

## Research Paper



## STATESMANSHIP OF TIPU SULTAN

<b>Dr.B.P.Mahesh Chandra Guru<sup>1</sup></b>	<sup>1</sup> Professor, Department of Studies in Communication and Journalism, University of Mysore, Manasagangotri, Karnataka, India
<b>Dr.Gurusiddaiah, C<sup>2</sup></b>	<sup>2</sup> Assistant Professor, Department of Studies in History, University of Mysore, Manasagangotri, Karnataka, India
<b>Dr.Sreekantaiah<sup>3</sup></b>	<sup>3</sup> Guest Faculty, Babasaheb Dr.B.R.Ambedkar Studies and Research Centre, Bangalore University, Bangalore., Karnataka, India
<b>Abhilash, M.S<sup>4</sup></b>	<sup>4</sup> Research Scholar, Department of Studies in History, University of Mysore, Manasagangotri, Karnataka, India

## ABSTRACT

The greatness of Tipu's policy rests on his firm devotion to his cause. He tried his utmost to accomplish his object by mustering up all his resources, by negotiating alliances with his neighbors and by seeking help from far-off countries. Tipu was an exceptionally talented and capable statesmen but he was unfortunately twisted by the cruelty of the pro-British. Tipu never wanted to make war on the bulk of his own subjects but he was always driven by his consciousness to improve the conditions of his people and enrich the state's exchequer. Tipu was a ruler with a difference as compared to other rulers in South India. Tipu had ushered in a new era of state capitalism to prevent any kind of privatization of economy and oppression of people much before Karl Marx. Tipu is perhaps the only native ruler who had resisted the British colonialism. An analysis of his reforms would indicate that he was revolutionary in thought and far ahead of his times as a statesman.

**KEYWORDS:** state's exchequer, statesman, Karl Marx, political alliance

## PREAMBLE

Haidar Ali and Tipu Sultan made historical efforts to liberate the Indian sub-continent from European colonialism by building political alliance and economic co-operation between Mysore State and the Persian Gulf. Tipu also successfully managed the conspiracies hatched by his adversaries in Seringapatam. Tipu lacked Haider's sober, resourcefulness and consummate ability and Nana's skillful and cunning diplomacy. Though he copied western diplomacy, he lacked their tact and shrewdness, with the result that his policy appeared brilliant, without being effective. Though his policy was dynamic and vigorous, it was not well planned and carefully executed. He exhibited great energy and courage, but lacked the necessary skill to implement his bold designs. The statesmanship of Tipu Sultan is primarily evaluated in this article on the basis of qualitative research methodology.

## CALL FOR CONFEDERACY AGAINST BRITISH

The British signed the Treaty of Mangalore in 1784 which restored the possession of territories held by them earlier. This treaty was a setback for the British and a victory for Tipu. Tipu wanted to put an end to the war and concentrate on diplomatic and developmental endeavors even though he commanded the absolute loyalty of the soldiers, and possessed both financial resources and military powers. Tipu returned back to Seringapatam and received a rousing reception from the people which he had not witnessed earlier.

Nizam Ali Khan, the Subedar of the Deccan, was in no mood, in 1785, to listen to these calls for a confederacy. He was disposed to ally himself with the Marathas in another campaign against Mysore, to keep the unruly upstart from crossing the Tungabhadra. Tipu also evinced a desire to include the Marathas in the alliance, and the Nizam himself was found by Colonel Read sending Sooraji Pandit, the Poona Vakil at



Hyderabad, with a letter to Nana Fadnavis 'to prevail on the Pant Pradhan to enter into a conference with His Highness, Tipu Sultan and the French against the English. Besides this, a truce was agreed upon with the Marathas for a period of three years and six months.

Meanwhile, by his attack on Travancore, Tipu had invited the wrath of the Company on his head and Lord Cornwallis had, by conciliation and compromise, gathered together once again the broken threads of diplomacy (Kasturi, 1999).<sup>1</sup> Tipu had developed Mysore state which was considered as the 'The terror of Leadenhall Street', the headquarters of East India Company in London.

### TIPU'S ADVENTURISM

Tipu later on turned towards Dharwar where the forces of the Nizam and the Marathas had assembled to attack him. Tipu successfully fought against these forces because of his efficient battle strategy and military power. After defeating the Marathas for the third consecutive time Tipu camped at the site where the river Tungabhadra merged into the Pala river. Tipu directed his forces towards Savanur near Hubli and Coorg and occupied them without much bloodshed in 1786. He waged a heroic war against the Nizam and the Maratha forces which were virtually taken aback. In 1787, there was a peace treaty entered into by Tipu and Marathas which made the Marathas address Tipu as *the King of Mysore*. After the treaty the Nawab of Savanur was reinstated. It was presumed that the Nizam of Hyderabad was a signatory to the treaty since he had participated in the battle against Tipu along with the Marathas.

"Looting a conquered enemy enriches a few, impoverishes the nation and dishonours the entire army. Wars must be linked to battlefields. Do not carry it to innocent civilians. Honour their women, respect their religion and protect their children and the infirm" from Tipu Sultan's decree in 1783, repeated in 1785, 1787 and possibly more often. "To quarrel with our subjects is to war with ourselves. They are our shield and our Buckler; and it is they who furnish us with all things. Reserve the hostile strength of our Empire exclusively for its foreign enemies" – from Tipu's Code of Law and Conduct, 1787. Tipu was one of those rare Indian rulers of the 18th century who refused to enter into any deals with the British East India Company against another Indian ruler. The Nizam of Hyderabad allied with the British against Tipu, and even the Marathas were persuaded to do so in the Third Anglo-Mysore war. But Tipu told the Marathas: you are not our enemy, our common enemy is the foreign invader and occupying force represented by the British East India Company. The Marathas learned their lesson, and refused to join the last war waged by the Company against Mysore, which culminated in Tipu's martyrdom (Kaur and Udayan, 2008).<sup>2</sup>

Tipu's rupture with Travancore provided the English an excuse for organizing a powerful confederacy against Mysore. Besides the Maratha chiefs, the tributaries and the refractory subjects of Tipu were induced to join the English. Cornwallis organized the confederacy apparently for the protection of an ally, the Raja of Travancore. The real aim of the confederacy was not merely the protection of company's dominions but also their extension. The Marathas joined the confederacy for different reasons. The Nizam was prompted to join the alliance by factors which had no connection with the immediate causes of the war. Tipu tried his best to disengage the Marathas and the Nizam from the English. Tipu

also attempted to defeat the English activity in Hyderabad where he had a more powerful group of supporters. Hence, strange circumstances brought about a powerful confederacy which proved far-reaching in its effects (Ali, 1982).<sup>3</sup> The scholar has remarked about the confederacy hatched by the British against Tipu in 1790.

### TIPU'S DEVOTION TO CAUSE

The slightest injury to his rights would provoke him to take dangerous decisions. Tipu always had border disputes with his neighbors, which strained his relations with them. He never broke any treaty engagements and never failed to fulfill his promises. He never indulged in the pursuit of those selfish and narrow policies which his neighbors adopted. He never conspired with any foreign power to subvert their power. On the other hand he struggled hard to rally them on his side for the liberation of the country. While Tipu adopted a forceful, nationalistic and enlightened policy, his neighbors lacked boldness and foresight and pursued narrow and selfish policy. The greatness of Tipu's policy rests on his firm devotion to his cause. He tried his utmost to accomplish his object by mustering up all his resources, by negotiating alliances with his neighbors and by seeking help from far-off countries. Finally he laid down his life itself for his cause. The British ascendancy was complete both in the military and in the diplomatic fields (Ali, 1982).<sup>4</sup>

Haidar Ali prepared the ground for political and economic stability while Tipu Sultan tried his utmost to have friendly relations with foreign powers and brought about commendable economic development even under most difficult circumstances, such as being surrounded by unscrupulous foreign rulers and ambitious Indian rulers. His voluminous correspondence both with native and foreign powers prove that Tipu Sultan aimed at the consolidation of his kingdom, stabilization of his rule, sound development of Mysore State and liberation of India from foreign aggression. He was totally preoccupied with communicating with various rulers, deputing embassies to various countries, preparing for war, developing strategic relations, sustaining alliance building with internal and foreign forces, and nation building activities. Though Tipu's foreign policy was dynamic and vigorous it was not properly implemented. The adverse external circumstances and defects in the implementation of policies were mainly responsible for the diplomatic failure of Haidar Ali and Tipu Sultan.

### VISION OF TIPU

That he is a Prince of uncommon ability; that he has a genius of vast extent, but a genius turned to ill, that he has a rapid succession of ideas, both as a Politician and as a General; that he has a bold and investigative mind in all his operations and pursuits; that the din of war, and the clangor of arms, are the music to which his ears are organized, must be readily admitted. But all the brilliancy of parts, all the elevation and splendor of talents which distinguish this Oriental Monarch, are shaded and degraded by a lust of ambition, a thirst for power, and an exercise of cruelty, which dishonor and debase the human character, be it in what sphere it may, or however signalized by nature abilities. This haughty tyrant, cultivated and educated as his mind is, follows, like a brute, the mere impression of passions, and, counteracting both reason and humanity, disgraces his species (Public Advertiser, 1791).<sup>5</sup> The news analysis suggests that Tipu was an exceptionally talented and capable statesmen but he was unfortunately twisted by the cruelty of the pro-British.

Tipu's kingdom ushered in the prosperity and the countryside was full of inhabitants and the soil cultivated to its full extent. The Tipu's government was strict and arbitrary, it was the despotism of a politic and able sovereign, who nourishes, not oppresses, the subjects who are to be the means of his future aggrandizement: and his cruelties were, in general, only inflicted on those whom he considered as his enemies (Dirom, 1792).<sup>6</sup> The observation clearly indicates that Tipu's administration was effective and prosperous in its own right. Indian rulers who refused to fit into this worldview, such as Tipu Sultan, were demonized as tyrants and marked for elimination by military means.<sup>7</sup> The British artists and writers had resorted to the negative portrayal of Tipu since they projected the Mysore Wars as just conflicts fought to put an end to the abuses of Tippoo.

### DEFENCE MANAGEMENT BY TIPU

Tipu's armies are beyond comparison superior to those of the Nizam or Marathas, it may be included that he can defeat the greatest force that either of these powers could be against him, notwithstanding his present strength is not more than three-fifths in infantry and nearly half in cavalry of his strength at the time he attacked the Rajah of Travancore in 1790 (Macleod, 1794).<sup>8</sup> The relations of Tipu with the English were strained after 1795. His diplomatic initiatives with the Indian rulers were construed as negotiations for alliances. The English were aware that Tipu was secretly preparing for a war to recover his losses. Cornwallis had already taken necessary precautions to counter these moves. Cornwallis had secret negotiations with the Marathas and the Nizam which offended Tipu and destroyed the chances of any possible Anglo-Mysore accord. The English pursued the politics of offence which made Tipu strongly protest. Tipu's relations with the English deteriorated after 1795. Tipu tried to sincerely persuade the Nizam of Hyderabad, the Marathas and others to strengthen his hand in destroying British power.

Tipu Sultan had thought of eliminating the European colonialism and feudalistic intermediaries in the country. He had also adopted the healthy principles of good governance. He had thoroughly overhauled the administration and defence management systems. He was totally preoccupied with the improvement of the life and conditions of his people despite hectic involvement in political and military affairs. He was a great champion of nationalism and secularism. He strived for Hindu-Muslim unity and contributed funds for the maintenance of Hindu religious temples and institutions in Sringeri, Srirangapatna and other places. He had appointed several Hindu officers and demonstrated his commitment for collective welfare in Mysuru state.

### BRITISH COLONIALISM

The British hatched a conspiracy to put an end to the era of Tipu Sultan ultimately by forming an alliance with the Nizam of Hyderabad and the Marathas. The British even went to the extent of inciting the religious sentiments of the Marathas and provoked them to wage a war against Tipu. Tipu had to face this triple alliance and the English continued their search for traitors. Tipu also made earnest efforts to win over the French and defeat the British. The allied forces marched towards the battle field in 1791 against Tipu. They had broken through the frontiers of Mysore and conquered Kolar and Hoskote as Tipu could not concentrate on the defence measures of these two places.

Tipu launched a massive attack against the British in March 1791 and captured Bangalore, which was an

important city after Seringapatam. The Marathas acted brutality and defeated the Mysore forces at Dharwar in April 1791. The English forces led by Cornwallis sieged Srirangapatnam. The British also tried to incite the people against Tipu but failed miserably in their mission. There was a fierce battle between the British and Mysore forces which subsequently forced the English to cross over the Cauvery and flee. But Tipu misread the British forces and the English reorganized their force and crushed the Mysore forces consequently. Both the parties entered into a peace agreement on February 23, 1792 which made Tipu to hand over half of the territories under his possession to the British, pay a sum of Rupees of 3.3 crore to the allies as war expenses and give two of his sons, princes in to the custody of the British as hostages.

Tipu never wanted to make war on the bulk of his own subjects but he was always driven by his consciousness to improve the conditions of his people and enrich the state's exchequer (Dirom, 1794).<sup>9</sup> Tipu thankfully acknowledged in his letter of February 16, 1799, to the Grand Seignior of Constantinople for the latter's desire, for the sake of the whole body of the faith and religious brotherhood, to afford assistance to our Brethren Mussulmans; support our holy theology and not withhold my power and endeavors in defending the region of Hindustan from the machinations and evils of these enemies (Kausar, 1980).<sup>10</sup>

Tipu had encouraged a good number of Hindu military and revenue authorities namely Hari Singh, Sripat Rao, Rama Rao, Appaji Ram, Mukund Rao Moolchand, Sujan Rai, Subbarao, Purnaiah, Shamaiah, Krishnarao and others. He rewarded merit and capacity by following the egalitarian principle.<sup>11</sup> Tipu developed the system of public administration on the basis of sound principles and practices. The government officials were chosen on the basis of merit and capacity rather than communal and religious considerations. Most of the top military and administrative officials were basically Hindus.

The Mysore state had functioned through the joint enterprises of Hindus and Muslims for such a long time in the past that nothing short of a complete overhauling of the system could have ensured the elimination of either of the two communities from public service (Guha, 1985).<sup>12</sup> Tipu was more feared than respected or loved by his subjects (Malcolm, 1836).<sup>13</sup> Tipu's invocation of Islam was linked to his desire to generate greater enthusiasm in his struggle against the English.

Tipu was a ruler with a difference as compared to other rulers in South India. Tipu is perhaps the only native ruler who had resisted the British colonialism. Tipu envisaged a number of measures for the promotion of agriculture through land revenue administration. Tipu's revenue regulations did not exclude the sphere of trade and industry. The problem of revenue collection was ultimately that of enforcing the state claims on the vested interest of a long standing officialdom, largely dominated by the Brahmins (Guha, 1985).<sup>14</sup> The history of Tipu deserves to be told in a different light from what we have been told so long. However, close examination of his life and career would reveal that he was an enlightened ruler with two basic objectives in view. One was to prevent the foreigners from gaining control of the country. The other was to make his state prosperous and progressive through commerce, trade and agriculture. The state capitalism trend pursued by the Sultan could be seen in greater degree

with regard to the establishment of factories. Tipu expected a very high standard of discipline, integrity, royalty and devotion to duty to secure public welfare from his civil servants. The greatness of Tipu's policy rests on his firm devotion to his cause. Finally he laid down his life itself for the cause (Pande, 1993).<sup>15</sup> Tipu was a multi-faceted personality and remains in the history of India as a symbol of self-reliance, progressive governance and inclusive development.

Munro wrote in a letter to his father in 1799 after the treaty: "After the reverse of 1792, the rage of novelty, instead of abating, increased, he issued more regulations, not only to the principal officers of state, but to those in the most subordinate situations-to- the persons who had the charge of his gardens, of his buildings, of feeding his bullocks and his elephants and Most of them contain an exordium by himself, setting forth the excellence of loyalty and the true faith, and endeavoring to inspire his subjects with a detestation of caffers, or infidels, that is to say Europeans in general, but particularly Englishmen, by lavishing curses and excretions upon them. Happening on a day to pick up his instruction to the Superintendent of his Bullocks, the first line I read was, a caffer-a dog-a hog, are all the three brothers in the same family."

### MARTYRDOM OF TIPU

Tipu sincerely complied with the peace accord, rebuilt the State of Mysore and pursued diplomatic parleys with foreign countries including the Persian Gulf. Tipu also renewed his efforts to maintain good relations with the Nizam and the Marathas. The political transformations in Europe and the rise of Napoleon had an impact on the affairs in the Mysore State. In 1798, the English put forth determined efforts to crush the power of Tipu and deputed Lord Wellesley to complete the mission of converting India into their colony. The Nizam of Hyderabad also became a party to the British conspiracy. The Marathas were also persuaded by the British to fight against Tipu. The Fourth Anglo-Mysore Battle witnessed the martyrdom of Tipu under the worst circumstances on May 4, 1799 at Seringapatam. There was absolute political subjugation of Mysore State by the British in India.

Burton Stein's description of the Sultan's administrative financial organization reveals the construction of an extractive government (Stein, 1989).<sup>16</sup> It is, however, doubtful that appointment of Hindus to responsible posts followed any principle other than sheer common sense (Sharma, 1991).<sup>17</sup> Tipu Sultan was an enlightened ruler who firmly advocated self rule and self-sufficiency. He firmly believed in state capitalism and established good number of factories and industries in Mysore state. He appointed efficient, committed and responsible officials and strengthened the process of public administration. Thus, reward according to merit in the sense of ability was an egalitarian principle followed from Tipu (Pande, 1993).<sup>18</sup>

Tipu Sultan firmly believed in egalitarianism in all walks of life. He never pursued the politics of opportunism. He brought about social change and economic development which benefited the people. Tipu built an exceedingly efficient system of administration and a navy: he launched upon a series of innovative measures which would transform his State into a humming but of industrial activity. The reforming zeal of Tipu originated from his insight into our social, political and economic structure. Tipu's policy was to develop trade and industry strictly under State control, guidance and leadership. An analysis of his reforms would indicate that he

was revolutionary in thought and far ahead of his times (Ali, 1993).<sup>19</sup>

### STATESMANSHIP OF TIPU

Tipu's approach to social and religious issues was certainly characterized by egalitarianism. He never allowed his personal belief to come in the way of his administration and remained secular throughout in the discharge of his duties as head of the state. He had great respect for women and did everything to safeguard their honor and virtue (Pande, 1993).<sup>20</sup> The scholar has emphasized the democratic and humanist approaches of Tipu Sultan.

Tipu Sultan had followed the secular policies of his father and appointed Hindus to the administrative posts. He was guided by the Republican ideals and stood by the welfare and progress of the people. He was the most powerful ruler in the 18<sup>th</sup> century India. He maintained healthy distance from the French who wanted to gain monopoly over trade and commerce in Mysore state. He had offered stubborn resistance to British colonialism and strived his best to establish the sovereignty of the people in his state. Tipu's sword symbolized the spirit of resistance against the aggressors of freedom and independence (Devaraj, 1993).<sup>21</sup>

Tipu Sultan was one such complete man. He spoke, he wrote and he fought. Which field of human endeavor did he not cast his keen eye on or not embrace with his heart? Economics or politics, poetry or history, medicine or mechanics, religion or linguistics, war in its theory and practice- all this he combined with an insight becoming only of a revolutionary. He was the first and unfortunately the last that the rising bourgeois order had produced. He was a shining example from Karnataka's past that invoked the spirit of the European renaissance. He was unique in that he remained a revolutionary even as a ruler (Saki, 1998).<sup>22</sup> Tipu's measures and policies have been variously interpreted, often with forceful generalizations by historians in India and abroad as eclectic and modern (Habib, 1999).<sup>23</sup>

Girish Karnad has portrayed the unique personality of Tipu in his play on the basis of objective analysis of historical factors. The play is thus a rare blend of dreams, thought processes and action. Karnad brings home the fact that a lifetime is not sufficient for the realization of high principles and ideals of Tipu who had sown the seeds of patriotism. In showing that the fearless warrior was in fact a dreamer of peace and progress who yoked ethics with economics, Karnad adds human dimensions to the figure painted into the fading murals of history (Sudhir, 2008).<sup>24</sup>

Tipu's administration was different from those of many of his contemporaries. He brought about several administrative reforms which benefited the people. His agricultural policy was progressive and encouraged the farmers and consumers. He constructed many tanks, canals, forts, public buildings, palaces and temples. He succeeded in making Mysore the most prosperous of the Indian states (Mahadevi, 2010).<sup>25</sup>

Tipu Sultan was the only ruler from India to die fighting on the war front against the British. He was the supreme legislative, executive and judicial authority in his kingdom. He promoted the welfare of the people and eventually adopted the role of champion of social justice. He had dreamt of creating a welfare state on the basis of western liberal and democratic values (Husain, 2011).<sup>26</sup>

Tipu was the fierce warrior-king, known as the Tiger of Mysore. The personality of Tipu Sultan has dominated

the country's imagination for over two centuries. His implacable enmity with the British and his bravery on the battlefield are legendary; he was one of the few Indian kings to defeat British armies. Tipu's main dream was to oust the British from India. He saw that the only way to do this was to form a united front of the Marathas, the Nizam of Hyderabad, and all the other princely states. He could not achieve success since the local rulers were motivated by highly selfish interests and least commitment to nationalism (Roy, 2012).<sup>27</sup>

Tipu was in contact with the French during the time of the French Revolution. He was aware of events in Europe and was attracted to the maxims of the revolution, which called for equal rights for everyone in the world: liberty, equality and fraternity. Tipu was influenced by three European movements: Renaissance (Italy), Reformation (Germany) and Revolution (France). He wanted to blend the salient features of these movements in his reign and make Mysore state as an egalitarian state (Sayeed, 2015).<sup>28</sup> The historical persona has undergone numerous interpretations and the various assessments of his character and policy have been sharply polarized (Sil, 2015).<sup>29</sup> It does appear that in his dealings with his subject, Tipu tried to be fair, to walk a middle path. Tipu also concerned himself with the moral character of his people (Brittlebank, 2016).<sup>30</sup>

Unfortunately, after 218 years of his death, Tipu was brought to the surface of communal politics. Even a Hindutva activist cannot deny that Tipu offered heroic resistance against British imperialism, in the fourth Anglo-Mysore war. Tipu died the death of a hero in May 1799, while defending his capital Srirangapatam, which was, however, plundered by the English troops. Thus, the martyrdom of Tipu represented the downfall of a leading Indian power and one of the most inveterate and dreadful foes of the English. He was indeed the first Indian sovereign to seek to apply western methods to his administration. He was not a modern man in outlook, but he definitely took certain significant steps to rejuvenate the economy of Mysore. He knew that tapping of new economic resources was necessary for the survival of a warrior state threatened by enemies on all sides. Tipu Sultan definitely appears to be one of the most colorful characters among 18<sup>th</sup> century Indian rulers (Ray, 2017).<sup>31</sup>

## CONCLUSION

Tipu had ushered in a new era of state capitalism to prevent any kind of privatization of economy and oppression of people much before Karl Marx. He too had lamented the British labour laws which had worsened the conditions of the working proletariat. Tipu and Marx had considered the British as the enemies of the people in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Tipu Sultan achieved fame through his military genius and statesmanship and died fighting the British at Seringapatnam in May 1799. The British contemporaries and adversaries saw him as a fanatical tyrant while the postcolonial historians of India and their counterparts in the West provide a radically opposite profile of the man. The life, mission and achievements of Tipu Sultan aptly confirm that he was indeed an enlightened champion of freedom, a progressive ruler, a great nationalist fighter and a statesman par excellence.

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