

III CHAPTER

CHRISTIAN MISSIONARIES UNDER HYDER ALI AND TIPPU SULTAN

Eighteenth Century is a turning point in the History of Christianity in Mysore as well as in the history of Mysore. The suppression of the Jesuit Order marks a significant development in the missionary history. Equally important was the arrival of the Protestant Missions to this region in the eighteenth century. The most important political development of the century was the rise of Hyder Ali and Tippu Sultan to power in Mysore. Both Hyder and Tippu became notable figures in the history of Karnataka by the expansion of their Kingdom. They drew the attention of the whole world by their resistance to the British. Their attitude towards the Christian religion and Christian missionaries deserves special mention.

Hyder was born in 1721 at Budikote in Kolar District. He joined the Mysore Army and distinguished himself by his bravery in the seige of Deveanahalli in 1749.¹ He participated in the Karnatic War (1751-1755) and gained rich experience in the art of warfare.² He rose to power in the Mysore court, at a very short time. At last he was powerful enough to force the Dalvoy Nanjarajaiah to retire and became the Raja's Prime Minister and General.³ He was the defector ruler of Mysore Kingdom from 1761.

Though Hyder Ali had been criticized by some as an usurper he has been defended by many because he served the Kingdom from arisis.⁴ Hyder defeated many Palegars and extended the boundaries of Mysore in all directions. He was known for great courage and intrepidity as a soldier and for a strategy as a leader of the armies. Though he was unlettered he could claim proficiency, like Clive, both in political and military fields.⁵

Hyder Ali had very good relations with the Christians. As Severine Silva states "the general relations between Hyder and Christians form a chapter which has been entirely lost."⁶ Hyder had two remarkable Goan priests as his personal friends-One was Bishop Noronha.⁷ The other was Fr.Jochim Miranda.⁸ Rev.Schwarts a Protestant missionary lived at the court of Hyder.⁹ Hyder's army also consisted of several catholic soldiers. There was a church for their use within the Srirangapatna Fort. Many French generals also offered prayers in this church.¹⁰ Hyder had made arrangement for a priest to visit Srirangapatna and stay their for some days.¹¹ ALP D'Souza says that Hyder used Canara Christian for his administrative purpose. In the two treaties he concluded with the Portuguese he granted the Parish Priests the power to settle civil disputes among Christians.^{11A} The English occupied Mangalore, Canara and Bidanur in 1768.¹² Hyder Ali marched

to Mangalore with his son Tippu Sultan and recaptured Mangalore. After the conquest Hyder was informed that the Christians had helped the English in their conquest of Mangalore. Hyder was convinced that this behaviour of the Christians amounted to treachery.¹³ He summoned the Portugese priests and questioned them what punishment should be awarded to those who commit treachery. The priest replied that the penalty was death, because it was a punishment for betraying the sovereign. But Hyder exhibited his diplomacy and put them in prison instead of death penalty.¹⁴ Fr. Sebastian de Faria Vicar Vara of Honavar and two more priests along with five others were kept in the Bidanur fort.¹⁵

Severine Silva observes "towards the Christians the only alternative for him was to follow the same policy of religious tolerance to which he had struck from the very beginning. There was no other way for him. Even though the Christians had shown signs of revolt there was no alternative for him to forget it.¹⁶ But Tippu who had participated in the Canara campaign did not take so kindly the "Treachery" of the Christians. He was also aware of the role of the clergy towards the canara muslims. Though he resented his father's policy he could not do anything at that time except bidding his own time".¹⁷

Hyder Ali made another shrewd move. He opened negotiations with the portugese. As a result of the agreement between the two the suspicion against the clergy was removed. The Christians were no more chastised.¹⁸

In 1774 Hyder was able to expel the portugese from Mangalore. As against the English he wanted to have more European rivals in India besides the French. With this intention he started negotiations with the Germans.¹⁹

While all the political developments were going on, the catholic church and the catholic community continued to grow and flourish.²⁰

The second Anglo Mysore war begin in 1781. While the war was in progress Hyder Ali died on 7th December 1782 at Arcot.²¹

The death of Hyder brought great changes in Indian political scene. He was not only a great conqueror but was also a great diplomat. His death removed from the scene the last vestige of compromise.²² Towards the Christians he was generally tolerant.²³ Fr.Lichetta's report on Hyder in 1780 two years before his death is very significant. "The actual Lord of the country where the Mission of Mysore is situated is Granvababo Aidarali Khan Bader a turk by nationality. He is strongest and most

respected power in this peninsula. Not only is he not averse to our law and its priests but also he has favoured us in every thing. May god keep him for he is advanced in age when he will be dead God knows how things will go".²⁴

Tippu Sultan succeeded his father at the age of 31. He was more ambitious, dynamic and courageous than his father. The Europeans did not have a very good opinion of Tippu Sultan. Eloy Jozee Correa Peixoto, a portugese officer in Hyder's army who knew Tippu intimately describes him as follows. "The Nawab's son is as cruel as can be said, wretched and a worse action than can be found in any person. No chief is desirous of accompanying him, for he is imprudent, for which reason his fortune will be lost no longer than his father lives or his disgraced which he has path charge into victories of which he runs great risks for, there is not one person of his servants or in the other kingdoms that loves him naturally; and if some make a show outwardly they make a virtue out of necessity, there is abundant material in English describing his so called destruction of Christianity. There are many reports from the missionaries narrating his torture and ill treatment of Christians".²⁵ Historian Wilks assesses Tippu in his own way. "He could neither be truly characterised as liberal or parsimonious

as tyrannical or benevolent as a man of talents or destitute of parts. By turns he assumed the character of each in one subject alone he appeared to be consistent having perpetually on his stage the projects of Jeha Holy war".²⁶

A contemporary missionary Fr. Francis Xavier expresses a similar opinion "though Tippu Sultan was addicted to the Mohammedan superstitious he was showing great religious indifference and never showed any real zeal for the Mohammedan sect, but he was singularly hostile to the Christian name".²⁷ Thus there are contradicting conclusions, opinions, analysis on the religious policy character and statesmanship of Tippu Sultan.²⁸

The Christian community in the west coast was a powerful influence; it had passed a full century or two in affluence and prosperity. There were 6000 Christians in the kingdom of Shivappa Nayaka in the seventeenth century.²⁹ It is estimated that there were 40,000 Christians in Karnataka in this period. Thus in the kingdom of Tippu Sultan there was a rich and a powerful community numerically also it was strong. The character of this community was moulded by European traditions.

The Canara region was very important to Tippu Sultan who needed enormous amounts for his wars against the British. Tippu's war policy completely drained the treasury.³⁰ The source of revenue was only Canara and this source he now tapped to the fullest extent.³¹

In 1783 the English army marched from Bombay and captured Bidanur under General Mathews. In March that year Mathews took the fort of Mangalore easily. Many Christians who had military experience enlisted in the army of Gen. Mathews. According to Fernandes, the Canara Christians advanced to General Mathews a sum of Rs.3,30,000/-.^{31A} Mohibbul Haqssan Khan states that they also acted as spies and guides for the British.³² He also points out that these Christians helped campbell by supplying men and materials ; particularly food grains. Thus they secretly helped campbell. Severene Silva points out that the Christians of canara were eager to get rid of Tippu's rule over the region.³³ With this intention, it is alleged, they entered into league with Rustam Ali and Mohammed Ali who had formed a plot with English for Tippu's over throw. When Tippu got the news of the surrender of Bidanur he marched to that place, via Sira and Chitradurga and laid seige to Bidanur. General Mathews surrendered on 30th April 1783. They were taken prisoners to the capital. Tippu then marched with his

army on Mangalore. The English were not equipped to defend their position. They were forced to surrender. A treaty of peace was signed between Tippu and the English on 11th March 1784.³⁴

Tippu Sultan, it appears received highly exaggerated reports about the role of the Christians of Canara in the Second Anglo-Mysore war. He was fully aware of Canara's strategic significance.³⁵ It was a matter of life and death for him in Canara and especially at a time when he had just succeeded his father. The French were not forthcoming to support him. Hence, it appears, he decided to banish the Christian community to minimize the threat to his Kingdom.³⁶ He issued order to banish the Christians community from his dominion.

According to S.Silva this decision was the logical sequence of the plans he had in his mind all along from the time of his father.³⁷ When Tippu issued the order to capture the Christians and send them to Srirangapatna, the English who had entered into a disgraceful treaty were helpless. The Portugese who were the guardians of Christian religion in Canara interfered and requested Tippu not to imprison the priests and to let the Christians live peacefully as his father Hyder Ali had done. But Tippu did not heed to their request.³⁸

On the whole it can fairly be said that owing to the propaganda of the Goan priests and the alliance of the Christians with the English, Tippu banished the community to Srirangapatnam to remove all chances of help to the English at a time when his armies were engaged in other spheres. He wanted to remove all immediate danger to himself and his kingdom. He thought that by the banishment of the Christians of canara he would succeed in keeping the English at bay or at least give himself a breathing time to oppose the English at a favourable opportunity. This is the main political reason that induced Tippu to banish the community from canara. Tippu's impending order had shocked the Christian community. Some churches and some temples deposited their treasures and goods at Anjadeva island.³⁹

First he expelled thirteen Goan priests.⁴⁰ The Sultan wrote to the portugese Government that in due consideration to that Government he had pardoned them the capital punishment and the fine of three crores rupees.⁴¹ Then he banished Fr.Jaochim Miranda who was a close friend of his father to Telicherri.⁴² According to the report of 1784 Tippu had driven out of his state 26 missionaries.⁴³ Three priests had secretly joined the captives. Two died on the way and one was killed by the soldiers. Other priests left secretly to different places

carrying the records and books of the churches.⁴⁴ Thus from 1790 to 1799 there was no catholic priests in the territory of the Sultan.⁴⁵ The missionaries were warned that they would be put to death if they entered the kingdom. D'souza testifies that Fr. Joseph Michael Mendoz and two other priests went from place to place in secret administering sacraments.^{45A} According to Mohibbul Hassan Khan "The whole Christian colony of Mt. Marian was banished to Cochin".⁴⁶

After banishing the priests the Christian community was led away into captivity to Srirangapatnam. Fr. Francis Xavier mentions that "an edict went out from Tippu Said Bahdur Sultan that all the Christians who were his subjects and in his kingdom should be brought to his metropolis Srirangapatna and should be forced to renounce the Christian faith and join the Mohammedan sect and also to circumcised."⁴⁷ The missionary and British sources indicate that Tippu issued orders to his officers to capture all the Christians in his kingdom and depart them to Srirangapatna. Some were able to flee to hills and other places. But Tippu's orders were carried out and a large number of the Christians were taken out to Srirangapatna.

According to Fr. Francis Xavier "for very many having left the father land family possession if they had any and everything emigrated from here (sunkery) in Utter poverty and misery and for many years led an exiles life in foreign provinces nor did they became better in any way some however without a house or even a roof remained here in a most hidden way without any rest changing every night their hiding places in the house of pagans so that they might not be found be persecuting satellites".⁴⁸

There is no unanimity among the scholars about the number of the captives. According to Saldhana 60,000 captives from South Canara and 20,000 from North Canara were taken to Srirangapatna.⁴⁹ According to Tippu Sultan it is 60,000.⁶⁰ According to Kirk Patrick and Asistic Register (1799) 70,000.⁵¹ Sir Thomas Munroe 60,000.⁵² Jaochin Miranda 40,000.⁵³ Memorial of 1860, 60,000.⁵⁴ Memorial of Rosario Parishness 80,000.⁵⁵ Thus the figures range from 80,000 to 10,000.

The Christians reached Srirangapatna after a grueling journey of about 400 Kilo meters (200 miles). About one third of them died during the hazardous journey. Those who reached the capital were kept in Shahar, Ganjam in open fields or tents.⁵⁶ They were tortured severely and circumcised forcibly.⁵⁷ Their properties were confiscated

and given to the "loyal" members of the community. Tippu was successful in inflicting punishment on the guilty Christians.⁵⁸ But that did not improve his own position. Tippu realized that his policy of keeping the English at bay by banishing the Christian community had failed. He tried to pursue a conciliatory policy.⁵⁹ He wrote to the portugese Government to send some Christian priests to look after the spiritual needs of the soldiers and others. He also promised that he would build the destroyed churches at his own cost.⁶⁰

Tippu's religious policy has been condemned by British writers and Christian missionaries. Wilks is outright in his criticism. "Tippu in an age when persecution only survived in history, renewed his worst terrors and was the last Mohammedan prince after a long interval of better feeling who propagated that religion by the edge of the sword".⁶¹ Launy expresses a similar opinion.^{61A} Fr. Francis Xavier who was a contemporary of the Sultan "thinks that personally Tippu was quite indifferent to his own religion. But his bigotry was roused by some false prophets of Islam who approached him and told him that his kingdom would not remain stable unless he made all Christian embrace the Mohammedan religion and caused the very name of Christ disappear from his kingdom".⁶²

Besides the Canara Christians, many others were also converted to Islam. A portugese priest who was attached to the church at Mangalore had been forced to embrace Islam and to submit himself to the painful operations.⁶³ Christian missionary sources thus provide numerous examples of forceful conversions of Christians. Except four churches all places of worships were destroyed in this way. The following churches were destroyed by Tippu Sultan. Church of N.S.de Rosario and N.S. de Milagres of Mangalore, the Convent and Seminary built by Rev.Jochim Miranda, Church of Jesu, Marie, Jesu o fomzoor, Chapel at Bolar, Mangalore Church of Bom Jesu of Bantwal.

Church of Santhacruz of Bidre, Church of Sarvadore Agrar, Church of Imaculada conciecao of Mulki, Church of Sao Juse of Pezar, Church of N.S.du Remedies of Kair, Church of N.S. de Saude of Sirvam, Church of Sao Lawrance of Karkal, Church of N.s. de Rasario of Barkur, Church of Immaculado Conciecao of Gangelli, Church of N.S.De Milagrace of Kalyanpur, Church of N.S. de Rasario of Kundapur, Church of immaculado Conciecao of Baindur, Chapel of Kumta, Church of Sao Francissco Xavier of Chandavar, Church of Sao Salvadore of Honnur, Church of N.S. Dos Remedios of Gulmona, Church of Immaculado Conciecao of Sunkeri, built by the Carmelite.⁶⁴ The chapel of Mercara was destroyed and the priests was

expelled in the hunt for the few Christians of the coorg. All of them escaped to other places to avert greater destruction. The goods of churches were carried to places of safety.⁶⁵

Fr.Miranda and the portugese Government report admit the fact that the Canara Christians were circumcised and made muslims.⁶⁶ These Christians openly practiced Islam. The Barkur manuscript gives a vivid description of the conversion and the persecution of these Christians.⁶⁷ Various writers on this subject have concluded that the Christians acceptance of Islam amounted to partial apostasy.⁶⁸ They also hold the view that they did not voluntarily submit to the conversion.⁶⁹ Proxy Fernandes after examining several original sources concludes "There is little doubt that fifteen year long period of captivity was a time of suffering hardship and exile. The action of Tippu was stern, ruthless and violent a collective punishment out of proportion to the offense committed. It was a political penalty for what Tippu believed what an act of treason".⁷⁰

The Christian missionaries had been appealing to Rome to intervene on behalf of the Christians in captivity in tippu's capital.⁷¹ Fr.Pavone wrote to Rome to put pressure on tippu to allow the priest.⁷² When Tippu's

embassy visited the court of French king Louis XVI, the pope's representatives conveyed the appeal to the embassy.⁷³ According to Silva Tippu consequently gave up the persecution of the Christians.⁷⁴ In the Third Anglo-Mysore war English and their allies defeated Tippu Sultan.⁷⁴ During the ensuing confusion the captive Christians fled to Coorg, Baramahal and other places.

Apart from the canara Christian the other Christian and their institutions were also victims of Tippu's persecution. It has already been noted that almost all the priests in his kingdom were expelled. Tippu wanted to destroy the church at Kirangur near Srirangapatna. He devised a plan for this purpose. Some amount from the Government treasury was hidden in the church premise. Magicians were commissioned to search this missing money. They came to the church and their magic wand indicated the place where the money was hidden. This was used as a pretext to banish the priests and the Christians attached to the church.⁷⁵ There is another story regarding Tippu's attempt to convert his catholic soldiers Michael Surappa (Shurappa) was an important officer in Tippu's army. He was asked to accept Islam along with the 600 Christian soldiers in his company. He requested Tippu Sultan to give him three days from time to take a decision in the matter. He convened a meeting of his

soldiers and told them that he would rather give up his life than embrace Islam; his soldiers also took the same oath. When the Sultan came to know the decision of the group he dropped the proposal of conversion. This story is narrated with different versions in the works on the subject.⁷⁶ There are other instances which indicate attempts of forcible conversion by Tippu's soldiers.⁷⁷

Along with the twenty five churches destroyed in Canara, most of the churches in tippu's kingdom met the same fate. The following were the prominent churches during the time of Hyder Ali:- Ganjam, Palahalli, Pandavapura, Settihalli, Gadenahalli, Magde, Martalli, Basavapura, Chinchahalli, Dhasapura, Harobele, Kanakapura, Godur, Siomanahalli, Kutugallu, Nalamangalla, Chamarajana-gar, Kittiganatti, Hosur, Dakanikotte, Bangalore, Sira, Hosakote, Chikkaballapura, Devenahalli, Karahalli, Sagarahalli, Kadasanahalli, Manchahalli, Sandur, Buradagunte, Pusanahalli, Bhagavatarahalli, Kammanhalli, and Maderu.⁷⁸ Historians are not unanimous about the view that these churches were destroyed between 1784 and 1797.⁷⁹ It has already been pointed out that during the internecine wars between Mysore and her neighbors many churches were destroyed.⁸⁰ It is also a fact that Hindu opponents had attacked the priests and places of worship during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.⁸¹

Fr. Antappa's explanation that Tippu caused the destruction of several churches around Srirangapatna during the Third and Fourth Anglo-Mysore wars to prevent their misuse by the British does not sound convincing.⁸²

Any how Lewis Rice categorically states "By his (Tippu's) order all the churches and chapels were raised to the ground with two remarkable exceptions. One small chapel at Grama, near Hassan which was preserved by a Mohammedan officer and the second the Fort of Srirangapatna which was protected by Native Christian troops under their commander Surappa."⁸³

Other Historians have put forward several explanations regarding churches which were destroyed during this period.⁸⁴ The story regarding the church at Chikkarasanakere, near Maddur is very interesting. Tippu Sultan issued the orders to demolish the church and imprison the priest Fr. Rajendra. The old priest who came to know the news could not flee the place. He decided to hide in a small room in the church. The room was closed with a layer of bricks to prevent the soldiers spotting the priest. The soldiers who came searched for the priest and when he was not found tried to bring down the church. During the demolition a soldier was seriously hurt. They feared it as an ill omen and

returned to Srirangapatna without destroying the church. But the priest who was shut in a room was found dead by the disciples after a few days.⁸⁵ Jesuit sources explain this incident in a different way for Depigny makes the following observation. Laubay gives the traditions of the death of a priest who died at Chikka Arasinakere during the persecution of tippu. I would rather think that one who originated this tradition refers to the death of Fr. Platey in October 1719. If we knew the name by which the Christians called him during the several years of his residence there then it would be definite.⁸⁶

In this way Tippu's policy towards the Christians led to the death of many missionaries and the near disintegration of the Christian community in Canara. The fifteen years exile of the Canara Christian caused an irreparable damage to the community. Only a small number returned after 1792 (and in 1799). It was a stupendous task for the missionaries, Fr. Abbe Dubois and Fr. Champenoi to bring about the economic and religious rehabilitation of the refugees who returned after fifteen years bitter lent.

FOOTNOTE

1. H.A. Kirmani, Nishani Hyder, p.23
2. N.K. Sinha, Hydar Ali, p.6
3. Ibid, p.6
4. Ibid, p.9
5. Gholam Mohammed, The History of Hydarali Khan and Tippu Sultan p.236
6. Severine Silva, Hisotry of Christianity in Canara p.19
7. Mysore Archaeological Report 1937, p.96
8. S. Silva N.6 p.96
9. Ibid, p.99
10. Constancy Persons, Sreerangapattana p.121
11. A.L.P.D Souza, History of Catholic Community in South Canara p.28
12. Shaik ali B. Diplomatic Relation of British with Hyder Ali p.103
13. S. Silva, N.6 p.90
14. M.M.D.L.T. History of Hyder Sha pp.384-385
15. Pissurlencar, Fasciculo N.30 p.6
16. S. Silva N.6 p.103
17. Ibid N.6 p.103
18. Ibid N.6 p.103-104
19. Ibid N.6 p.104
20. Ibid N.6 p.105
21. N.K. Sinaha N.2 P.17
22. S. Silva N.6 p.105

23. Ibid p.106
24. Ferroli, The Jesuits in Malabar Vol.1 II p.562
25. E.M. Piexto, Tigers of Mysore p.47
26. Mark Wilks, Mysore Vol. II p.387
27. Francis Xavier, History of Sunkery Mission p.209
28. Mohibul Hassan Khan, Tippusultan p.364, I.M. Muthanna Tippu Sultan X'rayed p.191
 Mark Wilks Mysore p.760
29. S.Silva N.6 p.49
30. Ibid N.6 p.91
31. Ibid, N.6 p.91
- 31A. P.J. Fernandez, Storm over Srirangapattana p.39
32. Mohibul Hassan Khan N.28 p.261
33. S.Silva No.6 pp.116-117.
34. Shaik ali Diplomatic Relation of British with Hydar Ali
35. S. Silva, No. 6 p.116
36. Ibid N.6 p.117
37. Ibid N.6 p.118
38. Ibid N.6 p.122
39. Ibid N.6 p.119
40. Ibid N.6 p.120
41. Ibid N.6 p.120
42. Ibid N.6 p.120
43. Ibid N.6 p.120
44. Ibid N.6 p.120

45. Ibid N.6 p.121
- 45a. D.Souza N. 11 p.31
46. Mohibul Hassan Khan N.28 p.221
47. Xavier n.27 p.118
48. Ibid
49. S.N. Saldhanha Captivity of Canara Christians p.2
50. Kirk Patrick, Select Letters of Tippu Sultan p.59
51. Quoted by S. Silva p.123
52. Ibid
53. Pissurlencar N.15 p. 305-310
54. Quoted by Silva p.125
55. Ibid
56. S. Silva N.6 p.128
57. Ibid N.6 p.128
58. Memorial of 1860 Quoted by Silva p.128
59. Ibid N.6 p.137
60. Ibid N.6 p.137
61. Mark Wilks No.26 p. 761
- 61A. Launy. A. Histoire des Missions de L'Inde Vol. 1 p.19
62. Xavier N. 27 p.117
63. A.L.P. De Souza N. 11 p.40
64. Ibid
65. S.Silva N.6 141
66. Ibid p.151
67. History of The Dioces of Mangalore, p.64

68. S. Silva N.6 p.153
69. Ibid p.153
70. E.M. Piexto n.25 p.43
71. Anthappa Srirangapattanada Sutta Muthalalli Christa
Dharmada ugama p.350
72. Ibid p.350
73. Ibid
74. S. Silva N.6 p.137
75. M. Gerbier, Hisroty of Mysore Mission Vol.1 pp.55-56
76. C. Hayavadana Rao Mysore Gazetteer Vol.1, p.343.
Also see B.S. Talwadi, Karnatakada Christa Ithihasa
p.96
77. Ibid pp.96-97
78. Anthappa N.71 p.376
79. Ibid N.71 p.377
80. B.L. Rice, N. p.391, Anthappa 71, 309 Hayavadana Rao
No.76, Vol.I, p.379.
81. Ibid
82. Ibid
83. B.L. Rice, Mysore and Coorg with Inscriptions, Vol. 1,
p.389
84. Silva N.6 pp.145-149
85. Dayananda Prabhu, Mysore Samstanada Christara
Ithihasa, p.42
86. Ferroli, D.. Jesuits in Mysore, p.151