Nayar Brigade is a peculiar Military Organisation consisting of purely Nayars. It is also a unique aspect in the Military History of the world particularly in the Indian Context. So far no attempt have been made to make a detailed study on the reorganized state military consisting of men purely from the Nayar Caste. Which subsequently brought about changes in the recruitment, drill, discipline, uniform, arms and duties on the western pattern, under the supervision of the British Commanding Officers. The modernized outlook of the Nayar Brigade favoured the traditional Nayar force to render their meritorious services in the defence of their Nation during II World War.
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(SHEELA MENON)
INTRODUCTION

Military History, became popular as part of the knowledge which deals with cause, course and effects of military operations. The plight of the vanquished has come to be considered essential not only for soldiers and members of the defence studies and students of history but to every human beings.

The destructiveness of the world wars on the Western front led military experts themselves to seek ways and means to avert the possibility of another catastrophe. European military personnels and civilians brought to the knowledge of the common man consequences of war and how it affected the destiny of Nations and lives of millions, there by bringing total destruction to human civilization. Their personal experience at the war fronts in the form of books and articles have come to occupy a very important place. Their works were greatly appreciated by the readers not only in their country but in other continents of the world as well. Ever since the II World war, works on military history and defence studies have become very popular. To give a few examples: Colonel General staff Corps John Robert Beishline, "Military Management for National Defence", U.S.A., 1957; Lieutenant - Colonel J.C.M. Baynes, "The soldier in Modern Society", London

In India, military personnel and civilians have made their contributions in the field of Military History. Regiment is a part of the military establishment of a Nation divided into Squadrons or Batteries and commanded by a Colonel. Writers have made their contribution in the field of Regimental studies of the martial races of India. For example: K.C. Praval, "Valour Triumphs A history of the Kumaon Regiment", Haryana, 1976; Lieutenant JR Daniel (Retd), "The Black Pom-Poms, History of the Madras Regiment 1741 - 1983" Wellington, 1986; Captain A.H. Bingley, "Sikhs, Simla, 1826; Major R.M. Betham, "Marathas and Dekhani Musalmans", Calcutta, 1903. The appointment of British Resident to supervise the administration of Travancore, made the position of Nayars insecure in the administrative and military establishment of their land. Treaties of the 18th and the early 19th Century reduced Travancore to a subsidiary ally of the company; and the military potential of the Nayars were confined within the boundaries of Travancore. The opposition of the people found expression in the form of insurrections and revolts. Nayar
Brigade was reorganized on a European model. The men were trained and disciplined by British Officers who replaced the native officers from all top ranking posts.

Though some works have been done on the early military history of the princely state of Travancore, but so far no attempt was taken to present a detailed study on the history of Nayar Brigade. Hence an attempt is being made to investigate the origin and growth of the Nayar Brigade and involvement of the British into the administration of the Nayar Brigade by engaging European officials. Introduction of western drill and discipline and the reorganization of the Nayar Brigade into Travancore State Forces.

The word 'Nayar' is derived from the sanskrit word Nayak meaning leader and to be cognated with the word Nayaka. It is generally accepted that the terms Naik or Nayakan and the word Nayar are all derived from the same Sanskrit original. The word Nayar means a leader accustomed as a military leader and his chief duty was warfare. Brigade means a major sub-unit of an army division, usually of two or three Battalions commanded by a Brigadier, with organised body of Persons in uniforms for special duties. Hence, Nayar Brigade means a division of army consisting of Nayar caste alone.
The area chosen for the study is the former Travancore State which existed till 1956 and the period of study covers a span of 140 years. From 1795 when the English East India Company concluded a Treaty with the Princely State of Travancore by which Travancore troops were bound to aid the East India Company in its wars and ending in 1935, when Travancore State joined the Indian State forces scheme and the Maharajahs' Body guard and Nayar Brigade were reorganized and named as Travancore State forces¹. Geographically Travancore is the most southern part of the Indian state and occupies the South West portion of the Indian peninsula with its apex at capecomorin, between 80° 4 and 10° 22 North latitude, between 76° and 13 and 77° 38 East latitude. An area of 7,625 sq.miles, its extreme length from North-South being 174 miles and its width 75 miles. Travancore receives a share of both the South West and the North East Monsoon. Nature has provided plenty of flora and fauna and well timbered with teak, blackwood etc. Travancore has many rivers, lakes and miles of back waters which promote irrigation and facilitate cultivation. The largest river is the periyar river 142 miles long. The total area occupied by the surface of the lake accounts to 227½ sq. miles of which 157 is with in Travancore.

Unexposed to the muslim invasion, the southern shore of Kerala is predominantly occupied by Hindu than other parts of India.²

Hinduism, Christianity and Islam were the major religions which existed in Travancore. Brahmins, kshatriyas, Ambalavasis and Nayars formed the upper caste. Iravas and Nadars of South Travancore constituted the backward caste. The untouchables like the parayas and the original inhabitants were the Kadors, Irulas, malapandarams etc.

The analysis of the theme necessitates a few vital questions, the answers for which is sure to throw much light on the theme. To cite a few examples:

1. To what extent the Social, Political and Economic conditions of Travancore paved the way for the emergence of Nayars as a military sect?

2. How did they continue their military activities in the sphere of the day to day administration of Travancore from the early period towards the close of the 18th century?

² Report on the Administration of Travancore 1931 - 1932 (Trivandrum, 1933), p.1
3. How far the advent of Europeans in India influenced the military system of Travancore and how far did the European generals succeed in introducing western pattern of military system in Travancore?

4. How did the British dominate Travancore in military and administrative affairs and how did the Travancore Government react on it?

5. How far the British policy towards Travancore affected the Traditional military system of Nayar Brigade and how did it decline?

The primary sources for the study were mostly the East India Company's records such as Political Consultations, Military Consultations and Secret Sundries and some reports like the Annual Administration Reports of the Madras presidency, 1857-58 and 1933-1936 and Native Newspaper Reports of the Government of Madras 1874-1936. The Government Orders, and Proceedings of the Government of Madras and Travancore, of the Departments such as Political, Judicial, Military, Public and Law available in the Tamil Nadu Archives - Madras and National Archives-New Delhi were most important. cover Files preserved in the Directorate of Archives, Trivandrum and letter correspondence between Madras Government and Travancore Government and Government of India. The Correspondence between
British Resident of Travancore-Cochin with the Dewan of Travancore were of immense help in reconstructing the history of the Nayar Brigade. Standing Orders of the History of Nayar Brigade were also highly useful. The Government Records were supplemented by Books both in Malayalam and English and by personal Interviews.

Many secondary sources available in libraries such as Connemara, Madras University, Madras Institute of Development Studies, Adyar Theosophical Society Library, Srivichitratirunal Grantha Sala, Secretariat legislative and Law Department Libraries, University Library in Trivandrum, Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, supplemented the needed sources.

The first chapter deals with the commercial and other political activities of the foreigners with Travancore. The early military system of Travancore consisting of Nayars and the role of the Nayars in the military and political activities are highlighted. During the 18th Century the Nayar Battalion of Travancore was trained by European officials like D’ Lannoy and the introduction of Western military system are also explained.

The factors which paved the way for the entry of Nayars into military service, the dominant position held by them as officials and military personnel which enabled them to uphold
their supremacy in the administration of their state are highlighted in the second chapter.

The third chapter is meant for bringing out the traditional practice of Nayar Taravud system, Marumakkathayam law of Inheritance, undivided Taravud property, marriage pattern, the social structure of the people and the rigidity of the caste system etc. which had its impact on Nayars.

The fourth chapter elucidates the military establishment of Travancore before the 1809 revolt, the dismemberment of the State militia, periodical reorganization of the Nayar Brigade by European officers and their involvement in the introduction of Western military system and powers of European and Native Officers.

The fifth chapter is designed to analyse the factors which paved the way for the decline of Nayar Brigade since the later half of the 19th century. The functioning of police as a separate unit, the emergence of Irava, Syrian Christians and Muslims, changes in Travancore, social, economic, legislative, political, judicial and the Government polity, the introduction of western education. Finally in 1935 the Nayar Brigade was renamed as Travancore State forces after incorporating the Maharajah’s Bodyguard with the Nayar Brigade are described.
The Sixth Chapter deals with the recruitment of men for infantry, artillery, band, their training, drill, discipline, uniform, leave, furlough, pension are given in detail.

The conclusion explains the achievements as well as the short comings of the Nayar Brigade. The Nayars and their economic status, political and social supremacy above all their martial spirit which enabled them to continue as hereditary chiefs. The influence of British administration on the Nayar Brigade, training by European officers and duties on the basis of British Native Infantry Regiment and the factors which paved the way for the decline of Nayar Brigade are explained.

After the Treaty of 1795, the military strength of the Nayar Brigade began to decline because the British administration in India dragged Travancore into the subsidiary Alliance in 1805 by which the British administrators curtailed the interest of the natives and concentrated much on their welfare. Though the Nayar Brigade was given western military training they were not given the chance to do heavy military operations. On the other hand they were engaged to guard the king and perform light security duties. When the political dominance of Nayars declined due to the dominance of British administration in Travancore, the Nayar Brigade also began to
disintegrate. Neither the British Government nor the Travancore administration paid much attention for its revival and at last Nayar Brigade and the Maharajah's bodyguard were reorganized and came to be known as the Travancore State Forces.

Thus the study of the Nayar Brigade is a novel work, highlighting the History and Contribution of the Nayars to the development of Travancore State. This indepth study throws much light on the details relating to the origin, growth, and importance of the Brigade. Thus it constitutes a new area in the study of military History and there is a rich source of information for scholars.