

# History of tipu sultan



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

**First warfare**

“ I saw a painting prominently displayed in the reception lobby at Wallops Flight Facility, Virginia, United States of America. This place was the base for NASA’s sounding rocket programme. It depicted a battle scene with a few rockets flying in the background. A painting with this theme should be the most common place thing at a Flight Facility, but the painting caught my eye because the soldiers on the side launching the rockets were not white, but dark skinned, with the racial features of South Asians.... it turned out to be Tipu Sultan’s army fighting the British. The painting depicted a fact forgotten in Tipu’s own country, but commemorated here on the other side of the planet. I was happy to see an Indian glorified by NASA as a hero of warfare rocketry”.

- Dr APJ Abdul Kalam

Former President of India, in ‘ Wings of Fire’.

**CHAPTER I****INTRODUCTION**

Tipu was a master strategist. Unfortunately for Indian history, his foresight and war acumen was recognised by none better than prime enemy - The British in India. The Tiger of Mysore was quite simply put, just that. A Tiger to the core. Carrying on the legacy left by his indomitable father the great Hyder Ali, Tipu went on to become the quintessential thorn in the British rule in India. A close examination reveals a brilliant brain beyond the valiant warrior. The British had never been confronted in India with a more resolute

and fierce contender. Tipu's life-passion was to see the fall of the British in India with collective and consolidated resistance.

The main focus of the external policies he displayed was that a balance was essential to restore a sense of normalcy in the governance of the country. This very balance had been tilted by the British and unless they were defeated comprehensively by a collective effort, the Indian identity would be crushed forever. Towards this end he tried to garner support from the neighbours, the other Indian powers like the Nizams and the Marathas. But their reluctance to shake out of the deep slumber of kingly comforts and complacency forced Tipu to seek alternatives. It was here that he displayed astute foresight and understanding of the art of diplomacy and war.

Tipu analysed the aspects of British growth threadbare and realised that they had achieved near complete domination of the country by pitting one Indian prince against another. They had trained the Indian soldier and had ensured that it was Indian blood that was sacrificed to a larger extent in these campaigns. It was these very traits that Tipu intended to replicate when he tried to get French aid for his campaigns against the British. He yearned to see the two European giants fight each other to destruction. Just the way the Dutch eliminated the Portuguese and the English eliminated the Dutch presence in India, he hoped that the French would eliminate the English. While the French were fairly powerful, this of course would be possible only with the concerted efforts of not just the French but a cohesive and determined alliance of all Indian powers along with the French.

Unfortunately for History, the British had learnt better lessons from their Anglo - American wars than the French. The French failed to understand the fact that the surest way of getting at the English, akin to the American experience, was by extending massive support to the Indian powers in their struggle against the English. Despite repeated proposals from Tipu, the French failed to clutch the idea and adopted a rather timid posture as far as the Britishers in India were concerned. Regular visits by emissaries to France failed to convince the French that a golden opportunity to seize the initiative against the British indeed existed. It was only when the great Napoleon came to power and realised the validity of Tipu's thought process did the French agree to pitchfork alongside the Mysorean. Destiny had her own designs. Napoleon, who had written to Tipu from Egypt and promised to arrive in India to start the revolution against the British, was stopped at Syria and the British had by then realised that Tipu was the primary instrument that would pivot the scales in the southern peninsular India.

The ' cohesive and concerted efforts' policy of Tipu was not dependent entirely on the French. He had understood that of the four main players of Peninsular India, the other three being the Marathas, the Nizam and the British, it required the combined efforts of three powers to reduce the fourth power. Even the British, were not as powerful in the south as they were in the northern parts of India, Bengal in particular. The strong presence of the Marathas and the Hyder- Tipu combine had proven to be an entirely different predicament. The weak Nizams had also proven to be stronger than the Mughal Emperor. While the three Indian powers combined to achieve victories in the First and Second Wars of Mysore, the Nizam and the

Marathas colluded with the British to engineer the defeat of Tipu in the third Mysore War.

The diplomatic vision that drove Tipu to reach out to partners, the determination to follow that vision, even in the face of repeated betrayals are truly remarkable. The sole reason for the policy to fail was because the other Indian powers refused to shed their myopia. They failed to realize the magnitude and the implications of British imperialism.

The swim against the heavy British tide was indeed lonely and in the end, unsuccessful for Tipu, however, the application of Diplomacy as an art backed up with unstinted courage in war very nearly upset the English applecart. This paper studies the military genius of Tipu Sultan with special emphasis on his foreign and diplomatic policies. The paper will also attempt to bring out the relevance of his policies in the present day.