



PART II

Polity, Economy  
Society  
and  
Culture



Sangama, Srirangapatna

## Chapter X

# POLITY AND ADMINISTRATION



Prior to Haidar, Mysore was a small kingdom with a feudal structure of administration and polity. The central table-land of Karnataka had witnessed the rise and fall of several dynasties of great repute like the Kadambas, the Gangas, the Rashtrakutas, the Chalukyas, the Hoysalas, the Vijayanagara, and the Wodeyars, each of whom had left behind a trait of its own. Into this administrative and political heritage of bewildering variety, Haidar and Tipu injected yet another pattern of their own, which with the fall of Tipu was soon to assume a colonial style of functioning.

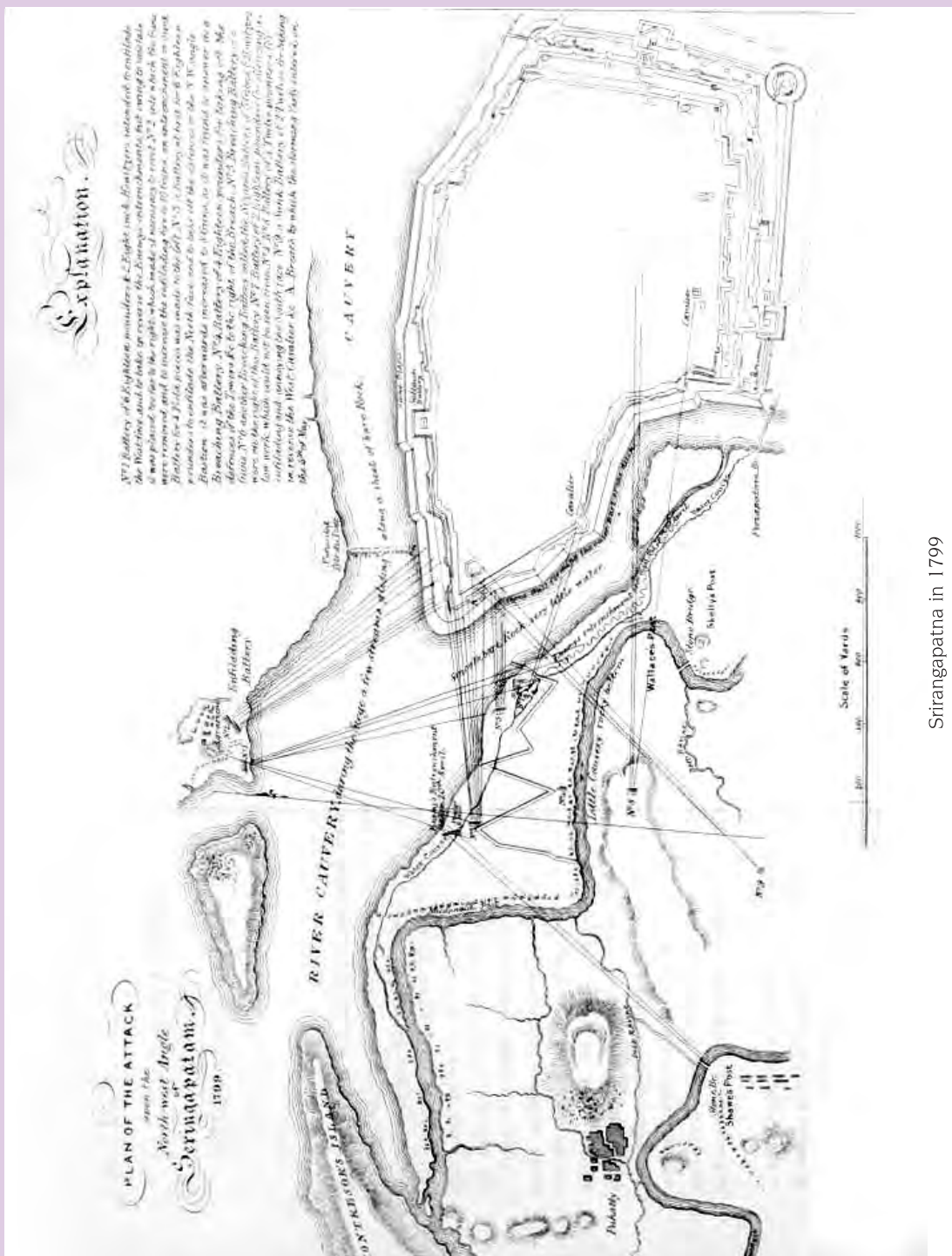
In the entire history of Karnataka the period of Haidar and Tipu, just for about forty years, is a ludicrously small period in respect of time, but it is momentous in its

impact not only on the events of the time, but also on what followed for a century and a half, until India emerged again free and independent in 1947. Both Haidar and Tipu are fascinating figures of the eighteenth century whose main aim was to stem the tide of colonial expansion in India, to modernize their State, to link it with the outer world, to inject a strong and efficient government in it, to extend and expand its frontiers, and to absorb progressive thoughts from every direction. Their polity was oriented in the direction of achieving these objectives.

Certain issues of great significance confronted their entire regime. One of them was their legal title to all effective authority. Haidar never assumed *de jure* power at any time. He conformed merely to the political principle of the age when divorce of *de jure* from *de facto* power was the fashion of the day. Not only the Mughals and the Marathas but also the English in the early years of their supremacy found in it a safety valve to stabilize their power by retaining the Nawab of Bengal as a puppet on the throne. Haidar did the same in Mysore. The Wodeyar dynasty never lost the title to the throne during his time. All the formalities, rituals and respect connected with royalty were accorded to the Raja. They were maintained with great pomp and dignity. If any of them died, his successor was chosen and installed on the throne with due care and show. Haidar succeeded to power when Chikka Krishnaraja Wodeyar (1734-1766) was the reigning Raja. After his death in 1766, his eldest son Nanjaraja Wodeyar was placed on the throne, but he was found inconvenient, and hence was removed in 1770. His brother, Bettada Chamaraja Wodeyar was installed as the ruler. He died childless in 1776, and Haidar chose from among the children of different branches who were all present, for the selection of a prince named Khasa Chamaraja Wodeyar IX, who outlived Haidar and died in 1796.



Krishnaraja Wodeyar II (1734-1766)



Srirangapatna in 1799



Nanjaraja Wodeyar (1766-1770)

Haidar could have very easily put an end to this fiction, but he thought that it was a convenient way to conciliate the Hindus who formed the majority. In diplomatic correspondence whenever it suited his convenience he made claims on the basis of former treaties because his government was in theory that of the Wodeyars. In the Dasara festival, it was the Raja, who showed himself to the public. As late as September 1781 a foreigner observed, "... a grand gentoo feast at which the king of Mysore Khasa Chamaraja Wodeyar was present, a lad about 12 years of age. This royal

prisoner is allowed to appear in public only at the festival time".

This concept of conceding *de jure* title to the Wodeyars is significant for a few reasons. It was no violent break with the past to excite the jealousy of the Marathas or of the people of Mysore. It is suggestive of the pragmatic approach of the times in reconciling the realities of both nominal and effective power. It is indicative of the fact that the State in India was always secular, and it did not bother whether the head of the Government was a Hindu or a Muslim. The only criterion that was vital was the ability to hold the sword firmly and run the administration efficiently. Haidar possessed both these abilities. Moreover, the essential feature of Indian life in all places and at all times is the ability to reconcile the irreconcilable. Such a vital issue as an ordinary "Nayak" of an army to be accepted as the Head of the Government emphasizes the intrinsic character of the people, who left the politics of the times to the elite, and the elite would always support that class which would not affect its interests. Since Haidar's dispensation was not only to respect and retain the Raja but also to patronize the elite, who were all of the upper caste so needed to run the administration on effective lines, he had no difficulty in gaining their loyalty and support. They made only one collective and concerted effort under Khande Rao to

dislodge him, but when it failed and when he assured them of no change in the traditional pattern of power sharing, they reconciled themselves to the new situation and made no more effort except feeble palace plots. The traditional pattern was that, although the *Dalvoy or Sarvadhikari* was the power-centre, the State bureaucracy which was the delivery system for policies to percolate to the masses, enjoyed all the perks and puffs of the creamy side of the administrative structure. Since Haidar encouraged real talent in any one, he was able not only to consolidate his power but also make it unchallenged and paramount.

Tipu would not make a compromise with such a situation where legal authority was separated from effective power. He was of a different bent of mind from that of Haidar. His succession to the throne caused no problem. If the elite had so desired, they could have made his position very irksome, for at the time of Haidar's death in the Carnatic, Tipu was away in Malabar on the western coast. It was Purnaiah and Krishna Rao, who kept the news of Haidar's death so secret, summoned Tipu so hurriedly, and installed him on the throne so peacefully. This shows both Haidar's popularity and the consolidation of his power so effectively that even in his death he commanded their loyalty.

Tipu's ideas were different. He wanted to take advantage of the secure base his father had gifted him, and get himself relieved of the farce of acknowledging the titular headship of the Raja. But it was not easy to dispense with him without causing complications. The Mughal Emperor, despite the decline in his political and military power, was yet a force in the legal sense, whose right to grant title to throne was acknowledged as the only source in India to gain *de jure* authority. Whether he was the Nizam or the Peshwa or even the Company, all had received *sanads* at his hand, which were the title to their legal recognition. Tipu also tried to secure such a *sanad* from Shah Alam, but he failed in the attempt, as the English stood in his way, although the French pursued his case energetically at the Delhi court.

Tipu's anxiety to get recognized as an independent prince increased because he concluded that the longer the vestiges of the Raja's authority persisted, greater was the scope for him to be a centre of discontent, intrigues and plots. Therefore, he approached a higher authority than the Mughal Emperor, the Ottoman Sultan, who was the Caliph of the Islamic world. Tipu sent an embassy to Turkey in November 1785 which reached after several obstacles in September 1787. The Ottoman Sultan accorded permission to Tipu to assume the title of an independent monarch, and

the right to strike coins, and to have the *Khutba* read in his name. His ambassadors secured for him an investiture which formalized and legalized his status as ruler of Mysore. Tipu got what he desired.

Why was Tipu so keen to secure such a recognition? One reason was to eliminate the constant palace plots which were not unknown even during Haidar's period. In the midst of First Mysore War in 1767 the Madras Governor, Bouchier, had attempted to subvert Haidar's power through an agent, Ranga Rao, who was instructed to induce the Raja to contribute towards the cost of the war, and if he did so, Haidar would be destroyed. However, Haidar's effective intelligence system frustrated the scheme. Again in 1778 Rani Lakshmmanni, wife of Krishnaraja Wodeyar II, had employed Tirumala Rao on a secret mission to Lord Pigot, Governor of Madras, to overthrow Haidar, but a revolution in Madras in which Pigot was killed, disappointed the Rani. But she revived her efforts again in 1782 during the second Mysore War through the same agent, Tirumala Rao, who was sent to Sullivan to negotiate a treaty, which was actually executed between the Rani and the English. However, Tipu found out the conspiracy and punished the culprits.

In order to nip in the bud the possibility of the English finding an excuse to destroy Tipu, he was keen to deny the royal family their title to the throne in which he was successful, and we do not hear of palace plots any more. Secondly, he wanted to elevate his status to be on par with his neighbours. When he wanted to negotiate a matrimonial alliance with the Nizam's family, the negotiations broke off on the ground that he came only from a "Nayak's" family, and that it was derogatory for a princess of a Nizam's family to marry a person who did not enjoy equal status.

Thirdly, Tipu's mental make up, his independent spirit and his sense of self-importance would not permit to work under conditions of inhibitions, however, feeble they might be. He would think that sovereignty would take no partner. In politics if an institution is not useful, it is better it is done away with. It would involve not only unnecessary expenditure, but may prove a source of danger as it did in the Second Mysore War. Lastly, Tipu had world-wide contacts - with France, Turkey, Iran and Afghanistan - whose main purpose was to enter into offensive and defensive alliances in order to eliminate or at least check the colonial influence in India. Such negotiations of high order between one State and another could be carried on only by heads of two sovereign States. The stigma of being a subordinate to a Raja was revolting to an imaginative and dynamic person like Tipu.



The second important aspect of the polity, which has been much maligned is the nature of Haidar's and Tipu's regime. It is characterized as, "usurpation". It is an European concept deliberately thrust on their regime to justify British conquest of Mysore. In the historiography that followed the fall of Tipu two concepts "usurpation" and "restoration" figure again and again; the former term to condemn the heroic struggle of two great leaders to stem the tide of British expansion, and the latter, to glorify their act of giving the throne back to the Wodeyars as most gracious and merciful. Behind these two concepts lurks the entire political philosophy of Europe in the first half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, which may be summed up in two words, "legitimacy" and "reaction". In the race for progressive thought France was far ahead of all others in forcefully projecting the revolutionary ideas of liberty, equality and fraternity, and in causing that upheaval of 1789 which ultimately threw on the scene "democracy" and "nationalism" and produced in Napoleon, the "Child of the Revolution". His meteoric rise upset the established balance of power, and it aimed at the integration of the whole of Europe into a new entity designed on the French revolutionary ideas. England and Austria, the custodians of old regime, could hardly tolerate these drastic changes. They were interested in the "restoration" of old monarchies and in imposing the "legitimacy" of old order. Napoleon was stigmatized in the Congress of Vienna as the "usurper" of European thrones. England and Austria took the credit as the "liberators" of Europe from thralldom of a despotic ruler, and as the "restorers" of the balance of power, which alone would ensure peace and tranquility in Europe. The authors of this policy ignored what lay in the logic of history, which became soon apparent in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, when events took a complete "U" turns from what Matternich had planned.

This European background is necessary to understand the parrot like repetition of "usurpation" and "restoration" by colonial historians in respect of both Haidar and Tipu. These historians completely gloss over the "legitimacy" of their own rule in India, how they built up their power, how they expanded their authority, how they suppressed every local power which resisted their growth, how they damaged the Indian economy, how they killed her arts and crafts, how they disturbed its social order, how they exploited the resources of the land to serve their own interests, and how they reduced the majority of the people to utter poverty and destitution. A foreign power which was never assimilated in the main stream of Indian life invented concepts of "usurpation" and "restoration" to justify all its misdeeds.

There was of course a change of administration with the advent of Haidar and Tipu, but what was its impact? Was it for the better or worse? Did they try to serve

the land or help themselves? Did they protect the land from foreign onslaught or sold it for a song? Did they improve the conditions of the people or made them more miserable? Did they enhance the prestige of their State or dragged it into disrepute? Did they extend its frontiers or made them shrunk? If the answer is not in the negative, the change was for the better. We cannot say that all the British historians or witnesses have poured unqualified condemnation on Haidar and Tipu. The personal eye-witness account of Lt. Moore, who was present in the Third Mysore War, and who fought against Tipu, runs as follows:

“When a person traveling through a strange country finds it well cultivated, propulated it with industrious inhabitants, cities newly founded commerce extending, towns increasing, and everything flourishing so as to indicate happiness he will naturally conclude it to be under a form of government congenial of the minds of the people. This is a picture of Tipoo’s country, and this our conclusion respecting its government”<sup>1</sup>,

Even such a high authority as Sir John Shore who was fully aware of all intentions of Tipu, would not hesitate to say:

“... [Tipu] maintains dignity without ostentation - the peasantry of his dominions are protected, and their labour encouraged and rewarded. Before the late war, reports were continually propagated of his cruelty and tyranny with respect to his subjects in Malabar, - they were not ill-founded but that they were greatly exaggerated may be established by one consideration, that during the contest with him, no person of character, rank or influence, in his hereditary dominion, deserted his cause”<sup>2</sup>.

What greater tribute could there be than an acknowledgement of Tipu’s foresight even by James Mill, a historian of the other camp?

“He had the discernment to perceive what is so generally hidden from the eyes of rulers in a more enlightened state of society, that it is the prosperity of those who labour with their hands which constitutes the principle and cause of the prosperity of the State ... His country was accordingly ... the best cultivated and its population the most flourishing in India, while under the English and their dependencies, the population of the Carnatic and Oudh, hastening to the state of deserts, were the most wretched upon the face of the earth”.

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1 Edward Moore. A Narrative of the Operations of Captain Little’s Detachment, (London, 1794), pp. 306-7.

2 John Malcom, “The Political History of India”, Vol. II, Appendix II, pp. 220-21.

If any more evidence is required from the eye-witness accounts of those who were their adversaries, and who actually fought in a war against him, we have the account of Major Alexander Dirom:

“Whether from the operation of the system established by Hyder from the principles which Tippoo had adopted for his own conduct; or from his dominions having suffered little by invasion for many years; or from the effect of these several causes united; his country was found everywhere full of inhabitants and apparently cultivated to the utmost extent of which the soil was capable; while the discipline and fidelity of his troops in the field until their last overthrow, were testimonies equally strong, of the excellent regulations which existed in his army. His government, though strict and arbitrary, was the despotism of the politic and able sovereign, who nourishes not oppresses, the subjects who are to be the means of his future aggrandisement, and his cruelties were, in general, inflicted on those whom he considered as his enemies. He had been diligently employed ever since the former war, in improving his army, and in strengthening his principal forts, and had laid in such ample supplies of military stores in his frontier posts to the north as showed that he meditated extensive conquests”<sup>3</sup>.

This testimony is enough, if testimony is required, that no ordinary persons but the finest of the fine had arrayed their forces against the English and that they were equally great in the realm of taking welfare measures for their people. The advent of such persons to power need not be termed as “usurpation” but as the good fortune of the people.

As against this picture of “usurpation” from the pen of those who were his inveterate enemies, what do we find the conditions of Mysore under “restoration” and the benign Colonial rule? From 1800 to 1806 not a year passed without some insurrection or people’s revolt either of Dhoondia Waugh or Ballam Insurrection or Wynad uprising or Palegars Revolt or Vellore Mutiny. The grants to mutts, temples, agraharas and Brahmins swallowed up a fourth of State revenue. In one stroke of pen Purnaiah created as many as 126 agraharas. The subsidy “restoration” had to pay to their masters was so oppressive that the backbone of the peasantry was crushed in extortions. The notoriety of *Kandachar*, the local militia for revenue collection had reached the level where Purnaiah would not prefer any one except Brahmins of his own lineage and circle, who were from Maharashtra. Annigere and

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<sup>3</sup> Alexander Dirom, *Narrative of the Campaigns in India which terminated the War with Tippoo Sultan in 1792* (London, 1794), pp. 249-50. pp. 268-269.

Hanagal Brahmins of Haidarnagar or Bidnur caused such a confusion as to bring about the revolution of 1831 when the "restoration" was annulled and the royal family was back again in wilderness. The atrocities of Boody Basawappa and Rangappa Nayak put to shame a reign of terror. Nor was the position of Mysore any better under the Commissioner's rule. One should read the Report of their own Commissioner, F. Goodall, appointed for famine relief of 1876-78. The picture he has depicted of the distress and misery of the people is so heart rending that not tears but blood should ooze out of the eyes of any one, if one possesses really a heart. Goodall reported:

"The wage-earning classes are the first to suffer... the weaver had to put away his loom, the barber's razor could not be employed, the services of the village artisans had to be dispensed with... and many of them soon succumbed ... The last to be reached in Mysore was the ryot... with a heart-rending wrench he tore himself away from his home. Day after day we may fancy him scanning the clouds, day after day he looks at his parched fields, the rain will not come down, the earth is iron, and the sky brass, and he can see no hope anywhere. Most of his cattle are dead, and he can only keep of rest alive by tearing off the thatch from his house, and leaves from the trees if these leaves have not been withered. He cannot eke out his food with the herbs of the field, for they are dried up and cannot be found... so he and his people wander on hoping that they may find a place of rest; but they find it not. The skeletons of those who preceded them lie by the way side, and omens of what may happen to them. Some one falls out and dies; there is no time to weep and still less to bury the corpse; so it is left where it fell; another fall a victim in a short time, and so on, till the party becomes very small. Perhaps only one out of the number is alive at the end of the journey, and this one in a most deplorable, and many have not yet been reoccupied. From one end of Mysore to the other there was one death wall".

Such was the position of Mysore under the rule of the Colonials. With all this the majority of British historians, particularly of colonial brand, pour such venom that it is high time that we de-colonize the history of Mysore. They deliberately chose the term "restoration" to hypnotise the people in order to make them remain attached to the band-wagon of the British, because they had removed the dynasty of Haidar, a Muslim, and had restored the dynasty of the Wodeyars, a Hindu. This was to play upon the sentiment and psychology of the people, for it touched upon the delicate nerve centre of faith and creed. This was the Roman technique of "divide and rule" which got the polished touch of sophistication under the British and was

applied consistently. It was a very powerful weapon in the armoury of the Colonials to perpetuate their own rule in India. Since the days of Akbar India had been evolving a polity of national monarchy, where questions of caste and creed had all been buried deep into the limbo of the past. The English were reviving it with vengeance. No body had questioned the right of the Nizam to rule over Hyderabad, or Muhammad Ali over the Carnatic or Shuja-ud-daula over Oudh, or Shah Alam over Delhi, but when it came to Haidar or Tipu in Mysore, the theory of "usurpation" was so vehemently applied as to make it appear that they had committed the worst crime in history. Likewise, "restoration" concept was so often and so cleverly used as to make it suggest that the British had performed the noblest deed in history.

When they annulled that "restoration" in 1831 under the signature of the most enlightened Governor-General ever sent to India, their conscience did not prick, for the Raja had committed an offence and he had to be punished. They would not call the period from 1831 to 1881, which was longer than the period of Haidar and Tipu put together, as "usurpation" but as one of "re-organization". When it was no longer profitable for them to rule over Mysore, as they could not manage even famine relief, they made the best of the bad bargain and got the credit of generosity in giving back the throne to the Wodeyars, under a different vocabulary "Rendition" and not "Restoration". In the semantics of the colonials the period preceding "Restoration" was a hell, but the period preceding "Rendition" was a heaven. We have to appreciate the sharp English mind for the subtle distinction between "Restoration" and "Rendition". For what happened in 1881 they would never use "Restoration" which was reserved exclusively for the Subsidiary Treaty of 1799. In reality the period prior to "Restoration" was a period of prosperity and what succeeded "Restoration" was one of misery and distress.

Finally, the terms "usurpation" and restoration" were never used in Indian history, prior to the Colonials gave currency to these two terms. Karnataka is an ancient land where several dynasties rose and fell since the dawn of history. The rise and fall of those dynasties, whether Satavahanas, Kadambas, Gangas, Chalukyas, Rashtrakutas, Hoysalas, Vijayanagar, Bahamanis or Wodeyars, were all regarded as natural political processes, when over the decay and debris of one dynasty, another arose; frontiers changed and rechanged; personalities emerged and disappeared; maps were drawn and redrawn; and revolutions made or marred the picture of the land, but at no time any communal turn was given to its history. It was only the resourcefulness of the colonials which gave a different twist by injecting the communal poison through their suggestion that Haidar and Tipu had usurped what

really belonged to the Hindus, and that the English restored to the Hindus what had been seized by the Muslims. We wonder, if Tipu like the Nizam had submitted himself to their subsidiary terms they would have shed English blood to "restore" the Wodeyar dynasty to power. "Usurpation" and "Restoration" were just hollow terms intended to conceal a crime and make it appear as a virtue.

The third aspect which deserves analysis is what were the aims and objectives of both Haidar and Tipu in adopting a hostile policy towards the English, which is the central arch of their edifice? Haidar tried for a long term to be friendly with them. In fact he appears on the scene first on their side fighting against the French in the Carnatic Wars. It was the breach of their trust and their perfidy to Nanjaraj that made him oppose them. Mysore could never forget or ignore the treachery in using all its resources and strength and solemnly promising to surrender Trichinopoly that caused a permanent scar on the heart of the Mysoreans. Again, if one were to probe deep into the causes which brought about the First and the Second, and the Third and the Fourth Mysore Wars, one would get a very clear picture of the shady side of British character. The extent they went to conquer the whole of Mysore in the First Mysore War, the alliances they formed, the intentions and motives they expressed, and the exertions they made, would all go to show how they were bent upon enslaving India. Intoxicated in their power as an invincible force since the days of Plassey and Buxar, they desired to repeat their performance of Bengal and Bihar in Karnataka as well. Their shrewd diplomacy was such that they would rope the other Indian powers as well with them to fight against Haidar. They would muster not only their resources of the South but of all the three presidencies together with what they could get from the Home Government. It should be said to the credit of both Haidar and Tipu that they defeated not only their designs to conquer Mysore but also inflicted such a blow as to dictate them terms at their own gate of Madras. All their power and prestige was dragged into mud, and an "invincible" power was humiliated for the first time in Indian history. But Haidar committed a serious error at this time, and that was to grant them generous and liberal terms. He was a soldier, and he judged all things from a soldier's scale of valour which meant defiance in war, but magnanimity in victory. If he had not been so magnanimous in this war, his son would not have seen his doom in the Fourth Mysore War.

Haidar regarded the English as gentlemen who would honour their word. He secured in this treaty their solemn pledge for military aid whenever he was confronted by his adversaries. When the Marathas knocked at his door very soon in the war that followed, he invoked the treaty terms by which they were bound to send him troops. They not only turned the Nelson eye but secretly planned to join the Marathas to

destroy him. Treachery could go no further. A crisis had confronted him and he thought that the English who posed themselves so upright would honour their own commitment. It was a bitter disappointment, a wound which was never healed. Since the breach of the Treaty of Madras, there was no looking back on the part of Haidar to make any compromise with the English. The die had been cast, and the two were in well-defined hostile opposite camps.

The Second Mysore War exposed the English on the entire all-India scene. If in the First Mysore War their intention was the conquest of Mysore, in the Second Mysore War, they aimed at the whole of India. They occupied Pondicherry, the last remnant of French hold in India. They occupied Guntur in order to link the entire Coromandel coast with Bengal. Worse still, they provoked the Marathas by concluding a treaty with Raghunatha Rao, a claimant to the Peshwaship, whose installation on the gaddi, amounted to not only the status of the king-makers but also the winner of an empire. If Maratha Empire had gone, what would have remained of India, except Mysore? It was at such an hour the Indian powers for the first time showed wisdom and foresight, courage and skill, in forming an Indian Confederacy of all powers. Haidar also played a very crucial role in its formation. It was resolved that Haidar should fall like a tornado on the Carnatic and conquer Madras; the Nizam should take his own coastal areas of the Northern Sarkars, Nana was to excite all the Marathas to reduce Bombay; Bhosle was to march and threaten Bengal; and Sindia was to take Company's possessions in the Gangetic valley.

Haidar's crucial role was more in the implementation of this hostile alliance. His troops burst out like thunder and lightning on the Canatic. Never had the English tasted the fury of an Indian foe. The Madras Government was tottering to its fall, and its Governor, Whitehill was dismissed in no time. Haidar's defeat of the English army, the capture of Colonel Baillie along with his entire detachment, the flight of Sir Hector Munro, the hero of Buxar who had crushed three mighty rulers in 1764, his throwing off all his guns into the Conjeevaram tank, and running for life to Madras, are all events of history that resound to the credit of Haidar and Tipu. The English were in consternation, and they were apprehensive that what had happened at Saratoga in the New World, might happen in India, and that Haidar might prove Washington of this country. In all these events Tipu was the key-figure.

It should also be remembered that Haidar alone stood firm in his stand against the English. With all the tall talk the Nizam never moved a single soldier from Hyderabad. A single letter of Warren Hastings giving him back Guntur was enough to

disengage him from the confederacy. A single defeat of Sindhis was enough to make him sue for peace, and enter into that humiliating pact with the English, called Treaty of Salbai. Nana never moved his troops to conquer Bombay. He was never a soldier, but only a political genius who knew how to manipulate. Likewise, Mudaji Bhosle never stirred out of Nagpore, for he fell into the trap of British diplomacy, being assured of high office in the Maratha confederacy.

It was Haidar, and Haidar alone that bore the entire brunt of the war. He never made a compromise and never left the Carnatic. He declared himself as the Nawab of Arcot, and he died a natural death in that region having conquered a good part of it. No one had taught the English so bitter a lesson for the breach of their treaty. These events show how Haidar's polity was oriented towards a nobler cause of eliminating the Colonials, or at least of checking their growth in India.

When Tipu succeeded to power, he proved to be more determined than Haidar to crush the English. He fought with the fierceness of a tiger; he never made a compromise, never deviated from his goal, and never submitted himself to a foreign power. His life passion was to eliminate the English from his Kingdom for which purpose he used all his means, resources, energy and power. He never entertained any illusion about the danger to his independence from the colonials. Even his dreams which were recorded were packed with engagements of life and death against them.

During the first decade of his regime, he was a terror to them. Even as a youth in the first Mysore War, he had surprised them at the Company's garden house near Madas, when all the Councillors had to rush to a boat lying near by to save their lives. History would have been different had they fallen in his hands. Even before he came to power, he was known for his valour, dash and resoluteness. He had overpowered Baillie and Braithwaite. He had harassed General Medows. Even Cornwallis had to struggle for two long years with the support of two other powerful allies, the Marathas and the Nizam, before he would accept their terms. He surprised even Arthur Wellesley, who was later known as the Duke of Wellington, the conqueror of Napoleon, in the Fourth Mysore War. His dread was so inscribed in the English hearts that their ladies would silence their naughty children with Tipu's name.

Despite his personal valour and courage, he was aware that they were superior to him in military skill, in material resources, and in political maneuvering. They had won their empire as much by force of arms as by diplomacy. They knew the art of sowing disunity among Indians, of drawing full advantage from their dissensions by



interfering in their affairs, and of using Indian man-power to serve their interests. Certain factors helped them to build up their power. First, Indian sepoys were trained on western lines to become an excellent fighting machine. Second, the willingness of Indian princes to join them for selfish gains. Third, their superior military leadership and superior armoury, both of which were weak on Indian side. Fourth, their political shrewdness, efficiency of their civil service, love of their land, social consciousness, spirit of harmony and solidarity among themselves, and the sense of loyalty to their superiors and their nation. Fifthly, they commanded vast resources, not only of the three presidencies in India but also of England, whose mercantile policy, and world-wide trade had made her the most prosperous nation of the world. Finally, their superior navy, a fleet of merchant ships, war vessels, easy access to any harbours, and gun-boat diplomacy had made them really powerful.

Tipu was aware of these advantages on their side, and desired that despite his short-comings on many scores he should beat them. He exerted his utmost to achieve his goal. Not finding himself equal to their superiority in every sector, he desired to make amends partly by his own personal exertion, and partly by seeking support from outside powers. They were to be convinced of the danger in allowing the British expansion in India. He tried his best to drill into the ears of the Nizam and the Marathas that not only they but the whole country would suffer if Indian powers did not stand united. The writings were there on the wall how steadily and systematically the colonials were reducing one power after another. But his Indian neighbours refused to be convinced. Far from joining him, they declared war on him. Even when he had an upper hand in their war of 1785-7, he conceded them advantageous terms hoping his concessions would win them over to his side for a common cause. Yet the Indian powers indulged in their own game of narrow short-sighted policy, ignored his pleadings, and worse still, joined hands with his enemies to crush his back bone. If only the Nizam and the Marathas had not supported Cornwallis in the Third Mysore War, it would not have been possible to defeat Tipu. If not active support, at least neutrality of the Marathas in this war would have had far-reaching effects. Neither the Nizam nor the Marathas would learn any lesson of history that those who lived in glass houses should not throw stones at others. Tipu attempted to convince his neighbours of the sinister designs of the English to crush Indian powers one by one, and that after he was gone, it would be their turn. But they remained under such false security as not to be aware that fumes of the colonial fire would consume them all sooner or later. The greatest contribution of Tipu was this awareness and consciousness as also his preventive measures to check the conflagration.

When it became too apparent that his Indian neighbours would not join him in a common cause, he did not lose heart. He attempted other sources. His discerning mind explored the field to know who were the other rivals of the English. He found out that the French had long antipathy towards them. He inferred that the enemy of his enemy was his friend. Even otherwise ever since the Carnatic wars the French were the historical allies of the Mysoreans. Although they were a spent force in India, he was fascinated by their two achievements abroad. One was their major role in assisting the Americans win their independence, and the other was, their revolutionary thoughts of liberty, equality and fraternity, which came very close to his own ideals of political craft. He had always maintained a French corps in his army, which was the source for French ideas to germinate in his mind. He worked ceaselessly to build up close alliances with the French, sent embassies to Paris, urged and pleaded with them, and sought their support to repeat their performance of the New World. His efforts in this respect also were not successful, for France was in the midst of a revolution of unprecedented nature, which was a watershed in history. Nevertheless his efforts to induce the Nizam to raise a French corps of 14,000 troops, and his contact with Napoleon to concert plans to subvert British power in India, would all indicate the fertility of his mind, and the extent he would go to implement his designs. His failure in his attempt need not detract the credit that is due to him for conceiving ingenious plans.

Likewise, his efforts to secure aid from Turkey and Afghanistan deserve appreciation. He tried several sources hoping if he failed from one, he might get from another. One would wonder whether it was a realistic approach to expect aid from Turkey, a place so far away from India, and from a country which was itself in trouble being nick-named "the sick-man of Europe". It was greatly harassed at this time by the aggressive expansionist policy of Russia, and depended on British for moral support to check the Russian menace. Tipu's strategy was to first build up friendly relations with the Ottoman Empire, open up their vast areas as a market for Mysore goods, and come closer together in economic ties, which might automatically open the doors for political relations. He did moot an offensive alliance with Turkey, hoping it might not be an useless effort, as the Sultan of Turkey was the Caliph of the Islamic World, whose moral duty was to extend help to any Muslim country that was in need. Tipu's detailed letter to the Sultan tracing the history how the English had crushed the Mughals, the Nawabs of Bengal, Oudh and others intended to suggest that it was a conflict of the Crescent and the Cross, in which as the Caliph he should support the distressed Muslims in India. Tipu touched the sectarian and communal chord here, hoping at least that would work and serve

his purpose, but it was of no use. The English were too clever for him. It was not at all difficult for them to frustrate his efforts in this direction as well.

Tipu's last hope was from Afghanistan. In this he seemed to succeed to some extent. He contacted Zaman Shah of Afghanistan and induced him to invade India, so that this diversionary attack would disengage the English attention from the South, and he might seize the opportunity to execute his plans. By December 1798 Zaman Shah having marched from his capital had come as close to Delhi as Lahore in order to restore the Mughals to their earlier dignity, but the superior English diplomacy brought about a situation where Zaman Shah had to hurriedly go back to his own country. Wellesley, on the advice of Duncan, the Governor of Bombay, sent a Shia agent from Muradabad, Mehdi Ali Khan, to the court of Baba Khan, the Iranian Emperor, to excite Shia-Sunni differences and to induce him to fall on Herat on the frontiers of Afghanistan. This rear action frightened Zaman Shah who had to abandon Indian project and retreat to his country. Tipu's efforts failed just at the time when they seemed to succeed.

Thus, all efforts of Tipu to check the colonial expansion, which was the basic objective of his State policy failed. They failed because of the reasons over which he had no control. It seemed destiny seemed to favour the colonials and not Tipu. He was up against a power, which was like a leviathan that moved through all obstacles, and he attempted to stop it single-handed all by himself.

If Tipu was not successful in his main objective of stemming the tide of colonial expansion, he was supremely successful in his other objective of making his State a progressive state. Despite the hectic political and military involvement of his regime, he never ignored the main task of improving the life and conditions of his people. His encouragement of agriculture and industry, promotion of trade and commerce, building up of a strong navy, opening of factories in near and far off places, dispatch of embassies to different and distant lands to link Mysore with the outer world, innovative measures in almost all sectors of life, and more than all his efforts to integrate all his people into one homogenous whole, would indicate his inexhaustible energy and fertility of mind. He launched upon a series of measures which would transform his State into a humming centre of great industrial activity. He exerted his utmost to secure artisans and craftsmen from different countries to manufacture guns, muskets and a host of other commodities. He laboured hard to promote agriculture through every conceivable method, by encouraging fallow lands to be cultivated, by extending loans to the needy farmers, by fixing fair rent on land

holdings, by ensuring helpful price to the peasants, by constructing dams, canals, tanks and anecuts, and eliminating middle men from exploiting the peasantry. His reforming zeal touched almost every department of life including coinage and calendar, weights and measures, banking and finance, revenue and judiciary, army and navy, morals and manners, and social ethos and cultural affairs. Had he not been engrossed in his exasperating wars, he would have ushered Mysore into an industrial revolution.

Tipu's elaborate regulations of trade, commerce, industry and agriculture lead to certain conclusions. First, he had his own vision of State which was to serve a social cause, that stood for unifying all the people into a powerful homogenous whole. Individuals could not be unified until their basic demands were not fulfilled. By pooling the resources of the State through trade, commerce, industry and agriculture, he desired to make their demands as per his own scheme of planning. Secondly, his restless mind conceived that change was the law of nature, but change was not easy to bring about, as man's immobility always preferred status quo. It required a strong and dynamic leadership to bring about the change. Tipu desired to offer such a leadership which would do away with the vestiges of feudalism in his State. He stood for a change from traditionalism to modernism.

The third aspect of his State policy was related to freedom. All history is nothing but unfolding the drama of human freedom - political freedom, economic freedom, social freedom, and freedom from hunger, from superstition and from ignorance. The key-concept in Tipu's life is the concept of freedom. His quarrel with the English was only for freedom, as they attempted to subjugate the people to their will. Tipu's concept of the State was "freedom enlarged", "freedom organized" and "freedom objectified". When he found resistance to free interplay of organized energy in his sector of activity by foreign forces, he was up against them. Whereas others had no vision or insight to perceive the need for this freedom, he stood firmly for the basic principle that any State should have full and unobstructed freedom.

The fourth aspect of his polity was the secular character of his State. His detractors have said a good deal that he was a bigot, a fanatic and an intolerant ruler. This is not true. The numerous grants he gave to Hindu temples, the number of non-Muslims he had in both civil and military service, the kind of respect and regard he showed to Shanakracharya of Sringeri, would all disprove the British charge that he was intolerant. The list of letters he wrote to Sringeri and the number of temples that received his grants is quite long. What greater proof is required of his

secular character than the one that at his fall Purnaiah suggested Tipu's son for the succession and, it seems, Mir Sadiq opposed the idea? If Tipu was harsh on the Raja of Coorg, the Christians of Mangalore and the Nayars of Malabar, it was because of political reasons when they had raised the banner of revolt against the State and had hand in glove with the English. He did not single them out to punish. He was equally harsh on the Mehdewis, the Nawabs of Cuddapah and Kurnool when they worked against the interest of the State. He was more friendly with the Marathas than with the Nizam.

This apart, it should be remembered that Tipu was an enlightened ruler who knew that he was a Muslim ruler of a non-Muslim State and that the State must be neither a Muslim State nor a Hindu State, but a secular State. He was deeply religious, but that was a personal affair. He knew the limitations of his power and that he could not administer the State on principles unacceptable to the non-Muslims. The treatment meted out to the reactionary feudal aristocracy of Malabar and Coorg should not be torn out of context, nor the punishment to the Christians of Mangalore viewed as religious persecution. They were administrative actions dictated by political considerations for the safety of one of the most strategic regions of his State. Once a *faujdar* reported that a Hindu had married a Muslim girl, and sought Tipu's orders what should be done as it was not permitted in the Shariath. Tipu replied that it was none of the business of the *faujdar* to interfere in the business, and that it was purely a personal affair. He was so careful in protecting Hindu houses of worship that in a siege on Dindigal fort he ordered not to attack from the rear as the Raja's temple was located there. When some one complained to him against Purnaiah and said that the Brahmins were not trustworthy, he at once snubbed the person and recited a Quranic verse meaning that for the fault of one do not blame the whole community. The temple of Sri Ranganathaswamy was hardly a stone throw from his palace, and he would listen to the ringing of the temple bells with as much respect as he did the call of the *Muezzin* from the mosque. He extended monetary support to many Hindu religious institutions which were as many as 150 in number. In short his State was a welfare State where the good of all was the main concern of the ruler, and not of any particular caste or creed.

The fifth aspect of his policy was to link his State with the outer world and break its insular character. Before Haidar and Tipu, Mysore was a land-locked Kingdom situated on the central part of the table-land. The acquisition of a long coastal belt on the Western side facilitated both Haidar and Tipu to be in touch with the outer world. For this the first thing they did was to build a navy. Tipu's navy



Sri Ranganathaswamy, Sirirangapatna

consisted of 22 lines of battle ships and 20 large frigates with 72 and 62 guns, apart from a few grabs, ketches, galivas, and a fleet of merchant ships. These were put to good use for transport of goods to the Gulf area on the way to Europe overland. Mysore was rich in several commercial cash crops such as silk, sandalwood, pepper, cardamom, cocconut, ivory, elephants and so on which were greatly in demand in the western markets. Tipu was interested that the trade of these commodities should not fall into foreign hands, but should be controlled by the State so as to enhance its prosperity. His State became the greatest exporter and importer of goods which fell neither into the hands of the foreigners nor indigenous middlemen. The State acquired the monopoly of exports and imports, which intended to serve two purposes, to increase the wealth of the State and to link the State with the bigger world. Before establishing a trading centre in a foreign country, he would enter into correspondence with the rulers of that place, which would be a prelude to closer relations with that country. Mysore factories were established in such distant places as Armenia, Basra, Muscat, Pegu, Jiddah, Aden, Armuz and Kutch.

One of the objectives of sending his embassies to Turkey, France and Afghanistan was to promote commercial and political relations with those countries. When the Chinese merchants expressed their apprehension of piracy on the western coast, he issued strict instructions to his officers to extend all protection to the Chinese merchants. Not only abroad but also within India he opened factories in such places as Pondicherry, Poona, Kutch, Karachi, Mahe', Cuddapah and Kurnool. In short his concept of political economy was almost similar to the European thought of mercantilism, which aimed at gaining additional sources of revenue to public funds through overseas trade.

This leads us to the sixth aspect of his policy which related to his eager desire to profit by western science and western political philosophy. The support he gave to the Jacobin Club founded by French soldiers in Srirangapatna on the occasion of the fifth year of the French Republic in 1797, the idea to plant the "Republican tree" outside his palace, and the willingness to call himself "Citizen Tipu" are classical examples to indicate his desire to learn western political philosophy. He ordered a salute of 2300 cannons, 500 rockets and musketry to celebrate the occasion, and announced before a meeting of the Jacobin Club, "Behold my acknowledgement of the Standard of your country, which is clear to me and to which I am allied; it shall be always supported in my country, as it had been in that of the Republic"<sup>5</sup>. It makes

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5 Official Documents relating to the Negotiations carried on by Tippoo Sultan with the French Nation and other Foreign States (Ft. St. George, Madras, 1799), p. 138.

even P.E. Roberts acknowledge that Tipu's character was perhaps "unique in Oriental history"<sup>6</sup>. Tipu's exertions to be in touch with the developments of his age in Europe suggest that India would have ushered as a more powerful modern State without the calamity of foreign imperialism.

Tipu's originality, creativity and innovative spirit revives in our mind the characteristic features of the European Renaissance era and of European mercantilism, which played such a vital role in building the capitalist society of the modern age. What Tipu imitated was European mercantilism which was essentially a system of political power. Its aim was to suck the wealth of other nations through exchange of goods at exorbitant rate of profit. The merchandise of the east was sold in the western market a hundred times more than its value. Very quickly Europe started living on Asia, Africa and America. Tipu's sharp mind observed this phenomenon, and his will, purpose and personality endeavoured to profit from the experience of the west.

European capitalism was the product of foreign commerce, which was promoted by the formation of Joint Stock Companies. The East India Company was one such Company, which became so rich as to convert itself into a political entity for colonial exploits. Tipu was aware of the entire background how the nations of the West had become prosperous. He wanted that he too should be second to none in this respect. One example is enough to show the keen interest he took even to the minutest detail in respect of foreign trade. He wrote to his official in Muscat:

"We direct that such of our vessels as import at Muscat be unloaded in two days; and that their export landing of sulphur, lead, copper etc., be almost completed in two days, and the vessels dispatched to Mangalore. If more than four days be consumed in loading and unloading the vessels, you shall be responsible for the extra expense (that may be incurred in consequence). You must regularly report to us the day each vessel arrives at Muscat, and also the day on which it is dispatched from thence"<sup>7</sup>

His correspondence which is copious indicates his deep interest for a revolutionary change in every sector of life. Political differences apart, Tipu had great respect for western science, technology, discipline, organization and system. It was Haidar who first appreciated western techniques of war. Tipu went a step further and revamped the entire civil and military structure on Western lines. His concept of

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6 P.E. Roberts, *India under Wellesley* (London, 1929), p. 57.

7 W. Krikpatrick, *Selected Letters of Tipu Sultan to various Public Functionaries*, (London, 1811), Letter No. 155, p. 186.



national-State, the responsibility of the government to the people, the elimination of feudalistic intermediaries, his attempt to build up a standard of laws and creation of civil service were all influenced by western thoughts which he did not hesitate to adopt. Praxy Fernandes is right in saying, "The greatest tribute his conquerors, the British, could pay to him was the progressive adoptions of these ideas in their future governance of India".

Finally, Tipu's polity was so progressive that it was far ahead of his times. He desired to teach his people faster than they could learn. His economic experiments, his efforts at state-trading, his great industrial plans, his efforts to build up a strong navy, his interest in pearl fishery, his interest in rockets, his imaginative flight to build a dam across the river Cauvery, and his vision even to establish a University at Srirangapatna, were all measures which no prince had thought of before. He had a zeal for making innovations and improvements. His thorough overhauling of the administration, his reorganization of the armed forces, his establishment of a Board of Admiralty, his issue of new coinage, his reform of the calendar, his introduction of the new scales of weights and measures, his amazing experiment of a new type of co-operative Bank, his novel regulations in the administration of justice, his passion for changing place names, all exhibit his creative genius and his zeal for modernization.

But the most significant aspect of his polity was his love of liberty. He would think "with liberty gone, your soul is gone". It was his maxim that the life of a lion for a day was far better than the life of jackal for a hundred years". He would prefer death to dishonour and it was he who offered his blood to write the history of free India. It was he who thought that even to lay down one's life was too small a sacrifice for the freedom of the land. He was the one who told us that liberty was more precious than life. His two passions of life were love of liberty and love of land. The dominant impulse in Tipu was his passion for change, particularly the change of mind. He had undergone a metamorphic change of his own mind. He was in the process of changing the mind of others. The change he wanted to bring about was a simple concept that life was not worth living unless it was a life of liberty and dignity. Without this liberty man is like a bird kept in a cage. Tipu's mind was agitating that the British were fast making the whole of India a great prison-house. Tipu desired to liberate her inmates so as to make them feel the freshness of free air, and the sweetness of a dignified life. The British caught him in the process of opening the flood-gates of this prison and shot him dead.

It is true that Haidar's and Tipu's government in nature was absolutism. There was no other form of government known in India at that time. But it was a government quite different from all others in two respects, it was not parasitic and it was for the well-being of the people. The criterion to judge a government is how it spends its revenues and resources, whether for productive purposes or unproductive, whether for the well-being of the ruler or the ruled, and whether the State was on the path of progress or decay. Judged by this standard Mysore under Haidar and Tipu could be considered as a progressive State whose resources were well spent on development projects. This was more so under the imaginative leadership of Tipu. He spared no pains to promote the welfare of his people. He personally supervised every department of the Government and endeavoured to check the laxity, speculation and indifference of the bureaucracy. Mackenzie is on record that Tipu "invigorated the whole system by principles of good government, and an economic management of material resources to which those of any neighbouring power bore no comparison... Checking the frauds of intermediate agents by severe and exemplary punishments, the Sultan protected the raiyats, who were chiefly of Hindu religion, from the enormities of black collectors"<sup>8</sup>.

Although the Government evolved was a highly centralized with all powers concentrated in the hands of the Sultan, Tipu would consult his chief civil and military officers on all important matters. There were seven departments or Kacharis at the Centre each under a chief, who with his subordinate officers constituted a Board. These Boards met separately from time to time to discuss the affairs of their department. Every member recorded his views in the book of minutes which was kept in a box under the seal of the department. The decisions were taken by a majority of votes and Tipu was kept informed of these proceedings. Sometimes the heads of the several departments met to deliberate on matters of common interest. Thus Tipu had evolved a pattern which was a well defined procedure to take the views of the concerned officers into consideration for the final decision, which vested with Tipu alone. For example, whether to send an embassy to Mauritius on the advice of Ripaud was hotly discussed by the Heads of the Departments, some of whom were very critical, but their advice was over-ruled by Tipu.

In conclusion it must be said that both Haidar and Tipu contributed much to bring about a significant change in the polity of the region. Before their regime the State was cut up into too many units of independent powers, the petty paolegars

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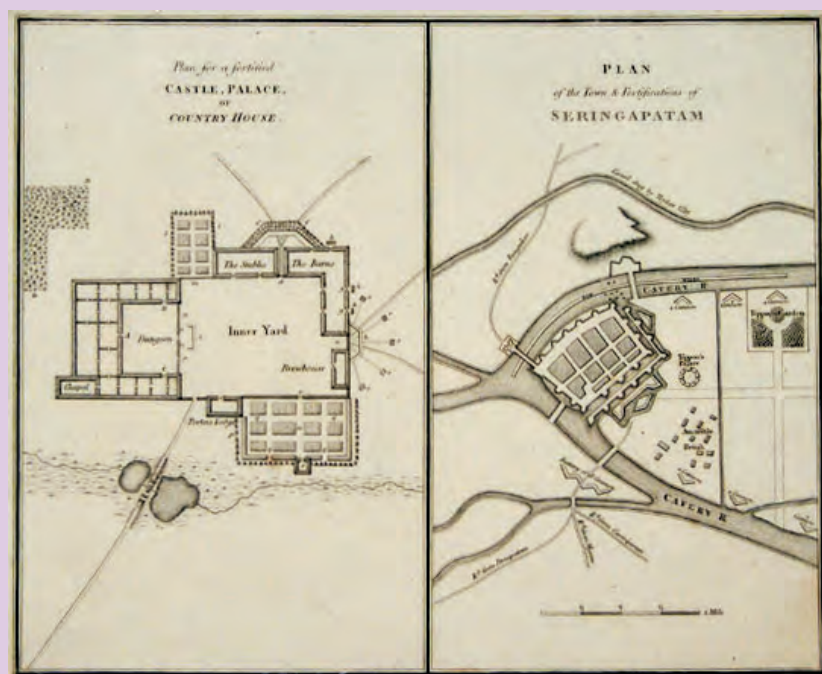
8 Goodall, The Mysore Famine of 1876-9 (Calcutta Review, Vol. I, XXXVII, No. CLXXIV, Oct. 1881), pp. 268-269.

and zamindars, each of whom cherished its own autonomy and very grudgingly acknowledged the suzerainty of the Centre. Haidar and Tipu broke up this tendency and built up a larger State. Secondly, it was Tipu who analyzed the factors why small armies under the colonials whether Clive or Munroe would overpower large Indian forces, and found out the reason that it was because of the lack of the cross fertilization of new ideas, which had met a natural death in India. Only one type of authority, despotism, had choked the nervous system of our body politics. Rigid caste system had paralysed the upper class from manual labour. That was why Tipu would subscribe to the French Revolutionary thoughts of the Jacobin Club. He would undertake social reforms. He would probe deep into the causes of the success of the colonials both in the civil and military fields. The swiftness, smartness, strategy and discipline of the well-equipped and well-led European army would easily walk over the disorderly, disjointed, ill-equipped and ill-led Indian army. Tipu did his best to change this system, and was successful to some extent, as was evident by the defeats of Baillie and Braithwaite. Moreover, certain political and moral factors such as nationalism, patriotism, discipline and the spirit of service and sacrifice had pushed the Europeans to the Centre of world scene, while the absence of these factors and presence of such negative factors as self-interest, short-sightedness, petty-mindedness and jealousy among Indians had made them the victims of exploitation and enslavement. Tipu attempted to set right this imbalance. The Europeans had evolved a new creed of mercantilism, capitalism, and colonialism with their knowledge, skill, diplomacy and wisdom, but the Indians had been left far behind because of their feudalistic systems of society, which had become parasitic in character, Tipu attempted to alter this picture.

Indians had lost their intrinsic capacity to stand united in the hour of danger. They had lost their judgment to know who was their friend and who the foe. The Marathas and the Nizam would rather join the colonials than their Indian neighbour. Tipu exerted his utmost to unify the contemporary Indian rulers for a common cause but they turned a deaf ear to his appeals. The will to face the challenges of life soberly and intelligently was missing on the Indian side, despite Tipu's efforts to revive it. With the rise of the English, a new political development had taken place in the country, which had destroyed the old traditional balance of power, and unless that balance was restored, friction was inevitable. It was Tipu who realized the true intentions of the colonials which was to reduce every Indian ruler to the position of a pensioned Nawab or a Raja.

In short, Tipu struggled all his life to protect and preserve the integrity and independence of his State and also to promote the well-being of his people. He fought against cowardice, injustice and ignorance. Constant challenges of the time stimulated him to further action. His restless mind would come out every time with something new. He thought that a better State was not possible without better men, and better men would not emerge until better conditions were provided to them. Hence, he attempted all his life to provide better conditions to his people. But the difficulty was that he desired to do so much that it could not be accomplished. His desire to accomplish within his life-time what Europe had achieved in centuries was an impossible task particularly when hostile forces had arrayed themselves against him. The time was not propitious. The support from the base was wanting. The foes across the frontiers were cunning, and many of his ideas were too radical. His thoughts were good but environment was bad.

Nevertheless, credit cannot be denied to Tipu. Success is not the criterion in history for glory. Paradoxes are plenty in life where goodness suffers, and crookedness thrives, but history places the crown only on those who were really righteous. Tipu belongs to that category which lives and dies for a righteous cause. He died fighting for the liberty and dignity of his Kingdom.



Sriragapatna plan