CHAPTER IV

Strategies and Tactics of War
Tipu Sultan displayed considerable military skill in war. As a strategist, he had no match during his period. An able and gallant soldier, he was his own commander-in-chief. During the war he commanded the principal army. His personal valour, fearlessness in danger and perseverance inspired his troops with confidence and enthusiasm. Owing to this, he was extremely popular with his army. His energy and activity were astonishing, even 'Runnell' who was very hostile to Sultan, admitted that he possessed great qualities of war and finance.¹

He devised many strategies and tactics of war during the course of war, as is exemplified in *Fath-ul-Mujahidin* written by Zain-ul-Abidin Shushtri who wrote this work at the Sultan's request. Its importance lies in the fact that it is the only work in Persian which deals with Tipu's military administration and *(Tadabeer-e-harb)* tactics of war. This is a well documented study in which the author has tried his best to project Tipu in the correct historical perspective. It is written by one who knew Tipu intimately and is the only extant primary source in Persian *(contemporary work).*²

Tipu enjoyed the great advantage of an undivided command and owing to his personal direction of the campaign, his commanders could not give expression to their mutual jealousies. All forces were well disciplined and their morale was high. His regular horses under Ghazi Khan, Wali Mohammad and Ibrahim
Khan proved very effective in harassing the enemy and cutting off their supplies.

His general plan of a campaign was always sound. The manner of fighting was defensive rather than offensive. In the Fath-ul-Mujahidin, we find that before the beginning of hostilities and launching an offensive, it is important to make a reconnaissance of the battle field, examine it thoroughly and find out if the enemy forces have entrenched themselves behind clusters of trees or under the shelter of a mountain or at the bank of a river. If there is any of these conditions, it is not advisable to wage war except in a situation when war has become inevitable and the shelter or the enemy forces are on the one flank. In this state of affairs, the cavalry should be dispatched so that the enemy might not be able to fight back. In the meanwhile, proximity to the enemy position should be sought. No sooner is this goal reached, than first of all cannons should be fired followed by the gun-fire and small guns. If the enemy forces perchance are advantageously placed on even ground, the army should be divided in three equal lines and after cannonade and gun fire the enemy should be punced upon with spears and daggers.

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the artillery should be brought face to face with the enemy forces. The war should be started with bayonets and horseriders should be stationed at some distance from the army of the enemy. The horseriders should bring the news of movements and stay with no loss of time and as soon as the enemy intends to attack, a retreat should be made under the cover of cannonade and as soon as the enemy stands up, we should also stand up and use our artillery. When the enemy forces get themselves ready to fight and land in the battle field, the best recourse is night attack. The method of this kind of warfare is that as soon as the enemy forces get near and one fourth of the night remains and the part of the last night is over, movement with light artillery should be made so stealthily and secretly that even the sound of galloping horses and that of the movement of infantry are not heard. The soldiers should not meet and talk to one another and thus pounce upon the enemy and penetrate the army of the enemy firing with guns and cannons and bore of the soldiers be allowed to lay their hands on the valuables found during loot as booty of war. As this has been proved by experience that when the soldiers out of greed and avarice for riches and valuables turn their attention to plunder and loot and become indifferent to fighting, the enemy gets an opportunity to rally and mobilise by rejuvenating himself and renders the task difficult.
When the number of the enemy forces is reduced, the artillery of the enemy should be taken into possession after night attacks the camping ground of the enemy should be firmly held the rest of the night till the next mid-day. The army should not be dispersed in the morning. After the dispersion of the enemy forces, horseriders be posted to communicate the minutest detail regarding the enemy to their officers. The army should be stationed at such a place which is in no way accessible to the enemy.

If the enemy forces are greater in number, in the wake of night attack, the army should take to the opposite direction and dismount at a distance of two or three miles under the shadow of a fort or at the foot of a mountain or in forest and disarm itself and pass the whole day. As soon as it is dark, a start should made at once. The best of the devices (Tactics) is that during the time of war or peace when there is an increase or fall in the number of the army. It should camp at a place, facing the enemy forces flanked on both sides either by a mountain or forest and river, irrespective of the Plenty of water or any other thing. No note of it should be taken and no heed be paid. If the number of the enemy forces is less, the army should be stationed at a precarious place either under the shelter of a mountain or a forest and in no case, make a demonstration of haste or speed. The war should be based on the cannon, and such
tactics be resorted to that the enemy be forced to come in the battle field with all war strategies.8 If the enemy does not deliberately start hostilities till evening, the corresponding army should be kept at a distance of two miles in the shelter of a well known place, and cavalry, infantry and musketeers should be posted as guards on routes in the whereabouts of the army of the enemy and if the enemy gets out and makes good the escape, the army should be rearmed and the musketeers and cannons should be hidden at places and thus pursue the enemy and involve him.9

The cavalry should be posted before hand to disrupt and cripple the advancement of the enemy and scuttle his every move to launch an offensive till the main forces arrive at the spot. During war the infantry (Yazakdar) should be put on the right wing and the left wing so that they might defend their army (camps). The best of devices is that while camping half of the army should form the van-guard and the next half the rear-guard. Two pairs of mounted soldiers each meant for the advance and rear of the army should be deputed to keep a vigil round the clock.10 War or no war, whenever a march is made with the intention of waging war even if the army is at a distance, best effort should be made to keep both the wing of the army on one side or in the midst of dense trees or in the shelter of a river. If the war breaks-out by chance on the way, mentioned shelters
should be made use of. It has often been experienced many a time that the commander of an army came out safe and sound in one attempt piercing through the army ten times stronger by this tactics and succeeded in sending food and reinforcement to any spot he deemed fit, and then has returned to his own place by the same route and way.¹¹

All the commanders and sipahdars should be posted as premeditated. The cannons should precede the risala in accordance with the rules and regulations, and the boxes of gun powders be left behind the army and some wise house-riders be sent to the battle field to examine the nature of the upper and lower land. The army of the enemy should be loosely watched. If the fighting is going to happen, if commander is face to face such a technique should be put in operation so that at the time of war perfect awareness of the right and left, of the front and rear is secured by arranging the soldiers side by side and organising the artillery in the appropriate way, collectively coupled with the virtues of boldness and loyalty full attention should be paid to the battle field.¹² The commander-in-chief should warn the soldiers that if some one shirks his duty or shows his back during the course of war, he should be killed without any hesitations. If the resaladar colludes with the enemy, he should be killed.¹³

It the enemy stands, stands yourself and begin
cannonade, if he tries to come forward, come back-ward fighting slowly-slowly. If Sipahdar does not act according above written orders (rules) and runs away saving his life and does not care cannons and hand over all the cannons to the enemy, after proof, his punishment is that before rich and poor hang him till death. If act according to rules, give him jagirs, horses and elephants.\textsuperscript{14}

When the duty of sephadar is conformed then from poor to rich and from a soldier to an officer, all should obey him and if some one act against his wish, he has the right to punish him. If the army of the enemy is stronger, stay yourself behind the clusters of trees or under the shelter of a fort or a place of unapproachable and prepare yourself with half hour or full strength of army, everyday more formidable. We should come back after going two or three miles away from the enemies forces, repeat these tactics once or twice so that the enemy became indifferent, make a night attack after overcoming the situation gets out to a safer place because by this tactics our soldiers becomes aware and brave and the enemy is indifferent in war, more then these deceptions are used.\textsuperscript{15}

Sardar or Sepahsalar should send news reporters to collect more information of 10 or 20 miles, and keep aware of water and the Clusters of trees, so that at the time of need, both can be used and also about the movement of the enemies forces. At the time of marching, some cavalrymen should be
posted in the front and the rear as an advanced guard so that they walk to some distance from the main army because there are very advantages in these tactics. In face to face battle, never begin the war of cannons, and the enemy starts, you should disrupt and scuttle his every move and strength and then start cannonade.\textsuperscript{16}

To begin with the cannonade should be taken recourse of. When the enemy forces are near the cannon shells should be fired, if nearer gun fire should be resorted to and if very serious war breaks-out, we should go forward with the invocation, "Oh! Allah help us" and thus make the life of enemy impossible.\textsuperscript{17} If the Guerilla war starts, the artillery should be left at its place and under the cover of cannons a retreat should be made, It has been said, "War is deception".\textsuperscript{18}

If the enemy is stronger and he has stationed himself in the centre of his army (Qalb) and wants to go to a safer place attack after two or three a.m. at night because the enemy becomes indifferent at that time and thinks that there will be no attack and the army men retire to refresh themselves and relax and at that time, the goal should be reached and the war should be started so that enemy’s army could not face the might. If he stays near the camps, a night attack would be an easy thing.\textsuperscript{19}
During the war or at the time of starting war it is the foremost duty to put the cavalry in the front and the rear so that if there is a war with the advanced guards, the protection of the army is guaranteed and it remains beyond the reach of the enemy.  

All these things mentioned above have taught by experience and there is a lot of advantages in using all these. While battling for fort before the confrontation all the things necessary for capturing the forts must be procured, first the cannons on the towers should be destroyed with an incess cannonade, and afterwards the walls there of.

Tipu sultan in various bloody encounters taught the British that they were not strangers to combination of military art and exploits of valour. Tipu combined cleverly political expedience with war tactics. He provoked every where hatred against the British following the maxim. "Every thing is fair in war". He caused himself to be proclaimed as the saviour and the avenger of Mysore. He drew from all parts of India new lessons in the art of destruction and enveloped himself in a heavy cloud formed of all the elements of desolution and carnage.

His tactics were a combination of courage and planning during the course of war. His main principle was to attack detached parties and intercept the convoys of the enemy.
He always avoided combats as far as possible. While making an invasion into the enemy's kingdom, he made his enemy tired by long marches, surprising attacks on isolated detachment and supply depots. He cut off enemy's communication with his magazines harassed ceaselessly their advanced troops. he sometimes entered the enemy's camp unawares.  

He, by his swift marches and counter marches, baffled the English commanders who toiled in vain to catch up with him. He inflicted great loss on the English armies both in men and material, and he not only failed the plans of Medows for the invasion of Mysore but invaded the carnatic also thus converting a defensive into an offensive war. He definitely proved his superiority as a skilful general and as a tactician of the first rank. Even cornwallis who did not like to admit the defeats which the English armies had sustained during the third Anglo-Mysore war, acknowledged, we have lost time and our adversary has gained reputation which are two most valuable things of war.

By the improvements which he had introduced in his infantry and artillery and above all in excellent cavalry. Cornwallis was obliged to admit that Tipu's Looties were "the best troops in the world, for that they were always doing something to harass their enemies". According to Arthur Wellesley, his cavalry was the best of the kind in the world.
He crossed the Tungabhadra river while it was flooded and inflicted severe defeats upon his enemies in a series of night attacks which wore them down and obliged them to listen to overtures of peace. He kept close to the river banks, which were steep and rocky. It was difficult ground for the movements of enemies cavalry, but was favourable to the operations of his infantry. This proved decisive in the war with the Marathas and Nizam. He always selected his own ground and throughout the campaign the initiative remained in his hand. Besides, by marching along the banks of river. Tipu was enabled to draw his supplies with facility from his kingdom, south of the Tungabhadra. Tipu’s efficient intelligence service, which enabled his irregular horse to intercept the Maratha convoys, The shortage of supplies was in no small measure responsible for the enemies reverses in this war.27

Tipu has often been criticised for having allowed his cavalry which was a terror of Madras, To decay and for having given up his father's mode of warfare.28 Although he began to make increasing use of his infantry, he did not give up Haider’s mode of warfare, in fact it was because both his infantry and cavalry played their distinctive and proper role that he was able to gain victory over the Marathas-Nizam coalition, and to carry-on a gallant struggle for nearly two years against an Anglo-Nizam-Maratha confederacy, In his war with Maratha, Although it was
mainly due to his superior infantry and artillery that defeated them, the cavalry too rendered great help by harassing the enemy and cutting off his supplies.29

The success which he gained over Medows was entirely due to the efficient use which he made of his cavalry, Lord Cornwallis, when advanced on Seringapatam in May 1791. It was the co-ordination of the Mysore cavalry and infantry that checked his further advance and forced him to retreat from Arikere. Second time, his numerous infantry offered such stubborn resistance before the capital that the Governor General was compelled to make peace with Tipu.30

Arthur Wellesley admitted this fact in his writings that Tipu's cavalry was the best of the kind in the world.31 His true advantage lay in superior mobility against the British. During the course of war, he himself commanded the principal army and the Generals whom he sent to fight on different fronts had to act according to his instructions.32 Major Dirom testifies to the fidelity of the Mysore troops to Tipu.33 Even Colonel Wilks admits that the army remained loyal to the Sultan till the last.34

In the first phase of war the failure of the company's plan of campaign, and the losses which the English army, " The finest and the best appointed that ever took the field in India,"35 had sustained, greatly alarmed Lord Cornwallis,
the then Governor General Medows was defeated and the Carnatic lay at the mercy of Tipu. He saw that Tipu's efforts have been of late so vigorous and in some degrees so successful against our army, that our whole strength is to be utilised to reduce the power of so dangerous a neighbour. He therefore reverted to his previous decision of personally conducting the war, thinking that his presence in the field would not only put fresh vigour in the ranks of the British army but would also stir the Nizam and the Marathas into activity.

Tipu's strategy during the siege of Bangalore had been to avoid a general action, and to attack the English only when their resistance weakened. This was to be effected by cutting off their communication with their allies and the Carnatic, by destroying the neighbouring villages to prevent them from getting any fresh supplies, by constant cannonading and throwing of rockets, and by striking at the baggage and stores in order to harass them and create confusion in their ranks. These tactics had achieved a large measure of success. The English army was completely isolated from the Carnatic and its allies; there was a great shortage of forage, grain and ammunition and cattle were dying daily by hundreds. The English cavalry of picquets is the face of swarms of Mysore horse. After the fall of Bangalore, which came as a great blow to Tipu. Lord Cornwallis had to admit. "The army has sustained great fatigue and hardship in
carrying on a seige in the face of an active and powerful enemy, and our distress for forage nearly occasioned a failure of the undertaking and is but realived after the capture of the palace. From this it is clear that the condition of the English army had become so precarious that if krishna Rao had not come to their rescue, they would have been sooner or later overwhelmed by the Mysoreans.

In the third Anglo-Mysore war (1790-92), Tipu's cavalry was superior to that of the English and although his artillery was not better serve than that of his enemies, It was superior in numbers, secondly, he enjoyed superiority in the means of transport, having 1,40,000 Oxen and 12,000 mules at his disposal.

Tipu had carried on a gallant struggle against powerful combinations for many years. He had defeated Floyd, baffled both Meadow and Maxwell and frustrated their plan for the invasion of Mysore. According to Thomas Munro, "These gentlemen themselves are as well convinced as any private in the army, 'how cheap Tipu held them and how little honour he could have gained by foiling them one, or rather two, sallied forth, and after spouting some strange, unintelligible stuff like ancient pistol and a ghost of a Roman lost to their magazines by farming them infront of the army and then spent the remaining of the campaign in running about the country, after what was ludicrously called by
the army the invisible power, asking which way the bull ran."42

Tipu continued to fight with great courage in the third Anglo-Mysore war, hitting hard and some times very hard during Cornwallis' advance on Seringpatam in May 1791, Tipu displayed brilliant strategy, by having on the skirts of the English forces by destroying their baggage and by laying waste the country through which they marched. Tipu's cavalry wore them off, and then before Seringapattam. In the second encounter with the Governor General before Seringpattam, he again fought with a great courage and defended his capital in a manner truly worthy of his father, himself and of the nation which alone is attached to him.43

His general too showed great dash and resource. Fateh Haider destroyed Faridd-udin's force and re-captured Gurrantonda, while kamaruddin khan cut off a detachment of Marathas in Maddagiri and reoccupied Coimbature. In Fed 1792 when the ring of the powerful enemies was closing round the Sultan from all sides, a small body of Mysore cavalry cut off a great part of Abercromby's camp equipage and would have captured the whole had it not been relieved by Colonel Floyd.44 The colonel found him (Abercromby) wrote Munro, "So much dismay as if he had been surrounded by the whole Austrian army, and busy in placing an ambuscade to catch about six looties, he must have been a simple looti than he caught."45
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Haider and Tipu's armies by reputation inspired fear and even panic in incontestable. At the commencement of the second Anglo-Mysore war in 1780, there was rumour in Madras of a possible invasion by Haider's forces. Innes Munro remarked that, although 'unsuspicious tranquility' of the Madras council appeared to suggest there was no foundation to the report, it seemed to have raised among the natives in general an uncommon share of terror and dismay.'
References

1. Runnell, J. Marches of the British Armies in India during the campaigns of 1790 and 1791, London, 1792. (P. XXXIX)


4. Ibid, P. 27.

5. Ibid, P. 27.

6. Ibid, P. 27.


15. Ibid, P. 29.


17. Ibid, P. 29.


22. Michaud, Joseph. History of Mysore under Haider Ali and Tipu Sultan, New Delhi,
1885, PP. 38-39.


33. Dirom, Major. A Narrative of the campaign in India which terminated the war with Tipu Sultan in 1972, (London 1794) P. 249.


35. Ross, C. Correspondence of Charles... Vol. 2 and P. 52. (London, 1859).


38. Ibid., PP. 201-202.


41. Ibid, P. 266.

43. P.A. MS, No. 5303, Raymond to De. Frense, May 26, 1792.
45. Ibid, P. 133.
46. Ibid, P. 133.
Encampment Charts of Tipu Sultan’s Army
Drawn up under Tipu’s guidance

Plate 1