

# TIPU SULTAN FORT IN PALAKKAD DISTRICT- A STUDY

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## Introduction

Palakkad is one of the fourteen districts of Kerala. Palakkad was called as 'Palakkattuchery' in earlier times. Fort is a historical monument entangled with many war stories. Tipu's Fort, situated at Palakkad is blessed with scenic splendour and abundant natural resources. This fort is a testimony of wars between Mysore sultans and the British. It speaks about the battles happened between Tipu and the British. It also stands as witness of Mysore invasion in Kerala., and speaks about the story of Mysore Kings and British rule. It conveys about the Mysorean war against British.

## Objectives of the Study:

- ✓ To know about the details of Tipu's Fort in Palakkad District
- ✓ To Know the combination of British and Mysorean Architecture in the Fort.
- ✓ To Know the Structure of the Fort

## Methodology:

This study has taken sources from existing primary and secondary sources. The primary data is included from Government Reports and News Papers. The sources of secondary data include published data such as books, Journals and web sources.

## Area of the Study:

The study was undertaken in Tipu's Fort, Palakkad district.

## Palakkad

The Palakkad district is situated in the Southern Part of Malabar. It is a big district covering a wide area. Palakkad is one of the fourteen districts of Kerala. The present Palakkad district was formed on January 01, 1957. Previously it was a part of the Malabar district of Madras Presidency. Palakkad was called as 'Palakkattuchery' in earlier times, the name originated from the word PalaiNilam which means dry lands. There is also another meaning i.e., Pala + Kadu, Pala means tree (Alstoniascholaris tree) that is found abundantly in Palakkad and Kadu means forest. The main language is Malayalam, but Tamil also can be seen in the language and traditions in its Villages. Palakkad is also known as 'The Rice Bowl of Kerala' and 'The

Granary of Kerala'. Palakkad has a significant number of Tamil speaking people who contributed to the emergence of unique culture in the region.

### **The History of Palakkad Fort**

The history of the fort dates back to 18<sup>th</sup> century. When KomuAchan ruled the Palakkad region. Even though he was the ruler, he was a tributary of Zamorin of Calicut. He started ruling Palakkad independently as a king from the year 1758. Zamorin kings didn't like KomuAchan who became as an independent ruler. It became as a rival and led to the war. Zamorin started attacking the City. To protect the city and fight against the Zamorin, KomuAchan wanted a strong help. The Palakkad raja quickly requested support from HyderAli. Hyder Ali was the Faujdar of Dindigul during that period. As The raja was offered to build a fort and pay a tribute fee, he quickly agreed. So KomuAchan sought the help of Hyder Ali and he sent his brother in law Mukaddam Ali with 2000 horses and 5000 troops to fight Zamorin. The Zamorin seeing the armed opposition did not fight and submitted to Hyder, but Hyder suspecting treachery demanded a ransom of 1 lac and also ordered to pay 12 lac rupees to Mysore King. As they couldn't pay that huge amount, that became the reason for the Hyder's invasion of Malabar.

After this event, a French engineer started the construction of Palakkad fort in 1757 as per Hyder's instruction. Hyder supposed to have built the fort to serve as a common point and to facilitate communication between Coimbatore and Palakkad. After the death of Hyder the Zamorin re-established sovereignty over Palakkad till Tippu came back to Coimbatore and fought again it in 1788. The fort was retaken later by Col Stuart in 1790, after which it remained in British hands. In 1797 the English repaired the damaged fort. During all these periods the fort was popularly referred to as Tipu's fort.

### **Tipu's Fort (Palakkad Fort)**

The Palakkad Fort in Kerala is a one of the beautiful historical Monument. The Fort was located in the heart of Palakkad town at the foothills of the Sahyadrisrange. It lies in 10° 16' 30" N latitude and 76° 36' 30" E longitude. Palakkad Fort is considered as the one of the most well-preserved forts in the state of Kerala. The main attraction of the fort is its high Walls with its surrounding green garden. Palakkad Fort is also Known as Tipu's Fort. The Fort was built in the 1766 AD by Hyder Ali and now the fort is a protected monument under the Archaeological Survey of India. The shape of the fort is square and it is supported by walls which were strongly built. There was ground in the fort, which served as stable for the horses and elephants of Tipu sultan's army in ancient times.

After the British took over the fort, it was made into Tahsildars Kutchery, and the fort also housed other British government offices. It was then turned into a jail in 1877 when the Cannanore and other jails started getting overcrowded. In 1881 it ceased to be a Jail. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the fort became a Taluk office once again. Then it was declared as a monument, and now the Fort is under the custody of Archaeological Survey of India. There was open air auditorium called Rappadi. The old draw bridge has been replaced by permanent one. There is a childrens park which is called as Vatika. A Hanuman temple is located inside the fort.

## Hyder in Malabar

In 1766, Hyder became the King of Mysore. In the same year he made an advent in Malabar. He ordered to build a fort at Palakkad. It was mainly built to speed up the communication between the west coast and Coimbatore. In January 1763, Hyder Ali made an attack on Bednur and Mangalore and captured them. This made him to get into the notice of the British. During 1760's, the Muslims of the Malabar coast had a very difficult relationship with the Hindu Rajas. This led to the small wars at times. When this became the serious issue, the muslim communities appealed to local religionists to get sought the help of Hyder Ali. In 1766, Hyder invaded Malabar which affected the entire coast from Cannanore to Cochin. Then he ordered to build a fort at Palakkad., as it was one of the main strategic locations. Hyder Ali constructed the fort with lots of safety features. It reflected his warring mindset. He also showed his architectural talents through this. Even today it stands as a stunning architecture.

Few years later, as Zamorin got the help of East India company, Hyder lost many of his territories in wars. Palakkad alone remained in his hand. Then Hyder wanted his son Tipu to take care of Palakkad and also the fort. Great war was held at Ponnani between Tipu and English. At Mysore, Hyder faced a tough time with British. He died in 1782. In Nov 15, 1783 Palakkad was attacked by British forces under Colonel Fullerton and captured the fort. They added English style of architecture to the fort. As per Mangalapuram treaty of 1784, British gave back the places around Malabar to Tipu. So, Palakkad fort was also given back to Tipu along with that. Tipu constructed the fort in full structure and added many safety measures in the fort. He modified the moat with French architecture. He also reconstructed the inward palace building. Tipu not only constructed the Palakkad fort, but also remained there and carried many reforms. Districts and Taluks were originated during his period. He totally organized the Malabar state very well. Tipu's fort is the standing proof of his aspiration to rule the Malabar permanently.

### Structure of the Fort

The Palakkad fort was built in a fusion style. It was built neither in Indian nor European style. Fort was built by old granite stone. The Granites used to build the fort were brought from a place named Jain medu. The fort served as the Military headquarters of Hyder Ali. Tipu then modified and reconstructed it. Palakkad fort lies in the centre of Palakkad town. The fort complex is square shaped, and it occupied 15 hectares of land, with walls of immense thickness and strong bastions at all four corners and in the middle. Earlier, the entrance of the Palakkad fort was via a draw bridge, but now it has been replaced by permanent one.

The following are the important areas of the fort.

- **Arch gate** - It is situated in the front of the fort. It is a threefold building. A tunnelled entrance was built at the centre part. Now it functions as an Information centre

- **Pathway** -This was used by the troops of Hyder Ali. It is made of Vettukallu. The pathway surrounds the fort. The back side of the pathway was used as a Parade ground and to store arms.
- **Compound wall** - Built of unwieldy stones, the walls were very thick. It is a huge majestic structure. The compound wall has eight circular mounds at eight cardinal points. To reach the top of the wall, one should cross the staircases built in each circular mound. The outer wall along the moat on four sides is having trapezium shaped coping masonry.
- **Moat** -It is a water passage around the fort. It was used as the protection from the enemy troops. Crocodiles were used to be kept in the moat. Now it is filled with rain water harvest method.
- **Entry Bridge** - It is used to cross the moat. It was a tough challenge for British troops to cross the bridge. Two Pillars stand at the entrance.
- **Circular mound** - It was used to view the happenings outside the fort with the eye range.It was designed in a way that the soldier can watch the enemies closely. Holes were made on the mound so that the guns could be inserted. Security forces were stationed on all the circular mounds.
- **Tunnelled way** - This tunnel way has two turns. It is a roofless passage. This leads to Hanuman temple,which is situated on the northern side.
- **Hanuman temple** - Small idol of Hanuman is placed and worshipped on the northern side compound wall. Religious performances are taking place even today and large numbers of devotees worship the idol.
- **Inner entrance Mandapa** -It is a square structured mandapa. Many sculptures were placed here. The walls were built with brick and limestone.
- **Open courtyard and Garden view** - Open courtyard is very large. It is surrounded by the private garden.
- **Residential Palace bungalow** - It is a large house built with limestone and brick. Roof is constructed with tiles and the building was made in kerala style architecture. There is a large hall at the centre of the building.
- **Pillared Mandapa** - It is a rectangular hall with 40 ft length and 25 ft width. The pillars of the mandapa are designed with free hand drawings. These Pillars were chiselled with free hand drawing designs and the figure of animal and Human.

- **Open well** - This is a stepped well situated at the southern corner of the fort.
- **Guardroom** - It is a large rectangular hall situated at the front of the open well. It was used to dwell the guards.
- **Kitchen**- On those days,it was used to prepare food for Hyder and Tipu. Now this area is in full demise.

At present, more than eight state government offices are running in the fort campus. Lot of Tourism activities also carried out here by the District Tourism Promotion Council (DTPC).

## Conclusion

The Palakkad fort has a long History. The fort is considered as an important historical destination today The Origin of the fort is the ultimate aspiration of Haider at Palakkad . It speaks about the history of the fort and the influence of Mysore rulers in Kerala. The magnificent fort of Palakkad is an essential part of history, and its construction is Majestic as well. A large ground lies between the fort and now a day it serves as the important location for public meetings. The spacious ground surrounding the fort is known as Kota Maidanam. The fort is a preferred picnic spot in Palakkad district. The fort is also houses some other smaller attractions such as the Hanuman temple, Marty's Colum Vatika Shilavatika and a sub-jail. The fort houses an open air auditorium, called as Rappadi. Today it is a protected monument under Archaeological Survey of India (ASI).

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