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Osmanlı Toplumunda Birlikte Yaşama Sanatı:
Türk Ermeni İlişkileri Örneği

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OTTOMAN-TIPU SULTAN RELATIONS: A CRITICAL STUDY OF THE ROLE OF ARMENIAN MERCHANTS IN MYSORE -- SOUTH INDIA

OSMANLI-TİPU SULTAN İLİŞKİLERİ: MAYSOR'DA ERMENİ TÜCCARLARIN ROLÜ

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Özet

Haydar Ali ve oğlu Sultan Tipu günümüzde Güney Hindistan' da Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, ve Kerala adlarıyla bilinen ve 1779-1799 yıllarında Srirangapatna ve Maysor (Misor) diye adlandırılan yerlerin hükümdarlığını yapmışlardır. O dönemde İngiliz kuvvetleri ile ilişkileri iyi olan Delhi'deki Moğol Hanedanı yasal olara Maysor hükümranları ile mutabakata varamamıştır. Osmanlı İmparatorluğu ile bağlantıya geçen Tipu Sultan bağımsız monarşi devleti unvanını ve resmî para basım iznini Cuma hutbesinde almıştır. Ayrıca Osmanlı, Tipu Sultana mektuplar göndermiş, değerli kılıç ve kalkanlar hediye etmiştir. Gelebilecek dış tehlikelere karşı da Tipu Sultan'ın hanedanına destekte bulunmuştur. Ayrıca o dönemde Fransızlar da Tipu Sultan'a yardım için söz vermiştir. Maysor Hükümdarlığı Sultan Oman ile iyi ticarî ilişkilere sahip olduğu gibi Osmanlı İmparatorluğu ile de Kızıl Deniz bölgesi aracılığıyla ticarî ilişkilerini güçlendirmiştir. Tekel devlet konumunda olan Maysor, Avrupa ticaret gemilerini, özelliklede İngiltere'yi saf dışı bırakarak zengin bir ülke konumuna gelmiştir. Tipu Sutan'ın ticarete olan yoğun ilgisinden dolayı Avrupa ülkeleri ile sürekli bir çatışma halinde olmuş, ancak uzak görüşlülüğü ile hükümdarlığının ticaret politikasından taviz vermemiştir. İngiliz ticaretçileri Tipu'yu kendilerine daima bir rakip olarak görmüşler ve Tipu Sultan'ın ticarî girişimlerine her zaman ket vurmaya çalışmışlardır. Bu nedenle Tipu Sultan, Osmanlının ülkesini korumasını istemiş ve bunun karşılığında da ticarî imtiyazlar vermiştir. Özellikle Basra'daki faaliyetlerin Maysor'da da yapılmasını ve buraya açılacak olan fabrikalara teknisyenler gönderilmesini istemiştir. Tipu Sultan Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'na mensup Hıristiyan Ermeni tüccarlara imtiyazlar tanımıştır.



Introduction

Haider Ali and his son Tipu Sultan since 1779 untill 1799 ruled from Srirangapatna, Mysore over large areas of what is now called Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Kerala in South India. The British were opposed to both the rulers and used their power and influence with the Mughal Emperor in Delhi not to accord legitimacy to the Mysore rulers. Tipu Sultan approached the Ottoman Sultan who accorded permission to assume the title of an independent monarch and the right to strike coins and to have the Friday Khutba read in his name. Tipu also got friendly letters, Khillats, a sword and a shield studded with precious stones by the Caliph and his Grad Wazir. Regarding military help sought by Tipu, the Ottman ruler turned down the request as he was facing several outside threats. The French promised help to Tipu. The Mysore ruler had strong trade ties with the Sultan of Oman and also extensive trade contacts in the Gulf-Red Sea region and with the Ottman Empire. Mysore became prosperous due to state monopoly of trade as Tipu placed restrictions on European trading companies especially the British. Tipu's tremendous interest in international trade and other foreign economic matters in the midst of battles, challenges from the British and other threats, reveals his far sightedness and realization that promotion of commerce and industry is the true strength of his Kingdom. The British viewed Tipu as a dangerous competitor and their goal was to put an end to all his trading activities and imaginative enterprise. Tipu wanted to secure trade privileges with the Ottoman Empire on a reciprocal basis;

he wanted facilities in Basra in exchange for similar ones in Mangalore, that Turkey help in establishing various factories in Mysore by sending technicians. Tipu encouraged Armenian Christian merchants to come and settle in Mysore and gave them special privileges as they were seen as successful businessmen. He was also keen to utilize their expert knowledge and promote trade since the Armenian merchants were well known for their extensive knowledge and wide contacts in key trading centers, Tipu greatly valued them. The Armenian merchants specialized in the export of high quality textiles and Tipu patronized them as he laid great emphasis on exports and wide contacts with the Ottoman Empire. Although Armenian merchants had lucrative business in Tipu's Kingdom but some scholars are of the opinion that the British extensively tapped their knowledge about Indian ruling Princes and used it to consolidate their position/power in India. Ultimately the British defeated and killed Tipu in 1799. This paper focuses on Tipu's trade and other ties with the Ottomans as also the role of Armenian merchants in Mysore in particular and South India in general. It critically examines the place of Armenian merchants in the Ottoman Empire in relation to South India. The paper is based on available Indian sources at Mysore, Mumbai and Delhi.

-I-

Even since Haider Ali became the *de facto* ruler of Mysore between 1761-1782 with control over a large chunk of South India, the British perceived him as a mortal enemy and relations had been strained. Under his son Tipu Sultan they reached a nadir primarily due to determined British efforts to isolate him and bring about his downfall. The British challenge to Haider Ali and Tipu Sultan which the former saw as a great hindrance to their interests in India and neighboring areas was one of the most formidable an Indian ruler had to face in the second half of 18th century, and in self defense both the Indian rulers had been compelled to take a series of bold measures. In the Persian Gulf region, European rivalry was common, especially British attempts to bring it under its control. It is pertinent to note that the French had already conceded defeat to the British and were confined to few pockets in insignificant areas. Having curtailed the trade and profits of the Arabs and Persians especially those belonging to the Omanis they could easily be manipulated and eventually subjugated by the British. The Ottoman Sultan due to determined attempts by the Russian Czars and

mounting challenges from the Europeans had come to acknowledge British supremacy in the Persian Gulf region in numerous ways. The Persians were busy fighting amongst themselves while it was easy for the British to foment trouble for the Afghan rulers in view of the tribal factor in Afghan politics. From all this, it is abundantly clear that the room to maneuver for Tipu Sultan internationally was extremely limited given the British naval supremacy and superior technology which enabled them to have the global reach and paramountacy[1].

The British challenge to Tipu was formidable, it prompted him to respond with equally forcible, bold and prompt measures to tackle it. Most remarkable was his attempt to seek friendship with the Ottoman Sultan, Oman, France, Persia, Afghanistan, and other Persian Gulf countries, who were also equally at the sametime under intense pressure and vulnerable to British power. Despite his forced involvement in British inspired wars and the huge burden of war reparations, whenever his economic and political position improved, Tipu Sultan sent embassies abroad as he strongly believed in close cooperation with the Ottoman Sultan, Oman and other Gulf countries in order to contain the formidable threat posed by the British to his regime. Towards this end, he began to offer numerous concessions in order to induce them to support him. To the Ruler of Oman, Tipu sent a diplomatic mission headed by Mir Abdul Rahman and Mir Iyantullah. They were accompanied by Mirza Karim Beg Tabrizi the Persian envoy to Mysore. Like on previous such missions, Tipu Sultan sent valuable gifts to the Ruler of Muscat. These included jewels, elephants, khillats, sandalwood, ivory, pepper and cardamoms. It must be mentioned that Haider Ali had also maintained close ties with the Ruler of Muscat and also had an establishment at Muscat but this special arrangement lapsed as was customary with his death in his camp near Arcot on the 12th December 1782. Haider Ali has been called the greatest soldier and the most consummate statesman of the age. He was the son of a Pathan soldier of fortune who became one of the greatest ruler of a short lived dynasty which was one of the greatest that sprung from the wreck of the Moghul Empire. He first made his appearance in the political arena in 1749, as a volunteer in the army of the Mysore Maharajah. By his courage, and vast military experience, he distinguished himself in a number of daring battles and was elevated by

1 Aftab Kemal Pasha, "Tipu and the Ottoman Empire", in B. Sheik Ali, ed., Tipu Sultan: A Great Martyr (Bangalore: Prasaranga, Bangalore University, 1993), pp.219-232; Mohibbul Hassan, History of Tipu Sultan (Delhi, Aakar Books, 2005), pp.128-138.

the Ruler to the position of Commander in Chief. From 1759 he carried on the administration himself of the vastly expanded Empire having defeated the Marathas, Nizam of Hyderabad and the British who formed an alliance with the above two Indian rulers. In 1779 he led a powerful force of 83,000 soldiers against the British on the Malabar Coast and defeated their forces led by Colonel Baillie at Pollilore.

Tipu's intense diplomatic activity with Oman which had essentially political, economic and military consideration only showed his desire to keep up contacts with influential and powerful rulers but also to continuously seek allies in his ceaseless quest for partners to withstand the British challenge. Thus, the guiding principles of Tipu's diplomacy were to neutralize his enemies and maintain the integrity of his Kingdom and to contain British imperialism as also their expansionism. It is significant to note, that the French also maintained close ties with the Ruler of Oman but Tipu's and the Omani ruler's relations with the French appear to have been complementary but independent.

-II-

Tipu Sultan and the Ottomans

With France plunged into turmoil and instability whatever little hope Tipu Sultan had from France were dashed. This explains his decision to send a high level delegation to the Ottoman Caliph with three goals: 1] to gain recognition as an independent monarch of Mysore; 2] to seek military assistance; and 3] to explore the possibility of establishing close economic and trade relations[2].

At this stage it is necessary to briefly assess the Ottoman Empire's position which was under mounting challenge from the European powers. After the Turks conquered Istanbul in 1453 the capital of the Byzantine Empire and the last major stronghold of Christianity in Asia, the Ottomans became the masters in South West Asia and the undisputed naval power in the Mediterranean. But this collapsed in 1571 when they were defeated at Lepanto. European control and hegemony over the Eastern Mediterranean

2 Pasha, "Tipu Sultan's Relations with the Ottoman Empire", Détente, (New Delhi), Vol. X, No: 4 and 5, January-April, 1992, pp.6-11; I. H. Quereshi, "The Purpose of Tipu Sultan's Embassy to Constantinople", Journal of Indian History, Vol. 24, 1945, pp.77-85.

was restored. With the rise of the Europeans, the Arab-Islamic Lake as the Indian Ocean was known was dominated first by the Portuguese, then by the Dutch, French and soon the British became undisputed masters over the area. Bernard Lewis quotes from Umar Talib, one of the Turkish elite, who complained in 1625 that:

The Europeans have become acquainted with the whole world, sending their ships everywhere and seizing the harbors. The goods from India, Sind and China previously came to Suez and were distributed by the Muslims to the whole world. Now, however, these goods are transported by the Portuguese, the Dutch and the English to the Frankish countries, from whence they distribute them to the world. The goods that they don't need, they bring to Istanbul and the Islamic countries selling them at five times their value, thus reaping great profit. For the reason both gold and silver have become scarce in Islamic countries[3]. [3]

But Tipu Sultan still perceived the Ottoman Empire as strong and hence decided to seek assistance. As early as 1784 Tipu had sent an exploratory mission to the Sublime Porte to find out whether an Embassy there would be productive. When he was told about the efficacy of having a mission at the Porte, Tipu decided to send a large mission consisting of 900 people on November 17, 1785. Tipu Sultan sought the help of the Ottoman Sultan in his fight against the ever expanding British domination. Tipu was keen to receive a Caliphal investiture from the Ottoman Sultan. He was also very keen to conclude military and commercial treaties with the Ottoman Empire. The leader of the delegation was Ghulam Ali Khan and included Nurullah Khan, Lutf Ali Khan and Jaffar Khan among others. The delegation after a long and difficult sea and land journey via Muscat, Bushier, Basra, Baghdad and other places reached Constantinople on September 25, 1787. It was only on November 5, 1787 the Ottoman Sultan Salim-III received Tipu's emissaries with honor and decorated them. The Sultan accorded permission to Tipu to assume the title of an independent monarch and the right to strike coins and to have the Khutbha read in his name. The envoys were also given for Tipu friendly letters, Khillats, a sword and a shield

3 Quoted from Bernad Lewis, "Some Reflection on the decline of the Ottoman Empire", Studies Islamica, No: 9, 1959, p.118; see also K. N. Chaudhari, Trade and Civilization in the Indian Ocean; An Economic History from the Rise of Islam to 1750 (New Delhi: Munshiram Mnoharlal Publishers, 1985); ----- The Trading World of Asia and the English East India Company, 1600-1760 (Cambridge: 1987); Patricia Risso, Oman and Muscat; An Early Modern History (London: Croom Helm, 1986).

studded with precious stones by the Caliph and his Grand Wazir. With this, one of the major objectives of the mission had been accomplished. According to Azmi Ozcan, a noted Turkish scholar in his study: *Pan-Islamism: Indian Muslims, the Ottomans and Britain [1877-1924] this was the first and only instance of its kind on the part of an Indian [Muslim] ruler seeking recognition from the Ottoman Caliphs, though the practice itself was not new, as earlier Muslim rulers had sought recognition from the Abbasid Caliphs*[4].

Tipu also sought military assistance from the Ottoman Caliph to put an end to the British menace in India. In order to impress upon the Ottoman Sultan the gravity of the situation and urgency of his demand Tipu sought to arouse the religious sentiments of the Caliph by highlighting to him the subversive and deceitful manner in which the British had become overlords of large parts of territories which actually belonged to the Mughals and other Indian rulers. More significantly in order to make sure his mission would succeed, Tipu also impressed upon the Ottoman Sultan that the British were humiliating the Muslims in India by forcibly converting them to Christianity and changing the mosques to Churches. According to Azmi Ozcan: *To achieve his aims, Tipu Sultan appealed to very many religious motives in his letter. He informed the Sultan that about ten-thousand Muslim children had been forcibly converted to Christianity and many mosques and Muslim cemeteries had been destroyed and turned into Churches. In view of this and his religious responsibility, he had stood for jihad and had won many victories against the Christians. He requested that they should enter into a friendly alliance under which the Sultan should send troops and other military experts to help Tipu Sultan. It is interesting that Tipu Sultan also requested permission to contribute to the maintenance of the religious shrines in Mecca, Medina, Najaf and Kerbala*. The Ottoman Sultan found it easy to recognize Tipu Sultan as an independent King but saw his request for military assistance hard to entertain, because he himself was preoccupied with defending his possessions under challenge from the Russians, in the Crimea in 1787 and with Austrians and others. He politely

4 Birendra Varma, "Tipu Sultan's Embassies to Constantinople and Kabul", Journal of Historical Research, Vol. XVI, No: 1, August, 15 1973, pp.51-56; Mohibbul Hassan, ed., Waqai-i-Manzil-i-Rum-Tipu Sultan's Mission to Constantinople (Delhi: Aakar Books, 2005), pp.ix-xiii;, pp.1-4, pp.61-63; Pasha, ed., Perspectives on Inida and the Gulf States (New Delhi: Détente Publications, 1999) pp.1-23, and pp.210-211; Azmi Ozcan, Pan-Islamism: Indian Muslims, the Ottomans and Britain (1877-1924) (Leiden: EJ Brill, 1971), pp.11-12.

but firmly turned down Tipu's request for a body of Turkish soldiers to be sent to Mysore to fight against the British. Actually Tipu wanted the Ottoman Sultan to send him a body of troops whose expenses would be borne by him and they would be sent back to the Porte at his expense whenever they would be required by the Caliph. In the end, the Sultan declined to provide any tangible military help to Tipu. It must be repeated that the Ottoman Sultan facing outside threats could not expect help from France due to the turmoil there leading to the revolution. In fact, the Ottoman Sultan could not afford to antagonize the British by accepting the request of Tipu Sultan for military alliance or assistance as Britain was busy mediating peace between Turkey and her enemies- Russia and Austria. The Ottoman Sultan therefore, advised Tipu Sultan to have good relations with the British and hence was in no position to help Tipu and endanger British friendship. Moreover the incentive for the Ottoman Sultan to help Tipu declined, if there was any, when the British inflicted heavy defeat on Tipu and seized huge territories from the Mysore Kingdom in 1792[5].

Tipu had also urged the members of the delegation to secure trade privileges with the Ottoman Empire on a reciprocal basis; he wanted facilities in Basra in exchange for Mangalore. He also wanted Turkey to help him in establishing various factories in Mysore and by sending technicians specialized in the art of making muskets, guns, glass, chinaware and other military hardware or spares and in return Tipu would send workers required by the Ottoman Sultan. The delegation carried large quantities of goods produced in Mysore with them to be sold at various ports of call so that wide publicity is given to the products and hence exports boosted. The mission costed Tipu more than 20 lakhs of rupees and out of about 900 men only a handful returned to Calicut on 29 December 1789[6].

5 Iqbal Husain, "The Diplomatic Vision of Tipu Sultan: Briefs for Embassies to Turkey and France, 1755-1786" (Translation) in Irfan Habib, ed., State and Diplomacy under Tipu Sultan: Documents and Essays (New Delhi: Tulika Books, 2001) pp.19-65; see also Khaldoun Hasan al Naqeeb, Society and State in the Gulf and Arab Peninsula: A Different Perspective (London: Doutledge, 1990) pp.31-42; Pasha, India and West Asia: Continuity and Change (Delhi: Gyan Sagar, 1999) pp.1-15; Azmi Ozcan, No: 4, p.12; Ishtiaq Hussian Qureshi, "Tipu Sultan's Embassy to Constantinople, 1787" in Irfan Habib ed., Resistance and Modernization under Haider Ali and Tipu Sultan (New Delhi: Tulika, 1999), pp.69-78.

6 Pasha, No: 1, p.229, see also Aniruddha Ray, ed., Tipu Sultan's and his Age: A Collection of Seminar Papers (Kolkata: The Asiatic Society, 2002); Pasha, "Tipu Sultan's Diplomacy in the Gulf Region", GSP, Working Paper, No: 10, CWAAS, SIS, JNU, 1997.

Tipu also wanted the Ottoman Caliph to mediate in settling his differences with the British. The French attack and occupation of Egypt in 1798 and Napoleon's plans to reach India via Yemen and Oman alarmed the British who approached the Ottoman Sultan as the *acknowledged Head of the Mohammedan Church* to send a letter to Tipu Sultan to advise him not to fight against the British. So in early 1799 Caliph Selim III [1789-1807] addressed a letter to Tipu describing the French invasion of Egypt and their plan to conquer not only Arabia, and divide it into republics but also colonize the whole Muslin world and extirpate Islam. He also wrote that the French also wanted to conquer India and deprive its people of their religion, life and property. According to the Caliph, the French had sent an army to Tipu Sultan not to help him but to prepare plans to occupy India. Hence the Ottoman Sultan advised Tipu to refrain from any hostile activities against the English at French instigation and offered to adjust satisfactorily any cause of complaint that he might have against the British. According to Azmi Ozcan the Ottoman Sultan *declared that since France was the enemy of Islam, his duty was to protect India from the French. But if there was any danger of a British attack against Tipu, the [Ottoman] Sultan could help to prevent this by acting as an intermediary between them*. Tipu Sultan replied twice to the Caliph professing devotion to him and agreeing that as the French were on inimical relations with the Head of the Faithful, all Muslims should renounce friendship with them. *But since the British were the invaders in his country he could not be expected to change his attitude towards them*. Later on the British made full use of the passages from Caliph Selim's letter to Tipu *which expose the character of the French Republic and the outrages committed by the French against the acknowledged Head of the Mohammedan Church*. Before Tipu Sultan's letters could reach the Ottoman Caliph, the Tiger of Mysore as Tipu Sultan was fondly called was killed by the British General Wellesly on 4 May 1799[7].

Although the British had succeeded in frustrating Tipu's attempt to get recognition from the Mughal Emperor in Delhi despite their influential presence and machinations at the Ottoman court, Tipu did succeed in gaining recognition for his independent status as a King. Even though the Brit-

7 Pasha, No: 2, p.9; see also K. M. Pannikar, Asia and Western Domination (London: Unwin & Allen, 1953) and Malabar and the Dutch (Bombay: 1931); M. Redha Bhacker, Trade and Empire in Muscat and Zanzibar: Roots of British Domination (London: Routledge, 1992) pp.34-35. Azmi Ozcan, No: 4, p.13.

ish were quite concerned for a variety of reasons at the recognition of Tipu, but their rapidly growing influence in India and in the vast Indian Ocean region gave them comfort and confidence about ultimately their ability to encircle and crush Tipu. It must be mentioned that the British were apprehensive of Tipu's growing contacts with the Muslim rulers both in India and abroad. His extensive links with Afghanistan, Persia, Oman, Ottoman Empire and other smaller states, his strategy aimed at intensifying political and economic cooperation particularly setting up of factories, state to state trade ignoring the Europeans, establishing military cooperation, all were considered too dangerous and revolutionary ideas which if implemented could undermine their position in the area and ultimately dash their hopes of establishing an empire where the Sun would never set. Moreover the Nizam of Hyderabad was equally disturbed at Tipu's recognition by Turkey which was a *coup de grace*. Since the Ottoman Sultan still enjoyed great prestige as the most dominant Muslim power relegating the Mughal Emperor to the background, the Nizam felt out maneuvered as he could no longer claim to be legally superior because *the Sultan of Mysore had a better title to his Kingdom than the Viceroy of the Deccan to his Viceroyalty* No wonder the Nizam wanted the British to wipe out Tipu for which he provided all assistance. Many of Tipu's enemies were also concerned at Tipu's not inconsiderable achievements at Istanbul and other places which brought name and fame from abroad and ended his isolation throwing his enemies in confusion. The British correctly analyzed Tipu's comfortable and secure position at home which propelled him to seek outside recognition and success; hence they did everything to pull him down from within using his enemies and their manipulative skills[8].

8 B. Sheik Ali, History of Tipu Sultan (New Delhi: NBT, 1972) and – Tipu Sultan: A Study in Diplomacy and Confrontation (Mysore: Rao and Raghvan, 1982); see also Pasha, ed., India and Oman: History, State, Economy and Foreign Policy (Delhi: Gyan Sagar, 1999) pp.1-21; see also Pasha, "South India and the Gulf: Trade and Diplomacy During the late 18th Century", in N. N. Vohra, ed., History, Culture anda Society in India and Wevst Asia (New Delhi: Shipra, 2003) pp.237-249; see also Akhtarul Wasey, "Turkey and Evolution of Indian Culture", Islam and Modern Age, Vol. XXXIII, No: 4, November 2002, pp.87-94; see also R. L. Shukla, Britain, India and the Turkish Empire 1853-1882, (New Delhi, People's Publishing House, 1973).

-III-

Armenians in India

According to a study from the time of the Armenian King Leo VI, was driven from his throne, in 137 AD, by the Mamelukes of Egypt, the Armenians had ceased to be an independent nation in the political world until the end of the cold war in 1990-91 when upon the disintegration of the Soviet Union, Armenia became an independent state. Through ages the Armenians tenaciously preserved their nationality by adhering to the Christian faith, which the Armenian people had embraced in the third century by the preaching of St Gregory of Caesara, famously known as *Gregory-The Illuminator*. Due to their unsettled and wandering life, consequent on the absence of a national bond, it served to turn their spirit of calculation, enterprise towards commerce. Thus, they became the crucial link between Europe and Asia, especially when Europe had no direct ties [sea route] with Asia. They carried on a lucrative trade with India by the land route via Persia. In the Indian bazaars, commercial marts and the emporiums, the Armenian merchants exercised vast influence and in the absence of any foreign commercial element, they monopolized the export trade for a long period, taking Indian wares and items into Persia and Venice. Benaras on the banks of the Ganges became the headquarters of the Armenian merchants. They mostly specialized by trading in silk, fine textiles, pearls, rose water, dried fruits, spices and other items. It was only during the Mughal period that large number of Armenian merchants came to Agra and established commercial settlements. The Mughal rulers patronized them and bestowed huge favors not only due to the fact the Armenians were from Persia [New Julfa] but also due to their extensive trade skills[9].

From the days of Greek invasion of India in 327 BC under Alexander, when he came to India via Armenia and Persia, to the Period of Shah Abbas, the Armenians had to face the invasions by the Arabs, Turks, Kurds, Mongols, Persians and many others. The Saffavid ruler Shah Abbas is be-

9 Mesrovb J. Seth, History of the Armenians, (Delhi: Gian Publishing House, 1988) pp.14-31; and VN Dadrain, United and Independent Turania: Aims anda Design of the Turks, (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1917) pp.11-14; and 86-95; see also Richard G. Hovannisian, ed., The Armenian People from Ancient to Modern Times: Vol. One: and the Dynastic Periods: From Antiquity to the 14th Century, Vol. Two: Foreign Domination to Statehood: The 15 to 20th Century (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997).

lieved to have ordered the Armenians to leave their commercial city of Julfa on the banks of the Aras River to Isfahan in 1605. The Armenians-about 12 000 families built a new city on the banks of Zenderood and called it New Julfa. Thus, Isfahan became the Center or head quarters of the Armenian merchants who used the old caravan route i.e. Kabul, Lahore, Delhi in the East and Tabriz, Trebizond in the West to reach the Russian and Italian marts. During Nadir Shah's rule in Persia many Armenians fled to India to avoid persecution. They arrived at Surat in large numbers and flourished. Soon they established themselves in Bengal, Patna and Calcutta and elsewhere. At Syedabad they formed a permanent settlement and rendered valuable services to the East India Company during the Battle of Plassey in 1756 when Robert Clive fought against the Muslim rulers. Even as early as 1688 the Armenians had attached themselves to the English in Bengal. The British were anxious to cultivate the friendship of the Armenian merchants due to the latter's acquaintance with all parts of India and having a thorough knowledge of the local languages and conditions and were also of great help to them in pushing the East India Company's trade to the interiors of India[10].

After having consolidated their rule first over Bengal, the British became dominant in the entire Gangetic valley after the battle of Buxar over Oudh. The Armenians suffered a lot financially due to the prolonged hostilities between the British and the French especially when wars broke out since 1783 in the Carnatic i.e. Deccan. The French captured many ships belonging to the Armenians due to their open identification with the British. Armenian trade at Surat in particular suffered. British wars with Haider Ali greatly impacted the Armenians adversely. The British were naturally proud of the Armenians as faithful subjects to the English Government. Moreover the British encouraged the Armenians and other foreigners in Calcutta to raise a Militia [of Christians] to fight with the British. A wealthy Armenian merchant at Calcutta raised a militia at his own expense to fight the French in the Deccan. The British governor-general Lord Wellesley personally applauded this gesture. It might be recalled under Wellesley, Tipu Sultan was attacked by a large British army from Bombay and Madras, together with a subsidiary force of the Nizam of Hyderabad. Tipu

10 The Treatment of Armenians in the Ottoman Empire; Documents Presented to Viscount Grey of Fallodon (Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs) (New York: Hodder and Stoughton, 1916) pp.593-661; see also Djemal Pasha, Memories of a Turkish Statesman 1913-1919 (New York: Arno Press, 1973) pp.241-302.

Sultan was killed on 4 May 1799 by the British General Baird, in Srirangapatnam after its siege and capture[11].

Like his father Haider Ali, Tipu Sultan also fought several wars against the British and their allies -- the Maratha Confederacy and the Nizam of Hyderabad. The central policy of Tipu Sultan was to expel the British from India and demolish the Marathas and contain the Nizam and others who had accepted British rule. In order to sustain his huge army as also for development needs, Tipu needed finance. Towards this end he promoted trade in an aggressive manner. He monopolized the trade in spices and other commodities produced in his Kingdom. Tipu established factories at Surat and in many parts of the Persian Gulf region. He considered the Armenian merchants as very successful and was conscious of the benefits arising from the presence of foreign [Armenian] merchants and how this could increase his Kingdom's trade. Due to their extensive presence in India, Persia, Ottoman Empire and the entire Gulf Region and also in Europe and South East Asia, Tipu Sultan encouraged the Armenian merchants in his Kingdom to the utmost of his power, as they had the trade of the Carnatic in their hands and carried on a lucrative trade with Europe and the East. However, Tipu Sultan's close ties with the French and an adversarial relation with the British as also close Armenian-English ties not much headway was made. Moreover Tipu's monopolistic trade practices conflicted with the profit motive of the Armenians. The religious factor also seem to have undermined the relations because Tipu had sought and secured an alliance and recognition from the Ottoman Sultan on religious grounds of persecution of Muslims by the Christian English whereas the Armenians being Christians had fully aligned themselves with the British imperial policies as also their religion. But in an irony of twist Tipu Sultan who embarked on extensive political ties with the Ottoman Sultan, the French, Sultan of Oman, Persian rulers, Afghan rulers and others, found the Armenian merchants fairly useful in his contacts and trade with all the above rulers as they were present not only all over the Indian cities from Kabul to Mandalay and Bhutan-Kashmir to Cochin but also all over the Ottoman Empire and Europe as well[12].

11 Seth, No: 9, pp.118-120.
12 Ibid, p.157.