

# **Refutation of the False Allegations on Tipu Sultan**

**© 2015 Mohammed Masood**

**Made into E-book by: ISLAM REIGNS**

# CONTENTS

Topics	Page No.
1. INTRODUCTION.....	3
2. RELIGION.....	4
3. DASARA CELEBRATIONS.....	5
4. DESTROYER OF TEMPLES?.....	6
5. TIPU AND COORG.....	8
6. ANTI KANNADA.....	9
7. TIPU'S FAMOUS 'PADAYOTTAM' IN KERALA.....	11
8. TIPU AND ISLAM.....	15
9. TIPU AND CHRISTIANS.....	17
10. ORIGIN OF THE ALLEGATIONS AGAINST TIPU.....	19

## INTRODUCTION

These are some of the terms often associated with Tipu Sultan by a section of people. Tipu Sultan's legacy has become a hot topic of debate especially in Karnataka politics after his tableau was showcased by the Government of Karnataka (India) on the 65th Republic Day (26 Jan 2014). Later towards the end of the same year the Karnataka Government announced celebrating Tipu Jayanthi which irked people with strong right wing leanings even more. Tipu Sultan will remain a Religious Fanatic and Bigot in the eyes of these people for if a person is not willing to think rationally with an open mind and has developed prejudice just because a particular person/ruler did not belong to his/her community or faith then no amount of facts and figures presented to them will make them understand or change their opinion.

This article is for those who have an open mind and have not developed preconceived notions and who are not judgmental in their view. This article is also not asking its audience to blindly accept everything which is presented to them here but is only asking them to analyse and research its contents and think rationally before arriving at any conclusion. In writing this article as a student of History I have tried my best to Historicize the character of Tipu Sultan especially his religious policy towards his subjects based on facts. I have also done my own research and analysis on a few topics. (Anti-Kannada, An Embodiment of Shia-Sunni Unity).

Now let us take a look at some of the most common allegations hurled at Tipu Sultan, I only say 'some' because the list of allegations against Tipu Sultan keeps growing with every passing day even though its more than 2 centuries since he has passed away; from being a religious fanatic who killed Hindus, the destroyer of Hindu temples, to being anti-Kannada, etc, etc. It is difficult to say what more may come up in the future.

Let us also take a look at the origin of the allegations and analyse them, let us also critically examine these allegations and finally see if they hold any truth in them. As said earlier you don't have to believe what is being said here and you are free to check these facts and to draw your own conclusions.

## RELIGION

It is often said that Tipu Sultan was very religious, it is stated that it was his routine to get up before sunrise and he would perform his morning prayers and read the Qur'an and only after that he would look after the affairs of the

state. It is also to be noted that he called his state as “*Sultan-e-Khudadad*” meaning “Government of God” and his correspondence also throw lights that he considered his seat of power as a trust bestowed upon him by God.

There is no denial here that Tipu was religious, Well that being said, it was his personal right and choice to follow Islam , don't we have Hindu and Christian Kings in History who loved and followed their own religions. Is it right to call all these rulers religious fanatics just because they choose to practice their religion? In fact when a person is religious and has a deep understanding of his/her faith he would govern his people justly fearing that he will be answerable to God. No religion calls for extermination of people of other faiths. People who have a shallow understanding of religion do that and they do it in the name of religion out of sheer ignorance and folly not for their religion but only to promote their own interest in the guise of religion. On the contrary every religion be it Islam or any other religion asks the ruler to govern justly fearing God.

So we now know that Tipu Sultan was religious and that was his personal choice and therefore there must be no problem with that. However more than Hindus I often get Muslims asking me did Tipu Sultan have a beard? I tell them I am not sure but then they respond back convincingly saying “Yes, he had a beard”, I don't know what difference that makes. I know a lot of people especially Muslims who are only interested to know if he had a beard or not, again I find it sometimes really amusing when his images are circulated with a long beard. What we need to understand is that having beard or not was Tipu's personal choice and as a ruler and statesman we need to study and look at his policies and practices in governing his state and people, in dealing with his foes and friends, his conduct and actions as a ruler, one needs to research and study about his innovations and inventions which will give a clearer picture of his personal character if one wants to know about him and if one wants to truly emulate him. For I know for sure that Mohammed Ali Nawab of Carnatic had a beard and was among one of the oldest and biggest arch enemies of Tipu and his father Hyder Ali, always actively co-operating with the British throughout the reign of both Hyder and Tipu. Having or not having a beard does not necessarily make a person devout or sincere.

Coming back, did being a religious Muslim hinder Tipu Sultan from looking after the welfare of his Hindu Subjects? Did he become tyrannical towards his Hindu Subjects? What about his wars in Coorg? The much talked “Padayottam” in Kerala? What about his attitude towards Christianity and

his treatment of Christians? Let's look at all these questions and analyse them in this booklet.

Tipu was a Muslim King but the vast majority of his subjects were Hindus who were given full religious freedom to practice and follow their religion freely without any fear. The biggest proof of this is the Grand Celebration of the Dasara Festival held annually every year even during the reign of Hyder Ali and Tipu Sultan.

## **DASARA CELEBRATIONS**

We have contemporary accounts of Kirmani, British soldiers in confinement in Tipu's Kingdom and other historians who have accounted and confirmed that even during the rule of Hyder and Tipu the Dasara celebrations were held annually with all pomp and splendour and both father and son presided over these celebrations. Now why would a Muslim king even care about Dasara which is primarily a Hindu festival, not just that remember Tipu was accused of being a religious fanatic but he still ensured that no stone was left unturned in the preparations and arrangement of the Dasara festival. Why did he do this, was this just a political move? Even if we consider this argument for the sake of it, then what was the need for him to preside over the function, he would have just allowed it to happen or kept it a low affair. But Dasara was celebrated with great pomp and fervour, he did this because of the love for his subjects, he knew that the majority of his subjects were Hindu and Dasara was their biggest festival in Mysore. Had he been a bigoted ruler he would have discontinued this practice of celebrating the Dasara festival, or at-least would have not held it in the same pomp and splendour and nothing would have stopped him from doing so but to him the happiness of his people mattered the most.

## **DESTROYER OF TEMPLES?**

Sri Ranganatha Swamy Temple

Another popular and major allegation hurled at Tipu Sultan is that he destroyed temples. People with strong right wing leanings even say that he hated the sight of temples and had given orders to his army to raze down temples whenever they conquered new territory. Now here these people are faced with a big dilemma, they know that the famous Sri Ranganatha Swamy

Temple in Srirangapatnam was only 100 yards from Tipu's palace, also the Narasimha and Gangadharesvara temples were within his fort complex in Srirangapatnam.

Tipu would have heard the temple bells and the hymns of the priests every day from these temples but all these temple are intact? Not just intact there is also nothing to suggest that he interfered or hindered in the functioning of these temples and the temple priests and authorities have nothing but praise for Tipu.

May be he was again afraid that destroying these temples will make his subjects unhappy? But at least he could tell the temple priests to stop ringing the temple bells and to sing their hymns slowly as it was disturbing him in his prayers or in carrying his administration but on the contrary not only are these temples intact but these temples along with several other temples spread across his kingdom have received grants and gifts from Tipu Sultan, forget about destroying temples Tipu never ever interfered in the functioning of the temple affairs, he never ever asked the temple authorities not to ring the bells nor did he ever tell the priests to stop singing their hymns.

Some people have come up with a theory stating that he did not destroy these temples in his fort complex because he believed in astrology and the astrologers asked him not to destroy these temples else his kingdom would be in danger. But why did Tipu believe them for he was a religious fanatic, forget about being a religious fanatic he was a Muslim and any ordinary Muslim not necessarily learned or religious knows that Islam forbids believing in astrology, the Quran decrees it prohibited for Muslims to seek advice from soothsayers and Tipu read Quran everyday then how did he miss this?? Was it then that Tipu was not religious? No doubt he was religious and it was his religion which told him to respect the religion of others, the Quran says never to speak ill about the religious figures of other religions, as a ruler Tipu knew that his Hindu subjects held their temples in great reverence and it was his duty as head of state to look after these temples, ensure his subjects are provided facilities there to perform their religious rites. *The Mysore Gazette* points out that 156 temples received grants from him.

“Those disparaging Tipu Sultan for communal reasons should be aware that he made numerous gifts to temples, notably the Sri Kanteshwara temple at Nanjangud and Sri Ranganatha Swamy temple at Srirangapatnam, donated 10,000 gold coins to complete the temple at Kanchi, settled the disputes between the two sects of priests at the Melukote temple, while his several

letters to Sringeri Shankaracharya speaks volumes of his respect to Hinduism, according to Professor Ali, who said the present prejudice against Tipu Sultan was a fallout of the bias of colonial historians because Tipu had challenged the British paramountcy in India.” (The Hindu, January 19, 2013)

Then what about the talk of Astrology, well we need to know that Hindu Astrologers have been in the court of Indian Muslim kings for centuries, it was nothing new in the time of Tipu. It was a custom to have them in the court. Hindu Astrologers were also in the court of Aurangzeb. Aurangzeb had even adopted the fish emblem when he became Emperor, but merely as a gesture, to follow an already accepted custom. It was the same with Tipu, but saying Tipu allowed these temples to function independently because of these astrologers is foolish. He was a progressive and a wise ruler and depended on only 3 sources of strength as he had mentioned to the Sringeri Shankaracharya which brings us to another chapter in his life.

#### Tipu’s Reverence and Affection for Shankaracharya Sri Sacchidananda Bharati III (1770 - 1814)

The Sringeri Mutt possesses 47 letters addressed by Tipu Sultan to the then Shankaracharya Sri Sacchidananda Bharati III (1770 – 1814). Dr. A. K. Shastry has in his book ‘The records of the Sringeri Dharmasamsthana, translated and commented upon these letters.

These letter were written by Tipu in Kannada. In one of his letters to the Shankaracharya, Tipu says that he depends on 3 sources of strength ( ‘*Mooru Bala*’ in Kannada).

The first being the belief that God is merciful ( ‘*Eeshwara Dayapurnavagide*’ in Kannada).

The second being the blessings of teachers like the Shankaracharya ( ‘*Nimmantha Gurugala Ashirvada*’ in Kannada).

The third being the prowess of arms ( ‘*Ayudhabala*’ in Kannada).”

Tipu ends the letter with the gift of a crystalline *Linga* to the Guru and asking him to pray for the welfare of the state. The letter ends with Tipu Sultan’s seal and signature.”

Talking of the mutt one must not forget what happened here during the 3rd Mysore war the Maratha army under Parshuram Bhau caused a lot of damage to Sringeri mutt, plundered the temple property and even displaced the image of the Hindu goddess Sharada. The priest of the temple informed Tipu about the Maratha raid, seeking his help for consecrating the image of

the goddess. Tipu responded immediately to the request, and wrote to the Swamy expressing such sentiments of respect for Hinduism as to disprove any charge of intolerance against him. He provided the priest with funds to re-install the image. After the Idol was installed, Tipu received the *Prasada* and shawls, and in return he sent cloth and a bodice for the goddess and a pair of shawls for the priest, besides two palanquins, one for the goddess and the other for priest.

If Tipu was a fanatic he would have never done all this, he could have simply washed off his hands saying that it's not he who destroyed the temple.

When the priest wanted to visit Pune in the hopes of recovering the plundered temple wealth. Tipu provided him with all facilities. Tipu addressed him as the "*Jagatguru.*" The correspondence and the cordial relationship Tipu shared with the priest show the utmost deep respect, reverence and love he had for the priest. Here we need to pause and think "will a Muslim fanatic king ever care or show reverence and regard to a Hindu Pontiff??"

## **TIPU AND COORG**

Another allegation levelled against Tipu is that he devastated Coorg and converted Coorgis to Islam.

No doubt Tipu waged a war in Coorg but to understand the conflict in Coorg one has to look at the background. It was Tipu's father Hyder Ali who first came in contact with Coorg and it was at the invitation of Linga Raja who claimed the throne for his nephew Appaji Raja against Devappa Raja of Horamale. Hyder conquered Coorg and gave it to Appaji Raja and in return asked him to pay a tribute of Rs.24000 annually for his help which was agreed. But in 1776 Appaji died and Linga Raja became the ruler and after some time in 1780 he too died leaving behind 2 sons – the elder being Dodda Veer Raja. As the sons were young he took them under his guardianship and appointed a Brahmin priest Subbarasaya who was earlier one of the secretaries of the Coorg Raja as the care taker of the country until the children could come of age. This enraged the local population that someone from outside their community was appointed to oversee their affairs and take control of the principality. This was the chief reason for the revolt in Coorg. Time and again Coorgis rose in revolt for they wanted Veer Raja to head the



government. It was never a Hindu-Muslim issue but to give it a communal angle, the British and even Kirmani who wanted to portray Tipu as a champion of Islam said he converted as many as 70,000 Coorgis to Islam. While the Gazetteer of that time itself states that the entire population of Coorg was less than 50,000. So it is a baseless allegation that Tipu forcefully converted Coorgis to Islam. Hyder Ali had appointed a Brahmin which can be termed as a political mistake, it is also worth noting that Veer Raja was held by Hyder and Tipu as a political prisoner with his family for 8 years or so and if either of them had wished they could have easily got rid of him but instead he was looked after well even in confinement. We need to know that the conflict in Coorg was purely political in nature and had got nothing to do with religion.

## **ANTI-KANNADA?**

Tipu is also termed to be anti-Kannada. He is accused of replacing the court language from Kannada to Persian. He is accused of giving Persian names to places. One must again look at the history of that time before jumping to conclusions. First one must not forget that the mother tongue of Tipu Sultan was Persian and he was the ruler, yet he learned Kannada, he corresponded with the Sringeri Shankaracharya on a regular basis, did he correspond to him in Persian? All his letters to the Shankaracharya were in Kannada. Also one must not forget that Persian Language was the court language throughout India including Mysore where it was already in use along with Kannada. One must also not forget that Mysore before Hyder and Tipu under the Raja was a feudatory of the Mughal Empire.



*Mahadji Rao (1761-1794) Silver rupee in the name of Shah Alam II, year 1, AH 1174*



*Mysore: Krishna Raja Wodeyar (1799-1868) AR 1/4 Rupee Cr-205*

Coins were minted in Persian not just in Delhi but in Mysore and also in the Maratha Empire. Even after Tipu's death, coins were minted in Persian Language in Mysore. In layman's terms Persian language was like the English language then. People considered it a pride to be able to speak in Persian just like some do today if they know to speak in English. Persian was considered the language of the elite class. Persian had a prominence in India during the time of Tipu because Muslims had been ruling India for nearly

600 years till then. It is not that Tipu came and enforced Persian on the people of Mysore, it is not that he started minting coins in Persian. Accusing Tipu of being anti-Kannada is a great lie, as mentioned earlier Tipu learned Kannada, the local language of his subjects. That shows how prominent he thought Kannada was. Had he been anti-Kannada, he would have least bothered to learn the language. One must also not forget that Tipu ruled over a territory which included parts of Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh and Kerala as well. This is the reason he named towns in Persian to give them prominence and have a uniform naming pattern throughout his kingdom as Persian had its presence widely in various regions across India.

## **TIPU'S FAMOUS 'PADAYOTTAM' IN KERALA**

We now move to look at one of the biggest allegation hurled against Tipu. His invasion of Kerala which is very popularly known as 'Padayottam' by a section of people in Kerala. Here it is important to note that whenever I say Kerala it is particularly in reference to Central Kerala or Malabar where the dominion of Hyder and Tipu chiefly existed.

Again looking at the background. Hyder Ali first invaded Kerala in 1757 at the request of Raja Komi Achan of Palakkad to help him against Zamorin (Ruler of Calicut). At that time Hyder was a commander in the Mysore army under the Raja. Hyder defeated the Zamorin and the Zamorin agreed to pay a war indemnity of 12 lakhs. Hyder again entered Kerala in 1766 at the invitation of a local ruler Ali raja to fight against Raja of Kolathunadu.

Here is it worth noting that the Ali Raja of the Arrakal dynasty was of local origin. The founder of Arrakal Dynasty was a Hindu who had converted to Islam.

Space constraints me to write a detailed account of the Invasions of Hyder and Tipu into Kerala for that in itself is a different topic. However what we need to know is that these invasions were purely for expansion purposes. Kerala was made up of small petty kingdoms and both father and son saw it as the right place which suited their expansionist goals. Here they fought both the Hindus and Muslims who were known as 'Mappilas' without any discrimination whenever any of them stood in opposition against them.

However moving back to the topic of 'Padayottam', the 'Padayottam' mainly is about the accusations hurled at Tipu that he converted thousands of

Hindus to Islam and he destroyed great many temples, the same allegation that a religious fanatic bent on killing non-believers and destroying their places of worship. Here there is also a mention of atrocities committed on Christians. However we will look at it a little later.

Some people say Tipu Sultan is the reason behind Kerala having a large Muslim population, they accuse Tipu Sultan of having converted people *en masse* from Hinduism to Islam and destroying temples and enforcing Islam on the local population of Kerala which as we will see is absolutely rubbish.

Well had Tipu just been an expansionist like his father these accusations would not have come up, had he simply wanted land, money and power in Kerala – the people of Kerala would have been happy. The biggest reason/factor which is the cause of hatred for Tipu and cause all these allegations hurled against him in Kerala were his SOCIAL REFORMS.

Tipu was an inventor and innovator and Kerala gave him the perfect ground to bring out the Social Reformer in him.

Here we need to understand the society of Kerala at that point of time, the mind-set of its population and the social conditions prevailing at that point of time.

Kerala was the most caste conservative region in South India and here untouchability was followed most rigorously and very rigidly.

The caste practices in Kerala were so extreme that if a lower caste person even my mistake got in close contact with a higher caste person, the punishment inflicted on the lower caste person was often death.

‘Under the native rajas, Nairs thought nothing of cutting down on the spot a number of lower castes who had approached with polluting distance of his persons’. (Francis Buchanan, A Journey from Madras Through the Countries of Mysore Canara and Malabar, Cadell ad Davies, London, 1807, Vol. 1. p.383).

It were these rigid caste practices and evil of untouchability which compelled Swami Vivekananda to call Malabar a “mad house”.

He said: Is there anywhere in the world a folly which I have witnessed in Malabar? A poor *Paraya* cannot walk through the streets where the caste Hindus walk.... The people of Malabar are mad and their houses are mad houses. What judgement will you reach, other than that the different races of India will treat them with abhorrence and aversion until they reformed themselves and enriched their knowledge. Those people who observe such

satanic and obnoxious customs are shameless. (Vivekananda Sahitya Sarvaswam, Vol, III, pp. 186-187; Bhaskaranunni, Pathompatham Nuttandile Keralam, Kerala Sahitya Academy, Trissur, 1988. p. 159).

Here I would like the readers to read the following article: Genesis and Growth of the Mappila Community written by Dr. Hussain Randathani: <http://www.jaihoon.com/456.htm>

In this article the reader will know the real reason for the high presence of Muslim population in Kerala. The author has given the reasons along with adequate references which point to the real reason why the lower caste Hindus of Kerala voluntarily and *en masse* converted to Islam. The chief factors were for social and economic reasons that so many people converted to Islam in Kerala and not Tipu Sultan as C. Kesavan points out in his *Jeevitha Samaram* vol. 1, p.85, Bhaskaranunni, “the low castes were forbidden access to temples and bazaars. They were not permitted to drink from the well used by the upper castes. Education was forbidden to them. The prohibition was so stringent that they couldn’t go even to a post-office to buy postal articles.”

This shows the real reason for the large scale conversion of Hindus to Islam in Kerala and Tipu was not in any way responsible for the large population of Muslims in Kerala. The actual hatred for Tipu was because unlike other Muslims or even the Muslim ruler of Arrakal who never interfered in the social customs of the Kerala society Tipu could not remain quiet, he brought about many social reforms which changed the social practices of that time.

Tipu was an ardent social reformer and his zeal to eradicate the savage practices among his subjects had become proverbial. Most noteworthy among his reforms in Kerala were as Historian MS Jayaprakash says, Tipu Sultan was the ruler who put an end to the land monopoly of elite class *Janmi’s* in Kerala as he confiscated the land and distributed it to the landless and agricultural labourers. Compared to what Tipu did, the so called land reformations carried out by the first EMS Namboothiripad [communist] government in Kerala should be considered a sort of cheating the lower castes, said the historian.

To Quote another source, Sridhara Menon’s who is critical about Tipu but yet had the following to say about the social reformations undertaken by Tipu.

He states that reformatory works by Tipu Sultan paved way to the liberation of the majority lower class sections of the then Malabar including Thiyyas

and Pulayas from the centuries long oppression of the higher caste sections like Nayar, Nambiar, Kuruppu, Varyar, Namboothiri and Kshathriya classes.

During those times there was a custom enforced by the elite class that the lower caste women should not be covering their breasts. There are instances of cruelties inflicted upon the ladies for violating these laws. An Ezhava lady who happened to travel abroad and returned well dressed was summoned by the Queen of Attingal and her breast was cut off for covering them. (Ilamkulam Kunhan Pillai, *Studies in Kerala History Kottayam*, 1970, p. 275).

Tipu by law put an end to this custom and gave the lower caste people the right to cover the upper parts of their body. His decrees against polyandry and nudity of women really infuriated the elite class of Hindus who thought that Sultan was planning to convert them to Islam. The attitude showed by Hindus when Tipu asked the women of Nair families “to adopt Muhammadan custom of covering their bosom” clearly proves the intention towards reforms.

(Clarke, *Life of Willington*, quoted in Nagam Aiya, *Travancore State Manual*, see, C.K. Karim, *op.cit.*, p.185).

Another thing which provoked these elite class elements was that he abolished by law the Brahmin’s right to mate with lower caste Shudra women despite her choice of staying loyal to her husband by protecting her chastity. The period Tipu ruled Malabar; he was able to liberate lower caste women from such exploitations.

It was not just the lower caste Shudra women who got ‘liberated’ from such oppressions; the elite class Nair women of those times were forced to the polyandry system. Tipu put an end to this custom as well.

Historian MS Jayaprakash says it is the descendants of these higher caste groups, who by their pretensions as historians and scholars, demonizes and attributes sedition charges over Tipu Sultan.

Jayaprakash says that these people who were so frustrated accepting the equality and fraternity enacted under Tipu’s regime, felt like eloping from Malabar to the Travancore region. The reason was nothing other than that they were denied of those privileges they earlier enjoyed and a few present day historians, scholars and vested interests seems repeating the very same fabricated campaigns carried out by those frustrated minds of Tipu’s era. The vengeance against the reformatory works carried out by Tipu and Islam still prevails, noted the eminent historian.

Hence we can conclude that after what Tipu witnessed in Kerala he considered his duty as a ruler to stop it. He saw these social evils as not necessarily a part of Hinduism but a mechanism by the elite to exploit the weak and he thought it necessary to abolish them in the same way as the constitution of India has abolished untouchability and other social evils. It is noteworthy that these reforms brought about by Tipu must have given a framework and cue to other social movements which arose in future against caste practices and other social evils.

Tipu is also accused of having demolished temples in Kerala which again is partial truth. Here it must also be pointed out about his contributions to temples in Kerala.

C.K. Kareem, *op.cit.*, p.p. 195-99. Dr. Kareem has brought out a list of 57 temples and Satrams in South Malabar to which Tipu Sultan had provided grants. See *ibid.*, pp. 200-209.

## **TIPU AND GURUVAYUR TEMPLE**

When Tipu Sultan conquered Malabar, the priests of this temple were scared and they removed this idol from the temple and sent it to another temple in Travancore. When Tipu came to know that the Pujaris have sent the Idol of that temple elsewhere, he asked them to bring it back and place it in the temple. Tipu also exempted the temple from any kind of tax.

However there is no denial that Tipu's army destroyed few temples and Churches in Kerala however there are 2 main reasons for these:

- 1) Political reasons: when Tipu saw that the temple/church was being used for political reasons and as a rallying point by the rebels against Tipu.
- 2) Soldiers destroying temples in conquered territory in the hope of plunder, this did not have any sanction from Tipu and whenever any such incident came in light he severally punished the soldiers involved in such acts.

## **TIPU AND ISLAM**

There is no denial of fact that Tipu took steps to promote Islam however in doing so he did not undermine other religions. He never forced anyone to convert to Islam. He promoted Islam among Muslims through appointment of Qazis and instructing them to promote the teachings of Islam among Muslims in their Friday Sermons and through religious instruction. There is also no denial of the fact that Tipu gave concessions to people of his kingdom who became new Muslims.

It is also said that he once asked Purniya to convert to Islam but Purniya refused, again critically examining and even if we accept this to be true for the sake of argument. Let's try and understand why he did this, here one must not forget that both Christianity and Islam believe that a person will not attain salvation until a person does not die as a Christian or Muslim in case of Islam. In Hinduism the concept of conversation isn't there for salvation in Hinduism is attained by what is known and called as Moksha - Getting freedom from the cycle of death and rebirth.

For this reason Tipu must have asked Purniya as he cared and respected him for he was a servant from his father's time. However one must note that in spite of Purniya refusing to accept Islam he was neither forced to become a Muslim nor he in any way was demoted from his post, had that been done it would clearly show that Tipu was bigoted. But he allowed Purniya to exercise his personal freedom.

Again it is important to point out that as we all know this Pandit Purniya was treacherous, he aided the British which led to the demise of the Sultan. Some people say that his intention in doing so was to get the Hindu Kingdom back in the power as he himself was a Hindu which again is a false accusation, what Purniya did was out of sheer self interest. People forget that there were many Muslims officials who were treacherous to Tipu, they like Purniya were treacherous out of self interest for neither Hinduism nor Islam teaches to be treacherous.

o It is also important to refute that claim that Tipu saw conversion to Islam as a form of punishment. This is the most awkward argument, that a religious king thinks it is a punishment if he converts someone to his religion? Does this not make a mockery of his own religion? People also say he forcefully converted people and enlisted them in his army, a little bit of rational thinking would tell that only a foolish ruler will think these people after being forcefully converted to Islam and being enlisted in the army will remain loyal and put down their life for a ruler who forcefully converted them to a faith which they did not want to.



Tipu Sultan: An embodiment of Shia-Sunni Unity: Another important point worth mentioning and understanding is that had Tipu been a real fanatic he would have considered followers of all other sects and school of thoughts in Islam as heretics. He would have simply stated that what ever sect he followed is true Islam. One can see this real fanaticism and barbarism in Iraq now where these savages who call themselves the true followers and champions of Islam indulging in the most ruthless and barbaric practices in the name of Islam not just against Non Muslims but more against Shias as well as Sunnis who follow different a school of thought or who simply differ in opinion about religious matters and affairs.

One most not forget that Tipu had named his Gold coins after Prophet Muhammad and Sunni Caliphs and Silver coins after Shia Imams. Had Tipu been a fanatic he would have never ever done this. He would have hated Shias more than others and declared all sects and school of thoughts other than what he followed to be untrue on the contrary one finds a large number of Shias in his administration.

His attitude to what form of Islam you follow was apathetic and he considered that to be a personal affair just like he gave the freedom of religion to his subjects.

## **TIPU AND CHRISTIANS**

One must bear in mind that Islam accords special status to Christians, they are referred to in the Quran as 'People of the Book', Muslims have utmost respect for Jesus and his mother Mary, Jesus is highly revered by the Muslims and is considered as a Prophet. Not believing in the Prophet hood of Jesus amounts to disbelief in Islam. Prophet Muhammad had allowed Christians to pray in his own mosque and like any other Muslim Tipu must have known these facts.

He treated the Christians generously but only when they were guilty of treason he treated them harshly. Tipu was harsh in his dealings with the Christians not because of their faith nor because the religion of his arch enemies 'The British' was Christianity for the religion of his allies the French was also 'Christianity' but because of the support the Christians provided to the English.

His attitude towards Christians was determined not by religious but political considerations.

During the second Mysore war the Christians of Canara helped the British under General Mathew by providing help in the form of provisions, money and even men. In a letter just before the fall of Bednur, General Matthews mentioned that he had borrowed 33,000 rupees from the Canara Christians and anyone who happened to read that letter should make the fact known to the President in any of the Presidencies. *The Captivity Sufferings And Escape of James Scurry* pp. 99-100.

Tipu Sultan came to know of these activities on the part of the Christians and the European missionaries including some French, who were supposed to be his friends, and he would have seen them as pure treachery. This might have led him to adopt an extremely rigid attitude in his dealings with Christians. In any case, it would be naive to expect that Tipu, in the midst of war, would have been inclined to show leniency towards the Christians, especially Indian Christians, who were actually helping the English, his arch rivals.

It is also said that Tipu engaged in wholesome conversion of Christians to Islam which again is a lie and here is an interesting extract to refute this claim from the following article: J. B. P. MORE (2003) *Tipu Sultan and the Christians, Islam and Christian–Muslim Relations*, 14:3, 313-324:

“The missionary records also claim that from 1784 Tipu indulged in anti-Christian activities. The records assert that Tipu intended to destroy a church at Kisangur, near Srirangapatnam, which was incidentally the church where the all-Christian battalion of Tipu’s army, under the command of a certain Michael, known as ‘Surappa’ (the brave) on account of his courage, assembled for religious purposes. The missionary in the church was driven away after being accused of stealing money from the public treasury and hiding it in the church. Tipu then asked Michael and his men to convert to Islam, which Michael categorically refused. Though Tipu did not persist in his demand, the records state that Tipu gradually reduced the numbers in Michael’s battalion and finally Michael himself was forced to leave the army. It is nevertheless noteworthy that the missionary records amply attest that Tipu never imposed conversion by force on either Michael or his men.”

Suggested Further Reading on Tipu Sultan and his relation with Christians:

J. B. P. MORE (2003) *Tipu Sultan and the Christians, Islam and Christian–Muslim Relations*, 14:3, 313-324

## ORIGIN OF THE ALLEGATIONS AGAINST TIPU

Let us finally look at the causes and origin of these allegations against Tipu.

The chief and the main cause why the British hated Tipu can be summed up from the following passage of Alexander Beatson's 'A View of the Origin and Conduct of the War with Tipu Sultan' (London, 1800)

“Tipu was almost the last, but the most formidable obstacle to the English seizure of power in southern India. There was therefore a natural necessity for the English to attack Tipu’s image and credibility in the minds of everyone concerned. This took place not only during Tipu’s lifetime, but even after his death.”

The British recognized him as the great threat they ever faced in India and to put in the words of William Kirkpatrick who had the following to say about Tipu “the most formidable power with whom we ever had to cope in that quarter of the globe.”

Professor Mohibbul Hassan brilliantly sums up the causes and reasons behind the allegations hurled at Tipu in his monograph *History of Tipu Sultan*.

“The reasons why Tipu was reviled are not far to seek. Englishmen were prejudiced against him because they regarded him as their most formidable rival and an inveterate enemy, and because, unlike other Indian rulers, he refused to become a tributary of the English Company. Many of the atrocities of which he has been accused were allegedly fabricated either by persons embittered and angry on account of the defeats which they had sustained at his hands, or by the prisoners of war who had suffered punishments which they thought they did not deserve. He was also misrepresented by those who were anxious to justify the wars of aggression which the Company's Government had waged against him. Moreover, his achievements were deliberately belittled and his character blackened in order that the people of Mysore might forget him and rally round the Raja, thus

helping in the consolidation of the new regime" The History of Tipu Sultan (Delhi) 1971, p. 368.

### **Conclusion**

These are just a few facts which shows the open mindedness of Tipu and as I said in the beginning if one studies the Life of Tipu Sultan with an open mind and without being prejudiced it will point out to many more facts which point out he was neither a Religious Fanatic, Bigot or Tyrant but a very Open Minded and Empathetic ruler which India has ever had.

