CHAPTER VII

Effect of Mysorean Technology
One of the most important means used by Tipu Sultan to enforce his suzerainty, was his military power. The exercise of military might to lay claim to and to exercise legitimate sovereignty had a long history in India. Tipu operated within an environment where the legitimate ruler or king was the one who possessed *ksatra de facto*, the imperium, *empire* in the broad sense, i.e. the power to command, whatever might have been his birth and whatever might have been the circumstances that brought him to the throne. On the subcontinent, this was very much the case following the decline of the Mughal empire. Kirmani noted, *'He who can wield the sword shall have money struck in his name.'*

So far as the effect of Mysorean technology in the 18th century India is concerned, it cannot be denied that the English did not consider Tipu to be an unworthy foe till the last. They regarded his qualities of leadership as equal to their own. William Macleod, a British officer observed and testified this; "Tipu is the only prince who has preserved in disciplining and arranging his army after a regular plan. In this respect he is perfectly unprejudiced and ready to adopt any change which may serve for the improvement of his troops." The same source also testified to Tipu's successful retention of the western standards of discipline and deployment of fire-arms by the infantry, elements
that had been introduced in the Mysore army by Haider Ali, "His field guns', Macleod commented of Tipu, which are' almost all cast in his own country after French models are much better calculated for a distant cannonade than the English guns, a circumstance that has uniformly given his army an advantage over all cannonade.' The conclusion therefore was that' as his (Tipu's) armies are beyond comparison superior to those of the Nizam or Marathas, it may be included that he can defeat the greatest force that either of these powers could bring against him.'

Thomas Munro's impression about the strength of Tipu was not altered even after the reverses of the Mysore army during 1790-92. Instead, he was found saying.

With more territory they (the Maratha) are not half so formidable as they were fifty years ago; but Tipoo is what none of them are, complete master of his army and of his country. Every additional acre of land, rupee of same manner as among Europeans nations. He introduced modern tactics and all the improvements of musketry and artillery into his army. He is always ready for war, and can begin it, without consulting a superior government or a confederate chief, whenever he sees a conjuncture favourable to his designs. He was certainly in 1789 more than a match for the whole of the Maratha states, and
even now, they would probably be cautious in attacking him, though he could not bring into the field above eight or ten thousand horse and twenty-five or thirty thousand infantry.  

_Praxy Fernandes_ rightly remarks that a man with lesser courage and pride would have willingly compromised and made peace and perhaps salvaged a reasonable kingdom under the British umbrella as so many other native princes had done. But Tipu was not one like others. The most tricky problem before him was to work out suitable warcraft to match with three different and even entirely opposite tactics of his enemies.  

The Nizam with his forces practised the age-old method of the pitched battles, while the Marathas were the masters of surprise attacks or guerilla warfare. The English had their own style of warfare which centred round the use of artillery and fighting at a time of different war-fronts.  

Even a quick survey of Tipu's warfare is enough to record that he was shrewd enough to adopt the matching tactics against each one of them. It can safely be said that if these three would not have formed an alliance and would have fought separately against Tipu, he would have weighed heavily against them. The records of the battles fought by him against each one of them provides testimony to the fact.
Tipu had beaten back all his enemies in all sorts of warfare. The pitched battles, fort warfare, surprise attacks and even in the use of heavy artillery, he had adopted matching tactics against them and paid them back in the same coin. Thomas Munro, who began his career in south India from almost the last days of Haider Ali and early days of Tipu Sultan, also regarded the threat from Mysore more substantial than from the Marathas. In a passage he sums up his experience during the third Anglo-Mysore war thus:

The well-regulated, vigorous Government of Hyder has, under his son, become more systematic and more strong: the European discipline has been more rigidly enforced, and all kinds of fire-arms, which were formerly imported by strangers, are now made by his own subjects under the direction of foreign workmen. He has by various regulations and institution, infused so much of the spirit of vigilance, order and obedience, into every class of men, that he had experienced more of the accidents which always attend unsuccessful wars in Asia. The revolt of his chiefs, or the desertion of his men, whatever he has lost, has been owing to the superior power of his enemies, never to the defection of his officers; and even when forced to shut himself up in his capital, his authority continued so firm in the distant provinces, that the Marathas could not by any means convey information of their
approach to Lord Cornwallis, or advise him that they had left Dharwar, till they joined him at seringapatam. He conducts the operations of war on regular principles, taking the forts and securing the country as he advances; and add to all that by destroying or expelling all the Rajahs and Poligars, by not permitting his great officers to keep any independent bodies of troops, and by paying all the military himself, he had adopted the wisest measures for securing to his descendants the undisturbed possession of his dominions'.

*Munro* wanted the English to crush Tipu precisely because he was so strong. As he said in the same letter; it is only the presence of such an enemy that can render any combination of other states formidable, because they require some ally more regular and more vigorous than themselves, to hold them together and give spirit to their proceedings'. Fearing that the influence of Tipu might spread to the territories of the Nizam and the Marathas, Munro was led to argue in favour of an extension of the British dominions to the river Krishna; for as he said, 'while his power remains unimpaired so far from being able to extend out territory, we shall be perpetually in danger of losing what we have'.

He also proved his strategic superiority over the English. It was his numerical superiority, his ample supplies and
thorough knowledge of the countryside which enabled him to subdue his enemies in most of the fierce battle. His out post services, advance guards, ambuscades, surprises, communication, retreats, were admired by the British officers in their writings, His reconnaissances, alarms and demonstrations were excellent in their effects during the course of war.13

A year before the out break of the final Anglo-Mysore war in 1799, Malcolm wrote similarly of Tipu:

‘His conduct since the peace of 1792, has shown that though he possesses those feelings which are allowed not only to be natural but honourable in a humbled Monarch (viz. a spirit of ambition to regain lost power and fame and a spirit of revenge against the state that has humbled him) yet that he pursues these objects, not with that heedless and impatient rage that characterizes a man guided wholly by his passions; but with that unremitting activity and zealous warmth which we would look for in a Prince, who had come to a serious determination to endeavour by every reasonable means in his power to regain what he had lost.14

Even after the fall of serirgapatan, a section of Tipu’s followers were convinced that he had the strength to carry on the fight. The dangers that might have beset the company's
forces had he followed a different course may be guessed from
Aurthur Wellseley’s remarks on hearing of the submission of
another commander of the Mysore army, Qamaruddin without
resistance.

If he had remained in arms, we never could have
settled this country, unless we incurred the enormous expense of
keeping our army in the field even then the operations to be
carried on would be liable to all the hazards of protracted
military operations.16

The effect of Mysorean technology also testified by
a French officer Monneron in a letter to Cossigny. He thought
that Tipu’s artillery was superior to that of even the Europeans,
not to speak of the artillery of the Indian power. He further
argues that Tipu’s “artillery is in very good order and well served,
his troops are inured to the hardships of war, and they are the
best paid and best disciplined among the princes of India. he has
become redoubtable to the English, and the troops of the Suba or
the Marathas are not in a state of fight them.”16

Aurthur wellesley, the then Governor General,
wrote in praise about the Tipu’s army in a letter to his brother
on the day British army reached Seringpatam, “ in the action of
the 27th March, 1799 at Malavalli, Tipu’s troops behaved better
than they were ever known to behave. His infantry advanced and
almost stood the charge of Bayonets of the 33rd regiment and his cavalry rode at General Baird's European brigade. His light cavalry and others are the best of the kind in the world. They have hung upon us night and day from the moment we entered his country to this some of them have always had sight of us and have been prepared to cut off any persons venturing out of the reach of our campguards. We came by a road so unfrequented that it was not possible to destroy all the forage, which would have distressed us much even in that way as would be expected from them. If Tipu had sense and spirit sufficient to use his cavalry and infantry as he might have done, I have no hesitation in saying that we should not now be here and probably should not be out of the jungles near Bangalore."
References

5. Ibid, P. 93.
8. Ibid, P. 78.
10. Guha, Nikhelesh, Pre-British state system in south India, Calcutta, 1986, PP. (74-75)
12. Ibid, P. 139.
16. Pondicherry Archives, M. S. No. 1337.