CHAPTER VI

The Role of European Experts and Engineers
Tipu Sultan employed French, English, Portuguese, Swiss, Hungarian and African officers, ammunition experts and artisans into Mysorean army to train and tutor his troops and technology. They improved military equipments and made technological changes in the method of warfare under his guidance. Among them, French played a very important and distinct role in the courts of Haider Ali and Tipu Sultan.

The earliest recorded French military presence in India is of Hiriart, who was both a jeweller and a military engineer at the court of Jahangir. He designed two thrones for Jahangir and his military machines found great acclaim. Jahangir made him captain of 200 horsemen. A near contemporary was Claude Maille from Bourges, who was employed by the king of Golconda to train artillery units and cast cannon, some of which still exist in the fort of Golconda outside Hyderabad. At the time, warfare was largely an affair of princes ever in need of skilled fighters, who were themselves in search of good paymasters. These soldiers of fortune were often men of many parts and Maille is next heard of employed as an artillery man with Dara Shikoh and later as physician to the Governor of Allahabad. The development of trade marked the extension of military influence as well. Early trade concessions granted by the Mughal emperor to foreigners encouraged them to build fortified retreats to which
they could retire in case of trouble. Pondicherry was founded by the French for this purpose in 1673, fortified in 1682 and the recruitment of Indians as 'Cipayes' in the protection corps of Louis Paradis in Pondicherry, was the forerunner of Indian troops in the service of the French.¹

The extension of French military influence in India is largely associated with Dupleix, later Governor of Pondicherry. When Dupleix first arrived in India in 1722, he had no dreams of conquest or domination only thoughts of getting rich in the turmoil that accompanied the break-up of the Mughal empire. India was an El-Dorado ripe for plunder. The south was under hereditary Hindu rulers, with little contact with Delhi. The Deccan was being divided among the independent Muslim viceroyalties looking for a chance to throw off the yoke of the emperor. The decline of central power forced the foreign trading powers to fortify their settlement for their own protection, and to raise local forces commanded by their own officers. These forces subsequently came to be used to further their interests. In case of the French, who had already acknowledged both China and India as among the great civilisations, these forces were not used to colonise but to further political influence in the Indian state in order to promote French interests and to stiffen their resistance to English influence. They acknowledged the need to build up the
Indian princes, not to vanquish them. Louis XVI stated, "I have no wish to acquire provinces in India. India belongs to the princes just as France belongs to me."\(^2\) Dupleix as the political leader, with Bussy as his main military instrument achieved spectacular success to the extent that he came to be recognized as the equivalent of the Mughal emperor's viceroy in the Carnatic. This brought the French into direct conflict with English expansion in south India a conflict which was also a proxy for the Anglo-French wars in Europe. The final defeat of the French by the English in 1761 also saw the eclipse of French military presence in India.\(^3\) Though French military power ceased to be a factor in India, a certain degree of French military influence continued for almost a hundred years through the remarkable careers of brilliant individual French-men in the service of Indian states, before the final subjugation of these states by the English. These French men, some of whom were military adventurers and others on deputation or secret missions, included Raymond in Hyderabad, Lallee in Mysore. De Lannoy in Travancore, Deboigne and Perron with the Marathas, Gentel, Polier and Martin in Avadh and Allard, ventura and Court in the Sikh kingdom of Ranjit Singh. Their story is a vivid commentary of the times.\(^4\)

For someone seriously interested in soldiering as a profession, France offered little material incentive. A soldier in
France was paid 6 sous a day, against 15 sous which even a road labourer could earn. The Indian princes paid royally. Lallee for example, was paid by Hyder Ali & Tipu Sultan Rs. 5,000 per month, a princely wage in those days. More important for Europeans of humble background was the chance to earn an officer's commission in India if they showed any ability impossible in Europe where noble birth was the only consideration. Unlike the English who discouraged their own nationals from joining the armies of the Indian princes, the French imposed no restrictions. The Proportion of French amongst the mercenaries in the Indian states was always large. The careers of people like Lallee, Raymond, or Deboinge demonstrated not only the wealth and the power Frenchmen of humble beginings could aspire to but also the professional military advancement impossible in France itself.

The Indian princes also got their money's worth. The art of warfare in the military system in India has stagnated since the 16th century with armies incapable of manoeuvre and lacking the hierarchies of command to sustain control when leaders become casualties. Europe was far ahead in military development and the English and French provided object lessons on how small disciplined armies, drilled in up-to-date tactics, equipped with good muskets and baynouts, and supported by rapid firing cannon could prevail over large but ill-disciplined Indian forces equipped only
with swords, matchlocks, spears, and antediluvian guns. Moreover they were accompanied by a confusing mass of camp followers who only impeded action.8

Enlightened Indian princes quick to recognise their own weaknesses competed with each other to recruit professional Europeans to retain, reequip and reorganise their forces.7 French mercenaries with a military background in Europe became a precious acquisition. Their major contribution was in the development of trained infantry as the principal arm of battle, relegating the cavalry to an auxiliary role, a major department from the traditional Asian concept of battle. French military expertise was also particularly valuable in the field of fortifications, in the casting of good guns and in the training of artillery where efficient drills could dramatically improve the rate of fire.8

If Hyderabad was an opportune moment for the French in India which they enjoyed briefly only to throw away, Mysore was the golden opportunity waiting to be taken by the French but missed altogether. The reason for the failure was that French relations with Mysore were ensnared in the web of their relations with the Marathas and with Hyderabad, whom they looked upon to represent the likely future centres of power in India. Despite the overtures from Mysore, the French did not want
to prejudice their relations with the Marathas or with Hyderabad by seeming too close to Mysore, which was itself locked in almost permanent hostility with the other two powers. Hyderabad in particular looked upon Hyder Ali and Tipu Sultan in Mysore as upstarts, expecting a subordinate relationship from them commensurate with the historical status of Mysore as a vassal state of the Nizam. Eventually it was the ruler of the Marathas and the Nizam of Hyderabad who proved to be weak and vacillating and unable to stand-up to the machinations of the English.

In contrast, Hyder Ali and Tipu Sultan in Mysore were shrewd enough to recognise that the real threat to all the princes came from the English. Being too weak themselves they knew the only way the English could be resisted was either by an alliance of the Indian princes, which was not forthcoming, or by an alliance with a comparable power like the French. Like most Indian states anxious to modernise their armies and weapons of war, Mysore too had a number of distinguished French mercenaries in its employ. Their role was restricted to training and commanding native forces as unlike Hyderabad and the Marathas, Mysore never raised a full-fledged French corps. A few names standout; Hugel who raised and commanded the cavalry, Maistre de la Tour who trained the grenadiers and the military
engineer of Tipu Le Goux de Flaix. Their memoirs give first hand accounts of the Mysorean military technology at the time. The troops trained by the French were quartered outside Seringapatam in an area still known as French rocks. The fort at Seringapatam is a superb example of French military engineering. The best known of all these mercenaries is Lallee, who distinguished himself in many of Hyder Ali’s campaign and afterwards with Tipu, most notable against the English in the battle of Pulilore, depicted magnificently in the frescoes of Tipu Sultan’s summer palace outside of Seringapatam.

Tipu Sultan endowed with lively passions, his youth which was stormy and full of incidents contained more romance than history. He had above all that power so rare yet so necessary in kings, he understood men and knew how to put them in their places. Hyder Ali died with the regret of not having been able to execute his grand designs, but he interested the accomplishment of them to his son. He hoped on dying that the sceptre of India would someday be in the hands of his descendants, his last wishes, and his last instructions to his successor were contained in a mandate which he had prepared before his death, the principle traits of which show the depth and sagacity of his policy. These instructions were addressed to Tipu, “My son, the greatest obstacle you have to conquer is the
jealousy of the Europeans. The English are today all powerful in India. It is necessary to weaken them by war. The resources of Hindustan do not suffice to expel them from the lands they have invaded. Put the nations of Europe one against the other. It is by the aid of the French that you could conquer the British armies which are better trained than the Indians. The Europeans have surer tactics, always use against them own weapons." These instructions made a strong impression in the mind of the young Tipu Saheb and he true to the policy of Hyder, remained an ally of the French till the last. Though a princely ruler Tipu sultan himself was strongly attracted to the ideals of the French revolution he understood the significance of liberty, equality and fraternity, and his own way relied more on his ability to rule wisely and justly than on any divine right. Haider Ali's faith in European military techniques, training, and discipline was based on his observation of both the French and the British during the campaign in the carnatic. He had the opportunity of observing the military abilities of the principal contestants of Europe. Both De la Tour and Adrian Moens, refer to the use made by Hyder of French troops in his army. He was said to have employed French engineers as early as 1755 to assist in the organisation of his artillery and arsenal. He used European mercenaries and methods through out his reign, as did his son Tipu Sultan. In 1779 the French mercenary comtede. Lallee joined his service, bringing him
100 European infantry and 50 European cavalry, as well as hundred Indian infantry and 2 guns. It was reported that Hyder Ali paid comte de Lallée well to persuade the latter and his men of skill to enter Mysore service.

Haider Ali and Tipu Sultan made Mysore a formidable power by dint of his modern outlook and scientific bent of mind. They organised his army administration on European style and introduced many changes and much exactitude in administration. This has been regarded by some writers as evidence of modernity; his energetic recruitment and use of a large number of artisans, including many European.

The secret of Tipu's success against his countrymen and enemies appears to have consisted chiefly in his clear perception and ready adoption of the advantages of European discipline and technology. He in all his battles mostly relied on Artillery and regular infantry under the French and Portugese experts. The French, no doubt, imparted smartness in parade (Drilling) to his officers, Artillery and men of the regular army.

In 1786 an escaped British prisoner from Mysore reported that the capital seringapatam and the town of Bangalore contained between 200 and 300 European tradesmen. The majority of these men, ex-soldiers and sailors who had been
captured during the second Anglo-Mysore war, were employed in such tasks as the manufactures of armaments, the minting of coins and paper making. Not all Europeans employed by Tipu, however were prisoners of war. The embassy dispatched to Louis XVI in 1787 was instructed to request that French king supply the Mysore ruler with among others, 10 casters of cannon, 10 gun smiths, one caster of bullet, 10 foremen for casting incendiary bombs, and Engineers. However, the numbers of persons who agreed to enter Tipu's service were 10 casters of cannons, 10 gunsmiths, 10 casters of bullets & 2 Engineers etc. It has been confirmed by Panganuri, who described their arrival in Mysore. Similar requests were again made to the French both in the draft treaty drawn-up in 1795 and via Tipu's amissaries to the Isle de France in 1797. Captain Macnamara reached on may 11, 1789 in Pondicherry and informed Tipu that he would visit Mangalore next November and bring with him the presents from Louis XVI. Tipu was glad that they had brought with them, "Artists and workmen", who would help to introduce such industries in Mysore as were not known in the East.

It would appear from the above that the Mysore ruler's main aim was to draw upon the advanced skill of Europeans, whose mastery in the field of manufactures and industry, he readily acknowledged. Yet both Tipu and his father
also recruited artisans from other areas. In 1780 after Victories in the carnatic, Haider Ali promised protection to such men later transporting them to Mysore, many of whom were training up to arts and useful manufacturers\(^2\) and in 1785 Tipu's wakils to Istanbul, as well as setting up commercial links with the Ottoman Turks (Empire), were instructed to recruit men from the region, who would introduce various industries into Mysore.\(^2\) Haider and Tipu were not the first to develop their own workshops. The jewellery, textiles, and weapons produced in the karkhanas of the Mughal Emperors, are found in museums around the world. Moreover, Tipu's attitude towards his newly acquired European knowledge does not suggest a purely Economic rationale.\(^2\) No doubt, from Economic point of view, it would have been in their interest not to have to import any items.

In his survey, Francis Buchanan wrote that:

> Although his aversion to Europeans did not prevent him from imitating many of their arts, yet this does not seem to have proceeded from his being sensible of their value or from a desire to improve his country, it seems merely to have been done with a view of showing his subjects, that if he chose, he was capable of doing whatever Europeans could perform, for although he made broad-cloth, paper formed on wires like the European kind, watches and cutlery, yet the processes of making the whole were kept secret.\(^2\)
While Buchanan may not have understood Tipu’s motives for keeping his knowledge secret a practice not uncommon in India-his remarks do point to the apparently personal nature of the attainment of such skills. Even though many of Tipu’s workmen were European, their creations were regarded very much as the ‘Inventions’ of the Sarkar. In addition, they were clearly designed to impress.30

Kirmani described in great detail about these inventions in the Sarkar; Besides these inventious, Tipu’s workmen cast guns of a very wonderful description, lion-mouthed, also muskets with two or three barrels, scissors, penknives, clocks, daggers called Sufdura, also a kind of shield woven and formed so as to resist a musket ball.31

Tipu’s preference for his own manufactures, which he was much in the habit of praising, was notable and as early as 1784 he had ordered that everything should be made in his own country, he could do any thing without the assistance of Europeans more importantly, it was his practice when giving-gifts to identify whichever items had been produced in his own workshops (Karkhanajat) or were the invention of the Sarkar-i-Khudadadi.32
Tipu’s French relations were the result of the policy against British imperialism. Vicomte de Souillac, the Governor General of the French establishment in the East, tried his best to gain the friendship of Nizam and Marathas. But the failure of the French to win them ultimately brought about a change in the Souillac policy. Moreover, he was greatly impressed by Tipu’s victories against the Maratha-Nizam coalition and became inclined to agree with Cossigny, Governor of Pondicherry, that it was in French interest to form an alliance with Tipu, with whose help alone the English could be driven from India, and that the Marathas could not be effective against the English, partly because they were disunited and could be bought off, and partly because their army was entirely composed of cavalry. In fact, Cossigny favoured an alliance with Tipu whether the English helped the Marathas or not, and was prepared to supply him 8,000 rifles which he had demanded. Cossigny maintained that it was only with Tipu’s help that the English power in India could be overthrown.

French officers in Tipu’s service always remained his servants and never became his masters. In the third Anglo-Mysore war, his French corps consisted of 350 men and was commanded by Lallee. After the death of Lallee in 1791, Vigia was entrusted with the command. In 1794, the French corps
consisted of only about 20 Europeans, among whom were some swiss and 200 Indian Christians. When Vigi died in 1794, M. question succeeded him. On the fall of Seringapatam, the French corps had only four officers and 45 non-commissioned officers and privates. In addition, there were several deserters from the English army who had entered in Tipu's Service. Mr. M. Blevette, an old man, was Tipu's "Chief artificer and Engineer" who had also served Haider Ali, played a prominent role in training and tutoring Mysorean-technology under the supervision of Haider and Tipu.

Tipu's interest in European curiosities was long-standing. At the age of 18, he reportedly coveted the microscope of a French merchant which he saw in the latter's house in Madras; Such was his desire for it, the merchant agreed to give it to him. In 1786, M. Cossigny, the Governor of Pondicherry, sent him a barometer and latter Tipu wrote to him telling him to have a book on the thermometer translated into persian and sent to him. As well as requesting artisans and engineers from the French, he asked to be sent spectacles, clocks, and a Printing Press. He was described wearing a fob-watch, Possibly the one now in the collection of the Victoria and Albert museum in London. In 1792, during the siege of Seringapatam, the British found outside his tent which he had
been forced to abandon, ‘A case of mathematical instrument of London make. Following the conquest of Seringapatam, the victors came upon a stupendous collection of goods in various and extensive ware house in which included 20 granaries and 7 godowns containing immense quantities of paddy, ragi, salt, pepper and horse-gram. Nearly one thousand pieces of brass and iron ordnance were found in the fort and Island of Seringapattam, Among all the brass six pounders numbering 51 were English manufacture, and the others were in general cast in Tipu’s own foundry where a degree of perfection had been attained in every stage of the process. There was sufficient to form a large mercantile magazine. All items were minutely registered and the Sultan inspected horses or elephants which had been lately bought, or pieces of artillery which had been newly cast, and it was said that Tipu spent some of his pleasure hours in ranging amongst them.

One of the things that was attractive and worth mentioning about such item of European made was their curiosity value. In a letter acknowledging the receipt of a gift of a rosary and prayer carpet, Tipu wrote that they had given him much pleasure. In his instructions to his wakils to zaman Shah in 1796, in order to conceal the real purpose of their mission, they were told to say if asked that they were going to Persia, and having seen all the curiosities of that country, you were commissioned to
bring back with you the different rarities and choice productions of the country. These activities were clearly thought unlikely to arouse suspicion. As noted earlier curiosites were also exchanged as gifts. As with the recruitment of artisans then Tipu’s acquisitions of items of wide-ranging provenance was closely linked to the expression of his mighty-rule.

From the 1750s to 1800, modernisation of the Indian armies in many major independent states came about mainly through the efforts of French officers and military engineers who helped Indian rulers discipline their troops, equipped them with the latest weapons, developed ‘modern’ artillery and constructed crucial fortifications. They introduced many elements of European tactics on the battlefield and European techniques in training. However powerful some of these officers may have become in their time. They were always servants of the state, not masters. They did propose but the sarkar-i-Khudadad disposed. We shall never know what this course of modernisation may have led to had the Indian states been allowed to follow their own pattern of development. The last vestiges of French military influence disappeared with the subjugation of the Subcontinent. The progressive anglicisation of the institutions of India followed nowhere was the impact of English influence greater than in the army. The subsequent identity of the Indian army was forged from
the regiments and traditions of the Residency armies of the English East India company. So overriding was English influence in the army that its presence is manifest even today, 50 years after French influence, which may have lingered in the states was extinguished completely when the forces of these states merged with the Indian army after independence in 1947. Today, names like Allard and de Boigne, Raymond and Lallee do not evoke even curiosity in the army, leave alone the interest one might expect from the stirring stories of their times.46
References

2. Ibid, P, 52.
3. Ibid, P, 52.
4. Ibid, P, 52.
5. Ibid, P, 53.
8. Ibid, P, 53.
13. Ibid, P, 75.


32. Tipu sultan to Louis 16th, 6 August 1783, Kirkpatrick, letters, letter, 336.


34. Ibid, P, 114.


37. Dirom, Major. A Narrative of the campaign in India which terminated the war with Tipu Sultan in 1792, London, 1794, P, 183.

38. M.M.DLT. Haider Ali, PP, 326-27, De La Tour does not say if any pressure was brought to bear on the merchant.


42. Dirom, Major. A Narrative of campaign in India which terminated the war with Tippoo sultan in 1792, London, 1794. P, 98.


45. Reminiscences, French in India, New Delhi, P. 87.