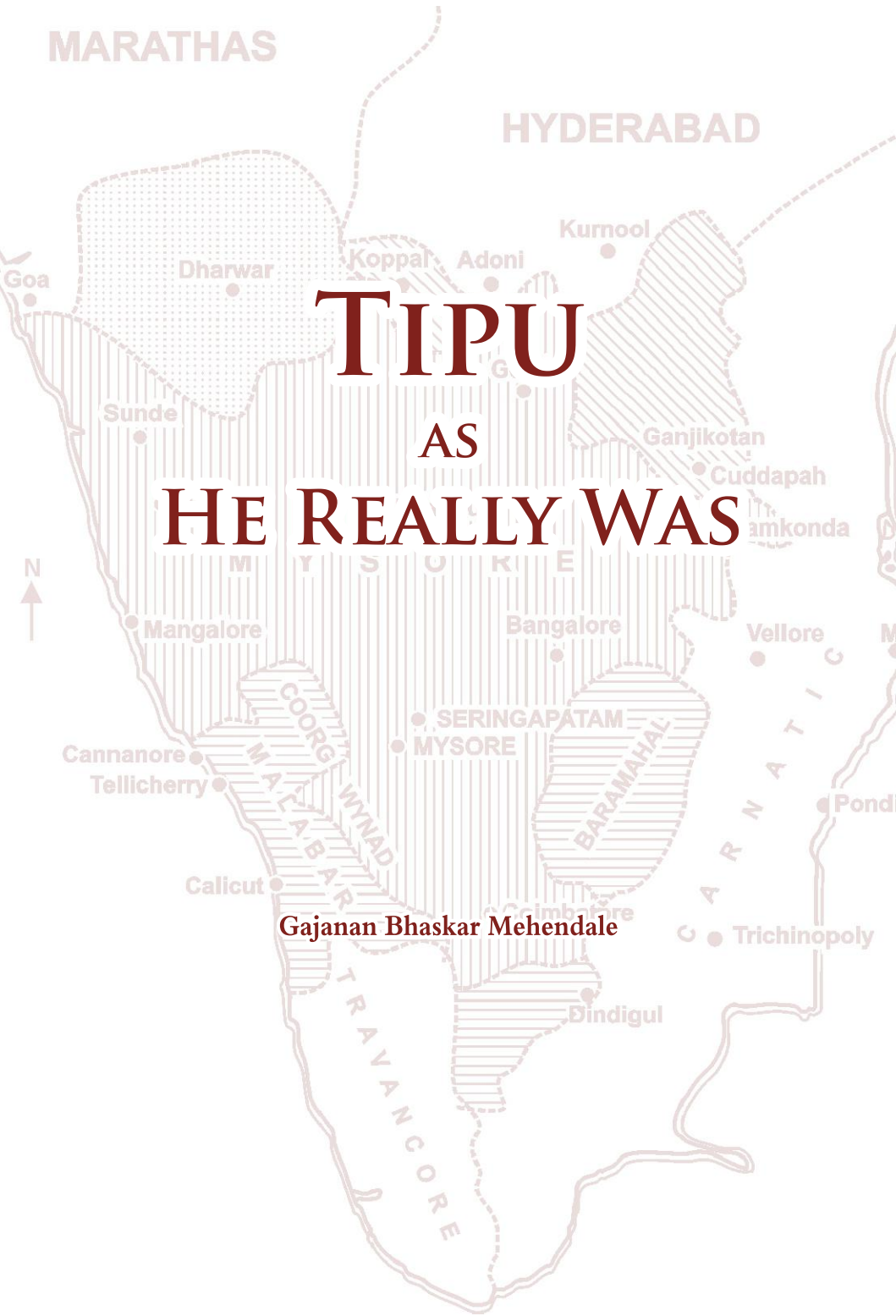


MARATHAS

HYDERABAD

# TIPU AS HE REALLY WAS



Gajanan Bhaskar Mehendale

**Tipu**  
as  
**He Really Was**

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## Preface

Tipu is an object of reverence in Pakistan; naturally so, as he lived and died for Islam. A Street in Islamabad (Rawalpindi) is named after him. A missile developed by Pakistan bears his name. Even in India there is no lack of his admirers. Recently the Government of Karnataka decided to celebrate his birth anniversary, a decision which generated considerable opposition. While the official line was that Tipu was a freedom fighter, a liberal, tolerant and enlightened ruler, its opponents accused that he was a bigot, a mass murderer, a rapist. This book is written to show him as he really was. To state it briefly: If Tipu would have been allowed to have his way, most probably, there would have been, besides an East and a West Pakistan, a South Pakistan as well. At the least there would have been a refractory state like the Nizam's. His suppression in 1792, and ultimate destruction in 1799, had therefore a profound impact on the history of India.

There is a class of historians who, for a long time, are portraying Tipu as a benevolent ruler. To counter them I can do no better than to follow Dr. R. C. Majumdar: "This ... tendency", he writes, "to make history the vehicle of certain definite political, social and economic ideas, which reign supreme in each country for the time being, is like a cloud, at present no bigger than a man's hand, but which may soon grow in volume, and overcast the sky, covering the light of the world by an impenetrable gloom. The question is therefore of paramount importance, and it is the bounden duty of every historian to guard himself against the tendency, and fight it by the only weapon available to him, namely by holding fast to truth in all his writings irrespective of all consequences. A historian should not trim his sail according to the prevailing wind, but ever go straight, keeping in view the only goal of his voyage—the discovery of truth." (*The History and Culture of the Indian People, Vol. VI, Preface, page xxx.*)

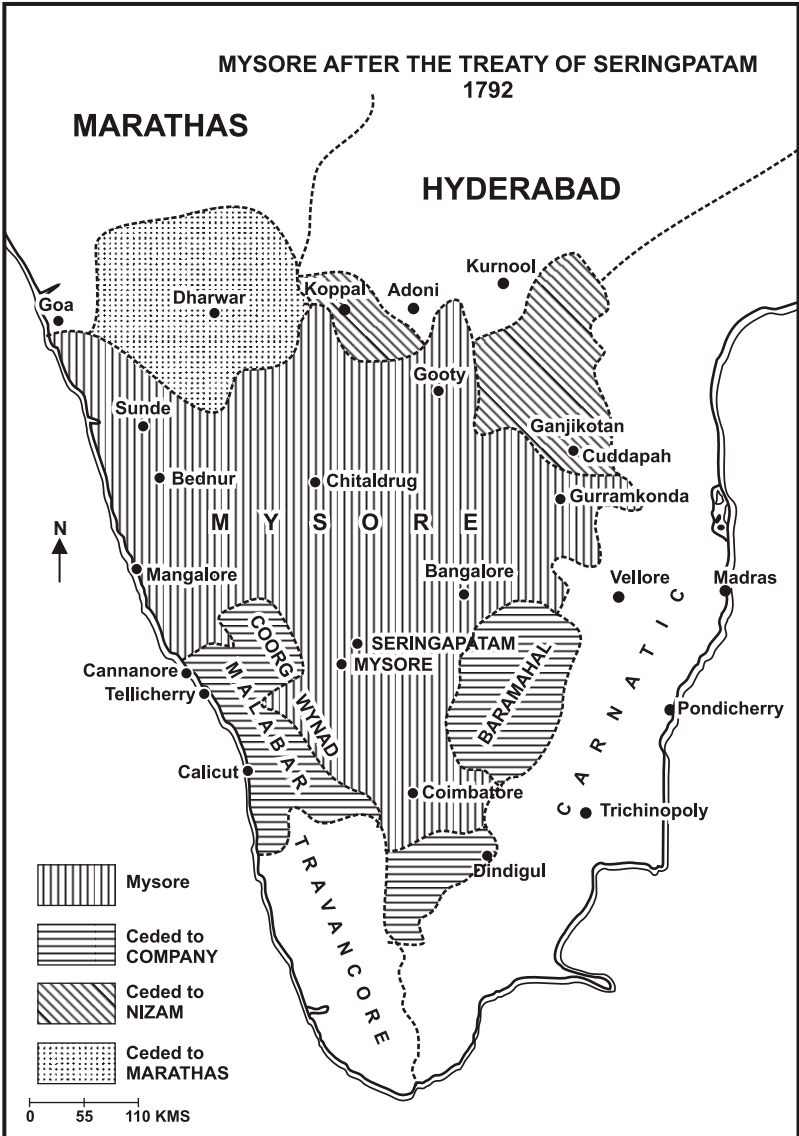
I am grateful to all the friends who have helped me in the preparation of this book.

**Gajanan Bhaskar Mehendale**



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## CHAPTER I

**Story of a Usurper and His Bigoted Son**

Haidar was a military officer of a relatively lower rank in the army of the kingdom of Mysore. He steadily rose higher no less by the dint of his ability than by the shortsightedness of Nanjrajayya, the prime minister and the real ruler of the kingdom. In 1758 he removed and pensioned off Nanjrajayya and got his own candidate, Krishnarao, appointed to prime ministership. In 1761 he removed Krishnarao, kept him in a cage, and concentrated all power in his own hands. The king, Chikka Krishnaraj Wodeyar, was kept confined to the palace in the capital, Shrirangapattanam. The majority of the subjects and the feudatories of the kingdom were Hindus and Haidar did not want to estrange them; he was interested in the substance, not the form, of royalty. He did not resume the grants to Hindu temples and their priests, nor did he exhibit bigotry in the kingdom of Mysore, though this did not necessarily apply to his new acquisitions and prisoners of war. Haidar's apparent tolerance was due, as much to superstition as to political expediency. When he opened the campaign in 1780, during the Third Anglo-Mysore War, "prayers for the successes of the expedition were ordered to be offered in the mosques and *japam* to be performed in the Hindu temples." (*Historical Sketches of the South of India, Vol. I, pages 812-13.*)

Chikka Krishnaraj Wodeyar died in 1766 at the age of thirty-eight. Haidar placed the pageant King's eighteen year old son, Nanjraj, on the throne of Mysore. Only four years later Haidar secretly poisoned and killed him and raised his younger brother, Bettad Chamraj, who was only eleven years old then, to the throne of Mysore. Haidar secretly did away with him also in 1776. In his place Haidar installed a three year old child, who came to be known as Khasa Chamraj, from a branch of the royal family.

**Conquest of Canara**

In 1763 Haidar invaded and conquered the Kingdom of

Canara (also known, after its capital, as the Kingdom of Bednore) which adjoined the western boundary of the Kingdom of Mysore. **During the final assault on the capital he granted his soldiers “free permission to retain all their plunder, all articles of gold and silver, and likewise all handsome Hindu women who might be taken.”** (*Nishane Haidari, Persian text, pages 74-75, Eng. Tr. – The History of Hydur Naik, pages, 136-37, and 139. Nishane Haidari was written in 1802-03 by Mir Husain Kirmani who had served both Haidar and Tipu.*) The ruling dowager Queen and her adopted son were taken prisoner and kept in confinement at Madhugiri till 1767 when they were released by the Marathas who captured that fort. Haidar renamed the capital Haidarnagar and it is still known as Nagar, a shortened form of that name.

Though Haidar conquered the Kingdom of Canara he could not keep it subdued for ever. At least once, in 1776, there broke out a rebellion in a district called Supa. Its severity, no less than his cruelty, may be gauged from the fact that he hanged thousands of men to suppress it. Tipu recalled the incident ten years later in the following letter.

### Tipu to Badruzzaman Khan

13<sup>th</sup> August, 1786

“You write: 'Moosa Khan, Risaldar of jaish [army], and Abdul Rahim, killedar of Sonde, who were dispatched for the purpose of chastising the insurgents of Supa, had seized upon a place in possession of the latter, who had [thereupon] taken to flight.

It is known. **Ten years ago [that is during Haidar's regime], from ten to fifteen thousand men were hung upon the trees of that district;** since which time the aforesaid trees have been waiting for more men. You must [therefore] hang upon trees all such of the inhabitants of that district, as have taken a lead in [or been at the bottom of] these rebellious proceedings.”

(*Select Letters of Tippoo Sultan, letter no. CCCXLII, page 381.*)

Sonde (or Sodhe), 20 kilometers from Sirsi, was the headquarters of a petty principality of the same name which Haidar had conquered after subjugating Canara. Supa is a small town, about 70 kilometers north of Karwar, in North Canara district.

This letter is a glaring comment on the nature of Haidar's and Tipu's rule in this region.

### Haidar's Atrocities in Malabar

In 1765 Haidar invaded Malabar which adjoined the southern boundary of the Kingdom of Canara. Malabar, or northern Kerala, was divided into a number of petty Kingdoms and principalities, chief among them being the Kingdom of Calicut (Kozhikode). Travancore, the southernmost kingdom in Kerala was defended by a line of fortifications called Travancore Lines (Nedumkotta in Malayalam). It was built on a strip of land in the Kingdom of Cochin which was ceded to Travancore in 1761. Construction of these fortifications was begun in 1761 and completed in 1766. Cochin itself and a part of that kingdom lay to the south of Travancore Lines. Haidar's invasion of Travancore was assisted by Ali Raja, the Musalman ruler of Kannur (Cannanore). Haidar easily overran Malabar. De La Tour, a French officer in Haidar's service, narrates:

“Haidar ... had given orders to pursue the fugitives with full speed, cutting down all they could overtake, without losing time, either by taking prisoners, or securing plunder. This order being executed with utmost strictness, nothing was to be seen in the roads, for the distance of four leagues round, but scattered limbs and mutilated bodies. **The country of the Nairs was thrown into a general consternation, which was much increased by the cruelty of the Mopillas [Malabari Musalmans], who, following the cavalry, massacred all who had escaped, without sparing women and children:** so that the army advancing under the conduct of this enraged multitude, instead of meeting with resistance, found the villages... forsaken and deserted.”

*(The History of Ayder Ali Khan, Vol. I, page 108.)*

Most of the Hindu rulers in the region took refuge in the Kingdom of Travancore. The Nairs, who formed the warrior class of Kerala, however, continued to resist the invaders by continuously waging a guerilla war against them. Haidar reacted with extreme violence and barbarity. De La Tour, a French officer in Haidar's service narrates:

“Wherever he turned, he found no opponent, not even any human creature; every inhabited place was forsaken; and the poor inhabitants, who fled to the woods and mountains in the most inclement season, had the anguish to behold their houses in flames, their fruit-trees cut down, their cattle destroyed, and their temples burned. The perfidy of the Nairs had been too great for them to trust the offers of pardon made by Haidar, by means of Brahmans he dispatched into the woods and mountains to recall **these unhappy people; who were hanged without mercy, and their wives and children reduced to slavery**, whenever they were found in the woods by the troops of Haidar; severity and mildness being both equally ineffectual in making them to return to their homes.”

*(The History of Ayder Ali Khan, Vol. I, pages 124-25.)*

It is not difficult to speculate what might have happened to women and children reduced to slavery.

Ramchandra Rao Punganuri, who had served both Haidar and Tipu, wrote in his Marathi chronicle of their reigns, composed in or before 1801:

“On hearing of this [revolt of the Nairs] Haidar at once... sent out his troops and slew the Nairs in every place: **those Nairs who fell into his hands were hanged by thousands: he took men, women and children, ten or fifteen thousand prisoners; whom he sent by thousands to lie captive in various parts of [Seringa] patam country.**”

*(English translation – Memoirs of Hyder and Tippoo, page 14.)*

Wilks, who knew and had talked with several officers of Haidar and Tipu, corroborates and supplements Punganuri's account. He says:

“The troops [sent by Haidar]... surprised and slew the insulated bodies of Nairs, whose insurrection had been made without any head to direct or arrange a general combination of their efforts. The prisoners taken in the first attacks were either beheaded or hanged; but as their numbers increased, Haidar conceived the plan of sparing them for the use of his former territories. This cure for rebellion in one province, and for defective population in another, of which such numerous examples occur in the Jewish history, was not successfully practiced by Haidar. In a forcible emigration of a multitude of Human beings, it would be inconsistent with the barbarous nature of the design that the arrangements for the subsistence of the captives should be made with scrupulous care: the diseases to which all Indians, and particularly the natives of Malabar, are subject on a sudden change of climate were super-added to hunger and mental misery; and **of fifteen thousand who were removed, it is supposed that [even] two hundred did not survive the experiment.**”

*(Historical Sketches of the South of India, Vol. I, page 535.)*

**Before leaving Malabar Haidar issued an edict depriving the Nairs of all their ancient rights and privileges but granting them back to those who should embrace Islam.** This led some Nairs to convert to Islam but majority of them took refuge in the Kingdom of Travancore. *(The History of Ayder Ali Khan, Vol. I, pages 126-27.)*

### **Haidar's Chelas or Captive Converts**

During the campaign in Malabar a Nair boy fell into Haidar's hands. Haidar converted him to Islam and named him Shaikh Ayaz. (He is called Hayat in contemporaneous English documents.) When he grew up he became a confidant and favourite of Haidar. Donald Campbell, an Englishman, who was taken prisoner by Haidar's men in 1782 was brought before Ayaz, who was then governor of Nagar (Bednore). Later, an officer under Ayaz told Campbell the story of the governor's conversion. *(A Journey over Land to India, Part III, pages 55-56.)* Campbell is corroborated by Punganuri and Wilks.

(*Memoirs of Hyder and Tippoo, page 34; Historical Sketches of the South of India, Vol. II, pages 741-42.*) Despite this overwhelming evidence Professor Mohibbul Hasan chooses to say that Ayaz “became a Muslim”, implying that he became a Muslim of his own free will, because he liked the tenets of Islam. (*History of Tipu Sultan, page 28, footnote 2.*) Nothing could be further from truth. Ayaz did not become a Musalman, he was made a Musalman. Wilks specifically says that it was a “forced conversion.” His was not the first or only case of a forced conversion in Haidar's regime. Some years ago Haidar had captured a Nair boy whom he had converted and renamed Daulat Khan. (*Nishane Haidari, Persian text, pages 176-77, Eng. Tr. – The History of Hydur Naik, pages, 351-52.*) Soon after Haidar's acquisition of real power in Mysore he captured Chikkaballapur, imprisoned the petty chief (*palegar*) of the principality, and converted his two sons to Islam. Kirmani, the author of *Nishane Haidari*, tells us that one of them, renamed Safdar Khan, was living when the chronicle was written. (*Nishane Haidari, Persian text, page 67, Eng. Tr. – The History of Hydur Naik, pages, 124.*) Wafadar was another such convert. He was a *chela* (slave) like Shaikh Ayaz which means that he was caught at a young age, and, after conversion to Islam, was drafted into Haidar's service. (*Historical Sketches of the South of India, Vol. II, pages 122, 205.*) Wilks tells us that when Haidar captured Chitaldurg (or Chitrdurg) he carried away 20,000 captives from that principality, converted boys of a proper age from amongst them and formed the first *chela* battalions of these converts. (*Historical Sketches of the South of India, Vol. I, page 743.*)

Haidar also converted many English boys or young men who fell into his hands as prisoners of war. The eastern border of the Kingdom of Mysore adjoined the dominions of the Nawab of Arcot (also called the Nawab of Karnatak) who was a vassal of the English East India Company. As Haidar had an eye on that territory he was bound to come into conflict with the Company. His first war with the Company, known as the First Anglo-Mysore War, lasted from 1765 to 1767. In the second, known as the Second Anglo-Mysore

War (1780-1784), a large number of the Company's soldiers, Europeans as well as Indians, were taken prisoner by Haidar's army. Many young men, or boys, from the Europeans amongst them were forcibly converted to Islam. Some European prisoners, who have recorded their experiences, also noticed a large number of Hindu boys and girls who were carried off from their homes and parents, converted against their wishes and married off at their captors' whims. Only a few examples could be cited here.

Captain Lindsay records under 10th March 1781:

“As the weather, ever since the beginning of the year, had been extremely hot, we were now, upon repeated entreaties, permitted to remain in the outer square during the course of the day... **The greatest part of the houses and choultries [resting-places for travelers] around us, we found, were full of multitudes of inhabitants of the Carnatic, all of whom Haidar had made embrace the Mahometan religion; about three thousand of these unwilling proselytes, most of them being young men, were formed into different battalions, and were now exercised mornings and evenings upon the parade, under the instructions of two or three Frenchmen... On another part of the parade there was about an equal number of women and girls, under the same description, confined together, and who, we were informed, were reserved to be married to the boys when they were grown up.**”

*(Lives of the Lindsays, Vol. III, pages 285-86.)*

Here are some entries from the narrative of an anonymous British officer, who was a prisoner of war for almost three years:

30th October, 1781: “Duncan Macintosh and Donald Stewart, privates, both of the 73rd Regiment, were **forcibly taken out and circumcised.**” (*Memoirs of the Late War in Asia, Vol. II, page 56.*)

19th June, 1782: “Arrived prisoners, fourteen European children, eight boys and six girls. It is reported that they were taken at Cuddalore.” (*Memoirs of the Late War in Asia, Vol. II, page 74.*)

13th July 1782: “Arrived prisoners, five hundred Carnatic

boys, in order to be made slaves, and to be entered into Haidar's slave battalions.” (*Memoirs of the Late War in Asia, Vol. II, page 79.*)

We know from several examples that such captives were forcibly converted to Islam before being drafted into those slave battalions.

22<sup>nd</sup> September, 1782: “Arrived prisoners, three hundred Carnatic boys.” (*Memoirs of the Late War in Asia, Vol. II, page 81.*)

2<sup>nd</sup> November, 1782: “Arrived prisoners, eight hundred Carnatic boys and girls.” (*Memoirs of the Late War in Asia, Vol. II, page 81.*)

Here is a sample from the narrative of James Bristow, another prisoner of war.

“This incident [forcible circumcision and conversion of sixteen prisoners of war in September 1781] spread general terror amongst the rest of the prisoners, everyone apprehending that he might be the next victim devoted to Mahometism; nor were our fears groundless, for early in January, 1782, the same persons entered our prison, accompanied by Sergeant Dempster, and made a second selection of fourteen, in which number I had the misfortune to be included. As Dempster [a collaborator] was suspected of a share in this horrid business, at least so far as pointing out the objects on whom the choice ought to fall; every one of us were highly exasperated against him, and it was fortunate for him that he was protected by the guards. The treatment the first victim had undergone, served in some degree to apprise us of the inutility of resistance. With horror and indignation we swallowed the narcotic potion, and those whom the dose had no effect upon, were forcibly seized and pinioned by stout coffres [Abyssinians] whilst the operation [of circumcision] was performed. After the operation our right ears were perforated, and small silver rings with round knobs fixed in them, this being a mark of slavery amongst the Mahometans....After we had been made what was termed Musalman, we neglected no opportunity of evincing our contempt for the religion of our tormentors.” (*A Narrative of the Sufferings of James Bristow, pages 39-42.*)

James Scurry, a British sailor, who too was a prisoner of war, had undergone a similar experience. He was among the fifty-two boys, “the oldest seventeen, the youngest twelve” who were sent from Bangalore to Shrirangapattanam. (*The Captivity, Sufferings, and Escape, of James Scurry, pages 57-59.*) The ordeal they had to undergo there is related by him as follows:

“He [Dempster, the collaborator] addressed us in the most endearing, though hypocritical language, and gave us to understand that **we were to be circumcised, and made Mohammedans of, by the express order of Haidar.** We were thunderstruck; but what could be done?...In short, they forced each of us to take a quantity of *majum* [an opiate], a drug well calculated to stupefy the senses and deaden pain; but it had little effect this latter way.

A mat, and a kind of sheet, being provided for each of us, we were ordered to arrange ourselves in two rows, and then lie down on our mats. This being done, the guards, the barbers, and the twelve men before-mentioned [robust men from Madagascar] came among us, and seizing the youngest, Randal Cadman, a midshipman,... four of these stout men held his legs and arms, while the barber performed his office [of circumcising him]. In this manner they went through the operation, and in two hours the pious work was finished.” (*The Captivity, Sufferings, and Escape, of James Scurry, pages 62-63.*)

For some of these seamen the ordeal was not over. James Bristow relates:

“The youngest and handsomest of these unfortunate men [or rather boys] underwent a second selection at Seringapatam, and were lodged in the palace as part of the tyrant's [that is Haidar's] household, where they received tolerable good treatment, were instructed in the language of the East, and taught different arts and exercises according to the stations they were intended to fill about his person... Some of these after the peace were intended for dancing boys, and sent among the notch people to be instructed in the manoeuvres belonging to that art.” (*The Captivity, Sufferings, and Escape, of James Scurry, pages 55-56.*)

It seems from these four accounts that at least 75 young Englishmen, or rather boys, and 4,500 boys and girls from Karnatak, were forcibly converted to Islam during Haidar's reign. And this, be it remembered, is not the whole picture; the prisoners have noted down only what they experienced, saw, or heard. They could hear or see very little of what was going on around them. Yet, their accounts show that though Haidar practised tolerance, as a matter of policy, within the Kingdom of Mysore, he did not extend it to his new acquisitions or the prisoners of war.

### **Tipu's Accession**

Haidar died on 7th December 1782 while the Second Anglo-Mysore War was going on. His thirty-two year old son, Tipu, who succeeded him, was a bigot and a jihadist from his youth. Wilks tells us that he took particular delight in wounding or killing the sacred bulls of the Hindu temples. (*Historical Sketches of the South of India, Vol. I, page 841.*) Soon after Tipu's accession a small English force from Mumbai under Brigadier-General Richard Mathews landed on the coast of Canara. When he reached near Nagar towards the end of January 1783, the governor of the district, Shaikh Ayaz, who had been converted by Haidar, deserted and handed over the fort to the English general. When Tipu approached the fort with a large army Ayaz fled to Mumbai. After a short siege Mathews capitulated on condition that he, with his troops, should be permitted to withdraw to the coast unmolested. As was his wont, Tipu broke the promise and imprisoned Mathews and all his men. Shortly afterwards Mathews was constrained by starvation to eat poisoned food, of which he died. We know from prisoners' accounts that seventeen other officers imprisoned at Kapaldurg were severely flogged till they consented to drink poison and died. This act of sadism must have been performed at Tipu's behest who, as we can see from his letters, never tolerated slightest deviation from his orders. In his treatment of prisoners Tipu was no different from his father. Here are a few samples from prisoners' accounts:

“A singular species of cruelty, that had no other object in

view than wanton malice, and the barbarous delight our villains constantly took in tormenting and insulting the English prisoners, occurred about this time [that is shortly after Tipu recaptured Nagar]. **Four European women, with their husbands, belonging to the Bednore [Nagar] garrison, were brought to Seringapatam, where they were torn from the men, whom the villains sent to Chitaldurg, and afterwards allotted the women to four of the black slaves.** Two became the property of the natives of Mysore, and the other two became the property of a couple of abominable Abyssinians, with whom they were compelled to live. I saw these women myself, they were good-looking females, but pity was all the assistance I was able to afford them.”

*(A Narrative of the Sufferings of James Bristow, pages 72-73.)*

18th September 1783: “The head Darogha of the slaves, who visits the Killedar daily, is attended by **nine of the European slave-boys, who have been circumcised:** each of them having a silver pearl in their right ear, this being a badge of slavery among the Mahometans.”

*(Memoirs of the Late War in Asia, Vol. II, page 144.)*

19<sup>th</sup> September 1783: “The head Darogha appeared this evening on the terrace of Tipu Sahib's house, which has a flat roof with one turret on each corner, attended by five of the European slave-boys. On his perceiving us in the yard of our prison, he immediately called the unfortunate victims to the edge of the house, and particularly pointed us out to them. They were so very much affected that they burst into tears, and retired.”

*(Memoirs of the Late War in Asia, Vol. II, pages 144-45.)*

3<sup>rd</sup> November, 1783: “**All the Europeans who have been made Mussulmen are confined in a large square,** and no one is permitted to go out without a sentry.”

*(Memoirs of the Late War in Asia, Vol. II, page 162.)*

The Second Anglo-Mysore War came to an end with the conclusion of a treaty of peace on 11<sup>th</sup> March 1784. By the terms of the treaty both parties were to release all the prisoners of war. But

Tipu retained several prisoners of war, whom he had forcibly converted to Islam, in captivity. The East India Company was not unaware of it, but had to feign ignorance lest Tipu would kill them rather than admit his crime. (He has been emulated by Pakistan who idolizes him.)

In January 1786 Tipu declared himself Badshah (sovereign). It seems however that he allowed the Hindu royal family to continue to reside in the palace. It was only when Khasa Chamraj, the deposed Hindu king, died—most probably murdered by Tipu—in 1796 that Tipu unceremoniously removed the royal family to a miserable hovel. It was probably about this time that three ladies from the royal family were forced into Tipu's harem. (See chapter 5.)

The Third Anglo-Mysore War commenced when Tipu attacked the Kingdom of Travancore, an ally of the East India Company, in December 1789. Lord Cornwallis, the British Governor General, who must have contemplated as inevitable a war with Tipu, quickly concluded an offensive and defensive alliance with the Marathas and the Nizam. Suffice it to say that when the allied armies stood at the gates of Shrirangapattanam, Tipu, rather than fighting it out, capitulated. The terms imposed on him were severe. The main clauses were, briefly, as follows:

- (1) Tipu was to pay an indemnity of three crores and thirty lakhs of rupees. Of this one half was to be paid immediately and the rest by three installments over periods not exceeding four months each.
- (2) Half of Tipu's dominions were to be ceded to the allies immediately. (The extent of cessions was to be determined by the amount of revenue, not area.)
- (3) Two of Tipu's sons were to remain as hostages till the entire amount of indemnity was paid.

The annual revenue of Tipu's dominions was estimated as two crores thirty-seven lakhs of rupees. So each of the three allies received territory worth thirty-nine and a half lakhs of rupees, which made hundred and eighteen and a half lakhs of rupees for the

whole. (See map.) The treaty was concluded on 20<sup>th</sup> March, 1792. Two sons of Tipu, one aged about ten, the other eight, were retained as hostages by the Company for a little over two years when the indemnity was fully realized.

Mohibbul Hasan, a biographer of Tipu, is sore over Tipu's discomfiture. He laments that the Raja of Travancore, attack on whose kingdom was the immediate cause of the war, got nothing out of the treaty. (*History of Tipu Sultan, pages 263-64.*) He is wrong. As we shall see, Tipu was bent on converting the entire population of Kerala, and specifically the Raja of Travancore, to Islam. Tipu's defeat in the Third Anglo-Mysore War, having put an end to that most detestable programme, is relevant even today.

Tipu's fangs were now drawn. It remained to deliver the coup de grace. Since his defeat in 1792 he was busy conspiring against the Company, and also against the Marathas, asking for troops from France, and inviting Zaman Shah, grandson of Ahmadshah Abdali, to invade India. His intrigues against the British led Lord Wellesley, Governor General of India, to declare war against him in February 1799. The Company's army, under Lieutenant General Harris, rapidly advanced to Shrirangapattanam. On 3<sup>rd</sup> May, 1799 a breach was made in the walls of the fort. It was obvious where the blow would fall. Instead of staying there to encourage and lead the troops Tipu was eating his lunch when the Company's troops stormed the breach at mid-day on 4<sup>th</sup> May. As Tipu went forward he was wounded by a musket ball. While he was falling back with the crowd of his troops he was hit twice. He was later found dead, shot through the temple, in a heap of the dead and the dying.

Lord Wellesley decided to restore the Hindu royal family to the Kingdom. Krishnaraj, the five year old son of Khasa Chamraj, was installed on the throne in the ancient city of Mysore on 30<sup>th</sup> June, 1799.

The Islamic nature of Tipu's sultanate and his atrocities against the Hindus and Christians will be described in the following chapters.



## CHAPTER 2

**Tipu's Atrocities against Canarese Christians**

Even as the Second Anglo-Mysore War was going on Tipu started carrying off the Christians in Malabar to Shrirangapattanam and other places, and forcibly converting them to Islam, on the supposed pretext that they had helped the English in their invasion of Canara. Evidence for this barbarous act is overwhelming; a few passages of which are quoted below,

**1. Tarikh-i Khudadadi**

In his memoirs entitled *Tarikh-i Khudadadi* (History of the God-given kingdom) Tipu describes the operation thus:

*“The port of Kurial (Mangalore) fell into our hands; on which occasion the odious proceedings of these accursed Padres becoming fully known to us, and causing our zeal for the faith to boil over, we instantly directed the Diwan of the Huzoor Kuchery to prepare a list of all houses occupied by the Christians, taking care not to omit a single habitation. The officers of the Kuchery, accordingly, employing the Mutsaddies (civil officers) of Sode, Nagar (Bednoor), Kurial (Mangalore) etc. for this purpose, soon prepared and delivered to us a detailed report on the subject. After this, we caused an officer and some soldiers to be stationed in every place inhabited by the Christians; signifying to them, that, at the end of a certain time, they should receive further orders, which they were then to carry into full effect. These men and officers being all arrived at their respective posts, the following orders were transmitted to them, viz. ‘On such a day of the week and the month, and at the hour of morning prayer, let all the Christians whatever their number may be, together with their women and children, be made prisoners and dispatched to our presence.’ And on the sealed cover, on superscription, of each of these dispatches, we specified the week and the month on which it was to be opened and read. Accordingly our orders were everywhere opened at the same moment; and at the same hour (namely, that of morning prayer) were the whole of the*

*Christians, male and female, without the exception of a single individual, to the number of sixty thousand, made prisoners, and dispatched to our Presence; from whence we caused them, after furnishing them duly with provisions, to be conveyed, under proper guards, to Seringapatam: to the Talukdars of which place we sent orders, directing that (the said Christians) should be divided into Risalas, or corps, of five hundred men, and a person of reputable and upright character placed, as Risaldar, at the head of each. Of these Risalas, four (together with their women and children) were directed to be stationed at each of the following places. .. where they were duly fed and clothed, and ultimately admitted to the honor of Islamism; and the appellation of Ahmady was bestowed upon the collective body.”*

*From Select Letters of Tippoo Sultan, Translated by William Kirkpatrick, pp 58-59.*

## **2. A Marathi letter of 16th June 1784**

This is a letter found in the collection of Rao Bahadur Parasnis, a learned historical researcher. The names of the writer and the addressee are not mentioned, but it was probably sent on behalf of Nana Phadnis to his agent with Mahadji Shinde. The importance of the letter lies in the fact that it quotes Tipu's letter to Noor Muhammad Khan, his agent at the Pune Court. The entire letter is as follows:

*“Tipu Sahib's letter to Noor Muhammad Khan was received at the third prahar of Wednesday, Jyeshth Vadi 14. It is written therein that:*

*The Hazrat [Ali, the Prophet's son-in-law and the fourth Khalifa] was born on 13th Rajab. Considering it as a great day fifty thousand Christians, including men, women and children, were made Musalmans and admitted into the religion [of Islam] on that date. Twelve hundred years have passed since the arrival [i. e. birth] of the Hazrat. Many Badshahs, vazirs and amirs have passed till now, but no one has performed such a great service to the religion. At present this great and pious work was done by God's*

*favour. We have celebrated it in a grand manner. Tell the Musalmans who are there to offer alms, submit thanks to God, offer Namaz, wear new clothes and celebrate 13th Rajab in the same manner every year.'*

*Similar letter has been written to the envoy [of Tipu] with the Mughal's army [i.e. Nizam's army]."*

*(Historical Papers of the Sindhias of Gwalior, letter No 414.)*

(Editors of *Historical Papers of the Sindhias of Gwalior* have given the date of letter No 414 as 2nd July 1788. The letter itself bears no date, which is not unusual. It states at the beginning that [Tipu's envoy at Pune] Noor Muhammad Khan has *received* a letter from Tipu on "Wednesday, Jyeshth Vadi 14". It is not the date of the letter; it is the date of receipt. The editors believed that it corresponds with 2<sup>nd</sup> July 1788. They have given no reasoning. Jyeshth Vadi 14 of Shaka 1710 falls on a Wednesday and that tithi corresponds with 2nd July 1788. This, I suppose, led the editors to derive that date. But Jyeshth Vadi 14 of Shaka 1706, too, falls on a Wednesday and that tithi corresponds with 16 June 1784. From other circumstances, too long to narrate here, I believe that was the date of receipt of the letter. Ali's birth date, 13th Rajab, of that year corresponds with 2 June 1784. The conversion took place on that date. The letter was sent soon thereafter and was received (at Pune) on 16 June 1784. So the mass conversion of Christians mentioned in this letter is the one which is mentioned in many other sources.)

### 3. Scurry's account

Scurry, a British sailor, was taken prisoner by the French and was among the 500 British prisoners of war handed over to Haidar by the French admiral Suffren in June 1782. Scurry was hardly 16 years old at the time. By Haidar's orders he, with many other prisoners of war, was forcibly circumcised and drafted into a chela (slave) battalion. He, with four other compatriots, who, too, were forcibly drafted into the chela battalion, escaped in 1791, reached a small fort in possession of the Marathas, and then joined a British detachment operating with the Maratha army near Dharwad. Here

is what he says about the atrocities, of which he was an eyewitness, committed against the Canarese Christians.

*“Now followed the fate of the poor Malabar Christians ... Their country was invested by Tippoo’s army, and they were driven, to the number of 30,000, to Seringapatam, where all who were fit to carry arms were circumcised, and forced into four battalions. The sufferings of these poor creatures were most excruciating: one circumstance, which came under my immediate notice, I will attempt to describe. When recovered [from circumcision], they were armed and drilled, and ordered to Mysore, nine miles from the capital [Seringapatam], but for what purpose we never could learn. Their daughters were many of them beautiful girls, and Tippoo was determined to have them for his seraglio; but this they refused; and Mysore was invested by his orders, and the four battalions were disarmed and brought prisoners to Seringapatam. This being done, the officers tied their hands behind them.... Their noses, ears, and upper lips were cut off; they were then mounted on asses, their faces towards the tail, and led through Patam [i.e. Seringapatam], with a wretch before them proclaiming their crime. One fell from his beast, and expired on the spot through loss of blood. Such a mangled and bloody scene excited the compassion of numbers, and our hearts were ready to burst at the inhuman sight. It was reported that Tippoo relented in this case, and I rather think it true, as he never gave any further orders respecting their women. The twenty-six that survived were sent to his different arsenals, where, after the lapse of a few years, I saw several of them lingering out a most miserable existence.”*

*(The Captivity, Sufferings, and Escape of James Scurry, pages 102-05.)*

It may be noted that though Scurry calls them Malabar Christians, they were Canarese Christians; the term Malabar was used in a loose sense for the entire west coast of India south of Goa.

#### **4. An account by a Portuguese priest residing near Mangalore, April-May, 1784**

*“As soon as Nagar [i. e. Bednoor] was retaken, Tipu Sultan entered it seeking the priests and the Christians against whom he was going to wreck his wicked intent proposed in the year 1768 to his father who disapproved of it and reprehended him for it; but now that he was dead, he began to put into execution his former passion and rancor which he seemed to bear towards our holy religion since his birth, because since he left Arcot, he went on demolishing churches which he came across on his way and passed orders to demolish those of the Mission of Mysore, showing signs that all his subjects would be compelled to follow Islam only as he was their sole king*

*The Vicar of Nagar was kept a prisoner with two others of the district of Barcelore; they suffered much for some time, and an undertaking in writing having been taken from them that they would not return to his dominions they were expelled....*

*Sometime later peace was made between the Nawab [Tipu] and the English who surrendered their forts to him, the envoys having come from Madras for this purpose. Finally on February 22, the day on which all the Christians of that kingdom were taken prisoners, I too was taken to the Court... by a minister of his, together with the parish priests arrested before and there was issued the decree of the expulsion of all the missionaries on that kingdom on pain of being hanged if they or their successors returned to it.... At the same Court another separate bond was drawn up against me, on which the other missionaries were also compelled to sign by dint of beating, I being separated from them on that occasion.*

*On Saturday, the eve of the first Sunday of Lent, I was arrested with other priests and jailed in the fortress.”*

The priest then adds that due to the intervention of the French envoy at Tipu's court he and his colleagues were saved from circumcision and were banished to Cochin. Then he continues:

*“What has happened after me is as follows: The Christians of Nagar were banished to Chittaldurga and all the others [i. e. other Christians] in the kingdom, who number about 40,000 have been taken to Seringapatam. A great number of these died of small pox; of three fathers who have been found disguised in the company of the*

*Christians, two died, and the third having been found out was banished, and he came to Tellicherry. The churches of the Mission of Mysore have been demolished and its missionaries who have been Jesuits were banished. They send me their news. The leading Christians of Pattanam [i. e. Seringapatam] and those of Canara together with the sacristans and their families were all circumcised with express orders not to communicate with their priests. The temples of Hindus have also been demolished together with the famous temple of Pattanam. Its chief priests like Somongollos [?] and others were also circumcised; also the English [prisoners] in great numbers have been circumcised; likewise many others have been circumcised, even the military men of his army without considering their nationality whether friendly or not, according to the old adage: 'As is the king, so is the law; and as is the law, so are the subjects.' Salvoes of guns were fired, banquets were held, bands were played, and money was distributed, on the day on which the Christians were circumcised. General M. de Lale, being annoyed and angry at all this, killed the horse which the Nawab had given him and on account of this display of his feelings, I do not know for this reason or another, he had been placed under guard and the troops under his command divided and assigned to the various Risalas of the Nawab."*

*(Antigualhas, Vol. I, Fasciculo II, pages 306, 309-10.)*

##### **5. Letter of the Portuguese Viceroy at Goa to the Secretary of State of Portugal, 9<sup>th</sup> May 1784**

*"Tipu Sultan was grateful because I did not allow the said Hayat Saheb to remain in Goa and because I ordered certain things which he had asked for to be sent to him. Since he had made peace with the English, however, he has acted as an enemy, causing much vexation and oppression to the Christians who number about twenty thousand souls, more or less, who lived in the said kingdom of the Ghats and below, ordering the arrest of the parish priests and compelling the said Christians to go live in the lands beyond the Ghats, imputing to them that they had been the cause for the English*

*to conquer the said kingdom, teaching and guiding them along the paths and places by which to enter. And although I wrote to him requesting him to release the parish priests and let the Christians live peacefully as his father Nawab Hyder Ai Khan had done, he replied to me on another matter without saying anything about this matter.”*

*(Antigualhas, Vol. I, Fasciculo II, pages 303-04.)*

## **6. Letter from the Portuguese Viceroy at Goa to the Secretary of State of Portugal, dated 9th March 1785**

This letter states that Tipu has expelled to Shrirangapattanam all the Christians of the Kingdom of Canara who number 40,000, has circumcised most of them and has compelled them to follow the “accursed religion of the Moors.”

*(Antigualhas, Vol. I, Fasciculo II, Letter No LXXI, page 314)*

## **7. Bristow’s Account**

James Bristow was a British soldier who was taken prisoner on 5<sup>th</sup> February 1781 when he got separated from his unit near Pondicherry. He, with some of his compatriots, was forcefully circumcised, converted to Islam, and then drafted into a *chela* (slave) battalion. He escaped in 1790. He says:

*“When we returned to Seringapatam, we were transferred from the Chaylahs to the Malabar Roman Catholic Christians, consisting originally of about 40,000 unfortunate wretches, men, women, and children, forced away from the Bednore and Mangalore countries in 1784, and compelled to embrace Mahometism, not, however, without exhibiting several martyrs in support of a doctrine with which they had no farther acquaintance than what consisted in counting a row of beads and performing genuflections before a crucified image. The corps, or battalion of these wretches, to which I had been posted, was soon afterwards sent to Mysore, where it remained five months, and then returned.”*

*(A Narrative of the Sufferings of James Bristow, pages 85-86.)*

It is clear that the Malabar Roman Catholic Christians of Bristow were really Canarese Christians who, as he says, were “forced away from the Bednore and Mangalore countries.” He thought, probably because, unlike him, they were Roman Catholics, that they did not understand their religion except for some rituals, but admits that many of them became martyrs when compelled to embrace Islam.

### **8. Narrative by an officer of Tipu, 1790**

In the Asiatic Annual Register, Vol. I (1799) an account of Tipu has been published ‘Taken from the information of one of Tipu’s officers, written in the year 1790, and translated from the Persian by Capt. James Achilles Kirkpatrick.’ It is stated therein:

“Since Tipu assumed the government, the revenues have diminished greatly, in consequence of his having adopted a different policy from his father. He removed from the hamauldaries (amaldaris) all the Brahmans, and others of the Hindu cast, who were well versed in country business, and put Mussulmen in their places.....He removed, from the Biddinore and Sonda countries, about 70,000 Christian inhabitants, who were cultivators of the ground, by which the revenues of these countries sustained a great loss.”

*(Asiatic Annual Register, Vol. I, 1799, pages 1-2 of the section entitled ‘Characters’.)*

Tipu’s proselytizing zeal was such that he was willing to forego revenues rather than abandoning forceful conversion of non-Muslalmans.

### **9. Punganuri’s Chronicle**

After Tipu’s death the Governor General Lord Mornington (Wellesley) installed a scion of the Hindu royal family of Mysore from whom Haidar had usurped the kingdom and appointed Lt. Col. Barry Close as the Political Resident. In 1801, he gave Major Mackenzie a Marathi manuscript narrating the history of the reigns of Haidar and Tipu. Its English translation made by Charles Philip

Brown was published in 1849 under the title *Memoirs of Hyder and Tippoo*. The whereabouts of the original Marathi manuscript are unknown. In his preface Brown says that though the name of the author is not mentioned in the manuscript it appears from other sources “that his name was Ram Chunder Rao of Punganoor, commonly designated Punganuri.” He does not tell us what these other sources were, nor who this Ram Chunder Rao Punganuri was. The chronicle, though very concise, and rather dry, is remarkably accurate.

After a brief mention of the Treaty of Mangalore (1784) the chronicle says:

*“Thirty or Forty thousand native Christians of Mangalore, men, women and children, were sent by Tippoo prisoners to Seringapatam where they were kept as converts.”*

*(Memoirs of Hyder and Tippoo, page 36, section 25.)*

## 10. Dubois' Account

Dubois was a Roman Catholic French priest who came to India in 1792 and left for France, after 32 years, in 1823. In India he adopted the clothes, food, and other manners of the Indians. He knew Tamil. The East India Company purchased his English book on the religion, caste system, and customs of the Hindus and published it in 1816. Its enlarged French edition was published in 1825. His French translation of Panchtantra was published from Paris in 1826. So Dubois knew his India and the Indians well. After destruction of Tipu, Dubois lived in Shrirangapatnam. His book *Letters on the State of Christianity in India* was published from London in 1823. In it he forcefully argued that conversion of the Hindus to Christianity is impossible. An English priest Elijah Hoole, during his visit to India, arrived at Shrirangapatnam in 1822. Dubois has given him for reading the manuscript of his *Letters on the State of Christianity in India*. About Tipu's atrocities against the Christians in Canara Dubois writes in that book:

*“When the late Tippoo Sultan sought to extend his own religious creed all over his dominions, and make by little and little*

*all the inhabitants in Mysore converts to Islamism, he wished to begin this fanatical undertaking with the native Christians living in his country, at the most odious to him, on the score their religion. In consequence, in the year 1784, he gave secret orders to his officers in the different districts, to make the most diligent inquiries after the places where Christians were to be found, and to cause the whole of them to be seized on the same day, and conducted under strong escorts to Seringapatam. This order was punctually carried into execution; very few of them escaped, and I have it from good authority that the aggregated number of the persons seized in this manner, amounted to more than 60,000.*

*Some time after their arrival at Seringapatam, Tippoo ordered the whole to undergo the rites of circumcision, and be made converts to Mahometanism. The Christians were put together during the several days that the ceremony lasted....*

*After the fall of the late Tippoo Sultan most of these apostates came back to be reconciled to their former religion, saying that their apostasy had been only external, and they always kept in their hearts the true faith in Christ. Almost 2,000 of them fell in my way, and nearly 20,000 returned to the Mangalore district, from whence they had been carried away, and rebuilt there their former places of worship.”*

*(Letters on the State of Christianity in India, pages 73-75.)*

## **11. Buchanan's account**

Francis Buchanan travelled throughout Tipu's former dominions by the Company's order in 1800-1801 to make an economic, social and geographical survey, and submitted his report, which was later published in three volumes, under the title *A Journey from Madras*. He states:

“The princes of the House of Ikeri had given great encouragement to the Christians, and had induced 80,000 of them to settle in *Tulava*. They are all of *Konkana* descent and retained the language, dress, and manners of the people of that country. The clergy, it is true, adopted the dress of the order to which they

belonged; but they are all natives descended from *Konkana* families, and were purposely educated in a seminary at Goa, where they were instructed in the Portuguese and Latin languages, and in the doctrines of the Church of Rome. In Tulava they had 27 churches, each provided with a vicar, and the whole under the control of a vicar-general, subject to the authority of the archbishop of Goa. Tippoo threw the priests into the dungeons, forcibly converted to Islamism the laity, and destroyed all the churches. As the Christian religion does not prevent the readmission into the church of such delinquents, these involuntary Mussulmans have in general reconciled themselves with the clergy, who now of course are at liberty and 15,000 have already returned to Mangalore and its vicinity; 10,000 made their escape to Malabar, from whence they are returning home as quickly as their poverty will admit. The clergy are now busy with their flocks, whose poverty, however, has hitherto prevented them from rebuilding any of their churches. During the government of Hyder these Christians were possessed of considerable estates in land, all of which were confiscated by Tippoo, and immediately bestowed on persons of other castes, from which it would be difficult to resume them.”

*(A Journey from Madras, vol. III, PP 23-24.)*

## 12. Letter of a victim's grandson

The atrocities committed by Tipu against the Canarese Christians are narrated in a letter of a victim's grandson. The letter is written by one L. R. Silva of Gangolli to his sister on 22nd November 1904. He states at the beginning that he is telling her, almost verbatim, what their grandfather had narrated to him. It is not known who was the younger of the two; but it seems that the sister was the younger of the two and her elder brother, feeling that he should pass on to her, in the evening of his life, the story of their ancestor, has written her this letter. That story is briefly as follows:

L. R. Silva's grandfather, Lucio, had seven sons and a daughter. The girl died at a young age. When Lucio was eight years old a “rakshasa (demon) named Tipu Sultan” seized all the

Christians in the territory from Sadashivgad to Coorg and carried them to Shrirangapatnam. Lucio and all his brothers were among them. As their parents were old and weak they were not seized. Lucio's six brothers died in captivity due to hardships. Lucio escaped and, subsisting on what he could get in the forest, set off towards home. He met two carters on the way. They gave him food and ultimately he joined his parents.

(English translation of the letter is given in Appendix 74 of the *History of Christianity in Canara*, by Severine Silva. I could not get that book. So I have used the translation of the letter quoted in the article 'Captivity of Manglorean Catholics at Seringapatam' on internet.)

Lucio was eight years old when he was seized, so he must have been born in 1776. The age at which he escaped is not mentioned in the letter. If we assume that L. R. Silva's father was born when Lucio was 25 years old, that is in 1801, and that L. R. Silva was born when his father was 25 years old, that is in 1826, he, L. R. Silva, would be 78 years old when he wrote this letter. The fact that all his six brothers died in captivity shows the high rate of mortality among the captives.

Here is a summary of the number of Canarese Christian captives given in various sources.

1. Tipu's memoirs Tarikh-I Khudadad	60,000
2. Tipu's letter, June 1784	50,000
3. Scurry's account	30,000
4. Account of a Portuguese priest, April-May 1784	40,000
5. Letter of Portuguese Viceroy, 9 <sup>th</sup> May 1784	20,000
6. Letter of Portuguese Viceroy, 9 <sup>th</sup> March 1785	40,000
7. Bristow's account	40,000
8. An account by Tipu's officer, 1790	70,000
9. Punganuri's chronicle	30-40,000
10. Dubois' account	60,000+
11. Buchanan' account	70,000

The number of Canarese Christian captives given in various sources differs widely and naturally so. Even now the number of

victims of a calamity given in various organs of media differs widely. Considering all the sources cited above we will not be far off the mark if we take the numbers of captives as 30-40 thousand.



## CHAPTER 3

**Kodagu's War of Independence**

Kodagu (Coorg in English) is a mountainous and forest-clad district, with an area of about 4,000 sq. kilometers, in the north-west corner of Karnataka above the Ghats. A people called the Kodavas form the warrior class of Kodagu. Madikeri (Mercara in English) is the capital of the district. Kodagu was an independent kingdom and its Rajas were descendants of a branch of the Royal House of Keladi. Unlike the Kodavas, the Rajas of Kodagu belonged to the Lingayat sect. The principal branch of the royal family resided at Madikeri and its two younger branches at Horamale and Haleri

Haidar had an eye on Kodagu since 1765, but all his attempts to reduce Kodagu to subjection were foiled by the Kodavas. He got his chance in 1773. The principal branch of the royal house had become extinct and, taking advantage of the feud between the two younger branches, Haidar intervened and installed Lingraj of the Haleri branch on the throne of Kodagu as his feudatory. *Nishane Haidari* tells us that **Haidar seized many of the women of Kodagu and gave them to his own soldiers.** (*Persian text, page 294; Eng. Tr. The History of the Reign of Tipu Sultan, page 75.*)

When Lingraj died in 1780, Haidar kept his 16 year old son Vir Rajendra and his family in prison.

Though Haidar had occupied their country the Kodavas had continued to resist the invaders by waging a guerilla war against them. In 1784 Tipu conducted a campaign to crush them. Its account given in his memoirs, entitled *Tarikh-I Khudadadi*, is briefly as follows:

At the approach of Tipu's army Ootti Nayak, the leader of the Kodavas, (whom Tipu calls Kutti Nayak in his abusive language) took refuge in an inaccessible gorge with his family. When Tipu, hacking a way through the jungle, approached that place Ootti Nayak fled to the English settlement at Tellicherry and, in a few days, died there of natural causes. The rebels had demolished the fort of Madikeri. Tipu ordered it to be rebuilt, appointed Zain-ul-

Abideen as the Faujdar (military governor) of the district, and renamed Madikeri as Zafeerabad.

*(Tarikh-I Khudadadi, translated by Kirkpatrick in Select Letters of Tippoo Sultan, pages 202-07.)*

Tipu adds:

“When I arrived at Zafeerabad I sent for all the leaders of the rebels and delivered into their hands written mandates to the following effect: ‘...This is about the seventh time that you have acted treasonably towards the Sarkar, and plundered our armies; I have now[ therefore] vowed to the true God [that is, Allah], that if you ever again conduct yourselves traitorously or wickedly, I will not revile or molest a single individual among you, but making Ahmadis [that is Musalmans] of the whole of you, transplant you all from this country to some other...”

*(Tarikh-I Khudadadi, translated by Kirkpatrick in Select Letters of Tippoo Sultan, page 207.* I have omitted a few sentences in which Tipu calls them bastards and whoresons.)

Wilks has quoted a similar passage, evidently from *the Sultan-ut-Tawarikh* which is an enlarged version of *Tarikh-I Khudadadi*. It says:

“From the period of my father’s conquest of the country, you have rebelled seven times, and caused the deaths of thousands of our troops; I forgive you once more, but if rebellion be ever repeated, I have made a vow to God, to honour every man of the country with Islam [that is, to make Musalman every one of them]; I will make them aliens to their home, and establish them in a distant land.”

*(Historical Sketches of the South of India, Vol. II, page 281. Abusive words omitted.)*

No sooner than Tipu’s back was turned the Kodavas again rose in rebellion. Its account, as given in *Nishane Haidari* is briefly as follows:

As Zain-ul-Abideen Mahdavi extended the hand of lust to the women of the peasantry, and compelled the handsomest among them to submit to his will and pleasure the people of

Kodagu rose in revolt under the leadership of Momuti Nair and Ranga Nair. Ultimately Tipu himself had to go there to suppress the revolt. The campaign lasted for seven months. **During that period several villages in Kodagu were destroyed and eighty thousand men, women, and children, were made captives. Both the leaders of the rebels were taken prisoner. Of these Momuti Nair died shortly afterwards; Ranga Nair was circumcised, made a Musalman by the Sultan, and was renamed Shaikh Ahmad. The captives were all taken to Shrirangapattanam. They were all made Musalmans and eight Risalas were raised from amongst them styled Ahmadis.** To repopulate the district six or seven thousand servants of Tipu, belonging to the Shaikh and Sayyid tribes were sent to Kodagu. Some stayed there; others, the climate not agreeing with them, were allowed to return.

*(Nishane Haidari, Persian text, pages 291-99; Eng. Tr. The History of the Reign of Tipu Sultan, pages 68-84.)*

Wilks' narrative of the campaign is evidently based on *Sultan-ut-Tawarikh*. He says:

“He [Tipu] did however move late in October [1785], and entering Coorg in two columns, burned and destroyed the patches of open country, and compelled the inhabitants to take refuge in the woods, where they, as usual, refrained from any decisive operation. Some delay was necessary in making strong detachments to the frontier, in every direction, with a view to his ultimate measures for the future tranquility of Coorg; but every thing being ready along the whole circumference, his troops began to contract the circle, beating up the woods before them as if dislodging so much game, and by these means closed in on the great mass of the population to about 70,000, and drove them off like a herd of cattle to Seringapatam, where the Sultan's threats [of making them all Musalmans] were but too effectually executed.”

*(Historical Sketches of the South of India, Vol. II, pages 282-83.)*

Wilks adds that the captives from Coorg were circumcised [and converted to Islam] on one and the same day, on the

‘auspicious’ occasion of Tipu’s assumption of royal dignity.

*(Historical Sketches of the South of India, Vol. II, page 294.)*

Ramchandra Rao Punganuri has made a brief reference to these events, under the year named Vishvvasu (1785 A. C.), thus:

“He [Tipu] now heard that rebellion had broken out in Coorg which he entered by Aigur pass. He seized upon men, women and children, all he found; and sent them captives to Seringapatam....About five hundred souls, men, women and children, whom Tipu caught in Coorg were all made coverts and sent (captives) to Bangalore, Chitradurgam, Colaram, Hoskote and Nandidurgam.”

*(English Translation – Memoirs of Hyder and Tippoo, page 37, section 31.)*

That the number of captives given in the English translation of Punganuri’s chronicle is evidently an error, probably for fifty thousand, is proved by internal evidence. In its brief narrative of Lord Cornwallis’ campaign against Shrirangapatnam in 1792 the chronicle states:

“Lord Cornwallis and the Moguls [that is Nizam’s army] had marched from Mangalore and were encamped near Seringa [patam]: the Sultan with his army having halted near Mirgul where they placed batteries. At this time, year Virodhikrit, Magh Shuddha purnima, Tuesday [7th February 1792] the English who were on the hill of Errodu (French rocks) made a night attack on the Sultan’s army: and all the Sultan’s army fled. On this day the converts seized at Coorg and other places, with the lancers, ten thousand in number fled, and escaped with their weapons to Coorg.”

*(English Translation – Memoirs of Hyder and Tippoo, page 47, sections 29- 30. The editor’s conversion of the date as 1791 A. D. is only tentative. The year named Virodhikrit corresponds with Shaka 1713 which commenced on 4th April 1791 and closed with 23rd March 1792. Magh Shuddha purnima, that is full moon in the month of Magh, corresponds with 7th February 1792.)*

If the number of captives who escaped to Coorg was ten thousand, the total number of captives who were carried away from

Coorg must have been greater. This is corroborated by Lewis Rice who says in his gazetteer of Mysore and Coorg: “The success in the first operations by Lord Cornwallis having driven the Mysore troops during two night assaults to seek shelter under the walls of Seringapatam, about 5,000 Coorgs who had been carried away by Tipu, with their wives and children, altogether about 12,000 souls, made their escape in the confusion that caused and returned to their native country.” (Mysore and Coorg, Vol. III, pages 117-18.) It may be noted that the history of Coorg given by Rice in the gazetteer is based on a Kannada chronicle compiled by the order of Vir Rajendra, the Raja of Coorg. (*Mysore and Coorg, Vol. III, pages 101-02, 132.*)

In his account of the attack made on 7th February, 1792 (the date given in Punganuri's chronicle) Wilks, too, states: “The Ahmadi Chelas [slaves] constituted the centre [of Tipu's army] which had given way, and availing themselves of the confusion which ensued, and the open retreat by the Mysore bridge, nearly the whole body, amounting to 10,000, many accompanied by their wives and children, marched off with their arms to the western woods of Coorg, and thence to their respective homes.” (*Historical Sketches of the South of India, Vol. II, page 537.*) Obviously, those who escaped returned to the Hindu fold.

But back to Tipu's campaign in Coorg in 1785. Some glimpses of the campaign and its aftermath are found in Tipu's letters quoted below.

## 1

**Tipu to Zain-ul-Abideen (Shushtari), Commander of a Kushoon (Regiment)**

17<sup>th</sup> September 1785

“It has lately been represented to us, that the Koorgs having committed some excesses at Zafeerabad. We have, in consequence, written to the Bakhshi (chief-of-staff) of the army, to dispatch you with two guns and your Kushoon to that place.... You will proceed, as above directed, to Zafeerabad; to the Faujdar of which place,

Zain-ul-Abideen (Mahdavi), we have addressed another letter, which is enclosed. **You are, in conjunction with him, to make a general attack on the Koorgs; when having put to the sword, or made prisoners of, the whole of them, both the slain and the prisoners, are to be made Musalmans.** In short, you must so manage matters, as [effectually] to prevent them from exciting any further sedition or disturbance.

(Select Letters of Tipoo Sultan, letter no. CXVII, pages 150-51.)

The translator, Colonel William Kirkpatrick observes: “The reader will probably be startled at the order contained in the foregoing letter, for making Musalmans, not only of the living, but of the dead Koorgs, who might fall into the hands of the Sipahdar (commander); and the extravagance of the proceeding might even lead him to suspect, either the correctness of the manuscript, or the fidelity of the translation. With respect to the former, it will be sufficient to say that there is not the slightest ground for supposing any error of the manuscript in this passage; and as to the latter, I will only observe, that nothing can be expressed with more plainness, or freedom from ambiguity, than the original, which, for the satisfaction of the oriental reader at least, shall be inserted at the bottom of the page.”

The original Persian sentence has been given there in a footnote and its translation is correct. It is possible that it is a slip of the pen on the part of the Persian scribe, but it is equally possible that Tipu, in his zeal of forcefully converting the infidels, might have indeed made such a statement.

## 2

### Tipu to Ranmast Khan, Nawab of Kurnool

5<sup>th</sup> January 1786

“Some time ago ... the excitors of sedition in the Koorg country... raised their heads, one and all, in tumult. Immediately, on our hearing of this circumstance, we proceeded with the utmost speed, and, at once, **made prisoners of forty thousand sedition-exciting Koorgs**, who, alarmed at the approach of our victorious

army, had slunk into woods, and concealed themselves in lofty mountains, inaccessible even to birds. **Then carrying them away from their native country we raised them to the honour of Islam [that is, made them Musalmans]**, and incorporated them with our Ahmadi corps. As these happy tidings are calculated, at once, to convey a warning to hypocrites, and to afford delight to friends, [but more especially] to the chiefs of the true believers [that is, Musalmans], the pen of amity has here recited them [for your information].

(*Select Letters of Tippoo Sultan, letter no. CXCVI, pages 228-29.*)

Men forcibly converted to Islam were drafted into the Ahmadi corps of Tipu's army. Ahmad is one of the epithets of Muhammad, the prophet of Islam.

### 3

#### Tipu to Meer Muinudeen

13<sup>th</sup> January 1786

“By the favour of the Almighty and the assistance of the Prophet, we have arranged and adjusted the affairs of the Taluk of Zafeerabad [that is, Madikeri] in the most suitable manner; **the tribe of Koorgs to the number of fifty thousand men and women, having been made captives, and incorporated with the Ahmadi class [that is made Musalmans]**. This being an event calculated to give strength to the people of Islam, we wish that brother all joy on this auspicious occasion.”

(*Select Letters of Tippoo sultan, letter no. CCII, pages 236-37.*)

The translator, Colonel William Kirkpatrick, adds “Three other letters, to the above effect (but to whom addressed is not said), were dispatched by post.”

The number of converts is given as fifty thousand in this letter, and forty thousand in the last one. Such differences are natural in case of mass conversions.

So we have the following figures for the number of captives

which Tipu carried away from Coorg and converted to Islam.

Nishane Haidari	80,000
Sultan-ut-Tawarikh	70,000
Punganuri's chronicle	50,000?
Tipu's letter of 5 <sup>th</sup> January 1786	40,000
Tipu's letter of 13 <sup>th</sup> January 1786	50,000

The number of captives, which Tipu carried away from Kodagu, given in various sources differs widely and naturally so. Even now the number of victims of a calamity given in various organs of media differs widely, especially when the number is very large. In this case, we will not be far off the mark if we take the number of captives as 40,000.

### Mohibbul Hasan's apologia of Tipu

I shall cite here only a few of the tricks played by Mohibbul Hasan in his apologia of Tipu which he called *History of Tipu Sultan*.

1. He has conveniently forgotten to tell his readers about Zain-ul-Abideen's misdeeds, though he has used Nishane Haidari as one of his authorities. (*History of Tipu Sultan, pages 78-79*.) Or, could it be that he did not regard them as misdeeds at all?
2. Mohibbul Hasan has not mentioned in his account of Tipu's campaign in Kodagu that Tipu 'honoured' Ranga Nair with Islam. Later, perhaps as an afterthought, he states in his chapter on 'State and Religion' :

*"It is usually forgotten while assessing Tipu's religious policy that some of the conversions were voluntary. Thus, for example, Ranga Nair, one of the Coorg leaders, who had escaped returned on Tipu's invitation and embraced Islam."* (*History of Tipu Sultan, page 363*.)

He has cited as his authority for this statement "Kirmani, page 298" that is page 298 of the printed text of Kirmani's *Nishane Haidari*. What does Kirmani say there? He says: "Ranga Nair was felicitated with the honour of Islam [that

is he was made a Musalman] by His Majesty [Tipu], was circumcised, and was named Shaikh Ahmad. He was given the rank of a Risaldar and was cherished as a son. (*Nishane Haidari*, page 298; *Eng Tr. The History of the Reign of Tipu Sultan*, page 82.) It should be noted that the Sultan's slaves were called his sons. (Of course, his female slaves were not called his 'daughters'. They went straight to his harem.) That does not mean that they were really treated as sons. The main point is, nowhere has Kirmani said that Ranga Nair "embraced" Islam; in no source has it been stated that he became a Musalman of his own accord. He did not become Musalman, he was made a Musalman. And, still, Mohibbul Hasan in his "History" cites Ranga Nair's as an example of voluntary conversion. All that I can say is that he is not telling the truth. The statement that Ranga Nair "embraced" Islam is a blatant lie. Hasan's statement that "some of the conversions [made by Tipu] were voluntary" is also baseless. There is no example—not one, leave alone some—of voluntary conversion to Islam in Tipu's reign.

3. Kirmani says that Tipu sent six or seven thousand men of the Shaikh and Sayyid tribes to repopulate the Kodagu district. (*Nishane Haidari*, page 299; *Eng Tr. The History of the Reign of Tipu Sultan*, page 83.) Lewis Rice, too, says in his gazetteer of Mysore and Coorg: "**Into depopulated Coorg he [Tipu] sent Musalman landlords, and gave to them the lands and slaves of the exiles, besides a supply of labourers from Adwani in the Bellary district, and armed them with a degree of cruel proscription: 'The country is given to you in jaghir', were his instructions, 'improve it and be happy. The extermination of those mountaineers being determined on, you are required as an imperious duty, to search for and slay all who may have escaped our just vengeance; their wives and children will become your slaves.'**" (*Mysore and Coorg*,

*Vol. III, pp 111-12.)*

See how Mohibbul Hasan narrates this event: “To prevent future risings he transported the rebels to Mysore, and in their place ordered new settlers to be brought from Adwani in the Bellary district.” (*History of Tipu Sultan, page 79.*) He has not cited any authority for this statement, but it is evident that it is based on Kirmani and Rice quoted above. Kirmani has specifically stated that the new settlers sent by Tipu belonged to the Shaikh and Sayyid tribes, from which it is clear that they were Musalmans. Rice, too, states that Tipu sent Musalman landlords to Kodagu. Then why did Mohibbul Hasan refrain from telling his readers that the new settlers were Musalmans? Was he afraid that telling that would put a stain on his portrait of Tipu as a tolerant ruler?

4. The number of captives which Tipu carried away from Kodagu is given as 70,000 by Wilks and 85, 000 by Rice. On this Mohibbul Hasan comments: “But this is preposterous, for the whole population of Coorg at that time did not amount to these figures. In 1836 the population of Coorg was returned at 65, 437 (Imp. Gaz., 1885, iv, p. 33).” (*History of Tipu Sultan, page 79, footnote 4.*) I shall presently show that the information given by Mohibbul Hasan is incomplete and misleading. But even if we accept his statement as it is, his argument does not hold water. He implies that if the population of Coorg was 65, 437 in 1836, it must have been less than that in 1785; so Tipu could not have carried away 70,000 persons from Coorg in that year. This is fallacious reasoning. Let me illustrate it by an example. The Jewish population of Poland was three million in 1939; it is less than a hundred thousand today. If anyone tries to estimate Jewish population of Poland in 1939 from today’s figure, without contemplating the Holocaust that Hitler perpetrated in the Second World War, he would arrive at a grossly inaccurate figure. One must take into consideration the natural and man-made calamities that might have taken

place while estimating population figures of the past. Suppose, the population of a village was 100, of which 60 persons died in an epidemic of plague in a certain year. Now, if any one takes the figure of survivors as his base and, without giving a thought to the intervening epidemic, tries to estimate the population of that village ten years ago, his estimate would turn out to be wrong. And if it is found that he has deliberately ignored the epidemic and has also, deliberately, given incorrect figures, he will be called a liar.

The information given by Mohibbul Hasan about the population of Coorg is incomplete and misleading. I give here the full passage from the source he has cited, viz. *The imperial Gazetteer of India, Volume 4, page 33*: "In 1836, shortly after the British occupation, the population of Coorg was returned at only 65,437 souls. The first regular census, conducted by actual counting, was effected on the night of 14th November 1871, and gave a total of 1,68,312. The second regular census was taken on the 17th February 1881, when the population numbered 1,78,302, showing an increase of 6 per cent during the past decade." The British Government annexed the principality of Coorg in 1834. The population of Coorg returned in 1836 is obviously an estimate. The very next sentence tells us that the first regular census, conducted by actual counting, was effected in 1871. And yet Mohibbul Hasan chose the first figure, viz. 65,437, evidently because he thought it convenient. Even if we accept that figure, Hasan's argument is, as I have shown above, fallacious. But even for such an argument, it would have been honest to give the population figure arrived at by actual counting, viz. 1,68,312. If we accept that figure as the base and the growth rate of 6 per cent per decade, and assume that there had been no natural or man-made calamity in the intervening years, the population of Coorg would have been 1,02,500 in 1785. See the table below.

Year	Population
1785	1,02,500
1795	1,08,655
1805	1,15,169
1815	1,22,079
1825	1,29,403
1835	1,37,168
1845	1,45,398
1855	1,54,122
1865	1,63,369
1870	1,68,270

(I have assumed a growth of 3 per cent in the five years 1865 to 1870. If an additional growth of half a per cent is assumed for the ensuing year the population for 1871 would be 1,68,354.)

The estimate that Coorg's population was 1,02,500 in 1785 is based on the assumption that no natural or man-made calamity had occurred between the years 1785 and 1871. But we know that Tipu had carried away from Coorg a large number of captives in 1785. If we accept 40,000 as the figure of captives given in Tipu's letter of 5th January 1786 the population of Coorg, before Tipu carried away the captives would be  $1,02,500 + 40,000 = 1,42,500$ . Therefore, Mohibbul Hasan's implied argument, based on incomplete and misleading information, that Tipu could not have carried away a large number of captives from Coorg is wrong. It takes one sentence to make a fallacious statement; it takes a lot more space to prove its fallacy.

There is some more evidence to show that Kodagu was indeed depopulated. In his report Francis Buchanan states under 20<sup>th</sup> January 1801:

“The Coorg Raja, during the siege of Seringapatam [in 1799], under pretence of assisting the English, made an incursion into the country, and swept away all the inhabitants he could seize. He has given them possessions in his own country; but they are very desirous of returning home, although I do not hear he uses them ill.” (*A Journey from Madras, Vol. III, page 18.*) There are some more

entries in his report to this effect. (*A Journey from Madras, Vol. III, pages 62, 64-65, 69.*)

The Raja was keen to re-populate his kingdom because most of the government's income was derived from land revenue. If the population was reduced the land lied uncultivated which meant a reduction in revenue.

In 1788 Vir Rajendra, with his two younger brothers, escaped from the prison at Piriyaipattan with the assistance of his faithful subjects. The leadership of Kodavas naturally devolved upon him. They inflicted defeat after defeat on Tipu's forces and captured all the forts in the district except that of Madikeri. That fort he captured in 1791 during the Third Anglo-Mysore War. But the Raja's family suffered a terrible loss after his escape. Wilks tell us: "It was probably after this event, that Tipu Sultan ordered the remainder of the family to be removed to Seringapatam, where, after the customary scrutiny, two females, sisters of the Raja, were received [that is, forced] into the royal harem. (*Historical Sketches of the South of India, Vol. II, page 473.*) This statement is corroborated by Captain Marriott who was appointed as superintendent of Tipu's harem after the Sultan's death in 1799. In a letter to Josiah Webbe, Chief Secretary to the Government of Madras, dated 2nd July, 1800, he reported that there were 601 inmates in the harem, 268 wives and concubines of Haidar and 333 of Tipu; two sisters of the Raja of Coorg were in the latter section. (*Tiger of Mysore: Life and Death of Tipu Sultan, pages 210-11.*) After his escape Vir Rajendra formed an alliance with the English East India Company and gave all possible assistance to their forces which passed through his Kingdom during the Third and the Fourth Anglo-Mysore Wars, the last of which put an end to the tyrant.



## CHAPTER 4

**Malabar's War of Independence**

Since Haidar occupied Malabar in 1766 Malabar has never been quiet; the people of Malabar had continued to resist the foreign invaders in a never ending guerilla war. I shall let the sources, mostly Tipu's letters, speak for themselves.

**Tipu to Badruzzaman Khan**

13 February 1786

“Your two letters, with the enclosed memorandum of the Nair captives, have been received. **You did right in causing a hundred and five of them to be circumcised, and in putting eleven of the youngest of these into the Asad Ilahi class and the remaining ninety-four into the Ahmadi troop**, consigning the whole, at the same time, to the charge of the killedar of Nagar [i. e. Bednoor]. You must give strict orders to the said killedar, to take the utmost care of these people, so that they shall not perish.”

*(Select Letters of Tippoo Sultan, letter No CCXXIV, pages 256-57.)*

It appears from some other letters that Badruzzaman Khan was *Faujdar* of Nagar. The Nair captives mentioned in the letter must have been captured in Malabar and sent to Nagar. The district of Nagar adjoined Malabar in the north. Forcibly converted men were drafted into Asad Ilahi and Ahmadi classes in Tipu's army. It seems that the younger men were incorporated among the Ahmadis and others into Asad Ilahis.

**Tipu to Arshad Beg, Faujdar of Calicut**

21 may 1786

“**Getting possession of the villain, Goorkul, and of his wife and children, you must forcibly make Musalmans of them, and then dispatch the whole under a guard to Patan [i. e. Shrirangapattanam]**”

*(Select letter of Tippoo Sultan, letter No CCLXXIV, page*

310.)

It is evident from this letter that Goorkul was a Hindu. The report of the Joint Commission appointed by the British after Malabar was ceded to them in 1792 states that in Kollam year 961 (1785-86 A. C.) Goorkul Mopilla of Manjeri (a sub-division of Ernad to the south of Calicut) rose in rebellion and Arshad Beg, not being able to face him, prevailed on Ravi Varma, one of the Rajas of Zamorin's family to join him and with their united forces, Goorkul was discomfited and fled. (*Reports of a Joint Commission, page 36.*) Arshad Beg was civil and military administrator of Malabar. Though the report calls Goorkul a Mopilla, he was evidently not a Musalman. He is styled as "Goorkul Rajah" in the index of the report. Most probably he was a local chief and the Mopillas, disgruntled by exactions of Tipu's revenue officials, might have risen in rebellion under his leadership. That is why he is called a Mopilla. Gurukkal, also called Kurukkal, is a caste in Kerala. It is also used as a family name.

### Tipu to *sipahdar* Abdul Kareem stationed with Arshad beg

13 June 1786

*"You write that 'the villain Goorkul, being wounded, had thrown himself, together with his wife and children, into a fire [kindled for the purpose] which had consumed them [all].' You add that 'the mapilahs have all taken to flight.' "*

It seems that Goorkul knowing, or suspecting, the fate that awaited himself and his family if they fell into the hands of the tyrant resorted to this final remedy and refuge from dishonor.

In January 1788 Tipu descended into Malabar by the Tamarassheri pass. The *Sultan-ut-Tawarikh*, which is an enlarged version of Tipu's memoirs, records:

*"During the twenty-five years that the country of Calicut had belonged to this dynasty, in as much as twenty thousand troops were maintained for its occupation, and the revenues never equaled their monthly pay; the balance, to a large amount, was uniformly discharged from the general treasury. Notwithstanding all this, the*

*actual circumstances of the country were never properly investigated, until his Majesty, the shadow of God [Tipu!], directed his propitious steps and remained three months in that country. He observed that the cultivators (instead of being collected in villages as in other parts of India) have each his separate dwelling and garden adjoining his field; these solitary dwellings he [i. e. Tipu] classed into groups of forty houses, with a local chief and an accountant to each, an establishment which was to watch over the morals and realize the revenue; and a sheikh-ul-Islam to each district for religious purposes alone; and addressed to the principal inhabitants a proclamation to the following effect.*

*‘From the period of conquest until this day, during twenty-four years, you have been a turbulent and refractory people, and in the wars waged during your rainy season, you have caused numbers of our warriors to taste the draught of martyrdom. Be it so. What is past is past. Hereafter you must proceed in an opposite manner; dwell quietly, and pay your dues like good subjects; and since it is a practice with you, for one woman to associate with ten men, and you leave your mothers and sisters unconstrained in their obscene practices, and are thence all born in adultery, and are more shameless in your connections than the beasts of the field; I hereby require you to forsake these shameful practices, and live like the rest of mankind. **And if you are disobedient to these commands, I have made repeated vows, to honour the whole of you with Islam [that is make you Musalmans],** and to march all the chief persons to the seat of the empire.’*

*Other moral inferences, and religious instruction, applicable to spiritual and temporal concerns, were also written with his own hand, and graciously bestowed upon them.”*

This was nothing but a mockery of the matriarchal system then prevalent in Kerala. Tipu who forced even married women into his harem and who had a liking for the poor, unfortunate, castrated boys of nine or ten years, had no right, except the right of force, to lecture others on morality. It should be noted that Malabar was in a continuous state of war since its occupation by Haidar and a

large garrison, out of proportion to its revenues, had to be maintained to keep it under subjection. This was the reason behind Tipu's rantings and he was threatening them that unless they meekly submitted to his rule, he would 'honour' them with Islam; in plain language they would be forcefully converted to Islam, there being no other way to convert them.

At the approach of the rainy season of 1788 Tipu returned to Shrirangapattanam by way of Coimbatore. However the garrison he left in Malabar continued his programme of forced conversions, some examples of which are found in the correspondence of the English factors at Tellicherry.

*"It was, on July 14<sup>th</sup>, that the next important item of news reached the factors. They wished to send an express messenger overland with the news of their situation to the Anjengo settlement for communication to Madras and Calcutta. Such messages had heretofore been safely entrusted to Brahmans who, from the sanctity of their caste, had hitherto been permitted to come and go without hindrance. **But the factors now learnt that the Brahman messengers were no longer safe; a Brahman selected to convey the message refused to go; and assigned as his reason that there was 'a report prevailing that the Nabob had issued orders for all the Brahmans on the coast to be seized and sent up to Seringapatam.'** And on the 20<sup>th</sup> confirmation of the fact was received from Calicut, where '200 Brahmans had been seized and confined, made Mussulmen, and forced to eat beef and other things contrary to their caste.'*

*The effect of this on the country powers became speedily apparent, for, on the 27<sup>th</sup> August [1788], the factors received identical notes from the Kottayam and the Kadattanad Rajas saying they could no longer trust Tippu, and beseeching the factors in the most earnest way 'to take the Brahmans, the poor, and the whole kingdom under their protection.'*

*But it was not only the Brahmans, who were thus put in a state of terror of forcible conversion, for, in this same month, a Raja of the Kshatriya family of Parappanad, also 'Tichera Terupar, a principal Nayar of Nelemboor' and many other persons, who had*

*been carried off to Coimbatore, were circumcised and forced to eat beef.*

*The Nayars in desperation, under these circumstances, rose on their oppressors in the south, and the Coorgs too joined in. The Mopillas likewise, though in their case fiscal oppression and intrigues to be presently alluded to must have been the causes, rose in rebellion. The movement was headed by Ravi Varma of the Zamorin's house, on whom, to quiet him, a jaghir had already been conferred by the Mysoreans. This chieftain, between July and November 1788, took the field, and being victorious, made himself master of the open country. He then proceeded to invest Calicut. Tippu, in December, sent down Lally and Mir Asr Ali Khan, who succeeded with 6,000 native troops and 170 Europeans, in driving him away from Calicut, but never quite succeeded in driving him out of the field.*

*While these operations were in progress no less than 30,000 Brahmans with their families, it is said, fled from the country, assisted by Ravi Varma, and took refuge in Travancore."*

***(Malabar, Vol. I, by Logan, pages 448-49.)***

*"So early as October 30<sup>th</sup>, 1788, the factors heard of Tippu's intention shortly to visit the coast, and Sir Francis Gordon, the Company's Resident at Calicut, when reporting on January 1<sup>st</sup>, 1789, the arrival of Lally's troops, indicated pretty clearly what Tippu's mission was; for Lally and his coadjutor had already received 'orders to surround and extirpate the whole race of Nayars from Kottayam to Palghat.' ...*

*On the 11<sup>th</sup> of February, there was a report at Calicut that Tippu had descended into the low country by Tamarassheri ghat, and on the 15<sup>th</sup> he sent a formal request to the factors not to give protection to any Nayars, who might flee to Tellicherry.... On February 27<sup>th</sup> after leaving a force at Calicut, 'to surround the woods and seize the heads of this faction,' that is, Nayars, he turned his steps northwards.*

*This move was a signal for a general exodus of the Hindu chiefs in North Malabar. The Faujdar of Kottayam wrote angrily to*

*the factors, on the 7<sup>th</sup> of March, to say that both the Kottayam and Kadattanad Rajas and other principal people had taken refuge in Tellicherry. The Chief replied that he had given orders to put out all the people belonging to Tipu's Sarkar, and the Faujdar was at liberty to come and see if they were there. The fact was, as Tipu afterwards pointed out in a very angry letter to the Chief, that the Rajas had come into Tellicherry and taken boat thence to Travancore, carrying with them, so Tipu alleged, ten lakhs of rupees each. But Tipu was not convinced that they were really gone until, with the Chief's consent, he had on March 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup>, sent an officer and six other persons to search for them in Tellicherry.*

*It was time for the factors to bestir themselves in looking to their defences, for, on the 12<sup>th</sup> March [1789] they had authentic information from a spy that the force now at Kuttippuram (in Kadattanad) within a few hours' march of the settlement [of Tellicherry] consisted of between 20,000 and 30,000 regulars...*

*It was at Kuttippuram, the headquarters of Kadattanad family, that this force surrounded 2,000 Nayers with their families in an old fort which they defended for several days. At last finding it untenable they submitted to Tipu's terms which were 'a voluntary profession of the Muhammadan faith, or a forcible conversion with deportation from their native land. The unhappy captives gave a forced assent, and on the next day the rite of circumcision was performed on all the males, every individual of both sexes being compelled to close the ceremony by eating beef.'*

*This achievement was held out as an example to the other detachments of the army.*

*There was no doubt that Tipu was bent on carrying out to the letter the substance of the proclamation, which, he himself in his autobiography says, he addressed to the people of Malabar. "*

***(Malabar, Vol. I, by Logan, pages 450-51.)***

*"The factors at Tellicherry redoubled their efforts to get their lines into a proper state of defence. The length of the lines which had been successfully defended against Sirdar Khan was no less than over 3,000 yards from Mailan fort to Chirakkalkandi, and 5,000 yards*

more from the latter place to the Coduvalli river mouth, besides upwards of three miles of sea shore. The factors set to work on an inner line of defence stretching from the river north and west of Morakkunnu to the beach at the south end of the bazaar.

But they might have spared themselves the trouble, for Tipu's plans were not yet ready for breaking with the Honourable Company. He was bent on his proselytizing mission for the present. On March 22nd [1789] the Chirakkal prince... next claimed the protection of the factors, but as the receiving of him would probably had diverted Tipu's whole force against the settlement, and as moreover his [Chirakkal prince's] recent conduct had been so unfriendly the Chief gave him a stern refusal. Next day however his sister and the rest of the family made their appearance uninvited on Darmapattanam Island. On being told to go they refused both that day and the next. In the following night they appear to have set sail in a boat for Travancore. Tipu made another grievance out of this against the factors; this party was also said by him to have carried off ten lakhs of rupees with them in their flight. Some 10,000 to 15,000 Nayers came with the family to Darmapattanam Island and provoked the angry letter from Tipu to which reference has already been made. The island was crowded with them on the evening of March 26<sup>th</sup>, but during that night, after their Chief's family had sailed, they most mysteriously disappeared, and the Commanding Officer of the Island, who had received orders to send them away found, to his surprise, on the morning of the 27<sup>th</sup> that they had already gone.

There are different accounts of what befell their unhappy prince. Wilks says that he 'had been induced by the most sacred promises to pay his personal respects to the sultan, and was for several days treated with considerable distinction, and dismissed with costly presents to his little principality.' But after his departure malign influences came into play; he was accused of a second conspiracy to revenge the cruel indignities committed on his countrymen; two brigades were sent to take him; his attendants prepared to defend themselves; and, in a skirmish, he was killed. The factory diary records that 'he was killed in attempting to escape.'

*Another account says he shot himself on finding that escape was hopeless. However that may be, it is certain from Tipu's own account, as well as from the factory diary record that his body was treated with the greatest indignities by Tipu. He had it dragged by elephants through his camp and it was subsequently hung up on a tree along with seventeen of the followers of the prince who had been captured alive."*

*(Malabar, Vol. I, by Logan, pages 452-53.)*

Wilks, the historian of Mysore, writes in this connection:

*"These indignities recounted by the Sultan himself [in Sultan-ut-Tawarikh], although free from his usual obscenity, are too brutal for translation; and he relates, among the incidents pertaining to this Raja, that he had, during their personal intercourse, offered 400,000 rupees, and the plates of gold with which a particular temple was roofed, on condition of sparing the temple itself; to which proposition the Sultan is made to reply, that he would not spare it for all the treasures of the earth and the sea. He states the destruction [made by him] in the course of this holy war, of eight thousand idol temples, many of them roofed with gold, silver, or copper, and all containing treasures at the feet of the idol, the whole of which was royal plunder..."*

On this Wilks observes "When crimes are deemed to be virtues, we may infer that their amount is much exaggerated"

*(Historical Sketches of the South of India, Vol. II, pages 331-32.)*

Granted that there is exaggeration in the number of temples destroyed by Tipu; yet the number of temples destroyed, or at least desecrated, by him must have run into hundreds, if not thousands.

In North Malabar Tipu visited Kannur and solemnized the preliminary ceremonies of a marriage between the Musalman dowager queen Bibi's daughter and one of his sons.

"There can be little doubt that the main object of his visit at this time to North Malabar was to appease the Kannanur chieftainness. Having made friends with the Bibi by handing over to her a portion of the Chirakkal district as well as by the projected

marriage, the trouble from rebellious Mopillas in the south rapidly disappeared, and in the future this turbulent race ranged themselves on the side of Tipu's troops."

*(Malabar, Vol. I, by Logan, page 453.)*

Tipu turned south in April 1789 and spent the rainy season at Coimbatore. He had left a strong garrison in Malabar to seize whatever Nayers they could and convert them by force. It was evident by now that in the next campaigning season Tipu would attack the Travancore Lines, a belt of fortifications, built between 1761 and 1766 to defend the kingdom of Travancore. Apprehensive of an attack, the Raja of Travancore had communicated with the Madras Government and the Governor of Madras had intimated to Tipu that an aggression against Travancore would be viewed as equivalent to a declaration of war against the English.

Towards the end of December 1789 Tipu launched an attack on the Travancore Lines which was repulsed with heavy losses. Two battalions of Company's native sepoy sent from Madras reached Travancore on 14 March 1790. In April 1790 Tipu's heavy guns made a breach in the Travancore Lines. On 15<sup>th</sup> April 1790 he launched another attack, broke through the Lines and in the next few days demolished them. By then more and more reinforcements were reaching Travancore from Madras and Mumbai and the campaigning season was about to end. So Tipu turned back and marched towards his capital. Malabar was thus freed from Tipu's tyranny for ever. The Third Anglo-Mysore War had begun on 29<sup>th</sup> December 1789 when Tipu attacked the Travancore Lines, but military operations began a little later.

Paolino da San Bartolomeo was a Portuguese Roman Catholic missionary who stayed in Malabar for almost twelve and a half years, from 1776 to 1789. Apart from English, Portuguese, French and Italian, he spoke several Indian languages, including Sanskrit, Tamil and Malayalam. He had travelled widely in Kerala and had met the Raja of Travancore and the Raja of Cochin several times. In his memoirs he says that he had the opportunity of being better acquainted with Kerala than with his own country. His

memoirs were published in Italian in 1796 and in English, under the title *A Voyage to the East Indies*, in 1800. This is what he says about Haidar's and Tipu's occupation of Malabar.

*"In 1773, Haidar Ali Khan, who had already made himself master of the kingdom of Mysore, marched down from Palghat, fell upon the city of Calicut, and reduced to subjection the whole of Malayalam [that is Kerala], including the fortress of Kodungalur. King Samuri [Zamorin] ... with five thousand of his Nairs, fled to the mountain, in the neighbourhood of the Ghats, from which they often descended to attack Haidar Ali's outposts, and harass his army. Haidar Ali's son, Tipu Sultan Bahadur, was at length so incensed against the inhabitants of Calicut, that he resolved to punish them; and for that purpose took the field in person. He was preceded by 30,000 barbarians, who butchered every person who came in their way; and by his heavy cannon under the command of General Lally, at the head of a regiment of artillery. Then followed Tipu Sultan himself, riding on an elephant; and behind him marched another corps, consisting of 30,000 men also. **The manner in which he behaved to the inhabitants of Calicut was horrid. A great part of them, both male and female, were hung. He first tied up the mothers, and then suspended the children from their necks. The cruel tyrant caused several Christians and Heathens [that is Hindus] to be brought out naked, and made fast to the feet of his elephants, which were then obliged to drag them about till their limbs fell in pieces from their bodies. At the same time he ordered all the churches and temples to be burned or pulled down or destroyed in some other manner. Christian and pagan [Hindu] women were compelled to marry Mohammedans. The pagans were deprived of the token of their nobility, which is a lock of hair called kudumi; and every Christian who appeared in the streets, must either submit to be circumcised, or be hanged on the spot. This happened in the year 1789, at which time I resided at Verapole [Varapali in Travancore]. I had then an opportunity of conversing with several Christians and Pagans, who had escaped from the fury of this merciless tyrant; and I assisted these fugitives to procure a boat to enable them to cross the***

*river which runs past that city.*

*This persecution continued till the 15th of April 1790. I had then quitted the coast of Malabar; but I was informed by the bishop and apostolic vicar there, that, on the above day Tipu Sultan, having forced the King of Travancore's lines, penetrated as far as Verapole, and had renewed the bloody scenes begun the year before."*

*(A Voyage to the East Indies, pages 140-42.)*

Mr. Brown, who had resided and traded as the Danish Resident in the French colony of Mahe, gave the following account of Tipu's atrocities in Malabar to Francis Buchanan:

"Tipu... early undertook to render Islamism the sole religion in Malabar. In this cruel and impolitic undertaking he was warmly seconded by the Mopillas, men possessed of a strong zeal, and of a large share of that spirit of violence and depredation which appears to have invariably been an ingredient in the character of the professors of their religion, in every part of the world where it has spread. All the confidence of the Sultan was bestowed on Mopillas, and in every place they became the officers and instruments of government. The Hindus were every where persecuted and 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. To trace the progress of these evils would carry me too far. I mention them only for the purpose of showing, how the ancient government of this country was at last completely destroyed, and anarchy was introduced.... **During this period of total anarchy the number of Mopillas was greatly increased, multitudes of Hindus were circumcised by force, and many of the lower orders were converted. By these means at the breaking out of the war [in 1789] conducted by Lord Cornwallis, the population of Hindus reduced to a very inconsiderable number.** The descendants of the Rajas were then invited to join the Company's forces; and when Tipu's army had been expelled from Malabar, many Nairs returned from their exile in Travancore; but their number was trifling,

compared with what it had been at the commencement of the Sultan's reign.

*(A Journey from Madras, Vol. II, pages 550-51.)*

Those Hindus who were thus converted by force could not return to the religion of their forefathers due to Hindu orthodoxy and shortsightedness. Buchanan records under 16th January, 1801:

“Although the Nairs are still more numerous than the Mopillas, yet during Tipu's authority, while not protected by government, the Hindus were forced to skulk, in the woods and all such as could be caught were circumcised. **It must be observed, that however involuntary this conversion may be, it is perfectly effectual, and the convert immediately becomes a good Musalman, as otherwise he would have no caste at all;** and although the doctrine of caste be no part of the faith of Muhammad, it has in India been fully adopted by the low ranks of Musalmans.”

*(A Journey from Madras, Vol. III, page 9.)*

The story of Tipu's atrocities in Malabar between 1788 and 1790 is best told in his own words.

## 1

### Tipu to Husain Ali Khan, Faujdar of Farrukhi (Calicut)

14<sup>th</sup> December 1788

“Meer Husain Ali has been dispatched [to you] with two kushoons [regiments]. With the assistance of Almighty God, and guided by the divine grace, he will, with the [further] aid of the holy Prophet, [soon] join you. You must [then] in conjunction with the aforesaid Meer, **make prisoners of, and slay, the infidels [utterly]. Such of the males among them as may be under twenty years of age, are to be made prisoners.\* Of the remaining unbelievers, let five thousand be suspended to trees.**”

*(The Asiatic Annual Register, Vol. XII, for the year 1810-11, Letter No I, pages 385-86.)*

\*Note by the translator Major General Kirkpatrick: “That is to say, their lives were to be spared, and they were to be detained as captives, or, in other words, to be made Mussulmans. Those

prisoners whose age amounted to, or exceeded twenty years, were, of course, to be put to death.”

## 2

## Tipu to Shaikh Qutb

31<sup>st</sup> December 1788

“The account you humbly communicated [to us] of your having seized upon eighty-two Mopillas, Nairs, Brahmans, etc. is known. **Let such of the males among them as are past twenty years of age be hung upon trees”**

*(The Asiatic Annual Register, Vol. XII, for the year 1810-11, Letter No VII, page 387.)*

Here Tipu consigns the Mopillas, though Musalmans, to the same punishments as the Hindus, because those who collaborated with the Kafirs were to be treated as *Kafirs*. The rebellion of the Mopilahs did not last long. They soon started collaborating with Tipu, who was their co-religionist.

## 3

## Tipu to Muhammad Ali, Second Diwan of Farrukhi (Calicut)

28<sup>th</sup> February 1789

“At this time 242 Nairs (being prisoners) have been sent to you; and a detailed list of them, according to tribes, is herewith enclosed. **Having circumcised them, you must enroll them among the faithful [i. e. make them Musalmans],** and give to each man six cubits of cloth and a turban; and to each woman eight cubits of cloth and a petticoat, according to the ordinance, [in this case]. Keep them, moreover with care. If there should be any deviation from this [command]; or if any of those should escape, you will come under our displeasure.”

*(The Asiatic Annual Register, Vol. XII, for the year 1810-11, Letter No XIII, page 389.)*

## 4

## Tipu to Badruzzaman Khan and others

6<sup>th</sup> March 1789

“Seven months ago [that is in August 1788] we proceeded in splendor for the purpose of settling the country of Farrukhi (Calicut), when calling together all the Nairs and Mopillas, we made enquiry respecting the state of the receipts and disbursements of the rayats; and having ascertained the same, remitted a third part of the amount which they had been accustomed to pay to the *Sarkar*, delivering at the same time to every one of the rulers or chief men of the country, a *Hukm-namah* (or mandate) to the following effect.

‘Your tribute (*mahsool*) has been reduced one-third part. You must, [therefore,] apply yourselves, diligently and faithfully to the promoting of cultivation; and paying your rents regularly to the *Sarkar*, always attend obediently upon our aamils [i. e. administrators]. Moreover, as among the tribe of Nairs, ; the woman has no fixed husband, or the man any fixed wife; but the whole with the exception of mothers, sisters, and daughters, cohabit promiscuously together like the beasts: now this not being [a] good [custom,] it is fit that you should desist from so hateful a practice; and that every man, taking to himself a wife, and keeping her in his house, do not suffer any other person (or stranger) to come before her.’

In short a great many other matters of the improper nature were set forth in writing [on this occasion;] and at the end of the *Hukm-namah* was written:

‘In the course of the last twenty-five years, you have slain near a hundred thousand of the *Sarkar*’s soldiers,\* and repeatedly committed excesses. Now, (or henceforward) you must desist from these proceedings: but if **you should ever again be guilty of the like, or engage in war or tumult against the Ahmadi** [i. e. Islamic] *Sarkar*, we will with the blessing of God, the helper, act by you according to the book of God [i. e. the *Quran*]; and carrying into execution, the commands of God, and of the messenger of God, will confer upon your whole nation the honour of Islam [that is, make Musalmans of all of you;] and place, (or enroll) every individual of you in the Ahmadi ranks.’

This was given in writing: after which, having laid our strict injunctions on the whole [body], we spread splendour on [i. e. went to] the royal residence (Seringapatam).

Four months after this [settlement] these base wretches, spreading confusion around, and setting sedition on foot, broke out universally into [a fresh] rebellion; and engaging in frequent hostilities with the Faujdars stationed among them, reduced the latter to great straits. Immediately upon learning of the whoreson behavior of the infidels, we again moved in the direction of Farrukhi (Calicut), with a view to fulfilling the commandments of God, and of the messenger of God, as contained in the Quran, and delivered twelve hundred years ago. The crusades (*jihads*) which [in consequence] took place, at that period may be learned by reference to ancient books. Since then no person has undertaken [meaning, of course, against the infidels of Malabar] till now that we, through the divine favour, and with aid of the holy prophet, have embarked in the present one, with which no other good work can compare [that is, no other good work van compare with the *jihad*]; nor can any claim so high a reward.”

**The letter proceeds to state that the holy war [*jihad*] now pursuing had already led to the spontaneous profession of the true faith [i. e. Islam] by great numbers of infidels and their families: and it concludes, with inculcating the positive duty of all Musalmans, to take up arms for the advancement of Islam; and by expatiating on the favour which they will by so doing, acquire with God, with his prophet, and with the Muhammadan world at large.**

The foregoing mandate was directed to be read to the whole of the Musalman population of the place, who were to be assembled for the purpose, on the next ensuing Friday after its receipt in the public mosque, where, besides the customary devotions of the day, a special thanksgiving was ordered to be rendered to the almighty, for the Sultan's recent successes, and prayers to be offered up for a continuance of the same. The service was appointed to be closed with a discharge of twenty-one guns, and the distribution of fifty

retls (maunds) of sugar, among the people (i. e. the true believers).

*(The Asiatic Annual Register, Vol. XII, for the year 1810-11, Letter No XIV, pages 389-91.)*

\*Note by the translator Major General Kirkpatrick about the casualties sustained in Malabar since Haidar's time: "There is no reason to suppose, that the loss sustained, by Haidar and his son [Tipu], in the subjugation of the Nairs, (if they could be said to have ever been subdued,) is at all overrated in this place."

## 5

### **Tipu to Muhammad Ali, Bakhshi of Ehasham (chief-of-staff of infantry)**

12<sup>th</sup> March 1789

"You will with three Risalas of Ehasham, and a hundred Muhammadis, under Muhammad Ali Sufi. And Mahi Muhammadi, proceed towards the fort of Kumbary, and having arrived within a kos or two of the same, where a body of the infidels, belonging to the garrison are assembled. You are (with the assistance of the Muhammadies) to ascertain their exact position, and having done so, are to fall upon them from three different quarters, and to make the whole of them prisoners. **You are then to encamp close to the aforesaid fort, where, preparing by means of the Muhammadies, a repast of rice and beef; you must feed the whole of your prisoners there on the same day, and afterwards incorporate them with the professors of Islam. They are then to be given in charge to the Muhammadies, with the directions for their being all forthwith circumcised. This being done, let them be reinstated in their possessions.** Having in the course of two or three days accomplished all this business, you will on the fourth day repair to the presence."

*(The Asiatic Annual Register, Vol. XII, for the year 1810-11, Letter No XV, page 391.)*

## 6

### **Tipu to Abdul Qadir, Talukadar of Kotungeery**

22<sup>nd</sup> March 1789

**“We have conferred the honour of Islamism on ten or twelve thousand infidels [that is made them Musalmans], of whom we have detained Lumboony Bhutmar, and some of their principal men who were the instigators of the [late] sedition. All the rest of them we have dispatched (or sent back) to their respective homes, together with their women and children; having previously, however, taken engagements from them, and given them Hukm-namahs (or written instructions for their future guidance). You must communicate this [proceeding] to the unbelievers [in your quarter] and, moreover, sending for them, make Musalmans of them, and then dismiss them to their homes, with the exception of the Lumboony Bhutmar and other chief men, whom you are to detain with you, representing to them ‘that you do so only till you shall have received *khilats* (dresses of honour) for them from us, after which you mean to dismiss them also.”**

*(The Asiatic Annual Register, Vol. XII, for the year 1810-11, Letter No XX, page 393.)*

## 7

Tipu to Syed Abdullah and three others of religious orders

18<sup>th</sup> January 1790

**“Through the divine favour, and with the assistance of the refuge of prophesy (Muhammad) the whole of the infidels inhabiting the districts of Farrukhi (Calicut) have received the honour of Islamism [that is, have become Musalmans]. There are only a few on this side of the country of Cochin who remain [to be converted;] and these also it is our firm determination to exalt and distinguished by bestowing upon them the happiness of the true faith [that is making them Musalmans]. As this [then] is an affair of holy war (jihad), we write to you, among others who are conversant in sacred matters, to desire that you will repair, accompanied by all the Mohammedans depending upon you, to our resplendent presence; whence, after a little while, having brought this business to a close, we will dismiss you, Sir, and them, to your**

respective homes.”

*(The Asiatic Annual Register, Vol. XII, for the year 1810-11, Letter No XXIII, page 394.)*

Observations by the translator Major General Kirkpatrick: “The few remaining infidels in the neighbourhood of Cochin, here alluded to by the Sultan, were, no doubt, the people of Travancore whom he had already endeavored to exalt (as he expresses it) to the honour of Islam; but by whom he had been shamefully repulsed in his memorable assault of their celebrated lines, on the 29<sup>th</sup> December, 1789.”

## 8

### Tipu to Ashraf Ali Khan, *Asaf* of Jamalabad

18<sup>th</sup> January 1790

“Your humble address, accompanied by two letters, written to you by Koonchy Tumunba, and a copy of your answer to the same, has passed under our most luminous view. For as much as the above named is one of those infidels with whom we are at war, and one of the enemies of the religion of the prophet, you are to consider as being among the acts worship, to labour by every means and in every manner, to repel and slay that villain. There being then, according to the word of the God, no objections to [employing] oaths and engagements for the purpose of destroying an enemy of the faith, that great and exalted person [that is the addressee] must, in this case get possession of and slay Koonchy Tumunba, by whatever you may think fit, or see practicable, whether the same be by oaths and promises, or by trick and cunning. This matter (or action) will [at once] be pleasing to God and the prophet of God, and gratifying to our high and sacred mind. Hence you must regard unwearied exertions in this respect as the most urgent of things, and speedily seizing upon that infidel, apprise us of the same. **Make, moreover, Musalmans of the whole of the unbelievers of that country; not leaving a single individual [uncircumcised],** for as much as this proceeding will likewise prove a means of breaking the loins of that infidel.”

*(The Asiatic Annual Register, Vol. XII, for the year 1810-11, Letter No XXV, page 395.)*

## 9

## Tipu to Badruzzaman Khan

19<sup>th</sup> January 1790

“Don’t you know that I have achieved a great victory recently in Malabar and over four lakh Hindus have been converted to Islam? I am now determined to march against that cursed Raman Nair without delay. Thinking that he and his subjects would be soon converted to Islam, I am overjoyed and hence abandoned the idea of returning to Shrirangapattanam.

Assemble therefore all the priests and other heads of the Muhammadan church, within your jurisdiction, and instruct them to exhort all true Musalmans to join in prayers to the throne o God, for the success of the holy cause in which he was embarked.”

**(Tipu Sultan: Villain or Hero?, page 38 and The Asiatic Annual Register, Vol. XII, for the year 1810-11, Letter No XXVII, page 396.)**

Maharaja Rama Varma — known as Dharma Raja, due to his piety and the help he gave to refugees from Malabar who had fled to Travancore because of Tipu’s atrocities— is mentioned as Raman Nair in this letter.

Tipu himself is telling us in this letter that he had converted over four lakh Hindus in Malabar and there is no reason to disbelieve him. It may be noted that the percentage of Musalmans in the population of Tamil Nadu is about 6 per cent, in Karnataka it is about 13 per cent, and in Kerala about 27 per cent. This is Tipu’s legacy to Kerala.

## 10

## Tipu to Sipahdar Abdurrazzak

31 January 1790

“Whatever number of Nairs shall be sent to you, you are immediately to cause the whole of them to be circumcised,

giving each of them from the *Tosha Khana* (store house) of the Sarkar, a wrapper of coarse cloth, four cubits long, and attending carefully during three days, to their surgical treatment (literally, to the business of their cure). On the fourth day, let them be set at liberty' during the three days [of their detention] each person is to receive daily a seer of rice; and one *pice* [in money]. Let the ingredients (or materials), used in making the ointment [to be applied to their wounds of circumcision] be procured from the Sarkar's granary. Of this ointment, let five seers weight be prepared at once, and kept in readiness to be served as it shall be wanted."

*(The Asiatic Annual Register, Vol. XII, for the year 1810-11, Letter No XXVIII, page 396.)*

The translator Major General Kirkpatrick adds: "The foregoing letter is followed by two others of the same date, to the officers who were respectively to supply the sipahdar with the articles specified in the former, instructing them to do so, upon receiving an application to that effect, under the hand and seal of Abdurrazzak."

## 11

### Tipu to Bibi (Dowager queen) of Kannur

31<sup>st</sup> January 1790

"The humble address which you have sent [to us] on the subject of the smallness of your force and of the disregard shown to your authority by the old [that is long standing] commanders of the Muhammadies is comprehended. With the blessing of the Most High God, the chiefs of the Muhammadies shall, for the future, according to former usage, and agreeably to your wishes, be made to obey your orders, and to be duly submissive to you. At this time do you repair to [our] Presence, bringing with you whatever troops you may have at hand. There are assembled here also, nearly twenty thousand Muhammadies; **you must, therefore, not exclude yourself from (or fail to participate in) the honour of this crusade (jihad), than which there neither is, nor never will be, a superior happiness, in either world. By this conduct you will at**

**once please God and the Prophet, and give satisfaction to our high and most holy mind.** Consider, moreover, that your worldly affairs will be benefitted by the same means. The twenty thousand Muhammadis with us, shall all be placed under you, and be employed on a certain service.”

*(The Asiatic Annual Register, Vol. XII, for the year 1810-11, Letter No XXX, pages 396-97.)*



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CHAPTER 5  
**The Jihadist Tipu**

Several examples of Tipu's intolerance towards other religions, as well as for his partiality for his own, are found scattered throughout his life. These have been collected together in this chapter.

**Tipu's Revenue Regulations**

A copy of Tipu's revenue regulations, in Persian, fell into the hands of a British army officer, Colonel John Murray, during the Third Anglo-Mysore War. It is mentioned by its English translator that it bore Tipu's seal and an endorsement to the effect that it was registered in the office of Govindrao, an officer in Tipu's revenue department, on the second day of the month of Ahmadi of the year named Dalav, which corresponds with 5<sup>th</sup> March 1786. Its English translation, made by B. Crisp, was published at Calcutta in 1792, under the title *The Mysorean Revenue regulations*. It was incorporated in a book entitled *British India Analyzed*, Part I, published at London in 1795. I have used this reprinted translation. It is also available on internet. Here are some extracts from these regulations:

“63. The Deostan lands are all to be resumed throughout your district; and after ascertained to what simpts (subdivisions) they formerly appertained, you shall re-annex them, and include them in the jumabundy (revenue assessment) of those simpts.” (*British India Analyzed, Part I, page 37.*)

Grants were assigned to Deostans (temple establishments) even in the districts, or sub-divisions other than the one in which the temple was situated. This rule says that it is to be ascertained first in which district or sub-division the land in question is situated and then its revenue, which was formerly assigned to the temple, was to be included in the revenue assessment of that district or sub-division. Simply stated, grants to the temples were cancelled; they were resumed by the government. It has been mentioned by Francis

Buchanan at several places in his report that grants to the temples and priests were resumed by Tipu. (For example, *A Journey from Madras*, Vol. I, pages 67, 70, 178.) It shows that the rule quoted above was enforced. A secular government should not bestow, or continue, grants to places of worship and priests of any religion. But Tipu's sultanate was an Islamic state. So, with a few exceptions, he cancelled the grants to Hindu temples and their priests, and continued those of, or even bestowed new ones on, masjids. Why some exceptions were made, I shall explain later. It would suffice here to say that Tipu was extremely superstitious and the exceptions were made not because of tolerance, but because of fear—fear of the wrath of gods! Some might say that this was not rational. But Tipu was not a rational man.

“69. The Qazis and other respectable Mohammedans, and such [Mohammedans] as follow the profession of arms, shall be exempted throughout your district from the payment of any house tax, or tax upon grain and other things, which they may bring from the country for their food.” (*British India Analyzed, Part I, pages 40-41.*)

Not equitable, but what can one expect in an Islamic state?

“70. You shall seize all Padres and *Cullistauns* (Christians) that are to be found within your district send them under a guard to the Huzoor [our Presence] —and you shall enquire and ascertain what *zindagi* [property], grain, cattle, land, and plantations etc. they possess and shall sequester the whole thereof for Government; and you shall deliver over the lands and plantations to other *Ryots*, whom you shall encourage to cultivate them, as, in case they are not cultivated, you will be required to make good what they should have produced. In future any person of the caste of *Cullistauns* (Christians) shall take up his abode in your district, you shall, according to the above directions, seize him, with his family and children, and send him and them to the *Huzoor* [our Presence].” (*British India Analyzed, Part I, page 41.*)

Being Christian in Tipu's sultanate was rather unpleasant. Tipu could not make this rule applicable to Hindus, solely because

their number was very large. Tipu could not afford to lose them all and rule a barren land. Sometimes even the Tipus of this world have to pay attention to worldly affairs!

“72. Wherever there are mosques in your district, there are Qazis, Mullahs and Muezzins. You shall transmit a statement of the allowances given to those persons, and the *inam* lands held by them, under yours and the Killedar’s seals, to the *Kacheri*; and continue them according to their *sanads*... Wherever there is no mosque, a mosque shall be built and a Mullah entertained at a monthly allowance of ten *fanams* and a quantity of ground yielding ten *fanams* shall be granted for the purpose. The Patel shall also furnish a daily quantity of oil weighing two *falooses* to light the mosque; and land for the support of the expense of the oil shall likewise be appropriated.” (*British India Analyzed, Part I, page 43-44. Fanam and faloos were coins.*)

As we have seen, by rule 63, lands granted to Hindu temples were to be resumed by the government. Here we see that lands granted to masjids were to be continued, masjids were to be built in villages where there were no masjids and new grants were to be assigned to them; all this was to be done, of course, at government expense. It was, after all, an Islamic state.

“73. Every person who shall become a convert to Muhammadan faith, if he be a *ryot*, shall only pay half the usual assessment, and shall be exempted from the payment of house tax; and if he is a dealer in merchandize, his goods shall pass duty-free” (*British India Analyzed, Part I, page 44.*)

Does this not mean that Tipu’s sultanate encouraged conversion?

Mohibbul Hasan, of course, knew these rules. In the Bibliography of his *History of Tipu Sultan* the book *Mysorean Revenue Regulations* (Calcutta, 1792) is listed under the heading ‘Contemporary Works (non-Persian)’. (*History of Tipu Sultan, page 406.*) He has cited it in Chapter 20 (‘Administration and Economy’) and Chapter 22 (‘Review and Conclusions’) for duties of the *amil*s and such other points. But he has not used it at all in

Chapter 21 ('State and Religion'). He has maintained a deafening silence about the rules I have cited above. And who could blame him? These rules spoil the make-up which he has applied to Tipu's jihadist face.

### Tipu's Jihadist Books

Among the Persian books composed under Tipu's patronage or inspection there are many which exhort Musalmans to wage Jihad and strongly mark his aversion to Hindus and Christians. Tipu's modern admirers of a certain type naturally avoid mentioning these books. For instance, Kavesh Yazdani in his article 'Haidar Ali and Tipu Sultan' notices among books commissioned by Tipu a treatise on the art of dying cloth and of blending perfumes, a book on Persian grammar, and a treatise on the rule of calligraphy invented by Tipu himself, but maintains complete silence on books which betray Tipu's bigotry. (*Itinerario, Vol. 38, Issue 2, August 2014, pp 105-06.*) I shall try to fill the lacuna by providing a sample here.

1. *Fath al-Mujahidin* (Victory of the Jihadists). "A work on the rules and regulations for the army describing the duties of soldier engaged in the Holy War [jihad]." (*Islamic Culture, Vol. XIV, No. 2, April 1940, page 146.*) First chapter is on general points such as Muslim creed, prayers and jihad.
2. *Muaiyid al-Mujahidin* (Strengtheners of Jihadists). A collection of poetical Friday sermons each ending with a reference to the Jihad against the kafirs, to rouse the zeal of his Musalman subjects against the Hindus and Christians. (*A Descriptive Catalogue of the Oriental Library, page 77; Tiger of Mysore: Life and Death of Tipu Sultan, pages 95,116.*)
3. *Fatawa-i Muhammadi* (Muhammadi Fatwas). A Collection of Fatwas. "This book commences with the Sultan's favourite subject, war against infidels; and various extracts from the Quran and Traditions [Hadis] are quoted to rouse the zeal of his Musalman subjects

- against the Hindus and Christians.” (*A Descriptive Catalogue of the Oriental Library, page 157.*)
4. *Zad al-Mujahidin* (Travelling provisions for the Jihadists). “A work...specially on the duties of a Musalman with regard to Holy War [Jihad] against infidels [kafirs].” (*Islamic Culture, Vol. XIV, No. 2, April 1940, page 147.*) “Being an incitement to fanaticism or persecution of the Hindus, many of whom were compelled to become Musalmans.” (*A Descriptive Catalogue of the Oriental Library, page 45.*)
  5. *Urus-i-Irfan*. On the “Excellencies of Mohammedan religion; written for the conversion of the Hindus.” (*A Descriptive Catalogue of the Oriental Library, page 45.*) In it “*it is stated that Tipu Sultan converted about ten lakhs of people to Islam and built 2227 mosques.*” (*Islamic Culture, Vol. XIV, No. 2, April 1940, page 148.*)
  6. *Vaaz al-Mujahidin* (Exhortation to the Jihadists). “An incitement to the persecution of the Hindus and extirpation of the Christians: containing numerous quotations on this subject from the Quran. Compiled by order of Tipu Sultan whose mind appears to have been occupied day and night with this subject.” (*A Descriptive Catalogue of the Oriental Library, page 45.*)

Professor Sheik Ali who has mastered the fine art of cover-up describes *Fatawa-i Muhammadi* thus: “It starts with Tipu’s favourite issue of ‘Jihad’ against colonials, and it has culled out many passages from the Quran which sanction struggle for a righteous cause.” (*Tipu Sultan: A Crusader for Change, page 370.*) Jihad against colonials! What an example of euphemism! Read Hindus and Christians in place of colonials and you will get it right. As for the Quran I would prefer not to say anything here.

### Tipu’s Harem

In his narrative of Tipu’s palace at Shrirangapattanam Buchanan writes:

“The only other passage from the private square was into the zenana, or women’s apartments. This has remained perfectly inviolate under the usual guard of eunuchs, and contains about six hundred women, belonging to the Sultan, and his late father. A great part of these are slaves, or attendants on the ladies; but they are kept in equally strict confinement with their mistresses. The ladies of the Sultan are about eighty in number. Many of them are from Hindustan Proper, and many are daughters of Brahmans or Hindu princes, taken by force from their parents. They have been all shut up in the zenana when were young; and have been carefully brought up to a zealous belief in the religion of Mahomet. I have sufficient reason to think that none of them are desirous of leaving their confinement; being wholly ignorant of any other manner of living, and having no acquaintance whatever beyond the walls of their prison.”

*(A Journey from Madras, Vol. I, page 73.)*

There must have been another reason than the one given by Buchanan for their not being desirous to leave their confinement. Though they were not to blame for their terrible fate, their families would not have accepted them; they would be regarded as a stigma on the honour of their families, better to be forgotten for ever. It was sad, but that is how it was then.

Captain Marriott’s report on Tipu’s harem, dated 2nd July, 1800, submitted to the Chief Secretary of the Government of Madras has already been mentioned. In it he states there were 601 inmates altogether, including 268 wives and concubines of Haidar and 333 of Tipu. In the latter section two were classified as wives, 80 as women of ‘superior’ grade and the rest as their attendants or slaves. Among the women of ‘superior’ grade were two sisters of the Raja of Coorg, three members of the Mysore royal family and a niece of Purnaiya’s. (*Tiger of Mysore: Life and Death of Tipu Sultan, pages 210-11.*) All of them were, of course, born Hindus, though Tipu must have converted them to Islam before forcing them into his harem. Of these unfortunate women two sisters of the Raja of Coorg and three ladies of the Mysore Royal family have

already been noticed. There is no way of knowing how Purnaiya's niece got there. But there is no doubt that she, too, was forced into the tyrant's harem. Besides, Marriott says that mother of Tipu's son Abdul Khaliq was "a Hindu lady taken from her parents in Mysore." (*Tiger of Mysore: Life and Death of Tipu Sultan, pages 210.*) He adds that the majority of the women in Tipu's harem "were originally Hindus, from families whom the Sultan had put to death or held in confinement." (*Tiger of Mysore: Life and Death of Tipu Sultan, pages 211.*) A few among these are known: viz., women of the family of Shamayya, who was chief of postal services and intelligence since the time of Haidar, daughter of Kalopant Pethe, the Maratha Brahman commandant of the fort of Nargund, and wife of Krishnarao, chief of Tipu's treasury. Shamayya was accused of being a party to a plot to engineer a revolt against Tipu, and restore the imprisoned Hindu Raja to the throne of Mysore. Shamayya (Shyama Aiyangar), his brother Rangayya (Ranga Aiyangar), and many others connected with them, were arrested, tortured and executed. Ramchandra Rao Punganuri says: "Some wives of the sufferers were drafted into the Sultan's seraglio." (*Memoirs of Hyder and Tippoo, page 35.*) In 1785 Tipu's army besieged the fort of Nargund. Kalappa, or Kalopant Pethe, the Maratha Brahman commandant of the fort, surrendered on condition of personal security and free permission to depart. Tipu, as usual, did not keep his word; Pethe was imprisoned and his married daughter was seized for the harem of the Sultan. (*Memoirs of Hyder and Tippoo, page 37; Historical Sketches of the South of India, Vol. II, pages 286-87; Nishane Haidari, Persian text, page 289, Eng. Tr. – The History of the Reign of Tipu Sultan, page 65.*) In 1791, during the Third Anglo-Mysore War, Tipu's treasurer Krishnarao was accused of treason. He and his three brothers were tortured and executed. Krishnarao's wife was sent to Tipu's harem. (*Nishane Haidari, Persian text, pages 351-52, Eng. Tr. – The History of the Reign of Tipu Sultan, page 193.*) Such was Tipu's 'jihad' against infidel women! Being sent to the Harem is euphemism for being raped.

Tipu also had a liking for castrated boys. In his instructions to

the four principal members of the embassy which he sent to Constantinople in 1785 he asked them to purchase “twelve eunuchs of nine or ten years” and added that the expenditure incurred in the purchase “should be paid out of the Government money.” (*State and Diplomacy under Tipu Sultan*, page 35.) Lest they forget this task, he repeated it in his instructions to the commercial members of the embassy. (*State and Diplomacy under Tipu Sultan*, page 53.) During Haidar’s regime handsome English boys were selected from among the prisoners taken during the Second Anglo-Mysore War (1780-84). James Bristow, himself a prisoner of war, tells us that “some of these, after the peace, were intended for dancing boys and sent among the Notch people to be instructed in the manoeuvres belonging to that art.” (*A Narrative of the Sufferings of James Bristow*, pages 55-56.) Tipu, too, had cultivated his father’s ‘hobby’. He had detained several English prisoners of war in direct violation of the treaty of 1784. Among them were twenty English boys trained as singers and dancers. Tipu caused them to be murdered as the English army approached Shrirangapattanam in the Third Anglo-Mysore War (1789-92). Wilks says that “their instruction, performance, and dress, was precisely that of an Hindostanee dancing girl.” (*Historical Sketches of the South of India*, Vol. II, pages 448-49.)

### Tipu and the Ottoman Empire

In 1785 Tipu dispatched an embassy to Constantinople, capital of the Ottoman Empire. In the agreement which he had instructed them to make with the Ottoman Sultan was the following clause: “Whatever be the size of the army the Sultan of Turkey would send, the expenses thereof shall be borne by this Government”. (*State and Diplomacy under Tipu Sultan*, pages 36-37, 42.) Tipu had also instructed them to recruit as many Turk and Mughal soldiers as possible. (*State and Diplomacy under Tipu Sultan*, pages 33, 53.) Tipu could have recruited in India as many soldiers as he would need for his army. But he evidently felt that these Musalman foreigners would be more useful in his wars

against the infidels in India. He failed in gaining his object because the Ottoman Sultan did not want to antagonize the British.

The embassy was accompanied by about one thousand men including interpreters, cooks, troops for escort and other servants. There were obviously some non-Musalmans among them and Tipu did not let go the opportunity to convert them during the voyage! He instructed the members of the embassy to convert to Islam the unbelievers among the troops, after boarding the ships, and to offer them 30 or 40 rupees as an inducement! (*State and Diplomacy under Tipu Sultan, page 33.*)

Tipu had also instructed his embassy to secure permission to dig a canal from the Euphrates to Najaf in Iraq, which is sacred to the Musalmans as burial place of their fourth Khalifa, Ali. He was of course willing to bear all the expenses for the project. (*State and Diplomacy under Tipu Sultan, pages 31, 41-42.*) Rather than undertaking irrigation projects for the welfare of his Hindu subjects Tipu was concerned with digging a canal to provide water to a place which was sacred in the eyes of the Musalmans! Understandable if we keep in mind that his was an Islamic state. That the Ottoman authorities did not take the proposal seriously, and nothing came out of it, is another matter.

Later Tipu sent another letter, dated 10th February 1799, to the Ottoman Sultan. Following passages from it are noteworthy.

“All Hindostan is overrun with infidels and polytheists, excepting the dominions of the Khudadad Sarkar, which like the ark of Noah are safe under the protection and bounteous aid of God. **It is my hope from the supreme king of kings, that as at the appearance of a second Adam, the religion of Islam will obtain exclusive prevalence over the whole country of Hindostan,** and that all the sinful infidels will with the utmost ease become the prey of the sword of combatants in the cause of religion [of Islam].”

“Near five hundred thousand of the infidels of the district of Calicut, Nuzzurabad, Zufferabad, and Ashrafabad, who were wavering on the precincts of obedience, have been converted [by us to Islam] at different times.”

*(Official Documents Relative to the Negotiations Carried on by Tippoo Sultaun with the French Nation and Other Foreign States, Document No. 30, pages 70, 74; or The Despatches, Minutes, and Correspondence, of the Marquess Wellesley, Vol. V, pages 25, 30.)*

Before this letter could reach Constantinople Tipu's sultanate was overthrown and he was killed.

### **Tipu and Zaman Shah, the ruler of Afghanistan**

In 1797 Tipu sent two envoys, via Kutch, Karachi and Baluchistan, to Zaman Shah, the ruler (Amir) of Afghanistan who was a grandson of Ahmad shah Abdali. They were given written instructions to make a proposal to Zaman Shah, which was, briefly, as follows: As the infidels [the Marathas] prevail at Delhi, which is one of the seats of the government of Mahomedan faith, it is incumbent upon the leaders of the faithful [that is Musalmans] to unite together and exterminate the infidels. Therefore Zaman Shah should himself march to Delhi, or send one of his generals, to depose the infirm Mughal emperor and install a scion of the family in his place. Then Zaman Shah or the general sent by him should march to the Deccan, while Tipu himself "will raise the standard of holy war [jihad] and make the infidels bow down under the sword of the faith [of Islam]." (*Official Documents Relative to the Negotiations Carried on by Tippoo Sultaun with the French Nation and Other Foreign States, Document No. 22, pages 62-63; or The Despatches, Minutes, and Correspondence, of the Marquess Wellesley, Vol. V, pages 16-18.*) In his letter to Zaman Shah, dated 5th February, 1797, Tipu wrote: "Agreeably to the command of God and his Apostle [Muhammad] ... we should unite in carrying on a holy war [jihad] against the infidels, and free the region of Hindustan from the contamination of the enemies of our religion. The followers of the faith [of Islam] in these territories, always assembling at a select time on Fridays, offer up their prayers in the words: 'Oh God, slay the infidels who have closed the way! Let their sins return upon their own heads, with the punishment that is due to them!'" (*Official Documents Relative to the Negotiations Carried*

*on by Tippoo Sultaun with the French Nation and Other Foreign States, Document No. 26, page 66; or The Despatches, Minutes, and Correspondence, of the Marquess Wellesley, Vol. V, page 20.)*

So this was Tipu's grandiose plan: The Afghan ruler, Zaman Shah, was to expel the Marathas from Delhi and then his army from the north and Tipu's from the south were, in conjunction, to crush the remaining power of the Marathas in the Deccan. Thus India was to be brought again under the heel of Islamic rule! And a certain class of 'historians' want us to believe that Tipu was a freedom fighter, he was fighting for India's independence!

### **Destruction of Temples**

Francis Buchanan reached Coimbatore on 28th October, 1800. In his journal he wrote under 29th and 30th October, 1800:

"I remained at Coimbatore, taking an account of the vicinity; and on the morning of the 30<sup>th</sup> I visited a celebrated temple at Peruru, which is two miles from Coimbatore. It is dedicated to Iswara, and called Mail (high) Chitumbra [Chidambaram], in order to distinguish it from another Chitumbra, that is near Pondicherry....The Brahmans in the time of Haidar had very large endowments in lands; but these were entirely reassumed by Tipu, who also plundered the temple of its gold and jewels. He was obliged, however, to respect it more than many others in his dominions; as when he issued a general order for the destruction of all idolatrous buildings, he excepted only this, and the temples of Seringapatam and Melukote. This order was never enforced, and a few of the temples were injured, except those which were demolished by the Sultan in person who delighted in this work of zeal. This temple is in the district of Mr. Hurdis, who gives for its support an allowance, sufficient for keeping up a decent worship, but very inadequate to quiet the clamours of the Brahmans. Even in the reign of the Sultan an allowance was clandestinely given, so that the puja, or worship, never was entirely stopped, as happened in many less celebrated places."

*(A Journey from Madras, Vol. II, page 251.)*

The ancient temple of Ishwara (Shiva) Buchanan has written about is at Coimbatore. It is known as Arulmigu Patteeswarar Swamy temple. It is also known as Mel Chidambaram. A large number of temples might have been saved at least from destruction, if not desecration, by Hindu officials in Tipu's government and some might even have their endowments continued, as Buchanan says, in a clandestine manner. Yet, available evidence suggests that quite a large number of temples was desecrated, and even destroyed, during Tipu's reign. Here is a sample:

1. On 30<sup>th</sup> November, 1800 Buchanan reached Palghat (Palakkad) and stayed there till 4<sup>th</sup> December. In his journal he records under December 1-4, 1800:

“He [the Raja of Palghat] is now engaged in rebuilding the temple of Bhagawat at Callay Colam [Kallekkulam]; which was pulled down by Tipu.” (*A Journey from Madras, Vol. II, page 352.*)

Bhagawat is evidently Bhagavati. The temple is listed thus among the most important temples of Palghat Taluk: “Kallekkulam alias Emur Bhagavathi temple – In Akathethara amsam. Dedicated to Jaladurgha. The roof of the Srikovil is covered with copper sheeting. The other buildings are tiled. The temple is 288 x 114 feet in extent.” (*Malabar, by William Logan, Vol. II, page cccxciv.*)

2. On 10<sup>th</sup> February 1801 Buchanan reached a small town called Hiriadka (or Hiriyaadka) near Udupi. He records:
 

“At Haryadika there is only one shop, and on the approach of my people the owner ran away. There is a large temple of one of the *Saktis*; this is attended by one of the Tulava Brahmans as *Pujari*, on which account no bloody sacrifices are performed. There was formerly a Jain temple here of the kind called Busty, but it has gone to ruin, and the number of the Jain is daily diminishing. The image in the temple was of copper. With many other similar idols from different parts of the country, it was carried to Jamalabad. By orders from the late Sultan,

some of them were converted into money, and others cast into guns.” (*A Journey from Madras, Vol. III, page 89.*)

3. Tipu’s letter to Nabi Shah at Bangalore, 14th September 1786

“You write, ‘that agreeably to [our] orders, the Pagoda [temple] which was in front of the blessed Dargah has been demolished, but that the *Aamil* will not resign [to you] the ground [on which it stood].’ It is known. The *Aamil* will make over the aforesaid ground [to you], when you must annex the same to the premises of the Dargah.”

(*Select Letters of Tipu Sultan, Letter No. CCCLXV, page 406.*)

Nabi Shah was the chief of Dargah. He wanted for the Dargah the ground on which the temple stood. But the *Aamil*, that is the civil official, after demolishing the temple by Tipu’s order, was not handing over the ground to Nabi Shah. Tipu has taken the necessary action on Nabi Shah’s complaint.

4. Venkat-Ramana temple at Coimbatore. (*Memoirs of Hyder and Tippoo, page 40, section 56.*)
5. Nandigad (Nandidurg), near Chikkaballapur. (*Memoirs of Hyder and Tippoo, page 48, section 37.*)
6. Ganapati temple near Sultan Battery. (*Kerala State Gazetteer, Vol. II, page 231; Kerala District Gazetteers: Kozhikode, pages 71, 769.*) The town called Sultan Bathery (Sultan Battery) is in Waynad District of Kerala. The original name of the town was Ganapativattam. Tipu established a battery of guns in a Jain temple there.
7. Venkatachalapati temple at Parur. The temple was renovated in 1888 by the Hindus with the help of Maharaja of Travancore. (*Kerala District Gazetteers: Ernakulam.*) Parur is the headquarters of a Taluk in Ernakulam district.
8. Shiva temple at Taliparamba in Chirakkal Taluk in Malabar. (*Malabar, by William Logan, Vol. II, page cclxv.*)

9. Shiva temple at Ponmeri, five miles from Badagara in Kurumbranad Taluk in Malabar. (*Malabar, by William Logan, Vol. II, pages cccxiv, cccxix.*) Badagara (Vadakkekara = north bank) is the chief town in the Taluk.
10. Durga Bhagavathi temple in Ponnani town in a *Taluk* of the same name in Malabar. On the restoration of peace and order in the country a few of the former owners of the temple who had taken refuge at Travancore on Tipu's approach, returned and discovering in the temple well the broken pieces of the original idol, repaired and purified it. Later on, being unable to repair all the damages caused to the temple by Tipu, they made it over to the Zamorin of Calicut (Kozhikode), who seems to have carried out all the repairs in Malayalam Era 1037 (1861 A.C.). (*Malabar, by William Logan, Vol. II, page ccccv.*)



## CHAPTER 6

**Refutation of Tipu's False Glorification**

There is a class of writers who indulge in false glorification of Tipu, though, to preserve 'balance' and seeming impartiality, they occasionally administer mild admonitions for a few, very few, faults in his character without spoiling the secular and tolerant make up they have applied to his face. Kavesh Yazdani in one such subtle whitewasher. A full appreciation of his fine art is not possible here for want of space; one example must suffice.

In an article on Haidar and Tipu, Kavesh Yazdani says: “Tipu was also aware of American War of Independence and reportedly uttered, 'Every blow that is struck in the cause of American liberty throughout the world, in France, India and elsewhere and so long as a single insolent and savage tyrant remains, the struggle shall continue.' ” (‘Haidar Ali and Tipu Sultan: Mysore's Eighteenth-century Rulers in Transition’ in *Itinerario*, Volume 38, Issue 02, August 2014, page 106.)

I wondered who has attributed this fantastic statement to Tipu. Yazdani's reference to this statement given in end note 62 is “*Kausar, Secret Correspondence of Tipu Sultan, 306.*” So I looked up Kabir Kausar's book cited by Yazdani. The statement, indeed, was there. It is in Appendix F entitled “Tipu Sultan's Observations (Compiled from fifth edition of 'The Sword of Tipu Sultan' by Bhagwan S. Gidwani).” (*Secret Correspondence of Tipu Sultan, page 303.*) The first sentence in the appendix is: “The quotations given below show different facets of Tipu's philosophy and character.” Then the quotations were given under different headings. In the fourth section entitled “Tipu's Views on the American Declaration of Independence” I found the following quotation: “Every blow that was struck in the cause of American liberty throughout the world, in France, India and elsewhere and so long as a single insolent and savage tyrant remains, the struggle shall continue. (p. 210).” (*Secret Correspondence of Tipu Sultan, page 306.*) There is nothing secret about the correspondence of Tipu

given in the book. Why Kausar has called it Secret, I cannot say with certainty. Perhaps, he might have thought it would attract attention. It is obvious that, apart from common sense, something else is missing in the quotation. But that, at least, is not Gidwani's fault! It is Kausar's in the first place.

The sentence as quoted, or rather misquoted, by Kausar, and repeated by Yazdani, is from Gidwani's *novel*! So I looked up page 210 in Gidwani's novel. There it was: "Every blow that was struck in the cause of American liberty, by *Americans, by Frenchmen, was a blow in the cause of liberty* throughout the world, in France, India and elsewhere—and so long as a single insolent and savage tyrant remains, the struggle shall continue." (*The Sword of Tipu Sultan, page 210. Italics mine. Italicized words were omitted by Kausar; Yazdani blindly followed him.*) In the novel this is the last sentence in Tipu Sultan's address to a large assembly of Indian and French officers. It is not an actual address delivered by Tipu; it is an address which Gidwani has made Tipu to deliver in the *novel*. In other words it is a figment of Gidwani's imagination. Kausar believes that such imaginary quotations will "show different facets of Tipu's philosophy and character!" And, praising Kausar in the foreword to his *Secret Correspondence of Tipu Sultan*, B. R. Grover, the then Director of Indian Council of Historical Research, says: "Compiled by an Archivist in his methodical and scientific approach this work is a welcome addition to the source material of the late 18th century history of India. It affords fresh ground for an assessment of the character and activities of Tipu Sultan and his place in history." There is more; but I must not tax the readers' patience.

What about Kavesh Yazdani? We must grant him one thing: His is a *novel* way of Historical research!

### **Tipu, a freedom fighter?**

It has been claimed that Tipu was a freedom fighter, even the first freedom fighter, for India's independence from British Rule! Some writers have suggested this in a more subtle manner. For instance, an anthology of documents and essays, edited by Irfan

Habib, has been named *Confronting Colonialism: Resistance and Modernisation under Haidar Ali and Tipu Sultan*, as if it was Tipu who was confronting Colonialism! Nothing could be further from truth. Tipu fought to save his own skin and failed. That does not make him a martyr, at least not a martyr in the cause of India's independence. That he fought against the British does not make him a freedom fighter. Hitler, too, fought against the British. He did so, not for Germany's freedom, but because they were a hindrance to his plan of enslaving the Poles and the Russians.

In February 1797 a French ship, dismasted, put in at Mangalore. Its captain, Francois Ripaud, was a conman who represented himself as second-in-command at Mauritius, then under French rule, authorized to discuss Mysorean cooperation with a French force already assembled there for expelling the British from India! Tipu fell for it and initiated correspondence with the French authorities. His proposal to the French, dated 2<sup>nd</sup> April, 1797, inserted in his instructions to his envoys, was that the French should send "10,000 [French] soldiers" and "30,000 Negroes" to support Tipu and in return the territory and property which might be captured from the British and the Portuguese were "to be equally divided" between the French and Tipu. (*The Asiatic Annual Register, for the year 1799, page 195 in the section entitled 'Supplement to the Chronicle'*.) So this was Tipu's idea of his so called confrontation with colonialism: replacing the British by the French!

We have already seen in the last chapter Tipu's grandiose plan as expounded in his letter to Zaman Shah, the ruler of Afghanistan, dated 5<sup>th</sup> February, 1797: They were to unite in a holy war (jihad) against the infidels and free the region of Hindustan from the contamination of the enemies of Islam; the Shah was to expel the Marathas from Delhi and then the Afghan army from the north and Tipu's from the south were to crush the remaining power of the Marathas in the Deccan. This was Tipu's so called anti-colonialism: reestablishment of Islamic rule in India!

We have seen how Tipu carried away from their homeland

thousands and thousands of Canarese Christians and Kodavas (Coorgis) and converted them by force; how, by his own admission, he had converted lakhs of Nairs to Islam. Several books written under his patronage exhort his Musalman subjects to wage war against the infidels, that is non-Musalman, and to persecute the Hindus and extirpate the Christians. His revenue regulations lay down that every person who should become a convert to Muhammadan faith was to pay only half the tax charged on others and was to be exempt from house tax. He is known to have destroyed a large number of temples. All this shows, beyond reasonable doubt, that his was an Islamic state. There was nothing anti-colonial in it. Tipu's struggle was against the infidels (non-Musalman), not against colonials or colonialism.

#### **Tipu, a donor of grants to Hindu institutions?**

B. Sheik Ali in his *Tipu Sultan: a Crusader for Change*, page 3, states: "Tipu gave liberal grants to the temples. Records show as many as 156 temples received grants [from him]." He has not cited any records to support this statement. But it is evident that it is based on B. N. Pande's *Aurangzeb and Tipu Sultan*, page 14. Pande says there: "Prof. Srikantiah supplied me with the list of 156 temples to which Tipu Sultan used to pay annual gifts." (His name is also spelt Srikantia and Srikantis on the same page. Let us stick to Srikantiah. This Srikantiah, Pande tells us, "was then busy edition [*sic.*] a new edition of the Mysore Gazetteer.")

Pande has not reproduced the list, nor has he mentioned the date on which it was sent to him. Sir Brijendra Nath Seal, the then Vice-Chancellor of Mysore University, had forwarded Pande's letter, so Pande tells us, to Prof. Srikantiah, and he had responded by giving Pande this list and some other information. Seal was Vice-Chancellor of Mysore University from 1921 to 1929. So Pande must have received this list in or before 1929. He first mentioned that list in his lecture on Tipu, delivered on 18th November 1993, that is 64 years after he received it! That lecture and the one on Aurangzeb, delivered on 17th November, 1993, were delivered

under the auspices of the Institute of Objective Studies in the Academic Staff College, Jamia Milia Islamia, New Delhi. These two lectures were printed in the form of a booklet under the name *Aurangzeb and Tipu Sultan*.

So this is the source of the list of temples—yes, 156 temples—which, we are supposed to believe, as Sheikh Ali believes, received annual gifts from Tipu. The list was provided by Prof. Srikantiah to Pande in or before 1929 and Pande recalled it 64 years later! Believe it or not!

Before taking leave of this great story teller I would like to give the readers one more example of his art. In his paper on Aurangzeb, Pande has told the following story: Once while Aurangzeb was passing near Varanasi on his way to Bengal a halt was made to let the Ranis of the Hindu Rajas in the emperor's retinue have a dip in the Ganges and pay their homage to Lord Vishvanath. After performing the rituals the Ranis, except the Rani of Kutch, returned. After a search it was found that there was a secret underground chamber just beneath Lord Vishvanath's seat and they found the Rani there, "dishonoured and crying, deprived of all her ornaments." The enraged Rajas demanded exemplary action. So Aurangzeb issued orders to raze the temple to the ground and punish the Mahant. (*Aurangzeb and Tipu Sultan, page 12.*) After enthraling the readers with this moving story, Pande adds: "'Dr. Pattabhi Sitaramayya, in his famous book. 'The Feathers and the Stones' has narrated this fact based on documentary evidence.'" So Pande raised the story to the status of *fact*! He got the name of Sitaramayya's book wrong: It is *Feathers and Stones*.

The story told by Pattabhi Sitaramayya in his memoirs, *Feathers and Stones*, is briefly as follows: One day Aurangzeb's Hindu noblemen went to see the sacred temple at Benares (Varanasi). When the party returned it was noticed that the Rani of Kutch was missing. After a search she, bereft of her jewelry, was found in a secret underground chamber. It turned out that it was the doing of the *mahants* (priests) who used to rob the pilgrims in this fashion. On discovering their wickedness, Aurangzeb ordered the

temple to be demolished. But the Rani insisted on a Masjid being built on the ruins of the temple and “to please her, one was subsequently built.” (*Feathers and Stones, pages 177-78.*)

Sitaramayya adds: “This story of the Benares Masjid was given in a rare manuscript in Lucknow which was in the possession of a respected Mulla who had read it in the Ms and who though he promised to look it up and give the Ms to a friend, to whom he had narrated the story, died without fulfilling his promise.” (*Feathers and Stones, pages 178.*)

So this is the stupid story Sitaramayya believed and also wanted others to believe. His expectation came true. There was at least one person who believed it: B.N. Pande! Not only did he believe it, he embroidered it further. In Sitaramayya's story the Rani lost her jewelry only, Pande made her lose her honour as well! I leave it to the readers' judgment whether to believe Pande's story of “the list of 156 temples to which Tipu Sultan used to pay annual gifts.” As for Sheik Ali, the believer, the less said the better.

B. A. Saletore's article 'Tipu Sultan as Defender of the Hindu Dharma' was first published in (*Medieval India Quarterly, Vol. I, No. 1, pages 43-55.*) It is reprinted in *Confronting Colonialism, pages 115-30.* I have used this reprinted text. The first document discussed in the article is a Kannada sanad, issued under Tipu's seal, about a dispute regarding worship in a temple at Mysore. Saletore, who believes that it illustrates “Tipu's role as a legislator in Hindu religious matters,” and “not only remedies the injustice done by his own official, but also rectifies an omission made by a previous Hindu ruler of Mysore”, waxes eloquent in praising Tipu for his knowledge of Hindu religious practices. But, alas, the date of the document shows that it was issued, if ever, after Tipu's death! Saletore says that “the second line of the sanad contains merely the Hindu cyclic year and the month and the day (*Siddhartha saum. Bhadrapada ba. 5*) which corresponds to 15 September 1783.” (*Confronting Colonialism, page 116.*) But here he is in error. The cyclic year *Siddhartha* which occurred only once during Tipu's life corresponds with Shaka year 1721. Bhadrapada *Badi* 5 of the year

named Siddhartha, Shaka year 1721 corresponds with 19<sup>th</sup> September, 1799! Tipu had died on 4<sup>th</sup> May, 1799. The Sultan, the inscription on whose sword read, “My victorious sabre is lightening for the destruction of the unbelievers”, would have turned in his grave had he learnt that Saletore was calling him 'Defender of the Hindu Dharma'! (*For inscription see History of Mysore, Vol. III, page 1073.*) The date, and other defects in the sanad, which I do not have space enough to discuss, show that the document described by Saletore is spurious.

S. Subbaray Chetty's article, 'Tipu's Endowments to Hindus and Hindu Institutions' first published in *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress, pages 416-19*, is reprinted in *Confronting Colonialism, pages 111-14*. It is a half-baked piece. At several places he cites Local Records (L. R.) as his source without giving sufficient details. He sets out to give a list of charities and endowments Tipu made to Hindus and Hindu institutions, but at least one of these is a permission for the construction of a mosque on the “site of a temple got from the Brahmins with their goodwill” and two are grants to Dargahs, one at Penukonda and the other near Tonnur. Most of the other records cited are merely memorandums of grants, not the original farmans or their copies. There is no way, therefore, of examining their authenticity. In most cases dates are lacking, or are not given. Some of the grants are made to astrologers; these cannot be regarded as evidence of Tipu's tolerance or respect for other religions.

Nevertheless it is true, though strange, that Tipu gave grants to some Hindu temples, and employed the Brahmans to perform japa (incantations), penances and other rites, to ensure his victory. Wilks rightly observes: “That Haidar himself, half a Hindu, should sanction these ceremonies is in the ordinary course of human action; but that Tipu, the most bigoted of Mahomedans, professing an open abhorrence and contempt for the Hindu religion, and the Brahmans, its teachers, destroying their temples, and polluting their sanctuaries, should never fail to enjoin the performance of the jebbum (japam) when alarmed by imminent danger is, indeed, an

extraordinary combination of arrogant bigotry and trembling superstition; of general intolerance, mingled with occasional respect for the object of persecution.” (*Historical Sketches of the South of India, Vol. I, pages 813-14, footnote.*) This superstition of the tyrant became particularly manifest since 1790 as utter destruction stared him in the face.

In April 1791 the freebooters (called *Pindaris*) who followed in the wake of the Maratha army plundered the Shankaracharya's *math* at Shringeri. This was certainly a most reprehensible act. But to place it in its proper context, it must be remembered that such freebooters followed all non-European armies in India. It was common practice to let them loose to devastate the enemy's territory and thus, by destroying his economy, compel him to sue for peace. It was something like strategic bombing of the Second World War. It brings to mind Sherman's famous dictum “War is hell.” Such freebooters, called *looties* by the British, followed Tipu's army also. Even the grain dealers supplying the British army in India indulged in plunder. But there is a difference: the atrocities against the Hindus and Christians, and their religious institutions, committed by Tipu's soldiers were the result of Tipu's specific orders; the *math* at Shringeri was plundered by freebooters, no Maratha officer had ordered the act. In fact the Maratha officers were anguished by it and some efforts were made to restore the plundered goods and appease the Shankaracharya. Dr. A. K. Shastry, the editor of *The Records of the Sringeri Dharmasamsthana*, observes: “However Peshwa Madhavrao Narayan (popularly known as Sawai Madhavrao, A. D. 1774-1795) conducted an enquiry and ordered Parasuram Bhau to give compensation and return the looted articles to the Matha. Parasuram gave positive reply (Kd. 129, R. 52 in Marathi). The Peshwa's letters reveal his keen interest and sincerity in giving compensation to the Matha. The positive reply from Parasuram Bhau to the Peshwa would form an impression that the foolish plunder of Sringeri was not due to any deliberate intention on his part, but a result of the predatory habits of the Pindaris in his contingent.” (*The Records of the Sringeri Dharmasamsthana*,

*pages 171-72.)*

Tipu, naturally, was quick to capitalize on the event. (So are his modern apologists and admirers!) He had already requested the Shankaracharya to offer prayers to Lord Ishwara (Shiva) for the defeat of the enemies. (*The Records of the Sringeri Dharmasamsthana, Letter Nos. 86-87, 3<sup>rd</sup> April and 20<sup>th</sup> June 1791.*) When he came to know that the math was plundered by the Maratha cavalry (in fact, by the Pindaris) he made a grant of money for the restoration of the temple and reinstallation of the idol. He did not forget to request the Shankaracharya to perform penance for the destruction of the enemies and prosperity of the government. (The Records of the Sringeri Dharmasamsthana, Letter No. 88, 6<sup>th</sup> July, 1791.) This was the same Tipu who had carried away from Canara thousands of Christians and forcibly converted to Islam, who had carried away from Coorg thousands of Hindus and forcibly converted them to Islam, who had forcibly converted lakhs of Hindus in Malabar, who had commissioned several books which exhorted his subject Musalmans to wage jihad against the non-Musalmans, who had desecrated and destroyed several Hindu temples and Christian churches, and who had forced many Hindu women into his harem. This bigoted tyrant was lamenting because the Shankaracharya's *math* was looted by some freebooters! Could there be a better example of the proverbial crocodile tears?

### **Missile man Tipu?**

Tipu has been credited by many with the development, and invention, of rocket. Their supposition, however, is erroneous. Rockets have been in use in India for well over a hundred years before Haidar's birth. A few examples should suffice.

Francois Bernier, a French doctor of medicine, arrived in India towards the end of 1658 or at the beginning of 1659 and left in 1667. His travelogue was published in French in 1670 and its English translation in 1671. In his narrative of the battle of Samugadh fought between Dara Shukoh and Aurangzeb in 1658 he states :

“I am not aware that in this battle recourse was had to any other artifice unless it were that here and there were placed men who threw *bannes* which are a sort of grenade attached to a stick, and which were thrown, from various parts of the line, among the enemy's cavalry, and which produced the effect of terrifying the horses, and sometimes of killing the men.”

*(Travels in the Mogul Empire, page 48.)*

Banne is Sanskrit Ban. It means an arrow. But in medieval times the word was used in the sense of a rocket in Persian and also in Indian languages. The word generally used for arrow was *teer*.

An entry under date 9<sup>th</sup> August 1636 in the diary of Suba Dakkhan is as follows:

“Orders were issued on the recommendation of Khan-i-Zaman for the payment of the salaries of the *Ahdis* (gentlemen-troopers), *Ban-dars* (rocket-men), *Gola-andaz* (artillery men), *Mewras* (post-runners), *Naqibs* (heralds), *Chobdars* (mace-bearers), and *Harkaras* (couriers) etc. for the month of Amardad.”

*(Selected Documents of Shah Jahan's Reign, pages 24-25.)*

The term *bandar* in the Persian text has been translated as rocket-men by the editor Dr. Yusuf Husain Khan.

In English translation of a memorandum, dated 10<sup>th</sup> February 1662, conveying Emperor's order the word *ban* in the Persian text is translated as iron rockets by the editor Dr. Yusuf Husain Khan.

*(Selected Documents of Aurangzeb's Reign, pages 29-30.)*

Q. Craufurd wrote in the second edition, published in 1792, of his *Sketches Chiefly Relating to the History, Religion, Learning, and Manners, of the Hindoos*, page 55:

“It is certain, that even in those parts of Hindostan that never were frequented either by Mahomedans or Europeans, we have met with rockets, a weapon which the natives almost universally employ in war. The rocket consists of a tube of iron, about eight inches long, and an inch and a half in diameter, closed at one end. It is filled in the same manner as an ordinary sky-rocket, and fastened towards the end of a piece of Bamboo, scarcely as thick as a walking cane, and about four feet long, which is pointed

with iron. At the opposite end of the tube from the iron point, or that towards the head of the shaft, is the match. The man who uses it, points the end of the shaft that is shod with iron, to the object to which he means to direct it; and, setting fire to the match, it goes off with great velocity. By the irregularity of its motion, it is difficult to be avoided, and sometimes acts with considerable effect, especially among cavalry." (There is an illustration on the title page depicting rockets.)

Such examples could be easily multiplied. It is believed by some that William Congreve (1772-1828), who developed the modern rocket, first saw the weapon while fighting against Tipu. There is no evidence to support this belief. In fact, there is no evidence that Congreve ever came to India. It is true that the use of rockets in India was known in Europe at least since the 17<sup>th</sup> Century and experiments on its development were going on even before Congreve started his own. After many trials and demonstrations Rocket developed by Congreve was first used by a British warship in 1806 during attack on the French port of Boulogne. It was used by the British army in the Battle of Leipzig (1813) and the Battle of Waterloo (1815). Congreve himself never gave any credit to Tipu for his interest in rockets. It should be noted that Congreve was an ingenious inventor and had several inventions to his credit such as a process of colour printing, a gun recoil mounting, and a new form of steam engine. Suppose that the story of the proverbial apple tree is true. Would it not be foolish for someone to give the credit for the discovery of gravity to the owner of the tree because the apple falling from *his* tree led Newton to discover the phenomenon? It would be equally foolish, even if it were true that the rockets fired by Tipu's soldiers led Congreve to develop the weapon further, to give Tipu credit for its invention. There is no doubt that Tipu did not invent the rocket; there is no proof that Tipu's rockets gave Congreve the idea to develop his rockets.

Tipu is credited with many other achievements. It is claimed that he founded a university, a printing press, and a printed weekly for his army. Sheik Ali has gone so far as to assert that "In short if

hostile forces had not cut short his regime, he would have ushered Mysore into an industrial age”! (*Tipu Sultan: A Crusader for Change, page 319.*) It has also been asserted that he called himself “citizen Tipu”!! I feel no need to waste any words in refuting these and such other fantastic, absurd, and stupid claims. Suffice it to say that they are baseless.



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