

BRITISH CONQUEST OF MYSORE

Background of Mysore kingdom - After consolidating power in Bengal, Awadh & parts of the Mughal empire following the Battle of Buxar, the British East India Company shifted its attention to Mysore. The region was previously part of the Vijayanagara Empire until it fell around 1640. Following its collapse, the territory was divided among local military commanders known as Nayaks. The Wadiyar dynasty emerged from this system, eventually establishing an independent kingdom.

Hyder Ali & his administrative reforms

The Ascent of Hyder Ali & power shift

Hyder Ali began his service around 1741. Starting as a humble Havaldar (horseman), he rose through the ranks, becoming a Faujdar & eventually captured political power from the Wadiyar dynasty. In 1761, he successfully consolidated power by defeating Nanjara, the military commander & Prime minister to the Wadiyar King, Chikka Krishnaraja.

Following this Hyder Ali effectively sidelined the king, keeping him under house arrest while assuming control of the state's political & military authority. Despite this power grab, he did not adopt

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the title of Sultan at this time.

- Early relocations & conflicts - Hyder Ali maintained a stance against the British from the outset. His early military involvement included participation in the First Anglo French conflict & the Second Anglo French conflict.

During his time as the governor of Dindigul, he established significant strategic relations with the French, an alliance that would become a focal point of contention with the British East India company starting in 1761.

- Administrative & revenue reforms - After gaining control, Hyder Ali initiated systematic administrative changes. A key focus was his revenue settlement reform, which aimed to curtail the rights of hereditary local landlords.

By eliminating these middlemen, he created a direct administrative link between the central government & the common subjects. This move was so effective that the later zamindari system could not be implemented in this region.

- Religious policy - Recognizing that Chikka Krishna-raja was a Hindu ruler & the majority of his subjects were Hindu, Hyder Ali was careful to ensure his administrative officers did not offend the religious sentiments of the population.

Military reforms under Hyder Ali

- Western Training - Having participated in the First & Second Anglo-French wars, Hyder Ali recognized the superiority of Western military technology & tactics. He obtained military knowledge from his French connections.
- Risala system - To curb feudalistic tendencies, he replaced the military power of local lords with the Risala system. This involved creating seven units of 1000 soldiers each. The commanders of these units were appointed directly by Hyder Ali, ensuring a centralized command structure.
- Modern foundries - In 1755, he established a modern arsenal & laboratory to manufacture European style muskets & cast artillery pieces. Historical reports from the Portuguese in 1765 confirm that Hyder Ali had successfully acquired 30 pieces of artillery, called Gulab similar to those used by Shivaji Maharaj. By securing this weaponry from the French, Hyder Ali significantly boosted his military capabilities, demonstrating his proactive efforts to modernize his forces using European style military hardware.
- The conflict - These reforms, combined with his strategic alliances with the French, were a primary source of concern for the Company. These factors

directly contributed to the tensions that led to the Anglo Mysore wars. Hyder Ali ultimately died in 1782 due to serious illness during the Second Anglo Mysore war, leaving Tipu Sultan to manage the conflict & his father's legacy.

TIPU SULTAN & HIS ADMINISTRATIVE REFORMS

- Administrative significance - Tipu Sultan is recognized as one of the country's first leaders to adopt democratic administrative ideals. While he consolidated power firmly under his own title - officially styling himself as Sultan - he simultaneously integrated democratic elements & welfare state concepts into his governance marking a unique approach to managing his realm.
- Departmental Governance - Tipu Sultan divides his administration into 7 major departments, each headed by a chief responsible for specific functions. This prevented the consolidation of power that often weakened royal authority.
- Democratic elements - A unique feature of his governance was the establishment of boards consisting of 5-7 members for each department. Decisions were reached through discussion, deliberation & majority voting. The minutes of the meetings were recorded & submitted to Tipu

Sultan, reflecting an early effort towards collective decision making. Some of the major departments included

- Mix Khazana Kachari (Treasury & mint)
- Mix Asaf Kachari (Revenue & Finance)
- Mix Mikan Kachari (Military)
- Malika Tajar Kachari (Commerce)
- Mix Jam Kachari (Marine)

This structure functioned as a precursor to modern administrative systems where the Sultan acted as the head & departments functioned with accountability & structured records.

PROVINCIAL & DISTRICT LEVEL ADMINISTRATION

- Divisional structure - The kingdom was divided into 7 significant provinces for better governance. Tipu Sultan adopted a system of checks & balances similar to the models used by Sher Shah Suri & Akbar. In the Mughal administration, Akbar appointed 3 separate officers - a Bakshi (military), a Subedar (governor) & a Diwan (revenue) - who were all independently responsible to the emperor to prevent rebellion. Tipu Sultan implemented a similar approach by appointing two key officers in each province.
- Asaf - The civil governor responsible for revenue administration.

- Faujdar - The military governor responsible for law, order & the military.

- Revenue roles - While the exact details of the military side at the district level remain less clear, the revenue administration is well documented. Similar to the Mughal model, an officer known as an Amil was stationed at the district level. The Amil was responsible for revenue assessment & collection within his local jurisdiction.

LAND REVENUE & AGRICULTURAL POLICIES

- Elimination of Middlemen - Following in the footsteps of his father, Hyder Ali, Tipu Sultan bypassed all intermediaries, such as Jagirdars (landholders) & Waqf / Inam land grantees. He confiscated these lands & brought them directly under his central administrative control to ensure a more direct link between the state & the cultivators.

- Local administration - District level revenue management was overseen by an officer known as Amil. These officials were tasked with assessing land productivity & collecting taxes directly.

- Support for agriculture - The Amil was also responsible for promoting agricultural growth. This included providing Taccari loans which

were state sponsored agricultural loans to help farmers cover input costs, thereby increasing the overall productivity of the land.

- Revenue demands - The tax rates were adjusted based on land fertility. For highly fertile land the state demanded upto 50% of the yield, while for ordinary land, the rate was set at one-third which aligned with the traditional revenue standards prevalent in India at the time.

TRADE AND COMMERCIAL REFORMS

- Commercial modernization - Recognizing that the British power stemmed from their private enterprise & joint stock corporation model, Tipu Sultan sought to privatize trade within Mysore. He aimed to transform his government into a functional commercial entity to manage vital exports like sandalwood & gold.
- The commercial board - He established a central Commercial board based in his capital, Seringapatam. This body was responsible for managing all trader business operations.
- International diplomacy - To expand his reach, Tipu Sultan initiated the establishment of embassies in strategic locations, including the Persian Gulf, the Red Sea, Africa & China.

- Failed alliances - Tipu Sultan attempted to form a crucial military alliance with the Marathas to counter the British. While Nana Fadnavis was initially open to the idea, internal political instability within both the Maratha state & Mysore prevented this alliance from materializing. If this Maratha-Mysore alliance had succeeded, the British would have faced significant difficulty in capturing the rest of India.

TIPU SULTAN'S IDEOLOGY & WESTERN RELATIONS

- Intellectual leadership - Tipu Sultan was a learned man who approached governance through strategic considerations rather than emotion. He recognized the inevitability of Western influence in India & rather than suppressing these ideas, he embraced & adapted them.
- Concept of liberty - He possessed a sophisticated understanding of liberty as "freedom with constraints". He realized that true liberty, like the revolutionary ideals emerging in France, requires reasonable restrictions, much like those found in the Indian Constitution's fundamental rights.
- Foreign relations - His administration was significant due to his reliance on French military expertise. He established formal diplomatic contacts

with France, including ties to Louis XVI & later Napoleon Bonaparte via his foreign minister Talleyrand during the late 1790s.

- Political strategy - To gain support from revolutionary France, Tipu positioned himself as an opponent of monarchical systems, notably establishing a "Tree of Liberty".
- Religious tolerance - Despite the political conflict Tipu maintained a tolerant religious policy. For instance, during the Third Anglo-Mysore war in 1791, when British & Maratha forces attacked Seringapatam, temples were damaged by invaders. In response Tipu Sultan notably provided grants to these temples to help them recover, reflecting his pragmatic need for the support of his Hindu subjects.

HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE

- Key reasons for conflict - The British identified 3 major "hallmarks" in Mysore that were detrimental to their colonial interests.
- Excessive Centralization of power under Tipu Sultan.
- His strategic alliances & relations with French.
- His attempt to westernize his military & state infrastructure. Because these factors were perceived as "lethal" to British expansion, the company took a deep interest in conquering the region, resulting in the 4 wars.

FIRST ANGLO MYSORE WARR

BRITISH MYSORE RELATIONS -

- Westernization efforts - Haider Ali implemented various reforms in administration, the military & the economy, which the British saw a challenge to their interests.
- British perspective - Because Mysore was effectively modernizing, the British identified it as a major hurdle to their control of India. Consequently, relations between the two began to deteriorate significantly around 1750 onwards.
- Context of the wars - The conflicts were not necessarily intentional but rather circumstantial wars driven by the shifting political landscape in South India during the 1760s.

POLITICAL LANDSCAPE OF SOUTH INDIA

- Mysore's rise (1760) - Hyder Ali consolidated power in Mysore. His strong ties with the French, specifically their settlements like Mahe which fell within Mysore's territory, posed a threat to British interests.
- British dominance - After the Battle of Wandiwash in 1760, the British solidified their hold in South India. Both the Carnatic & Nizam of Hyderabad were reduced to puppet states, causing.

the British to fear a potential alliance between Nizam & Hyder Ali.

- The role of the Marathas - Following their defeat in the Third Battle of Panipat in 1761, the Marathas were in a financial crisis. They operated as a 'raider state', frequently attacking neighbouring territories including Hyderabad & Mysore, to collect Chauth & Sardeshmukhi.

- British territorial ambitions - The British sought control over the northern Circars, a vital coastal region including Masulipatnam due to its strategic port. Following the Treaty of Allahabad in 1765, the British managed to secure these territories further destabilizing the regional power balance.

- Escalation to war - By early 1767, the political situation became untenable. The Marathas began incursions into Mysore & Hyderabad territories, reaching as far as Hampi. Hyder Ali realized the threat of a potential triple alliance between the British, the Nizam & the Marathas, setting the stage for the conflict.

FIRST ANGLO MYSORE WAR - CAUSES & DYNAMICS

- The trigger - The conflict began in early 1767 when the Marathas launched incursions into Mysore territory, reaching as far as Hampi. Hyder Ali recognized the potential for a hostile combination

against him.

- Neutralizing the Marathas - Upon realizing the Marathas, the Nizam of Hyderabad & the British might combine forces, Hyder Ali took immediate diplomatic action. He successfully paid the Marathas 30 lakh rupees, which persuaded the Peshwas to withdraw back to their own territories.
- Breaking the British-Nizam alliance - After the Marathas departed, the British & Nizam of Hyderabad proceeded to launch an attack on Mysore. They hoped that defeating Hyder Ali would allow the Nizam to recover lost territorial revenues & strengthen the British hold in the region.
- Securing neutrality - Hyder Ali once again utilized his wealth to split the opposition. In June 1767 he paid the Nizam of Hyderabad 18 lakh rupees. This bribe was successful & Nizam decided to abandon the British & remain neutral leaving the British isolated in the conflict.
- The stalemate - By mid 1767, the war was reduced to a direct confrontation between the British & Mysore. After nearly a year & a half of indecisive fighting, Hyder Ali launched a bold strike towards Madras in 1769, forcing the British to negotiate for peace.

TREATY OF MADRAS & AFTERMATH

• Aftermath of the First Anglo Mysore war

The conflict concluded with the Treaty of Madras in 1769. The treaty established two critical provisions

• Status quo - Both sides agreed to restore the pre-war territorial situation.

• Defensive alliance - The British & Mysore agreed to a mutual friendship where neither would attack the other. Additionally, if a third party attacked one of them, the other party was obligated to come to their aid.

• Strategic analysis - Hyder Ali pursued this treaty as a defensive measure. By securing peace, he neutralized the immediate threat of a combined alliance between the British, Nizam of Hyderabad & the Carnatic rulers, which would have been difficult for Mysore to overcome.