreaks and defilement of their laws relating to revenue settlement, they tried to bring the situation under their control through the formation of a force by name Malabar Special Police. The severity of the rebellious activities which started right from 1836 can be witnessed from the judicial records of Madras government requesting the Inspector –General of Police to submit two proposition statements for the reorganization of the special punitive police in Malabar.¹⁶They became more powerful by suppressing the rebellion, through strategic moves and quick execution. In fact, through the declaration of martial law in the rebellion affected areas they brought it completely under their control. The entire Malabar region was left at their mercy. They suppressed it with the help of MSP force. Suppression of rebellion inflicted a fear among the minds of people about the British and their harsh and severe methods they will deploy towards anyone who stands and raise their voice against them. Sir Malcolm Hailey's report clearly states that after the rebellion, casualties neared up to 2339 with 1652 injured and rest 5995 being captured as captives.¹⁷ In fact, the methods they used to suppress the rebellion went out of control as they attacked the rebel as if seeking revenge on them. Their atrocities never spared anyone, local women were brutally raped and children were killed mercilessly. Even the rebels were attacked and killed ruthlessly like chopping off their heads, mutilating their limbs etc. Those who were captured were also subjected to many heinous tortures. Further, the widespread misery from epidemics and famine was compounded by the excessively high land revenue demand and the coercive manner in which it was collected in Malabar.¹⁸Though these acts were totally brutal and against social and moral values, it acted as a fear factor in the minds of people and stopped them from further rebellious activities against the British. Malabar Special Police in this respect served the interest of its masters rather than that of the common people inhabiting that region thereby serving the interests of power structure as stated by Michelle Foucault.

EXISTENTIAL IDEOLOGY OF NAXALITES AND THE FORCE WHO STOOD AGAINST THEIR MOTIVES

The force that played a crucial role in suppressing the rebellion is seldom heard of after the Malabar rebellion. However, it is clearly stated that the same force that has been used as a colonial tool as part of colonial modernity was later used as one of the efficient forces in India to tackle with minor and major threats to the nation. Most of the internal outbreaks were suppressed successfully in this manner. Likewise, its huge possibilities were also utilized in suppressing Naxalites which however was a movement that emerged as a reaction against the oppressive measures adopted by landlords against the farmers and other people. Their emergence and subsequent actions can be viewed under the broad concept of existentialism. Social existence, the objectivity of ideology, can be viewed as the location in which existential ideology confronts the images that others place upon it, though it is not in this confrontation that existential ideology defines itself. The distinctively modern feature of modern India is the emergence of political philosophy and the growth of the political into the dominant discourse.¹⁹Similarly, in postulating the existential domain, not to speak of existential ideology, one assumes the freely creative character of the construction of selfhood and the world of its concern, not hampering the real truth as such. In here one needs to clearly understand that MSP was used by the ministry of Kerala to subdue the on-going trend of Naxalism which can otherwise be termed as a bloody movement that went out of control slaughtering and massacring all those who possessed land and properties despite the fact that whether they are good or bad. This finally resulted in the loss of many lives simply because of an ideology that emerged in the mindset of certain individuals who suffered immensely under the hands of feudal elites. Although the economic grievances of the peasantry played an important role in their mobilization, nationalism as an ideology considerably influenced them.²⁰The situation was

such that they were right on their part at the same time they were wrong especially when it came to the procedure of executing the same. Hence, MSP was again used to subdue it with an iron hand. In the process, there were many hunt downs, chasings and unreported killings. However, they became successful in suppressing the movement through a gradual process. Many controversies are still revolving around the incidents that procured between MSP and Naxalites or the Kerala Police Force and the way many police officials are associated with many unidentified arrests and deaths pertaining to its suppression.²¹ Finally, it remained as a force to be reckoned with until 1956 before it got amalgamated as a part of Kerala Police Force as well as Madras Police Force.

CONCLUSIONS

The entire formulation and further progress of Malabar Special Police are explained in terms of theorems, ideologies, and concepts. It's very interesting to note that before the inception of the major events it was influenced by certain political ideologies that transformed the whole society of Malabar and thereby created an invisible rift in the entire society leading to a rebellion which was hitherto a necessity of the then society as the pressure was so much building inside the society due to the influx of these two conflicting ideologies that governed over them in different phases of transition as far as entire Malabar is concerned. It was all about dealing with the issues related with a state, and reference to the origin of the state ... throw sufficient light on the importance of property, the family and caste in this respect.²² During the time period of British and the rebellion, it was all about power and its maintenance using the ultimate product of colonial modernity named Malabar Special Police. They also succeeded in this endeavor as well. In the post independent Malabar also the same force was used by the Kerala ministry to suppress minor and major outbreaks against the authority as it became famous for its innate discipline and awesome, efficiency in getting the task done exactly in the same way the authoritarian figures need it to be handled. One of the major tasks undertaken by the infamous MSP before its amalgamation is the one related with the suppression of Naxalites, who however took to arms based on certain unfavorable circumstances offered to them by the society dominated by landlords and authoritarian figures. Their part is also right when one tend to view the entire scenario from the ideology of existentialism that became the cornerstone of their fight back, as they strongly believed that their existence can only be ensured if they completely eliminate feudal lords and other rich elite who curb their rights and subsequently force slavery upon them which they never wanted to experience as they needed ultimate liberation from these clutches. However, the way they used was totally violent as they wanted to completely exterminate this section of the very society for ultimate freedom as envisioned by them. It is this time the same force that did the "impossible" from time to time came in handy and they became successful in subduing the same within a short span of time.²³ Increasingly, political and social power also began to veer towards these new strata of rural bourgeoisie and petty bourgeoisie.²⁴ Thus to conclude it is better to say that when the whole process of origin, evolution and final amalgamation of Malabar Special Police, is viewed through specific theories and concepts, it gives a totally different picture of the events that took place in this particular time period of history. It is at this very juncture that one will understand that history is more than what it meets to the naked eye, transfiguring the immense possibilities underlying the same.

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