

Tipu Sultan and the Malabar Trade Routes – Commercial Perspectives

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the economic designs of Tipu sultan in linking Mysore trade routes with Malabar Coast. Tipu sultan focused on increasing trade activities connecting Malabar which had commercial perspectives. Tipu Sultan had visions about expansion of economy through trade but he had to fight Marathas, Hyderabad Nizam and Nawab of Travancore. Besides the mighty British East India company was imposing economic expansion ideas by interfering in the political squabbles. Tipu Sultan had commissioned officers to accumulate accurate information on accessibility and abundance of natural resources of neighbouring regions of Mysore state. The Commercial Regulations introduced by Tipu Sultan in the year 1793-94 were scrupulous and holistic regulations to revise commercial spreading out. The British, who depended largely on Malabar spices were affected by this trade blockade. Tipu sultan monopolized trading articles like sandalwood, betel nut, pepper, cardamom etc. Tipu Sultan had visions about expansion of economy through trade. Tipu sultan could not realise his plans, but was successful enough to generate trade points along Malabar coast to make Mysore Kingdom economically strong enough to fight the Mighty British.

Keywords: tipu sultan, malabar, trade routes

I. INTRODUCTION

The late 18th century was a period of transition in Indian history. The Moghul rulers were in a state of continuous decline and the British East India Company emerged as a major competitor on the affairs of the sub continent. The battle of Plessey was a decisive point in the history of south India. The Marathas had established their sway over vast areas of the sub continent as well various other powers were battling for expansion of their territories. Hyder Ali, a **Faujadar** (meaning commander of army) in the Mysore army rose to become the de-facto ruler of Mysore. By 1761 he proved himself as the king of Mysore. His territory was threatened by the Marathas on one side, the Nizam of Hyderabad on the other. Besides, the Nawab of the Carnatic region and the British East India Company were eyeing to devour Mysore territory.

II. THE MALABAR CONNECTION

Hyder Ali started to expand the territory and was successful in conquering the minor principalities around Malabar region. The King **zamorin** of Calicut defeated and forced to pay a tribute. The disunity and quarrel among the rulers of Malabar and the disciplined approach of the Mysore army led by its superior cavalry were responsible for this easy victory. He returned after appointing a governor called **Madanna** and fixing tributes for the local chieftains. But, soon after he left the Malabar region, his outposts in Malabar region were threatened by local rebellion led by the Nairs who formed the fighting corps under the aegis of Kerala kings. He could give attention to Malabar after 1773 as he was busy with first Anglo Mysore war. He was once again interested to keep link with Malabar regions. This time Malabar came to be directly ruled as a province of Mysore kingdom. A detailed land survey was done by **Sreenivasa Rao**, governor in charge of Civil affairs and the land records at the regional archives of Kozhikode dates back to this period.

After his untimely demise his son Tipu sultan planned to keep Malabar region under his sway and started developing trade routes along Mysore Malabar roads. Tipu sultan hated the British Plans in South India wanted to teach them a lesson. He decided to restrict the expansion of the British East India Company in South India. He decided to frame guidelines for Commercial regulations which would assist Mysore kingdom to outgrow selfish plans of British east India Company.

III. THE COMMERCIAL REGULATIONS OF 1793 & ITS IMPACT ON MALABAR TRADE ROUTES

1. The Commercial Regulations introduced by Tipu Sultan in the year 1793-94 were scrupulous and inclusive that every minuscule aspect regarding the country's trade and commerce came under the strict vigilance of the King.
2. The Commercial Regulations gave a detailed description of duties assigned to officers of the Commercial department, which the Tipu Sultan designated by the term **Malik –ul- Hujur** or the prince of merchants.
3. The heads of the departments as well as the various officers under the Commerce department were to pledge themselves in the most solemn manner, according to the forms of their respective religions to discharge the duties of their several stations with highest attentiveness, and accordance. They were required to be very loyal and their lapse of duties would incur tough reprimand.
4. The Commercial Regulations acted as a control over the trading class which was fully under the control of the Tipu Sultan.
5. With regard to the foreign trade, in order to strike at strict discipline and control over trade, several commercial agents were employed in places where maritime trade was conducted and at places where commercial factories were established.
6. There prevailed a bureaucracy which consisted of what was known as **Darogha**, the commercial representative, the **Mutsaddi** or accountant and the **Gumastha** or commercial agent. They were to carry out the trading operations and keep accounts of all types of trade. The **Darogha** was briefed regularly by the Tipu Sultan regarding the purchase and sale of the goods. Vigorous punishments were given in case of any lapse of duties by the officers. The malpractices included deception or unprofessional conduct or fraud.
7. Tipu sultan monopolized trading articles like sandalwood, betel nut, pepper, cardamom etc. Tipu Sultan laid stringent regulations regarding the collection of the duties and export of items. Though trade was carried on with austere observation of the Commercial department to boost foreign trade, classified mercantile agents were persuaded to come to Mysore state for further enquiries. The merchants were offered special consideration and the trade centers of Mysore were opened to them. It is known from literary documents that traders from Muscat, Kutch and China came down with their exceptional merchandise to Mysore state and were treated with great affection and fondness.

IV. FOREIGN FACTORIES

Several foreign factories including Muscat and Kutch were planned to be established in:

1. Kurnool,
2. Madras,
3. Pondicherry,
4. Pune,
5. Cuddapah,
6. Tanjore,
7. Wynaad,
8. Humnabad,
9. Kutch,
10. Karachi port of Sind province,
11. Mahe port (under the French East India company control)

The Commercial department was authorized to spend such sums as would appear necessary and proper for the purpose of the factories. of Tipu sultan's commercial regulations was clear to disallow trade contacts with all his enemies and especially with the British East India company. So Tipu sultan embarked on proclaiming a trade ceiling especially against the British East India Company. Trading with Madras and the Nizam who was an ally of British East India Company was completely discontinued. These trade barriers imposed by the Sultan thumped the English East India Company very badly. The English, who depended largely on Malabar pepper and Malabar spices were affected by this trade blockade.

V. THE INLAND TRADE

The inland trade within the dominion of Tipu sultan was thoroughly organized and was under the strict and rigorous management of Tipu sultan. Several commercial depots and stores were set up by the government to organize internal trade. In fact, the Mysore government fixed price for every article traded. These trade depots were established not only in Mysore state but also in Malabar, Coimbatore and other conquered territories of neighbouring Mysore. These trade depots received various commodities like pepper, Betel nut, cardamoms, tobacco

etc, value being fixed by the government. Tipu Sultan had visions about expansion of economy through trade. He had commissioned officers to provide precise information on availability and abundance of natural resources and flora and fauna of Mysore state. established various types of factories at:

1. Srirangapattana,
2. Chitradurga,
3. Bangalore,
4. Bednur,

These factories employed both Indian European and workforce. They manufactured

1. Scissors,
2. Glasses,
3. Pocket Knives,
4. Guns,
5. Muskets,
6. Powder Paper,
7. Watches,
8. Cutlery,
9. Iron wares

French engineers had prepared an engine driven by water.

VI. CONCLUSION

Thus, Tipu Sultan made Malabar trade routes more official through his regulations and kept the British East India Company away from economic pursuits. This was evident in all his commercial regulations. The English, who depended largely on Malabar pepper and Malabar spices were affected by this trade blockade. Tipu sultan monopolized trading articles like sandalwood, betel nut, pepper, cardamom etc. Tipu Sultan had visions about expansion of economy through trade. He had commissioned officers to provide precise information about products. This linked him to Malabar coast and he wanted to tap abundant resources of the coastal Malabar. His designs to keep the British East India Company away from trading proved disastrous and Tipu sultan could not realise his plans. But the increasingly intelligent sultan was successful enough to create trade points along Malabar coast and was determined in his goals to make Mysore Kingdom economically strong enough to fight the Mighty British.

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