

HUSSAIN RANDATHANI

Com. A.K GOPALAN
ON
MALABAR REBELLION
OF 1921

Speech of A.K Gopalan at a meeting held at Perinthalmanna on the 25 August 1946.[Taken from the court proceedings, Kozhikode Archives].
Following the speech he was arrested and sent to jail

Friends, I have so far spoken mainly on the purpose of celebrating this day. I propose now to speak only about some doubts relating to it. There have been several movements in this country at different times for winning the freedom of this country. As regards August 9, it is said that we should recall to our minds the events that have happened in this country since August 9. For, several things have taken place in this country for the freedom of this land. We have not forgotten the happenings after 9 August 1942 for the freedom of this country. Likewise, we have not forgotten four comrades of Kayyur were hanged. So also we have not forgotten the execution of Bhagat Singh. Many people of this country have been locked up in jails. We have not forgotten that women and men of this country have been shot dead. The Jallian Wallah Bagh massacre took place in this country some years ago. A European gentleman O' Dyer shot and killed several people of this country at a place called Jallian Wallah Bagh. When that gentleman was asked why he stopped shooting he replied that ammunition had run out. We have not forgotten that. Similarly Bhagat Singh was hanged. Some time ago British imperialism sent to the gallows, four patriots

known as the Kayyur comrades. We know about all those. We cherish all those who courted imprisonment in this country for the sake of freedom as patriots.

Twenty five years ago there arose from our folk an ordinary Muslim Ali Musliyar who for the country's freedom carried on a mighty struggle, in Kerala against British rule, against slavery and injustice. If for the freedom of this country anybody in Kerala had been able to put up a bold fight against the British empire, if anybody in Kerala can claim to be brave and determined, it is these brave and poor Muslim peasants, who facing guns and cannons, defied the white soldiery and even their mechanized divisions as if they didn't care a straw for them and carried on a brave struggle for freedom. These Moplah brethren of ours we should never forget. The August revolution consisted of pulling down telegraph wires, removing rails and burning of police stations, but the Moplah friends of Malabar under Ali Musliyar and Variath Kunhahammad Haji had a brave encounter with white troops at the place called Pookkoottur. The British imperialist government had guns cannons, planes and ships, But whatever they may have had, our brave Mappila brethren courageously, prepared themselves to fight, saying that they had the strength and courage for it. Those unarmed Muslim friends openly fought the white troops and established their rule in two Taluks of Malabar for nearly three months. They expelled the British empire from that place and ordinary peasants and labour friends carried on the administration there. The 'Quit India Resolution', thus they put into operation for about three months in 1921. It was Ali Musliyar who did it. They demonstrated that if the people of two taluks join together, not all the Gurkha troops, white troops, the police and the officials together will be able to oppress them. Our unity gave us so much strength. Without guns, without planes, without spears, Ali Musliyar was able to rule for nearly three months. Without remembering that, we shall not be fit for the struggle for freedom. Without realizing its merit, you will not be able to conduct a mighty struggle for the freedom of the country. That is why we speak and feel proud of 1921. Whoever you may be, whether Hindu or Muslim, if you are anti imperialist and if you feel that this incompetent British rule should be ended, you should learn the lesson of the brave struggle carried on by the patriotic youth of this country in 21. Without studying the circumstances of that struggle very well, it will not be possible to put into execution your direct action. It will not be possible to put an end to British rule. That is why we say that the good lesson of 21 should be learnt. The Moplah friends of this country were not BAs in those days. They did not have much of school education either. They did not have the Khan Bahadur title. But they were brave men. They did not make speeches in those days for the freedom of the country. But they faced the guns, they faced cannons, they faced our officials, and demonstrated that guns and weapons are all as straw before the might of man. They were able to rule for three months. Can this be forgotten? Does this not deserve to be commemorated? This is what we have to ask the Congress friends who sing the praises of August revolution. What we have to say is this: that if the Direct Action launched by the Muslim League of 15 August is to be a (real) action it should be directed against the British empire. We want to tell Muslim League leaders that if they want to carry on Direct Action against the British empire they should learn well the lesson of the struggle 21. That was the right struggle. There was direct action in Kerala in 21. It should not be forgotten. Every year you should recall to mind the struggle of 21. The struggle carried on by the people of this place who may be reckoned in crores, in thousands our Muslim brethren, for the freedom of this country against the oppression of the land lords and the wagon tragedy that took place in that struggle ought not to be forgotten.

Therefore, we say it is 1921 that we are observing. In 21 the people carried a direct action, an armed revolt for the freedom of this country, for ending the hardships of man, for affording protection to the folk of this country from jennis and for putting an end to the acts of highhandedness resorted to by the

police, the officials and the jenmis. While speaking of the armed revolt of 1921, let me ask our Congress friends who lay much stress on non violence what the August revolution was. It was cutting of wires, removal of rails. Similarly high handed officials had been attacked. Some of them had died. Was it non violent? Even Pandit Nehru says that we should remember the August revolution. If the Congress considers the August revolution, a struggle against the British Empire, why do they commend or keep up the memory of the struggle of 21 similarly. There are certain reasons to refer to that Malabar rebellion, Moplah rebellion and so forth. When thousands of Muslims prepared themselves to die for the freedom of this country that campaign happened to be characterized in that manner only on account of anti Muslim feeling.

The government of these days (Khilafat) was a government of the poor. It was a government by the labourers and peasants. Those who belonged to the camp of Variath Kunhahammadaji were peasants. There were rich people there. There were capitalists. But who was carrying on the administration? Variam Kunnath Kunhahammad Haji, a poor cart man, a man who had not passed any examination. But he was the leader of the people, the leader of the poor. Officials who were BAs and MAs saluted him. He gave orders to them. There were no officials taking bribes. The poor got protection. Judges whether Hindu or Muslim gave decrees without communal bias. There were several stories of poor people received protection irrespective of their belonging Hindus or Muslims from the government under Variyam Kunnath Kunhahammad Haji. He said to officials: "You are educated people. You are people who take bribes. But under my government the British way of administration is not enough. You should not take bribes. Variyam Kunnath Kunhahammad Haji is ruling the country. Therefore the people should be protected." We are said to be stirring up riots between Hindus and Muslims. No man of sense, no patriot will stir up riots between Hindus and Muslims. We do stir up riots but they are not communal riots. Riots against whom then? Against this useless British rule. We are inciting the people of the country to rebel against those rulers who think that they have guns and swords, killed poor Muslims in what was known as the Wagon Tragedy. Hindus and Muslims should not cut each other's throats.

None of the theories of Non Violence will prevail hereafter. If the people as a whole make up their minds to resist the acts of highhandedness from whatever quarter this may come, whether from police, capitalists or jenmis, it will certainly possible to put an end to them in this country quickly. And it will (not) be possible to live comfortably. Therefore when I mention 21, when I ask you to celebrate its anniversary, that is to say the Pookoottur Day, you shout Zindabad to our Mappila brethren of 1921. If there have been great patriots in this country, they are those these Moplah brethren. (We will keep) alive the memory of those who in 1921 for the sake of this country's freedom got ready to fight before the British guns, and rifles fighting injustice and highhandedness of land lords and officials. Then many of the good youth of this land braved soldiers' gun in the cause of this country's freedom. You and I have not done such a thing so far. It may be that we have given lectures, courted imprisonment and claim to be brave.

When rifles and cannons are fired, how many do you think there will be to march forward against them unarmed, seize the cannon and fight back? only very few. When such brave men waged an anti-imperialist struggle for the sake of their country and with a view to put an end to the excesses of landlords and the police, that was the right struggle, the memory of which we should keep up. We will say this a hundred times. We will say it even if we are hanged for it. For, if anybody deserves to be called patriots, if anybody has done real fighting, if people have fought for this country with unflinching courage, such patriots are our Moplah brethren. There is no doubt about it. The Congressmen who do not think of it are

not patriots. Many good lads faced the gun and met with their death in the cause of the country's freedom. Remember them. Our people should copy good features of that struggle and be careful to avoid the wrong ones. There will be no riots at communist's bidding. Who is there to stir up riots? It is pandit Nehru. He said to the league recently "either you will perish or we* * * * *"

it is not we, that incite people to riots. It is the congress leaders and League leaders. They are interested in doing it. We are not. For among communists, there is no jenmi, no capitalist, no rich man. In Muslim league there are capitalists and jenmis. So also in the Congress. At Calicut Badushah Sahib evicts poor Muslim tenants from several houses. A capitalist is a capitalist, whoever he may be, whether Samuel Aron or Bathal Sait, Hindu or Muslim, Congress or League. The object of the capitalist is to exact work out of the poor people of this country, to whichever religion they may belong, to pay them minimum wages and to make starve their family.

The Congress capitalist and League capitalist, the Congress jenmi and League jenmi are creating split between the Congress labourer and League labourers, between Hindu labourers and Muslim labourers and between the poor Hindu folk and Muslim folk to sub serve their selfish interests for British capitalists and Indian capitalists, are at loggerheads with each other. The Indian capitalist thinks: "I want the Railway. The British capitalist should not be allowed to plunder the poor people of the country wholesale. I too must have a share". The field of exploitation should not be left exclusively to the British. The Congress and League capitalists say that they too want to exploit.* * * If anybody in this country has waged an anti-imperialist struggle for the freedom of this country, if anybody has resorted to direct action it was in 1921 and it was by the Moplah friends of ernad and valluvanad taluks. At the same time one or two things should not be forgotten, that is the difference between 21 and 46. In 21 the country was in a difficult plight that followed the great World War of 1914-18. There was trouble.

There was shortage of rice. Cloth was not available. Further the new, Khilafath Movement had been launched. The Hindus and Muslims had been organized as one body. In 46, just see what has been happening in the country for the last eight months or one year. Indians of the Indian navy, not only Moplahs, but all people, one morning removed the union jack from their ships and foisted the congress and the league flags in its place and told the Britisher: "You must quit india. We should be given the same pay as is being given to the whites." So saying they started direct action. You must take note of the fact that even British troops strike work for our freedom. The M.S.P struck work; They struck work saying that they were not prepared to go about all over the country and shoot and beat people for Rs.21. Two thousand men of M.S.P who had struck work were dismissed by the government. The day before yesterday it was seen from the newspaper that the reserve police at Tinnevely had struck work. Thus policemen struck work; postal employees struck work; 10 lakhs of railway workers said that they were prepared to strike work. Then the government said that a compromise should be effected. Now, the non-gazetted officers who had been till now wearing coats and ties are now going about in madras shouting zindabad. Officers excepting the European Collector, government officials drawing salaries of Rs.200 and Rs.300, the police and M.S.P are ready to strike work. Why? Is striking work rioting? It is no longer possible to suffer the increasing pangs of hunger. Riot has broken out in the stomach of starving. All these strikes are the consequences of people having been driven mad by hunger. There are no riots except such riots.

Why are we shadowed? (They) are going to arrest us. We are being prosecuted. Black marketing is going on daily. There is no prosecution. Now people say, "Please do not ask us to detect black marketing. We detected black marketing and now black marketers take revenge on us". Pandit Nehru said that black marketers should be hanged. One need not go to the extent of hanging them. Will they be punished? Alagappa Chettiyar was caught when taking four lakhs of rupees worth of cloth to the black market. Was he punished? What then is the government for? Jenmies and capitalists should be punished. The government should have no fears in the matter. When railway employees strike work, the police and M.S.P should not be sent against them. There should be strength and courage enough not to send the police to the help of a capitalist European. If you cannot do good, will you refrain from doing devil? This is our only request to Congress. We have respect for the Congress. We are called traitors to the country. have we not taken part in the congress movement? but today we are not in the congress. Today Muthiah Chettiar is the congress representative. What will happen if Muthiah Chettiar goes to rule the country? Black markets! The Rajah of Bobbili got a meeting addressed by Srimathi Sarojini Naidu, trampled on by an elephant. And today he has been selected by the congress as its representative. The Congress does not want us.

in 1946 the whole country is prepared to do anything to win the freedom of the country. But the Congress and the league must give the lead. Instead, the Congress and the League stand apart like bitter enemies. If the congress says that it is day time now the League will say that it is night. You must unite. Are you not the people of this country? Can you not unite against the British? The Congress and League belong to this country. Why cannot they unite?

You should honour those Muslim brethren who in 1921 died for the freedom of the country. You must proclaim them as brave men who laid down their lives for the cause of freedom. Do you love your country? Are you enemies of British imperialism? If so respect those people who fought then. You should not forget Varian Kunnath Kunhammad Haji. He ruled the country for about three months. Though the British were here, no European had gone to that land, for 3 months. Hajjar knew how to carry on the administration. It must be done without harassing the people and without taking bribes. He said that government should be for the good of the people. The Congress and League should realize this. The lesson of those days should be learnt. The British government is our common enemy. The Congress and League should not fight between themselves. Calcutta is a striking instance in point. Saying that they are against the government, Hindus and Muslims fight against each other. Damages have been estimated to the tune of 5 crores of rupees. It is said that a large number of people have died. Congressmen and Leaguers cannot walk on the roads. The white soldier walks the roads smoking cigar. The Britisher walks along the streets of Calcutta trampling on your dead bodies. Will the Congress leaders and League leaders learn this lesson? * * * *Why do (people) strike work? Is it at the bidding of communists that persons getting salaries of RS.300 strike work? It is impossible for men to get on. There are the haves and have nots, the capitalist and the labourer, the jenmi and the peasant in this country. Strikes are the result. People do not get a living wage. They insist on getting it. You people must say: "Oh leaders, We have great respect for you, but if you do not care to unite, we shall unite, the poor labourers and peasants will unite. And then we shall carry on the affairs of the country". This is what you should say. Otherwise the anti-imperialist struggle will become an internecine struggle and our people will fail to get freedom. There will be unemployment in the land. There will be scarcity of cloth and rice. We shall not get anything. This is the lesson of 21. If there be any aggression today, It will not be 21 that will follow but 46.

In the present railway strike it is direct action that we are going to carry out. We shall return blow for blow. If there be need to resort to arms, we shall take up arms also. Otherwise mere satyagraha is not going to achieve anything here after. Did you not see what we got by the satyagraha of Gandhiji and the Congress. * * * * * We must be prepared to conduct an organized struggle, an armed struggle like the one that took place in 21. If violence is necessary, it should be used. Only those who are prepared for it need come forward. The British government resorts to violence. Then why should not we use violence? I do not at all believe in non violence. If anyone has faith in it, let him go and pursue that method. We take the lesson of the struggle of 21. Thereby it will be possible to bring the British empire to its knees. Did not Kunhammad Haji rule over two taluks for three months? Muslim peasants ruled the country. No B.A degree holder is necessary to rule the country. Comrade Ishaq is not necessary. It is the rule of the peasants that is coming. * * * * *

The organised struggle of 21 is direct action. We congratulate ourselves on it. It is only by such struggle that the freedom of the country can be won. But we must take particular care to see that it does not become a communal riot. If a united struggle is launched, riots of the kind that occurred in Calcutta cannot happen. To avoid such riots, the leaders of League and Congress should advise the people. The facts of the situation should be explained to them. I do not have much more to speak to you now. I have explained to you the object of this meeting. Some further accounts of this will be found in the columns of the *Deshabhimani*. People should purchase the copies of that paper and know them. It is not our object to stir up communal riots. We advise people that the whole country should remember those Moplah brethren who died for freedom. I have done.

s/d
Secretary to Government,
Home Department
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