PONNANI DURING MYSOREAN INTERLUDE

Ammad Kunnath “The rise and growth of Ponnani from 1498 A.D. To 1792 A.D.” Thesis. Department of History, University of Calicut
Ponnani during Mysorean interlude
CHAPTER 5

PONNANI DURING MYSOREAN INTERLUDE

In the history of south India the latter half of the 18th century was a critical period. The two large kingdoms in this part of the country, the carnatic and Mysore were both in the throes of political confusion and economic decay. This confusing political situation in the south provided the opportunity for any ambitious chieftain to fight for the crown. The position of Mohammed Ali, the Nawab of the carnatic was not secure. The carnatic wars fought between the English and the French with the veiled objective of getting control over the destiny of south India put the Nawab in to perpetual dependence up on the English. Mysore was also in a miserable condition. Mysore was one of those principalities which had been founded on the break up of the vijayanagar empire. It was founded by Raja Odayar (1578-1617) who claimed yadava descent. He was a puppet in the hands of his ministers. Hyder
a soldier of fortune distinguished himself in the several campaigns which Mysore fought.\textsuperscript{1} Haider's military skill as well as his financial acumen swept him in to supreme power in Mysore in 1761.\textsuperscript{2}

Immediately after his accession to the throne of Mysore Hyder Ali embarked on his expansionist career.\textsuperscript{3} His conquest of the Bednore Kingdom in 1763 brought him to the very borders of Kerala. It was the absence of a central authority in Kerala that enabled the rulers of Mysore to interfere in Kerala politics resulting in a deep impact on Kerala polity and society. Kerala of this time consisted of four important territorial divisions, Kozhikode, Kolathunadu, Cochi, and Travancore and there had been wide spread dissensions among the rulers which brought about Mysorean

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textit{Lewin B. Bowring, Haider Ali and Tippu Sulthan}, Oxford (1899), P.41.
  \item \textit{Ibrahim Kunju. A.P. Mappila Muslims of Kerala} Trivandrum (1989). P.74
\end{itemize}

188
invasions. Rivalry among the local chiefs and support of some petty Muslim rulers also proved to be favourable. It was quite natural that the wealth of Malabar and Malabar’s proximity to the sea attracted the attention of Hyder Ali to attack Malabar.

In 1766 Hyder Ali invaded Malabar with 12000 men. This was at the request of the Aliraja of Cannanore and the prince regent of Kolathunadu. Hyder marched his army in to north Kerala and conquered the Kingdoms of Kolathu Nadu, Kottayam, Kadathanad and Kurumbranad one after the other and reached the gates of Calicut the capital of the Zamorin. The Zamorin sent all members of his family to Ponnani and committed suicide after blowing up his palace. Hyder now became master of the Zamorin’s dominion, but he preferred to retire to Coimbatore with the onset of the monsoon. Hyder Ali appointed his Brahmin

---

officer Madanna as the governor of the newly acquired territories and garrisoned Calicut. He assumed the monopoly of exports from Malabar, setting up his Chief factory at Badagara. The rates of tribute to be received from the defeated Rajas were also fixed. The Ali Raja of Cannanore⁵ who had become the ally of the Mysore

5. Cannanore city was under the control of Muslim family known as Arakkal. This only Muslim royal family of Kerala followed the ‘Marumakkathayam’ system of inheritance. The senior most member of the family, whether male or female, is its head. The male Chief is called the Ali Raja and the female chief the Arakkal Beebi. This dynasty is known as Arakkal swarupam of the Ali Rajas. It is believed that the first ruler of this dynasty was Mohamed Ali and that the dynasty was named after him. Another version about the origin of this designation is that this only Muslim ruler of Kerala might have accepted the title ‘Ali’ after the name of one of the four ‘Pious Caliphs’. As they enjoyed suzerainty over the high seas and remained masters of the Laccadives and Maldives islands of the Arabian sea—they were called the ‘Azhi’ (sea) rajas or the ‘Lords of the sea’, from which the designation the ‘Ali Raja’ might have been derived. The Ali Rajas of Cannanore enjoyed full support of the Muslims of Malabar. A number of naval battles were fought by them against the Portuguese and they played an important role in expelling the Portuguese from the coast of Kerala.
ruler replaced the Kolathiri Raja as the Chief power of north Kerala. Hyder’s departure was the signal for a mass rebellion in the occupied areas. The Nairs of Kottayam and Kadathanad were in the forefront of the rebellion.

Hyder Ali reinvented Malabar and took stern measures to suppress the rebellion. He defeated the Nayars at Puthiyangadi and made Manjeri his

---


The term ‘Nair’ was originally a designation meaning literally ‘commandant’, a term that is supposed to have derived from the word ‘Nayakar’ meaning ‘leaders’. At one time there was the domination of the Nair in the society of Malabar. There are 116 sub divisions in the Nair caste. Megasthenes in his ‘Indica’ refers to a caste called ‘Nare’. K.P. Padmanabha Menon opines that Nares were Nairs and so they were the original inhabitants living in south India even before the fourth century B.C. Francis Buchanan argues that the Nairs were descendants of the ‘Nevars’ of Nepal who might have migrated to south India and settled there. He enumerates 12 sub divisions of Nair castes and attributes distinct function enjoined on each. At present the Nair caste constitutes 15% of the total population of Kerala.
headquarters. But he could not remain here for long and returned to Mysore in order to engage himself in military operations against the Mahrattas.

The difficulties of Hyder Ali emboldened the Kerala chiefs to rise again in rebellion. Kottayam was in the Vanguard of rebellion in the north and a Mysorean force of 4000 troops was beaten back. In Calicut where the Mysorean garrison was closely besieged by the rebels, the situation was saved for Hyder by the diplomacy of Madanna. Hyders army which was on the verge of defeat withdraw after receiving of monetary compensation from the Nair chiefs. The Zamorin also agreed to pay an annual tribute to Haider. Negotiations were opened with the chiefs in North Kerala also and Hyder agreed to withdraw his troops on the following terms 1) A war indemnity was to be paid to him 2) The Ali Raja was not to be disturbed 3) Palghat with its fort was to remain in his possession. The Mysore troops were withdrawn
from Kerala in 1768. The Zamorin and the Kadathanad and Kottayam Rajas returned to their possessions. For more than six years nothing more was heard of Hyder. The Malabar Rajas were happy at the thought that they had seen the last of him. Instead of strengthening their defensive preparations to present a united front against Hyder they again started quarrelling among themselves and Malabar was once again in the grip of division and disunion. The Zamorin began to quarrel with the Cochin Raja\(^8\) over a minor issue ie the appointment of a priest to the Triprayar Temple by the Cochin Raja.

---


9. *The State of Cochin was originally known as Perumpadappu and the ruling family was known as Perumpadappu swarupam. The Rajas of Cochin claims their descent from Ceraman Perumal. They were Kshatria rulers. The relation of the Raja of Cochin with the other rulers of Kerala was conditioned by the fear that he might lose his Kingdom by the aggression of others. He had recognised the Zamorin of Kozhikkode as the Suzerain in the 15th century but took the earliest opportunity to throw away the paramountancy of the zamorin and allied himself with the Portuguese and later with the Dutch.*
More over the chieftains of Malabar withheld the annual tribute to Hyder taking advantage of haider’s wars with the English and the Marathas.

By November 1773, Hyder had conquered Coorg which gave him an easy access to Malabar through Coorg and Wayanad. This was exactly what he did when he embarked on his second invasion of Malabar in December 1773. Hyder despatched a force under Sayyid Sahib by way of the Thamarasseri pass and another under Srinivas Rao by way of Coimbatore and Palghat. The Kerala chieftains failed to offer any worth while resistance and Mysorean authority was restored all over north Kerala. During this great military expedition Hyder Ali stayed at Ponnani. At this time, the fort of Palakkad was reconstructed with the help of French engineers. Hyder Ali and Tipu Sulthan introduced new war weapons and relied on French technology for war.\(^{10}\) Hyder now decided on

---

the conquest of Cochin. An army was despatched under Sirdar Khan which succeeded in capturing all the territories up to Trichur. The Cochin ruler sent emissaries to Seringapatam and secured the withdrawal of the Mysore troops by agreeing to pay tribute to Mysore. Hyder next planned an invasion of Travancore and sought the permission of the Dutch for his troops to march through the territories under their control. The Dutch refused to oblige whereupon Hyders military chief Sirdar Khan captured the Dutch forts of Chettuvai and Pappnivattam and the principality of the Kodungallur Raja. Sirdar Khan could not continue his campaigns further south as he had been blocked by the Travancore lines or ‘Nedumkotta’ built on the initiative of Raja Kesava Das.

When war broke out in Europe between the English and the French (1778) it found its echoes in Kerala. At one stage Hyder Ali had attempted to ally himself with the English, but he had failed as the
latter regarded him as a rival of their own interests. Hyder offered help to the French at Mahe and this resulted in retaliatory measures on the part of the English. English forces penetrated Malabar in 1779, capturing Mahe and cutting off the French aid on which Hyder Ali had depended. But the English at Tellicherry were in great trouble as Hyder Ali besieged Tellicherry in July 1780. The English had to evacuate Mahe and concentrate on the defence of Tellicherry. The struggle continued for one and a half years. At last the English succeeded in saving Tellicherry and recapturing Mahe. The military set backs of Hyder Ali in the war encouraged many Malabar chieftains to rebel against him. The Rajas and chiefs of southern malabar helped the English forces to drive out Mysore forces from the area. Towards the close of November, 1781 Tipu arrived by way of Palakkad to save the Mysorean

possessions in Malabar. But before Tipu could achieve any positive result, Hyder Ali passed away (December 7, 1782) and Tipu left Kerala in haste to occupy the throne of Mysore. By the time of his death Mysore had become the greatest Kingdom in south India not only in size but in every respect. Born poor and destitute and an illiterate Hyder Ali stands unique among the unique personalities of India. He was a self made man and achieved greatness as his talents for warfare, politics and governance were more than substantial. The life of Hyder Ali adds an adventurous chapter in the history of India.

When Hyder Ali died Tipu Sultan was in Ponnani. Suddenly he left Ponnani for Mysore. The boyhood of Tipu Sultan is shrouded in obscurity. He was born on

November 10, 1750. 'Sultan' was not the title added to his name by Tipu when he ascended the throne. His original name itself was Tipu Sultan. His life proves that he had received proper education and training in life to be a disciplined soldier and an efficient ruler. He began his military career at the young age of fifteen. The Mysore army that attacked Malabar in 1766 had the presence of Tipu Sultan as an ordinary soldier. From that date onwards Tipu had been serving his father as a worthy son.\textsuperscript{15} Hyder Ali sent him to Malabar when the Mysore army had been defeated by the English and when the Rajas and chieftains of Malabar turned against the Mysorean authority. But before Tipu could do anything worth while he had to return to Seringapatam to occupy the throne of Mysore.\textsuperscript{16} It is probable that Tipu Sultan reached Seringapatam about

\textsuperscript{15} Lewin B. Bowring Haider Ali and Tipu Sulthan, Oxford (1899), P.217.

\textsuperscript{16} Charles Stuart, A Descriptive catalogue of the oriental library of the late Tipoo Sultan, Cambridge (1809), P.265.
the 20th of December 1782 and without much display of pomp of ceremony ascended the throne.\textsuperscript{17} When he became the ruler he followed his father and continued the struggle against the British. He wished to form the unity of south India against Britian. Hyder Ali and his son Tipu Sahib swore on the Koran ever lasting hate for English and crush them.\textsuperscript{18}

The news of the death of Hyder was received with wild acclamations of joy both by the Madras and Bombay governments. They hoped that a war of succession inevitable in oriental annals, would keep Tipu busy for a considerable time. This interval of peace, they hoped to utilise for fresh conquests and consolidating their conquests and increasing their bargaining power with him. There was, however, no war of succession, and on that score, the English hopes

\textsuperscript{17} Gholam Mohammed "The History of Haider Ali and Tipu Sultan - New Delhi (1976) P.P 264-265.

\textsuperscript{18} Karl Marx, Notes on Indian History, Moscow (1965) P.95.
were dashed to pieces. But it did not prevent them from attempting to complete the conquest of Malabar\textsuperscript{19}.

The Bombay government in order to create a diversion on the west and there by force the Mysoreans to withdraw from the carnatic had sent a contingent to attack Bidnur one of the richest and most strategic provinces of Mysore. Bidnur and Mangalore fell before the English. But the fruits of the victory could not be enjoyed for long as Tipu Sultan himself controlled the military operations and recaptured Bidnur and Mangalore. An armistice was concluded on 2nd August 1783. While negotiations for concluding a more lasting peace had been going on between the English and Tipu Sultan Col. Fullarton attacked Mysorean territory from the south and captured the Palghat fort from the Mysorean garrison and left it in the Zamorins charge. This provoked Tipu to embark on another

military adventure in Kerala and conquer the whole of south malabar up to Kotta river. The English however succeeded in checking his further advance. The English also managed to win the Arakkal Beevi to their side. The treaty of Mangalore which brought about the second Mysore war to a close was a gain as far as Tipu had been concerned. The English gave up their claims on Malabar and declared the rulers of Kerala to be the friends and allies of Tipu. This was tantamount to a recognition of Mysorean suzerainty over Malabar.\textsuperscript{20}

The second Anglo-Mysore war had impressed up on Tipu Sultan the strategic importance of Malabar to the security of Mysore. During the war Malabar had become the battle ground for the Mysorean and English armies in turn, and Malabar offered an easy approach to the Mysore Kingdom. Realising the

strategic importance of Malabar Tipu was anxious to strengthen his hold over the territory. So he confirmed the appointment of Arshadbegkhan an officer of rare talents, humanity and integrity, made by Hyder before his death and sent him to Malabar. But Arshadbegkhan the new governor of Malabar was helpless as Tipu’s officers oppressed the civilian population by their unjust exactions. Even the Mappilas of Ernad rose in open rebellion against this. To tackle this situation Tipu Sultan himself arrived in Kerala at the head of a large army in January 1788 and conquered the territories up to Calicut without any serious fighting.

After effecting these conquests Tipu turned his attention to a thorough reorganisation of the administrative set up of Kerala. Arshad Beg Khan had made considerable reduction in the revenue demand in southern Malabar in order to relieve the distress of the people caused by the rebellions headed by the princes of the Zamorin’s family. Tipu gave priority to
the transfer of the capital\textsuperscript{21} of the province of Malabar from Calicut to Feroke on the south bank of the Beypore river. He built a strong fort at the place and connected it with the other parts through a regular net work of roads. All the inhabitants of Calicut were also to move to the new capital Farukhabad. But the beginning of the monsoon upset his plans. Tipu was forced to withdraw to Coimbatore. Availing of this opportunity the people returned to their homes. Thus the Sultan's "Transfer of Capital" ended in a failure. Had it not been for the war of 1790-92 and ultimate overthrow of Tipus power in Malabar, Farukhabad would have prospered.\textsuperscript{22} The peculiar social customs like

\textbf{21. The transfer of capital of the province of Malabar from Calicut to Feroke on the southern banks of the Beypore river in the outskirts of Calicut city, was a failure. A. Sreedhara Menon calls it as a grandiose or pompous project of Tipu Sulthan. All the inhabitants of Calicut were also to move to the new capital Farukhabad. But the beginning of monsoon upset his plans and the transfer of capital ended in apparent failure.}

polyandry and matrilineal law of inheritance that prevailed in Kerala seemed to be primitive and obsolete to Tipu Sultan. And so he was determined to bring about a radical re-organisation of social structure. He issued the famous Kuttippuram proclamation which read: (".....I hereby require you to forsake these sinful practices and to be like the rest of mankind...."). He wanted the people to forsake polyandry, matrilineal system etc. The Kuttippuram proclamation created widespread resentment and the people rose in rebellion. A large number of Brahmins fled to Tranvancore.

The Rajas of Kadathanad and Kottayam sought English protection. The nairs of Calicut and south Malabar headed by Ravi Varma and other princes of the 'Padinjare Kovilakam' turned against their oppressors and laid seige to Calicut. Tipu sent a large army of 6000 men to raise the seige but failed. Early in 1789 Tipu himself marched to Malabar. After leaving a force at Calicut to deal with the Nairs he proceeded north words. Alarmed at the advance of Tipu the local
chiefs took refuge in the British settlement at Tellicherry and later fled to Travancore. After giving a warning to the chief of the Tellicherry factory against the protection given to the local chiefs Tipu went to Cannanore and then to Coimbatore.

The Raja of Travancore had given shelter to Zamorin and other local chieftains. So Tipu Sultan was angry towards the Travancore Raja. At first he tried to win over the Travancore Raja by diplomacy but

24. Travancore the southern kingdom of Kerala was a small state lying between the south of Quilon and north of the cape comorin. It rose in to prominence with the accession of Marthanta Varma as its ruler in the year 1728. He aimed at the unification of Kerala and the establishment of centralised form of government. After conquering and annexing a number of small principalities he turned against Cochin. Much of the territories of Cochin was annexed with his Kingdom. But he came to the rescue of Cochin when the Zamorin conquered Cochin. A treaty was signed between the Raja of Cochin and the Zamorin of Calicut according to which they agreed to abide by the arbitration of Marthanta Varma the ruler of Travancore in case of a future dispute.
failed. Tipu Sultan now decided to invade Travancore and subdue that state. Tipu could not fulfil his mission as the Travancore lines put up stubborn resistance and as he received information that the British had declared war on Mysore.  

The provisions of the Treaty of Mangalore that brought the second Anglo-Mysore war to a close, were not favourable to the English. The sentiments of both English officers and merchants of Bengal and Madras were that they considered the treaty merely a truce which would not last long. Lord Cornwallis the governor general himself was determined to break the power of Tipu, the inveterate enemy of the English in south India. He had by this time succeeded in concluding alliance with the Nizam and the Marathas to fight Tipu. When the preparations were completed Cornwallis declared war on Tipu on the pretext of Tipus war with Travancore

(1790-92), a cause, the legality of which is yet to be scrutinised. Tipu was defeated. The treaty of Seringapatam brought the third Anglo-Mysore war to an end and Malabar was one of the provinces ceded to the English by Tipu Sultan on the conclusion of peace.²⁶ British supremacy was established over Malabar. The establishment of British power in Malabar in 1792 had brought considerable changes in the existing traditional system of land control and agrarian relations in this region. However such changes did not affect on native institutions which had functioned as a unit of land control.²⁷

Tipu Sultan lost half of his Kingdom. The remaining half was under post-war miseries. The third Anglo-Mysore war put Tipu Sultan in to a debt of 3 crores and 30 lakhs of rupees to be paid as war

---

indemnity. The war also gave a severe blow to the pride and self confidence of the Sultan. But he could never be disheartened. He got an interval of seven years, a period in which there had been no wars. But we may not be misled to think that Tipu had no history during these seven years. It was the history of a unique ruler.28

He was bent up on the reconstruction of the war-torn economy. He was to concentrate on public welfare. He had been equally great as a ruler and warrior. In the entire history of India there is one and only one warrior who could boast of having fought against the English and that was none but Tipu Sultan.

Tipu Sultan paid with in two years the war indemnity imposed up on him in 1792 and got back his hostages. He could not forget his heavy territorial and other losses and made haste to strengthen his military and financial resources. He negotiated with

many important Indian states to join hands with him for the formation of an anti-British league and sent letters to Persia, Arabia etc. But the charge for the declaration of war on Tipu by the English was the allegation that he had made a conspiracy with the French to drive away the English from India. In February 1799 Mysore was invaded from the east and west. The fourth Anglo-Mysore war was a short and swift affair. Early in May Seringapatam was stormed by the English. Noble Tipu Sultan is the brave man who died in the battle field as a soldier. Tipu Sultan was pure, orthodox and abstemious. He was a man of irrepresible energy who transacted much business systematically. His physical and intellectual vigour was extra ordinary. He was learned and showed an avidity of western knowledge. He was active with his pen and spoke Hindustan, Kannada and Persian fluently. He

could express opinions on religion, science, medicine, engineering and all branches of administration, civil and military. He wrote innumerable letters and possessed a good library of more than 2000 books on a variety of subjects. Coupled with his energy and talents were his extraordinary bravery and moral courage. He refused to save himself in his last moments by surrendering his French soldiers. He was a strategist and tactician. He was saturated with reforming zeal which affected the army, commerce, banking weights and measures, the calendar and coinage.

But it is quite unfortunate to note that both the English and the so-called national historians compete in ignoring the services of this great statesman, shrewd diplomat, benevolent ruler and brave warrior. Tipu Sultan a great patriot, the tiger of Mysore who roared before the bullets from the guns of the English, is kept away from the list of patriotic freedom fighters who sacrificed their lives to the cause of freedom. Tipu had
been crucified by history itself. And this was the tragedy not only of Tipu Sultan but also of history.30

"Muslims have played a very significant role in the national struggle for freedom. They have been in the fore front of it. It was, after all from their hands that the British had versted power in India. When British imperialism was spreading its tentacles over the country and devouring one province after the other the first man to realise the gravity of the danger was the lion hearted Tipu Sultan of Mysore. He saw clearly that unless determined efforts were made in time to thwart the nefarious designs of greedy aliens, the whole of India would ultimately be swallowed by them. With this resolve, he unsheathed the sword and jumped in to a fierce life and death struggle against the British exploiters.

Tipu Sultan made a valiant bid to unite the Indian princes against the British usurpers. He even wrote to Sultan Salim III of Turkey, to join hands with him for the expulsion of the British. His whole life was spent in the struggle. He came on the verge of success, the British were about to be swept out of the land. But they managed to achieve through diplomacy what they could not gain by arms. They clearly obtained the support of some rulers of the south and by the use of other methods of treachery and deceit brought to nought the patriotic ambitions of that gallant son of Mysore.

He preferred death to life of servitude under the British. His famous, historic words spoken a little before he met his death were, “to live for a day like a tiger is far more precious than to live for a hundred years like a Jackal”.

The historians of India does not tell of a brave patriot and a more uncompromising enemy of foreign
rule. In his life time he was the most hated man among the English to give bent to their spite. Englishmen in India even went to the extent of giving to their dogs the name of Tipu Sultan. Paying tribute to the Sultan, Mahatma Gandhi wrote in “Young India”, that he had no peer among those who attained martyrdom in the cause of the country and nation”. Few Indian rulers have been so much maligned and misrepresented as Haider and Tipu Sultan have been. The latter in particular, has been portrayed as “a monster, pure and simple”. The policies and activities of these two rulers, especially their rule of Malabar, have been made targets of bitter attack. ‘A careful study of their policies and activities will, however, clear many of these charges.32

The Mysorean conquest of Kerala left a lasting impression on the political, economic, social and


cultural fields. Though the Mysorean rule lasted only for less than two and a half decades (1766-1790) it was decisive in the entire history of Kerala. The invasions of Hyder and Tipu Sultan led to the decline of the old feudal order in Malabar and to the introduction of modern progressive ideas about state and government. The Mysore Sultans organised a centralised system of administration in the territories which came under their control. The only system of government known to the Indian sub continent at that time was despotism and Tipu's system could not be different. The Sultan was the embodiment of all civil, political and military authority in the state. He was his own foreign minister, his own commander-in-chief and acted as the highest court of appeal in his kingdom. He invigorated the whole system by principles of good government and by economic management of material resources to which the neighbouring powers bore no comparison. Inspite of the absence of any constitutional checks on his authority, Tipu Sultan did
not behave like an irresponsible despot. He displayed a high sense of duty to his office and believed that his subjects "constitute a unique trust held for God the Real Master". He took great care to work for the welfare and happiness of the people".

Tipu Sultan's zeal for innovation and improvement prompted him to introduce a number of changes in the system of government he inherited from his father. H.H. Dodwell gives Tipu the credit of being the first Indian sovereign who sought to apply the western methods to his administration. Each department was put under the charge of a chief assisted by a number of subordiate officers who constituted a Board. The decisions in the department were taken after full discussion where members enjoyed the right to dissent. The decisions were taken by a majority of voters and the minutes of the meetings were recorded.

However, the final decision in all important matters rested with the Sultan. Under Tipu there had been an efficient system of provincial and local government. Even the critics of Hyder Ali and Sultan agree to the truth that they were among the great rulers of India.34 The Nairs who played a prominent part in the resistance to Haider and Tipu lost their position of pre-eminence in the body politic of the state and their disappearance from the scene enabled the Mysore rulers to set up a centralised system of administration in the territories which came under their sway.35

During the Mysorean rule the land revenue system was re-organised on modern lines. The tenants lost their position of impotence and became important in the society when they were freed from their lords. By and large Tipu continued the revenue system of

34. Samuel Strandberg “Tipu Sultan the tiger of Mysore or to fight against odds.” New Delhi (1980) P.76.

Hyder Ali but introduced greater efficiency in it. He tried to establish direct relationship between the government and the cultivator by discouraging the Jemmi system, resumption of unauthorised 'inam' (rent free) lands and confiscation of the hereditary land rights of the Zamindars. The government employed the method of inducement-cum-compulsion to bring more land under cultivation. The Amil, in charge of the district, toured his district and sanctioned advances of money (taqavi loans) to the needy peasants. The actual produce from the land determined the quantum of Tax. Money rates were also fixed for payment of taxes. In Malabar land tax was unknown until the Mysorean rule. When Haider conquered the country the necessity for organising an efficient land revenue administration was felt. The tax was collected directly.


from the tenant through officials. The tenant thus got an added dignity in the new set up and the interests of the Janmi or land lord were adversely affected.38 Mysorean occupation created several difficulties for the Brahmin and Nayar communities in particular. The native Brahmins were known as Nambudiris in Malabar. They were the largest Janmi class who received royalty from the temples. It was a share of the Pattam39 which "the Kanakkar"40 used to pay the landlords and which the Mysorean government now claimed as rent. During the pre-colonial period ie under Hyder Ali and Tipu Sultan Ponnani underwent changes especially in the social field. Though the Nayars lost their feudal status they enjoyed many privileges and continued to exploit the Ezhava community and other lower classes. A group of the jobless Nayar soldiers

39. Pattam = rent
40. Kanakkar = cultivating tenant
settled near Kollanpadi in Ponnani. Their settlement is known as 'Menonthara'. There is also a large area with Ezhava domination known as 'Ezhavathuruthi'. Majority of Ezhavas here were agricultural labourers who lived on bare subsistence. In the time of Haider, temple lands were exempted from assessment; but "Cerikkal lands" were considered as private property and assessed. Tipu considered that temple lands were mostly managed for the benefit of a select few higher caste people and therefore he had them assessed to land tax.

There was tremendous progress in trade and commerce, both foreign and inland during the Mysorean

---

41. 'Menonthara' = A place in Pallappuram Amsom in Ponnani.

42. 'Ezhavathuruth' = A large area inhabited by the Ezhava community. This place in Ponnani is now known as Ezhava thuruth village.

43. Cerikkal lands = crown lands

44. Ibrahim Kunju. A.P 'Mysore Kerala relations in the Eighteenth century' - Trivandrum (1975) P.64.
rule. Tipu Sultan especially realised that a country could be great only by developing its trade and commerce and in this field he stood equal to his European contemporaries. Tipu's trade policy was aimed at making the government the chief merchant of his dominion and the trader was to enrich the treasury. So he established tight control over inland and foreign trade. He realised the importance of trade with the Persian Gulf and the Red Sea regions. Tipu Sultan arranged for the opening of trade centres in foreign countries such as Cutch, Muscat, Jiddah, Ormuz, and other places.45 He even planned to establish commercial relations with Pegu and China. A commercial board was established and the Regulation of 1783-94 set forth the general duties of the officers in the department. He declared government monopoly of trade in sandal wood, pepper, cardamom, betelnut, gold and silver bullion, and export of elephants etc.

He purchased pepper from the producers at 100 rupees a candy\(^46\) and this shows that there was direct dealing between the producers and the government. A number of factories were established in the Mysore state which manufactured wide range of articles ranging from war ammunition, sugar, paper, silk fabrics, small tools and fancy goods.

The most important contribution of Mysorean administration was the improvement of inland communication. As the country was split up in to several petty kingdoms, the need for good roads was never felt. For military and administrative purpose, a series of good roads connecting the principal towns of the province were quite essential, and from the beginning of his reign, Tipu paid close attention to the subject. Tipu constructed a net work of roads in Malabar. The coastal road from Beypore to cranganore

\[46. \text{Candy} = 4.54Kg\]
which still retains the name of Tipu Sultan road runs through Tanur, Ponnani, Veliyancode and Chetuva. There was another gun road from Tanur to Palakkad by way of Puthiyangadi, Tritala and Lakkidi.\(^{47}\) The most important of Tipus roads were (1) From Calicut to Pulavayi, via Perunilam, Chekkur and Tamarasseri (2) From Malappuram to Putuppanam, connecting it to the ghats (3) From Malappuram to Tamarasseri (4) From Feroke Tamarasseri via, Calicut, Elamaruti, Cattamangalam, Perunilam (5) From Feroke to Coimbatore via, Tirurangadi, Venkatakkotta, Pattambi, Kavalappara, Mankara river, Valayar (6) From Palakkat to Dintukal (7) From venkatakkotta to Coimbatore via Angadipuram (8) From Chaliyam to Cherruvay via,


Dr. Kareem goes on and reveal the rapid and intensive nature of the construction of roads. ‘The intensive nature of the work undertaken and the fast pace at which it was executed can be known when we see that this grand work was completed with in six years immediately after the second Anglo-Mysore war’. 

222
Tanur, Ponnani, Veliyankod, Chavakkad and along the island of Cherruvay to Kondungallur. These roads are even now called Tipu Sultan Road (9) From Feroke to Mysore (via) Kondotti, Nilambur, Karkur pass and Gajjalhattipass (10) From Cannanore to Mysore, via Tellicherry and Periyacuram (11) From Tanur to Palakkad and Coimbatore via, Puthiyangadi, Tirunavay, trittal, Kavalappara and Lakkidi and (12) From Palakkad to Kollamkod via Chittur and Thathamangalam. These roads were helpful not only for administrative efficiency and military operations but also for the promotion of trade and commerce. Many of them were connected with Feroke his capital and Ponnani his exporting centre in Malabar. Tipu Sultan established ware houses in the different parts of the country to store the goods. The principal ware house was at Vadakara. Ware houses were established at Mahe, Koilandi, Calicut and other places. The

English East India Company lost its lucrative business in Malabar because of the nationalisation of trade by Tipu Sultan. In the council proceeding of the Bombay government it was recorded as follows: "Tipu seemed determined to persevere in prohibiting the exportation of the coastal production and while the Malabar Rajas continue under his yoke the company can derive little or no benefit from the trade at Tellicherry." Tipu had a good coinage. His coins were discovered at many places in Ponnani. The coins of Tipu Sultan exist in far greater variety and number than those of his father.

Compulsion of circumstances required Tipu Sultan to give his maximum care to the raising and maintenance of an efficient military force. His infantry was disciplined after the European model with Persian words of command. French officers were employed to train his troops and he raised a French Corps though

49. *National Archives of India, Foreign Department, Secret and Political proceeding 26th August, 25 September 1789, SN. 96. P.1849.*
small in size. The strength of Tipu's army varied in accordance with the military requirements and resources available. On the eve of the third Anglo-Mysore war Tipu's military forces comprised 45000 regular infantry and 20000 horse besides some irregular force. Both Hyder Ali and Tipu Sultan realised the importance of a naval force but could not rise to the level of their main adversary, the East India company. English occupation of Tipu's Malabar possessions in the third Anglo-Mysore war drew the Sultan's attention to the need for an effective naval task force. In 1796 Tipu set up a Board of Admirality and planned for a fleet of 22 battleships and 20 large frigates. Dockyards were established at Mangalore, Wajidabad and Molidabad. Realising the fact that his resources were unequal to the potential and resources of the English Tipu Sultan is said to have remarked; “I can ruin their resources by land but I can not dry up the sea”. This statement of Tipu has resemblance to that of Napoleon Bonaparte who after his defeat at the
naval Battle of Trafalgar against the English remarked that “I am impotent at Sea”.

The conquest of Hyder Ali and Tipu Sultan resulted in far reaching social changes. It shook the very foundation of the traditional Malabar. The Mysore invasion administered a ‘shock treatment’ to the traditional Kerala society.\(^5^0\) The Mysorean rulers curtailed the privileges of high caste Hindus like Brahmins, the Kshatriyas and Nairs who exploited the lower castes. The Menons and Nayars were land lords in Ponnani and at Trikkavu area the Brahmins had landed property with Devaswam\(^5^1\) and enjoyed privileges by tradition. All Hindus were equal before the Mysorean rulers. Several measures of the Mysorean rulers, especially of Tipu Sultan served to shatter the myth of social superiority of the higher castes and


\(^5^1\) Devaswam - property belonging to temple.
instilled among the members of the lower classes a consciousness of their own dignity and status.\textsuperscript{52} It is proper to say that the Mysore invasion sounded the death knell of the old social order and inaugurated a new era of social change in the history of Kerala. The Muslims have been given several privileges and their dignity also increased during the time of Hyder Ali and Tipu Sultan.\textsuperscript{53} Of course the Muslims enjoyed a feeling of security and were not generally disturbed as they were not hostile to the rulers, though there had been hostilities against Mysorean rulers by some Muslim chieftains.

A large number of Edicts attributed to Hyder Ali and Tipu Sultan became the subject matter of criticism. All allegations of cruelty and bigotry of Haider Ali and Tipu Sultan were built up on the basis of these


\textsuperscript{53} "Christava Vijnana Kosam" - Alapuzha (1975) P.163.
proclamations. But a careful, serious and dispassionate study of those alleged proclamations or edicts proves that they were the creations of the so called historians or were misinterpreted. Tipu was aware of the crude practices of Polyandry and half-nakedness prevailing in Malabar, which he tried to reform. He might have issued the Kuttippuram proclamation assuming the role of a social reformer. But the opinion current among our historians that the implementation of the proclamation by his officers was tantamount to forcible conversions is baseless. History does not bear testimony to such wholesale and forcible conversion. None of the contemporary sources make any mention of such conversion. Even the hostile historian of Tipu Sultan Sri. K. M. Panicker evaluated the editct thus: "It was not religious bigotry that made Tipu to issue this amazing proclamation. He was firmly convinced that in asking the Nairs to give up what he called their obscene habits he was undertaking a mission of civilization. It is the narrow reformer's mind anxious
for the moral and material welfare of the people and not the fanaticism of a bigot desirous of converting the 'Kafir' that speaks in this proclamation". K.M. Panicker continues to say that after this proclamation he began to honour Hindus with Islam. This is the universal appraisal of the effect of the proclamation. The English constantly carried on the propagation of sensational news of mass circumcisions and forcible conversion to mislead the Hindu rulers of India. If we look in to the original sources dispassionately with a view to searching out historical truth all the prevalent stories of atrocities of Mysorean rule in Kerala will disappear.54

One surprising fact about this story of religious persecution is that all writers agree that both Hyder and Tipu were exemplarily tolerant rulers as far as other parts of the Mysore kingdom were concerned; but in Malabar they practised inhuman persecution on their

---

Hindu and Christian subjects. There is some apparent contradiction in this story of persecution. The fact was that Hyder and Tipu persecuted their Malabar subjects, not on account of their religion but on account of their continued rebellion and sabotage. Both the rulers were as ruthless to Hindus as to Muslims, when it was a matter of security of state. Hyder and Tipu ordered forcible conversion of some prisoners of war as a measure of punishment for rebellion and continued opposition to Mysorean authority. But they do not appear to have adopted it as a state policy and gone about converting people.55 The 1787 proclamation of Tipu Sultan made social or religious discrimination in Mysore unlawful. "Religious harmony is of prime importance in Islam. Islam warns against forcible conversion. There should be a spirited contest among people to perform good deeds. I take this rule equal to my heart .........., I have learnt with all respect the

Hindu vedas. From this day onwards, take it from me, it will be unlawful on the part of my subjects in Mysore or the Mysoreans living outside to show religious or racial discrimination. Then, is there any relevance in the statement of Buchanan given below? "The Hindus were everywhere persecuted, plundered of their riches, of their women and of their children. All such as could flee to other countries did so; those who could not escape took refuge in the forests, from whence they waged a constant predatory war against their oppressors.

Another serious allegation made against Tipu Sultan is the destruction of temples. A few temples might have been destroyed during war operations. But there is no evidence to show that destruction of temples was adopted as a state policy. But we have definite evidence of scrupulous care being taken to preserve

56. Gidwani. B.S The Sword of Tipu Sultan. P.229.
temples and other houses of worship. For example when Sardar Khan and his army occupied Trichur in 1786 they camped in the Vadakkunnatha Temple premises. Quoting the Temple Grandhavari, Padmanabha Menon says that the priests fearing desecration of the temple, had closed the doors and escaped. When they returned, after the retreat of the army they found the doors intact and nothing was missing! We have also instances of munificent endowments being conferred upon, or continued to Hindu temples and Satrams. Tipu had been so tolerant that there had been three temples, (Sree Ranganathan, Narasimham and Gangatareswaram) just 100 metres away from his palace. The Trikkavu temple in Ponnani was damaged during the military operations of Tipu Sultan and he gave financial assistance to modify the temple. The statement of Lieutenant Moore, "when a person travelling through a strange country finds it well cultivated, populous 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 to the minds of the people. This is a picture of Tipu’s country”, is a clear evidence to the law and order and peace and prosperity that prevailed in Tipu’s dominions. The feudalistic social and political structure of Malabar was completely swept away and the most welcome changes in the socio-political institutions and in the economic structure of the country were brought about thanks to the Mysorean regime.