

CONTEMPORARY RELEVANCE OF TIPU SULTAN

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ABSTRACT

The vision, adventurism, diplomacy and developmentalism of Tipu Sultan were crucial factors from the point of view of political stability and all-round development of Mysore state. Tipu was determined to liberate the country from the foreign yoke and establish a model State of Mysore based on egalitarianism. Tipu Sultan is a fascinating figure of the 18th century who offered his blood to write the history of free India. Tipu has been identified with the tiger since he had awesome power and demonstrated his fight against colonialism. Tipu had fought against the alien rulers shoulder to shoulder along with the Hindu brothers. Mahathma Gandhi and Pandit Nehru had paid rich tributes to the yeoman contributions of Tipu Sultan. The martyrdom of Tipu Sultan laid a strong foundation for the national freedom movement in India. Tipu Sultan will continue to be the fragrant flower, success story, milestone and role model in Indian history. The progressive forces in the country have appreciated the scholarship and statesmanship of the President of India.

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Preamble

The article makes an analytical narrative of the factors and forces which facilitated the integrated development of Mysore State under the rule of Tipu Sultan, on the basis of a wide range of primary and secondary sources. The methodology of historical materialism was primarily followed in the production of this book. The Portuguese, Dutch, Danish, French and English were the major external forces which dominated Third World Countries during the 15th – 20th Centuries. Haidar Ali's political adventurism chiefly paved the way to establish an economically beneficial relationship between South India and the Persian Gulf. The vision, adventurism, diplomacy and developmentalism of Tipu Sultan were crucial factors from the point of view of political stability and all-round development of Mysore state which had covered most of the areas in South India. The primary, secondary and tertiary sources of information had a direct bearing on the regions under study. Most of them deal with the whole of South India and the Persian Gulf under various rulers including Tipu Sultan. The present article is primarily based on authentic primary and secondary sources which were available from various archives, libraries and departments of various states and universities.

Political Economy of Mysore State

A vast and veritable reservoir of sources pertaining to the period of Haidar Ali and Tipu Sultan is available. A general review of some of the important works related to the history of the Persian Gulf and South India, relations between the Persian Gulf and South India and the role of Tipu Sultan in establishing strategic relations between Persian Gulf and South India during the second half of the 18th Century are furnished in the book. The history of South India is an intrinsic part of the history of India since South India is a part of India geographically and otherwise. The Persian Gulf used to be the trade route between Iraq, Persia and India, and the ships which voyaged in the Gulf carried very rich cargoes. The new economic circumstances in the western seas of the Indian Ocean opened the way for the Europeans.

The political economy of the Indian States also provides an explanation for the early phase of European expansion. As far as South India is concerned, the Portuguese, Dutch, Danish, French and English constituted the external forces while the Nizam of Hyderabad, the Marathas, the Nawab of Carnatic, the King of Travancore, the Mysore rulers and others constituted the internal

rulers in Eighteenth Century. The Maratha Confederacy, Nizam Ali of Hyderabad and Haidar Ali of Mysore State were three principal powers in the south, especially, during the Eighteenth Century.

The Franco-British warfare (1757-1763) actually gave the Europeans a new confidence in the superiority of their armed forces in Indian conditions. In the first half of the eighteenth Century, sea trade was brisk in South India and the Persian Gulf. The Arab trade achieved considerable progress during the reigns of Haidar Ali and Tipu Sultan. The period of 1750-1850 could be rightly viewed as the period which incorporated the economy of several countries into the world-economy. The trading operations of the Portuguese, Dutch, French and English companies dislocated and disrupted the indigenous economies. The transformation of the British Empire in India into the British empire of India under Lord Wellesley was accomplished in South India by 1800.

European Colonialism

European colonialism was institutionalized in India mainly due to the naval superiority, monopoly of trade and vulnerability of Indian ports. There was no question of equality or friendship in the idea of partnership even though both shared the same structure of trade and politics in the Eighteenth Century. In particular, the supremacy exercised by England over the Indian sub-continent constitutes a classic example of the influence of sea power upon history.

The 'Bullet' diplomacy of Haidar was characteristic of the man and that it reduced all treaties to scraps of paper in letter and spirit. Tipu applied himself to governmental tasks with the same assiduity as Haidar. Tipu tried to enlist the support of France, Turkey, Iran and Afghanistan to form a formidable front against the English, since he viewed the expansion of the British in the East as a threat to Indian sovereignty in general and Islam in particular.

Eminent historians have expressed the view that Haidar Ali laid a strong political and economic foundation for the State of Mysore. Haidar Ali was neither a diplomat nor an economist of a high order. He valiantly expanded the State of Mysore and mobilized enormous economic resources. But, Tipu Sultan had the ability to lead his kingdom on a modernizing path politically and

economically. This inference is drawn on the basis of the comprehensive study of the life, mission and accomplishments of Tipu Sultan who was a great visionary and missionary.

Haidar Ali launched a program of conquest and annexation after ascending the throne of Mysore since he had strong political and economic considerations while conquering the Southern States. He offered hegemony to the whole of the South. His plan was to obtain hegemony over all the Southern States and to develop them into a military alliance against the British. He wanted to maintain the status quo: India for Indians. Wellesley designed a strategy to sever all the links of Tipu internally and externally. In particular, Wellesley felt that it was utmost necessity to keep the Marathas and the Nizam from Tipu. The last decade of the Eighteenth Century in South India witnessed a historical conflict of interests between European colonialism and Indian patriotism. The real challenge to British imperialism came after the 1780s, when Tipu Sultan put forth determined efforts to safeguard the Indian sovereignty.

The effusions provoked by the Mysore Wars against Tipu Sultan suggest that the British were coming to see themselves not only as a great military power, but as a people of justice and moderation. Thus the British invaded Mysore not as conquerors but as liberators of the mass of the population from the tyranny of Tipu Sultan (Marshall, 1992).¹ The British had misled the local Indian rulers and won over them through negative propaganda and achieved the goal of expanding British imperialism in India.

Martyrdom of Tipu Sultan

After the death of Tipu, the fourth and final battle of Mysore came to an ominous end. A vast area of activities of Tipu has still remained unexplored in reality. The present book assumes great significance because no ruler, Indian or West Asia understood or appreciated in right earnest, the significance of South India and the Persian Gulf and the management of its affairs, better than Haidar Ali and Tipu Sultan.

¹ . Marshall, Peter (1992) Cornwallis Triumphant: War in India and the British Public in the Late Eighteenth Century” in *War, Strategy and International Politics*, Lawrence Freeman, Paul Hayes, and Robert O’Neill (ed.) (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992): 71-72.

The work envisages that Tipu was determined to liberate the country from the foreign yoke and establish a model State of Mysore based on egalitarianism. He put forth relentless efforts to bring about social and economic development of the people. Tipu had rightly analyzed the reasons for the political decline of Muslims, the most important being their indifference to trade, commerce and industry. Tipu was fully aware of the significance of the Gulf region which remained the hub of global economic activity linking the Red Sea, the Arabian Sea and the Indian Ocean. Tipu's diplomatic missions had commercial objectives ultimately.

Diplomatic and Developmental Initiatives of Tipu

Tipu Sultan formulated several regulations on trade and economic administration of his state to safeguard the political and economic sovereignty of his state. The most innovative scheme brought forward by Tipu Sultan was public investment which was unique in the sense that the returns were paid in inverse ratio. The amount invested by the general public in scheme was reinvested by the government in government trade. The state also included the people actively in the process of nation building. The people of Mysore State cherished the memory of both Haidar Ali and Tipu Sultan even after their death because they lived in peace and enjoyed prosperity under their regime.

Tipu Sultan was very much eager to develop a friendly relationship with many foreign powers and appointed several diplomatic missions to accomplish this goal of diplomacy. Tipu Sultan was born with a sword in his hand. He had to withstand the onslaught of all his neighbors in general and the British in particular. Tipu could not achieve success he the desired from the point of view of diplomacy due to several constraints. In particular, the success of Tipu Sultan's diplomacy brought name and fame from abroad especially from the Gulf region and ended his isolation by throwing his enemies into confusion. Tipu Sultan's regime facilitated the state monopoly of trade which ultimately made his state highly prosperous. Several historians have rightly opined that Tipu Sultan's concept of political economy was similar to the contemporary European thought with particular reference to cameralism and mercantilism.

Tipu failed in his diplomatic mission with the French who did not respond to his demands militarily and otherwise. Haidar Ali and Tipu fought against the warlords as part of their

conquests and strongly resisted European colonialism. They were formidable adversaries who inflicted a severe defeat on the British and came near to breaking the power of the East India Company. The May 04, 1799 was considered by the British rulers as the day on which an indomitable opponent of theirs was at last destroyed. General Harris publicly declared that they had conquered India after the death of Tipu by which an illustrious chapter in the freedom struggle of India ended. However, the day was also looked at with sadness by all patriots who vehemently supported the fight against European colonialism.

After the martyrdom of Tipu, Wellesley received the thanks of Parliament, widespread public accolade, and an Irish lordship for his services. Wellesley faced virtually no criticism or opposition at home for his decision to enter into the war, which was a marked contrast from the public reception surrounding the earlier Mysore Wars. Tipu's alliance with the hated and feared specter of revolutionary France appears to be the crucial factor responsible for this difference. This reveals the mindset of British who hated Tipu to the worst possible extent for his anti colonial and pro-national attitude. No more evidence is required to justify the indomitable nationality of Tipu Sultan.

Pioneer of National Freedom Movement

Tipu Sultan is a fascinating figure of the 18th century who offered his blood to write the history of free India. His reforming zeal had touched almost every aspect of life including coinage and calendar, weights and measures, banking and finance, revenue and judiciary, army and navy, social customs and cultural affairs. He aimed at bringing about a social and economic change in the conditions of his people. For this he took great interest in trade, commerce, agriculture and industries. His opening of factories in near and far of places, his dispatch of embassies to different lands to link Mysore with the other world, his experiment of a new type of cooperative bank, his novel system of judiciary, his conception of nation state, his elimination of feudalistic intermediaries, his creation of civil service, and his building up standard system of laws, were all modern ideas, which made his state a humming centre of great activity. Tipu combined the renaissance of Italy, reformation of Germany and revolution of France. He was fond of saying

that life of lion for a day was far better than the life of jackal for hundred years. He was all his life committed to a cause and was steady in his conduct (Ali, 2002).²

Illustrious Son of India

Tipu Sultan an illustrious son of India. He was one of the most creative personalities in the history of South Asia. He tried to uproot the British rule and in the event fell victim to treachery of his own comrades, South Indian rulers and became a martyr. He is remembered as one of the greatest legends in the history of India. He had tremendous reforming zeal that touched all walks of life. He never ignored the main task of improving the social and economic conditions of his subjects (Katiyar, 2011).³

John Hipplesley and Philip Francis argued vehemently in the Commons on the immorality of the Mysore Wars. This example demonstrated how Tipu had been effectively depoliticized, made over into a contemptible figure that no one in the government was interested in defending. The Indian empire had become a subject of national pride, rather than an embarrassing stain upon the national honor (Soracoe, 2013).⁴ The British succeeded to a large extent in politically subjugating a vast portion of South India after the martyrdom of Tipu Sultan. Tipu wanted to create a strong dynasty with a strong visual identity. Tipu has become an integral part of the history of India in the 18th century. He has been identified with the tiger since he had awesome power and demonstrated his fight against colonialism.

Tipu Sultan prominently called as Tiger of Mysore was a legendary ruler of Mysore kingdom. He did not only oppose British in south India but also effectively challenged them in their advancement towards capturing south Indian states. Tipu Sultan was not only a warrior, commander, fighter and man of words but was also an effective administrator and reformer. The befitting tribute to the legendary ruler will be to judge him by his services and deeds as

². Ali, Sheik B (2002) Introduction, In. Aniruddha Ray (Ed) Tipu Sultan and His Age – A Collection of Seminar Papers, The Asiatic Society, Kolkatta.

³. Katiyar, Abdul Jabbar (2011) Tipu Sultan: A Visionary, CSS Forum, September 16, www.cssforum.com

⁴. Soracoe, Michael (2013) Tyrant! Tipu Sultan and The Reconceptation of British Imperial Identity, 1780-1800.

unfortunately myths have over ran on history as far as this great ruler is concerned (Samdani, 2016).⁵

Tipu Sultan has been projected as a Muslim bigot by the right wing political forces mainly to gain political mileage. A historical icon like Tipu Sultan has been praised as a patriot and martyr. Tipu's letters to the French rulers, Emperor of Ottoman, Nizam and the Marathas show that he viewed the British as a formidable European colonial force which was bent upon the subjugation of India (Gowda, 2016).⁶

Tipu had fought against the alien rulers shoulder to shoulder along with the Hindu brothers. The right wing historians have written the history of India according to their whims and fancies. They have also tried to wipe out the names of Dalits, tribals, minorities and backwards from the pages of history of the freedom struggle. They have tried to authenticate false history propaganda by the British. Tipu Sultan has been portrayed as a Hindu bigot rather than a great nationalist and patriot. Mahatma Gandhi had defended Tipu by saying that he was an apostle of Hindu-Muslim fraternity.

Tribute to Tipu Sultan

In the words of Jawaharlal Nehru, "Haider Ali and Tipu Sultan were formidable adversaries who inflicted a sever defeat on British and came near to breaking the power of East India Company. Thus, the attempts of a few British and Indian historians to depict Tipu as communal are highly erroneous and unjustifiable injustice done to the history of India". The martyrdom of Tipu Sultan laid a strong foundation for the national freedom movement in India.

Tipu had the greatest ambition of driving the British off the Indian soil. He also consciously sacrificed his life and Kingdom for that noble aspiration. Tipu fought many sanguinary battles with the British. Tipu was the most feared Indian of his time in Britain. Tipu had fought four wars to oust them from India. Tipu sent missions to the Ottoman and French rulers, seeking them as allies to oust the British from India. There were jubilant celebrations in Britain after his

⁵. Samdani, Shakeel (2016) Tipu Sultan: The Great Warrior and Ruler of India, Muslim Mirror, May 04, www.muslimmirror.com

⁶. Gowda, Chandan (2016) All about Tipu Sultan, Comment, The Hindu, November 09, Bangalore, www.thehindu.com

martyrdom. Scholars have acknowledged Tipu as the Napoleon of India. His martyrdom indeed heralded a new age of Indian Independence. Tipu was one of the most innovative and far-sighted rulers of the pre-colonial period. He tried to warn other Indian rulers of the dangers of an increasingly arrogant and aggressive west. Tipu continues to exist in the political discourses, political narratives as well as in the imagination of nation-building as a great patriot and nationalist.

Tipu efficiently managed the state of affairs and sustained the fight against the British without any help from the Indian rulers and foreign forces. Tipu was also a great champion of human rights, social justice, communal harmony, national integration and state socialism. Unfortunately, some vested interests have branded Tipu as an anti-national ruler which is biased, baseless, unfounded and motivated. He made up his mind to accept martyrdom heroically rather than surrendering or leaving the battle field and was fully prepared to accept the command of His Almighty. In conclusion, it could be stated with great pride that the uncompromising and death defying fight against British colonialism and capitalism put up by Tipu has been a rare event among the rulers of India. Tipu Sultan will continue to be the fragrant flower, success story, milestone and role model in Indian history (Guru, 2016).⁷

Tipu Sultan died a heroic death fighting the British. He was also a pioneer in the development and use of Mysore rockets in warfare. This technology was later adopted by the Europeans (Kovind, 2017).⁸ The President of India Ramanath Kovind paid glowing tributes to Tipu Sultan during the diamond jubilee celebrations of Vidhana Soudha, Bangalore. The progressive forces in the country have appreciated the scholarship and statesmanship of the President of India.

Sri Sri Ravi Shankar, founder, Art of Living, called upon the people to focus on good deeds of Tipu Sultan. The religious leader recalled the patriotism, courage and military excellence of Tipu

⁷. Guru, Mahesh Chandra B.P (2016) Tribute to Tipu Mahathma, Round Table India, November 13, 2016, New Delhi, India, www.roundtableindia.co.in

⁸. Aji, Sowmya (2017) President Ram Nath Kovind hails Tipu Sultan, sparks war of words between Congress and BJP, News Report, The Economic Times, Bangalore, October 26, www.webcache.googleusercontent.com

(Chennabasaveshwar, 2017).⁹ The BJP was critical of organizing the centenary celebrations of Tipu Sultan who laid down his life for the sake of nationalism for political reasons.

Conclusion

The whole historical and secular fraternity reverentially salutes Tipu and gratefully acknowledges what he has done for the country, its people and more importantly to the cause of nationalism in India. In particular, Tipu Sultan will continue to be the fragrant flower, success story, milestone and role model in Indian history. The immense contributions which are available for researchers are open for study and judgment.

To the scholars Tipu Sultan appeared as great ruler, to the fraternity of historians he is a great role model and to lovers of philosophy, he is a great philosopher. Tipu Sultan lived like statesman and his contributions are marvelous for the progress of Mysore State. In conclusion, it could be stated with great pride that the uncompromising and death defying fight against British colonialism and imperialism put up by Tipu has been a rare event among the rulers of India. Hence, all nationalists and secularists salute Mahathma Tipu and love to cherish his monumental contributions to the country with pride and gratitude.

Tipu Sultan was the first and only Indian king of the 18th century who saw East India Company's design and fought against British colonialism. Tipu Sultan laid his life for the sovereignty of India. He was a true secularist and a great champion of nationalism. Tipu remains in the history of India as evergreen hero since he vehemently struggled against the colonials. He was the solitary figure of the 18th century who resisted the colonialism to the best of his ability. He is relevant today for his yeoman contributions to communal harmony, secularism, socialism and national sovereignty.

Tipu is fondly remembered by the progressive forces as a hero fighting for righteous cause. He strongly advocated that the value of life depends not on wealth and power but on the life and mission. Tipu Sultan was a model ruler, because in the dispensation of justice, he never

⁹. Chennabasaveshwar (2017) Focus on good deeds of Tipu Sultan: Sri Sri Ravi Shankar, Report, November 10, www.oneindia.com

differentiated between different religious and social groups. He built a true welfare state, waged consistent wars against colonialism, sacrificed his life for nationalism and wrote a historical foreword for the national independence. A good ruler should be identified ‘not by the size of his chest’ but by his capacity to deliver administration oriented to social justice, economic equity and national integration.

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