Tippu Sultan’s Period was a Revolutionary Changes in the Mysore State

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Abstract

By the middle of the eighteenth century, Mysore emerged as a powerful kingdom under the leadership of Haider Ali and Tippu Sultan. They posed a serious threat to the English East India company’s commercial and political interests by increasing their proximity with the French and controlling the trade on the Malabar coast. And for this matter, Tippu Sultan refused the company to export some trading goods. This brought the company into direct conflict with Mysore and four Anglo-Mysore wars had been fought from 1767-1799, in which Tippu Sultan rose as a historical hero, who consistently gave a tough fight to the British but was finally defeated and killed in the battlefield.

Key Words: taccavi, Padshah, talluqdars, Subah, polyvolte, kar-khanas, banadiq.

Introduction

Hyder Ali was born in 1721 and started his career as a horseman under the Mysore army of Nanjaraj and Devaraj. He succeeded in preventing Seringapatam in 1759 from Marathas, as a result of which he was rewarded by Nanjaraj with the title of “Fateh Haider Bahadur”. Gradually, Nanjaraja was overthrown by Haider Ali and assumed power but continued to accept Krishnaraja I’s overlordship. He captured some nearby territories like Coorg, Malabar, Bellary, and Cuddapah, etc. He even raided Maratha’s territories and he is also known for his strong presence in the first and second Anglo- Mysore wars. He died in 1782 during the course of the Second Anglo-Mysore war due to cancer.

Tippu Sultan- “The Tiger of Mysore”

Tippu Sultan succeeded the Mysore throne after the death of his father Haider Ali, he ruled from 1782-99. He continued the second Anglo Mysore war till 1785. He fought the third and fourth Anglo-Mysore war in 1790-92 and 1799 respectively. He died in 1799 during the war defending his capital Seringapatam from the British.

He made some reforms to run Mysore’s economy and military effectively. He understood the importance of strengthening the economy to have a strong military. His economic reforms included the introduction of modern industries by importing foreign experts and extending support to many industries, sending ambassadors to foreign countries to develop foreign trade. He also attempted to increase the state income by doing away with the jagir system and hereditary possessions of the poligars. In his military reforms, he reorganized the infantry on the European lines and established a modern navy.

Economic Development

The economic policy of Tipu Sultan was made in a very organized manner and he took initiative to develop the trading relation with some other countries also. The 18th Century ruler who was the last hurdle to the British’s domination over South India - introduced ground-breaking changes to the economy and even created technology parks across his kingdom. Historians and researchers, regard the Tiger of Mysore as a secular, progressive king who was constantly on the lookout for the best global technology for his kingdom. Records suggest that he developed industries, laid the foundation of the silk trade and encouraged foreign technology. He introduced a number of administrative innovations during his rule, including a new coinage system and calendar, and a new land revenue system, which initiated the growth of the Mysore silk industry. He expanded the iron-cased Mysorean rockets and commissioned the military manual Fathul Mujahidin. He deployed the rockets against advances of British forces and their allies during the Anglo-Mysore Wars, including the Battle of Pollilur and Siege of Seringapatna.

Since agriculture was the main sector of the pre-modern economy of Mysore, Tipu’s major concern was naturally with agricultural improvement. An order issued by Tipu shows concern that if revenue was collected at the wrong time, this would pauperize peasants by compelling them to sell their cattle. Such untimely collections were to be avoided, and ‘the resource-less’ peasants were to be given ‘taccavi’ loans ‘in the form of cattle and grain’ in order to enable them to undertake cultivation. Old canals and embankments were to be repaired, and new ones built. Similarly, old dams thrown across rivers were to be repaired, and new ones constructed.

Tippu Sultan made some regulations which were largely in conformity with the traditional principles of earlier regimes including the Mughal administration. Tipu was also interested in furthering agricultural manufactures. This is shown by a very interesting order he issued for raw-sugar manufacturers to be summoned and trained in the making of candied sugar and white sugar so that they might manufacture and sell these finer varieties in their own localities. Another indication of Tipu’s farsighted innovation was the introduction of sericulture in Mysore, which was to grow later into such a successful industry. The raising of mulberry trees was assigned to particular land-farmers (talluqdars). Twenty-one centres (kar-khanas) for the culture of silkworms
were established; the worms were to be produced on a monthly basis and the amount achieved from it was paid into the treasury. Tipu looked forward to an increase in silk production year after year.

Such interest in agricultural improvement could be creditable enough. But it was in the sphere of manufactures that his endeavours especially distinguished him from all contemporary Indian potentates. In 1787, Tipu instructed his prospective ambassadors to France to tell the French king that he had in Mysore ‘ten workshops (karkhanas) where countless muskets (banadiq) were being manufactured’.

The chief merchants in charge, of the factories of the Sultan’s Government were appointed to the post of Chief merchants. They were to take care of the business of the ships and factories and the victorious army of the ‘Sarkar-i Khudadad’ in the territories of other countries; to buy, sell and obtain coin and bullion, i.e. gold, silver, etc. and different kinds of cloth, sandal-wood, round pepper, small and big cardamoms, betel-nut, coconut, copra, rice, red sulphur and elephants and other commercial goods; to issue firm and true covenants to get invited and invite merchants from foreign countries; to select trustworthy accountants and alert, experienced, unselfish and honest agents (gumashhta), who are skilled in accountancy and business, and appoint them over the factories; to look after the management of commercial business without any loss; to maintain accurate records and accounts, while at sea and in port; not to allow any theft or embezzlement; and not to show negligence in managing the entire affairs of the factories (kothis) and ships within the kingdom and outside. Considering God and his Prophet (Peace be on him) to be present as witness it is their duty of work for carrying out these duties in accordance with the Hukmnama within their own jurisdiction and other factories to the best of their ability. They should unite with one heart and one mind in conducting and affecting the business of the ‘Sarkar-i Khudadad’. In the execution of business all officials should sit together and consult among themselves and without informing the mutasaddi, etc. they should record the statements of each person in their register, and obtain their signatures and put them in a box, setting a seal on the cover.

One of the most important aspects of Tipu’s life was his minting coins. Being an independent sovereign, Tipu after his succession over the throne, dropped the name and title of the Mughal emperor from his coins, and started using the title Padshah for himself from January 1786. Though the titles of Padshah or Zill-i Ilahi (Shadow of God) were those in use by the Mughal emperors, Tipu established his own individuality by incorporating his sovereignty a colour of religious militancy, which was not at all present in the Mughal imperial polity of the eighteenth century. Tipu would not put his own name on the coins he minted; rather the coin legends invoke God as the all-powerful Sovereign, and bring in the name of Muhammad the Prophet, and of Hyder i.e. Ali, the Prophet’s cousin and the model for heroes in Islam. His double-rupee was called ‘Hyderi’, after Ali, and the single rupee was termed as ‘Imami’, recalling the twelve ‘Imams’ whose line begins with Ali. There is little doubt that the motif of tiger, so much emphasized in Tipu’s ceremonial symbolism, was designed to link him with the same hero of Islam whose title ‘Hyder’ also meant a lion or tiger. Tipu Sultan had also taken various measures to improve their transaction with the other countries through ships and foreign trades. By regulating the rules he had made the economic policy of his state to flourish.

Creating a market for Mysorean goods worldwide

Tipu established trading houses for Mysore products worldwide. Historians explain, he preferred to do cashless, barter transactions for two reasons - one was to create a market for Mysorean goods and workmen abroad and the other, more important reason, was to curtail the drain of wealth out of India, which British were notorious for.

Tipu's economic strategy

One incident that highlights Tipu's economic strategy was a procurement deal with France in October 1788. When the French wanted to import pepper, sandalwood, cardamom, cotton yarns, gum and ivory, Tipu demanded that the goods be paid for by articles including cannons, ammunition, silk and woolen goods.

Revolutionizing the silk cottage industry

Apart from eliminating middlemen in the collection of land revenue, Tipu Sultan also got experts from across the world to further the silk cottage industry that Mysore had become famous for.

The peak of Mysore's economic power was under Tipu Sultan in the late 18th century. Along with his father Hyder Ali, he embarked on an ambitious program of economic development, aiming to increase the wealth and revenue of Mysore. Under his reign, Mysore overtook Bengal Subah as India's dominant economic power, with highly productive agriculture and textile manufacturing. Mysore's average income was five times higher than subsistence level at the time.

Tipu Sultan laid the foundation for the construction of the Kannambadi dam (present-day Krishna Raja Sagara or KRS dam) on the Kaveri river, as attested by an extant stone plaque bearing his name, but was unable to begin the construction. The dam was later built and opened in 1938. It is a major source of drinking water for the people of Mysore and Bangalore. The Mysore silk industry was first initiated during the reign of Tipu Sultan. He sent an expert to Bengal Subah to study silk cultivation and processing, after which Mysore began developing polyvoltine silk.

Road development

Tipu Sultan was considered as pioneer of road construction, especially in Malabar, as part of his campaigns, he connected most of the cities by roads.

Conclusion

The kingdom of Mysore developed in the eighteenth century under the rule of two important rulers, Haider Ali and Tipu sultan. They even defended the kingdom from British rule for some time by controlling their trading activities in the region and maintaining friendly relations with the French. This infuriated the Britishers and paved the way for a series of wars, known as the Anglo-Mysore war. During the war, the Tipu sultan called the tiger of Mysore gave a tough time to the English by defeating them in the first two Anglo-Mysore wars. He died in 1799 during the course of the fourth Anglo- Mysore war and after that Mysore formed a subsidiary alliance with the British.
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