CHAPTER IV

REORGANIZATION OF THE NAYAR BATTALIONS
FROM 1809 - 1857

The effects of the revolt of 1809 shook the very foundation of the existing Nayar military force in the two princely states of Travancore and Cochin. The subsidiary force stationed at Quilon since the disturbance, had their troops sent to these two states for further security. Eventhough, there were similarities between the two states with regard to the maintenance of the Brigade consisting of men from the Nayar caste, there were marked differences in the strength of the infantry, artillery, commanding officers and efficiency of the force.

The military establishments of Travancore before 1809 consisted of Three Battalions of Carnatic Brigade with seven Battalions of Nayar sepoys and a large militia numbering several hundreds of Nayar soldiers. After the dismemberment of Travancore army, a prohibitory order was passed by the British Government, which deprived the people from possessing or manufacturing arms. The British officials overran the military stores and magazine in the Northern, Southern and Eastern lines which formed the chief depot of arms storage. After 1809, the retained 700 men of the first Nayar Battalions
became the central core of the later days Nayar Brigade. By 1817, the Ranee Reagent Gowri Parvathi Bai and the Madras Government realized that the remnant of the old Travancore militia were of little utility for the state without arms or proper drill and discipline.\textsuperscript{1} Although subsidiary forces were stationed at Quilon to safeguard the territorial possessions of Travancore from external threat, the Madras Government realized that it was highly essential for Travancore to have their own state forces for internal defence, law and order. The Reagent Ranee firmly believed that proper discipline and efficiency could be brought out in the force only if they were subjected to European Officers. The need to replace the native Commanding Officers by European officers often raised protest from the native Commanders and Nayar soldiers. In the absence of the state infantry, the subsidiary force had to perform inferior duties also which could even deprive them of their service elsewhere in India. Like the British Government, the Resident was also fully aware of the fact that it was not beneficial to encourage Travancore state for strengthening their state force. When a native Nayar infantry disciplined and commanded by an European Officer was maintained at a low cost, it could even act as an assistant force to the main subsidiary force. By these means the small

\textsuperscript{1} Military Department Sundries, Vol. 2, 6 June, 1812, p. 14.
coup of infantry would be unable to strike against the
country's force but would be sufficient enough to maintain
internal security. Most of the British Officers who had
become the Commanding Officer of the Nayar Brigade were men
who had been acquainted with Travancore and the system of
administration. One such officer was Colonel Macleod of the
9th Regiment native infantry. This officer was recommended by
Reagent Ranee Gowri Parvathi Bai to the post of Commanding
Officer of the Nayar infantry. He had already displayed his
efficiency and won high reputation as the killidar of the fort
of Trivandrum and Ranee's escort of cavalry. It was only after
Resident's approval that Madras Government confirmed permanent
post for Macleod in Travancore. More Nayars were recruited and
the strength of the first Nayar infantry was raised to 1,200
men and they were also armed. The first Battalion was not
sufficient for civil duties and hence Macleod organized the
second Battalion, consisting of voluntary enlistment of
Nayars. When Captain Macleod was the Commanding Officer of the
Nayar Brigade, he had no assistant Officers. After the
reorganization of the second Battalion additional junior
officers were required, but only Captain Gray on half pay
list was made available from the regular army. Hence,
Travancore Government had to appoint three local Officers

namely Henry Daly as Lieutenant of second Battalion, William Sheridan as the Lieutenant of first Battalion on 28th January 1819 respectively. N.F. Nixon was appointed as Lieutenant and Quarter Master. These Officers were given commission from the Travancore Government. The pay of the Commanding Officer fixed at Rs. 1000 and that of Battalion Officers and Quarter Master at Rs. 200/-. Macleod brought some changes in the composition of the Brigade. Since, the Brigade was formed for police duties also, Macleod sent away those unfit men from the service to form a separate police coup to maintain law and order. Every attempt was made to organize the Brigade on the pattern followed by the sepoys in the service of the Company's army. During Macleod's days, there was no division in the duties between the military and civil servants. It was because Macleod never interfered in the administrative matters, but remained confined to his military duties and the Dewan also took charge over relief post and leave for Brigade men at the outstation. The Madras Government were not in favour of retaining Macleod in the service of the infantry. The growing influence of Macleod in the royal court and general administration disturbed the Madras Government. Moreover, the circumstances which required the Commanding Officer to gain

his influence in the court no longer existed and hence Macleod was called back. By September 1819, when Macleod laid down his office, first and second Battalions were organized with 2,100 rank and file, disciplined in the manner of English East India Company's Troops. Macleod was succeeded by Captain Gray as the next Commanding Officer in September 1819 and remained in service until 20th April 1829. During his days the overall command of the Nayar Brigade rested with the Commanding Officer, and the Dewan was relieved of his additional duties at the relief post.4

By 1820, Cochin State had only one native infantry Battalion with artillery which constituted the Nayar Brigade. The Nayar infantry of Travancore consisted of two Battalions, commanded by European Officers and men from the Brigade despatched to outstation and to guard treasury at various places. Cochin Nayar Brigade had no European Officers to command, although men mount guards at Rajah's residence and Temples. The state treasury at Ernakulam was not guarded by the Cochin sepoys but by British Indian sepoys.5

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Men of the Nayar Brigade had to perform military, police, civil and other menial duties. They were employed as police guards at Trivandrum Pagodas, Palace, fort, treasury, prisons and as detachment guards to outstations, to escort Rajah and his family members during ceremonial and other religious Processions. To escort Rajah on tours, to assist the revenue Officers in the collection of revenues and other duties. All those duties were in much contrast to the drill and discipline of the military activities of the Brigade. Men of the Nayar Brigade served in many parts of the state. The state detachment guards were furnished from both Battalions to the outstations, like Alleppey, Todupuzha, Quilon, Quilon Jail, Quilon District Tannah, Shencottah, Suchindrum, Kottar, Capecomorin, Nagercoil, Bhutapandi and Aramboly. These men were relieved once in 6 months when they exchanged their outposts. The guards safeguarded the Government treasury, jail administration, to check convicts, smugglers and the infiltration of Maravas from the Eastern region. Alleppey guards were sent as escorts to the Rajah and other members of the royal family. Men who were retained at the Travancore Head Quarters were incharge of guard duty at royal palace, Pagodas and other Government institutions. Men from the second Battalion were retained for drill and discipline.\(^6\)

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command of the Brigade was either done by a Regimental Captain, given the local rank of Major, or a Regimental Major, but, never by an officer of higher grade. That was because it would add to additional responsibilities and expenditure to the Travancore Government. The Rajah was not in favour of a higher grade officer to command the Brigade. The command of the Nayar Brigade, constituting of two Battalions was not the main command in the armies of the Native allied powers. Their duties were not fully military in nature. It was on account of these reasons that the Nayar Brigade was never Commanded by an Officer above the rank of Regimental Major. Hence, Lieutenant Colonel Grant, commandant of the Nayar Brigade after being promoted to Regimental Lieutenant Colonel was not allowed to continue his command of the Brigade.\(^7\)

The disputed boundary between Travancore and the British territory of Tinnevelly remained a source of threat to the inhabitants of Travancore. After the disbandment of state militia in 1809, the natives of Travancore were not encouraged to possess or manufacture arms. The sepoys sent as guards at various outstations were unable to defend themselves or their fields from men and beasts. The disputed area served as the passage for the runaway Nayar rebels, convicts and smugglers

\(^7\) Political Consultation, Vol. 537, 19 September, 1854, p.3729.
to escape to Tinnevelly and the infiltration of Maravas and Bandits into Travancore. The subsidiary forces were very often called to assist the Nayar forces and the British troops were also permitted to persuade the convicts in Tinnevelly. By these measures their activities remained checked for sometime, but by 1819, the armed Maravas resumed their activities and were more formidable in the Southern region of Travancore near Aramboly pass. On certain occasions, the British forces along with the Nayar Brigade were called upon to suppress the illegal infiltration and other irregularities committed by the natives of the neighbouring states.

In 1821, the Brigade establishment consisted of 2,284 of which there were 20 Subadars, 20 Jemadars, 100 Havildars, 100 Naigues, 44 Drummers and Fifers, 2000 Privates. The Brigade expenditure in 1823-24 was 1,35,531. The need for the reduction of the sepoys arose because in the execution of the civil duties by the men of the Brigade, they came into collision with the civil authorities like revenue collectors.

This tensed atmosphere was brought to the knowledge of the Government by the Commanding Officer in 1824. The Government wanted to bring about some changes in the Nayar Battalion and hence the Battalion was reduced and reorganized for the first time in 1826. The reduction was made to enlist more men for the Police duties. Accordingly about 25 privates were reduced from each company and a total of 500 men were reduced. After the reduction, each company consisted of only 75 sepoys. While no reduction was made in the other ranks, the strength of the private remained at 1,500. In December 1830 a further reduction of the Brigade was made from 1,500 to 1,400. Subsequently the Brigade was organized on several occasions either by the reduction of sepoys in the Battalion, or changes made in the number of Officers.

The visit of Lushington the Governor of Madras in 1830 resulted in a lot of changes in the military administration of Travancore. He was much pleased with the system of administration in the state. The British realized that the circumstances which compelled the stationing of Company's subsidiary forces at Quilon no longer existed. Hence, the

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13. Ibid. p.12.
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British Government started to withdraw their troops first from the outpost regions and then from the Head Quarters at Quilon. Until, the withdrawal of the Company's forces, the Nayar Brigade was treated only as an assisting force. The term Nayar Brigade was given only after 1830.\textsuperscript{15} In 1836, the subsidiary force at Quilon was withdrawn leaving behind only one Regiment. Thus men from Company's sepoys came to be gradually replaced by men from the Brigade. The peace and tranquility in the state both from internal and external factors convinced the British Government that there should be no need to station the subsidiary force in Travancore.\textsuperscript{16}

At Alleppey one of the outstation, guards from the Brigade took to various police and revenue duties. The commercial agent, the Superintendent of Police and the Resident J. Maclean felt the inefficiency of guard men at Alleppey. These guards were stationed far away from the Headquarter, and hence were not subjected to proper control. The need for an European officer was essential to have effective power of directing and regulating affairs at the outstation. In 1840 there were two adjutants for the Battalions and one Quarter Master to the Brigade, incharge of

\textsuperscript{15} T.K. Velupillai, \textit{Travancore State Manual} (Trivandrum, 1940), Vol. IV, p.123.

\textsuperscript{16} Political Consultation, Vol. 549, 27 March, 1855,p.1697.
artillery. The need for the fourth officer to take charge of the command to the North of Travancore became essential.\textsuperscript{17} Captain Ross, a Company's Officer of 18th Regiment Madras Native Infantry was appointed to take charge of the detachments especially the commercial depot at Allepey. In 1842 the post was abolished. The whole of the command stations before 1845 were 62, and men on guard were 600 inclusive of Officers.\textsuperscript{18}

It became the customary practice to employ Nayar Brigade for some of the state ceremonies of a religious character. The European Officers commanded by parading with troops on these occasions. The practice had not been confined to Travancore state. From 1841, the Court of Directors instructed the Calcutta Council to change the custom and that was brought into force in Travancore state, whereby the European Officers of the Brigade did not attend to any ceremonies of a religious nature. On certain ceremonies like Rajah's birthday, annual sasthamangalam procession, and pookajapara procession, the European Officers assembled after saluting, giving place to the native Officers to assume the command. On the death ceremony of the Rajah or any other royal member, the Officers assembled with foot soldiers and after giving the 

\textsuperscript{17}. Political Consultation, Vol. 314, 16 June, 1840, p.2534.  
\textsuperscript{18}. Political Department, GO. No. 208, 5 July, 1846.
respect to the body of the Rajah fall out, made way to the native Officer. Thus even for certain native ceremonies, priority was given to the European Officers and not to the native Officers of the state.\textsuperscript{19}

Eventhough, Nayar Brigade was organized on the pattern of British Native Infantry Regiment, the sepoy of the Brigade did not reside in the cantonment like that of the men of the Company's native infantry. Brigade men were permitted to go to their village which was usually 11-12 kms from their duty centre and they returned back when they were called for duties. The Constitution of the Nayar Brigade was such that it could not be modelled purely on a military basis. When any attempts were made to curtail the leisure hours of the men and bring in rigidity in the drill and discipline, the Nayar soldiers often revolted. In 1850, Colonel Grant Commanding Officer of the Brigade introduced the daily relief of guards in place of every 4th day and strict guard duties like that of Native Infantry Regiments. Hence many of the Nayar soldiers took voluntary discharge. It was Dury the Commanding Officer, who, brought about a balance between the habits of those men and their requirements for the service in the Brigade. So that they could be given relief on every fourth

day. The new measure gave them leisure hours which enabled them to attend to their labours in the fields and garden. The produce of which was highly essential to support their family in addition to their meagre amount they received as salary from the Travancore Government. The Nayar Brigade was sent for outstation duty such as suppression of rebellion and maintenance of internal peace. For instance, the Nayar troops were sent to suppress the uppergarment agitation of the shanars in the Southern Districts of Travancore like Nagercoil, Kottar, Suchindram and Neyoor. The dispatched men from 10th January to 31st of March 1829 consisted of both commissioned and non-commissioned Officers and men inclusive of 1 Subadar, 1 Lieutenant, 2 Geometers, 10 Havildar, 10 Naigues and 150 Sepoys. Time factor and the financial expenses deprived the British from bringing their subsidiary force from Quilon in the North to the extreme South when any kind of law lessness occurred. The British officials did not want their forces to indulge in the suppression of internal agitation. On the other hand, they wanted the Nayar Brigade consisting of mainly Nayars to take the frontal attack and suppress their own people. To create further communal tension, so that the people of different castes never united.

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10 Interview with Havildar K. Bhaskaran Pillai, 10 October, 1994.

against the British for a common cause in future. Men from the
Brigade were also sent with native Officers for the
destruction of royal tigers which remained a source of threat
to the villagers.\textsuperscript{22}

The administration of the Nayar Brigade fell into the
hands of the British administrators. The Residents in
Travancore refused to take any responsibilities regarding the
financial commitment and other internal matters concerned with
the members of the Nayar Brigade. They wanted to entrust such
kind of responsibilities to the native officials such as the
Dewan or other state officials. When some of the sepoys of the
Nayar Battalions approached the Resident with their petitions,
they were not entertained by the Resident. For instance, in
the case of one Ramanpillai the naigue of the second Battalion
in his petition dated 12th August 1837, when complained about
one Koomarapillai and his associates who broke open formers
house and stole property and destroyed Government records. The
petitioner's grievance was that those law breakers were
released by the Royal Court and were not punished accordingly.
The Resident refused to take the case and directed the matter
to be solved by the Dewan.\textsuperscript{23}

\textsuperscript{22} Political Consultation, Vol. 247, 3 May, 1836, p.1139.

\textsuperscript{23} Political Consultation, Vol., 273, 12 December, 1837,
p.7054.
In another case, John Ribero of Ambalapoly submitted a petition to the Resident. Which stated that after his father's death who had been in the service of the Nayar Brigade for several years, the father's pension was received by his mother. After her death, it was stopped. The petitioner requested the Resident to enable him to receive his father's pension. This case was also not taken up by the Resident as all the petition relating to pension were to be referred to the Travancore Government, as men received their pension from their Governments. 24

When British Administrators were the ruling race in India they wanted to maintain high decorum of their forces stationed at Quilon, because they wanted to prove their supremacy in military and administrative matters. The Commanding Officer of the subsidiary force was powerful at Quilon and the cantonment was separated from the town of Quilon. In that cantonment only the Commanding Officer of the station was all powerful. Even the police master of the town of Quilon did not interfere with the inhabitants of the cantonment. When the British officer in command of the subsidiary force at Quilon was unable to discharge his duties, the Commanding Officer of Nayar Brigade holding British Commission could not interfere or assume

command of Quilon forces. Only the next senior Officers on that spot at Quilon assumed command. Thus the officer commanding Rajah's force could not interfere with the Company's force. 25

The services of the British Officers attached to the Brigade are lent to the Durbar for duty with the Nayar Brigade with the sanction of the Government of India. As far as the military organization of the Nayar Brigade was concerned, the Commanding Officer was in charge of the general administration of the Brigade and he ranked next in military position to the Officer commanding the Company's subsidiary forces. He was responsible only to the Rajah and the Residents. All the other Officers in the Brigade reported to him. He was responsible for the drill and discipline of the Brigade and looked after the troops. Even in case of a change in the strength, dress and other amenities of the men of the Brigade, the Commanding Officer referred the matter to the Rajah through the Resident. The Commanding Officer also examined the book of the Battalion once a month. All discipline rested with the British Officers. All charges against Non-commissioned Officers had to be investigated by the Brigade Commandant. He received all information pertaining to the disposal of criminal cases in

which the men of the Brigade or Bodyguard were involved. Even the smallest items of expenditure could not be increased unless authorised by the Brigade Commandant and the receipts given by him. From 1st September 1906, Nayar Brigade treasury ceased to be a Government treasury, and the receipts of money of Huzur treasury were dispersed under Commandant's order. He was also empowered to mount the Railway guards during emergency.

The Commandant of the second Battalion was designated Staff Officer. The Staff Officer assisted the Commanding Officer in the execution of the general duties of the Brigade. The staff officer was directly incharge of supervision over the English and Malayalam clerks. He took all the reports, letters and abstracts related to the Nayar Brigade to the Commanding Officer for his signature. Thus the officer became a medium of communication between the Commanding Officer and other Officers commanding Battalion for collecting information from the Commanding Officers to the Resident or other state authority. The staff officer was also empowered to retain subordinate Officers like the Non-commissioned Officers if

27. General (Political) Department, File No. 1813, 16 November, 1928 (D.O.A).
necessary, but the matter was to be brought to the notice of the Commanding Officer. The staff officer was also in charge of supervision over the band, drummers, fifers and general supervision over band master. The Non-commissioned Officers from the band attended the Staff Officer's quarters daily and submitted reports.28

The Battalion Officers in charge of the Battalions, were also British Officers. Until 1836, the Battalions were commanded by the local Officers. In 1836 these Officers were promoted to the rank of Captain with usual Regimental allowance. The Battalion Officers took rank, in the Brigade according to the date of their commission in the Rajah's service. They took precedence in the Brigade in accordance with their standing in the Indian Army. The disciplinary powers of the Battalion Commandants was less than the Officer who commanded a detachment of British Native Infantry Regiment. The Battalion Officers were not to approach the Rajah directly to make their grievances relating to pay, pension, duty etc. It had to be first brought to the notice of the Commanding Officer, who, if desired represented the same to the Dewan or Travancore Government. The Battalion Officer took the report of his department to Commanding Officer on such day or time as

28. Ibid.
fixed by the latter. Battalion Officers were granted short leave by the Commanding Officer. He was also in charge of inspecting the guards at various places. After his tour he reported to Commanding Officer. He was responsible to the Commandant for drill, recruitment and internal economy. The peculiar constitution of the Nayar Brigade was such that it was not only the men of the Brigade who did additional duties, but the Officers of each Battalion had to attend to all staff and clerical duties of the Brigade.\textsuperscript{29} One officer took to the job of a Quarter Master, other that of the Staff Officer and the third subordinate officer took to Paymaster of British pensioners. These Officers when compared to Officers of their rank in the service of Native Infantry Regiment had more duties to perform.\textsuperscript{30} The Battalion Officers visited the Nayar Brigade Hospital once a week and entered in the visitor's Report any irregularities they might observe. They were also responsible for all public buildings and parade grounds at Pangode. The Battalion Officers sanctioned leave to men for a period of 30 days in a year. For any period exceeding that, sanction of the Commandant of the Brigade was essential.\textsuperscript{31}

\textsuperscript{29} Political Consultation, Vol. 549, 20 March, 1855, p.1570.

\textsuperscript{30} Political Consultation, Vol.537, 19 September, 1854, p.3729.

The Quarter Master who was in charge of stores department of the Nayar Battalion, had the key of the magazine which formed an important part of the entire stores department. He was responsible to the Commanding Officer for the ammunition. The final report as to the exact quantity of ammunition's entry and exit from the magazine was made to the Quarter Master by the Havildar of the magazine. It was the duty of the Quarter Master to see that guns and other accoutrements were kept in good condition. The lubricating oil for the wheels were provided from the stores. The carriage was also painted from the stores department.\(^{32}\) The Sergeant Major a British, was in charge of drill and discipline of the Nayar Brigade and was brought under the direct control of the Staff Officer. He submitted report to the Battalion officer on duty when the first part of recruit was trained and ready to fire the ball ammunition. The drill instructors were prohibited from receiving bribes from the recruits like that of an infantry recruit. Only those men well versed in drill and duties were chosen for the appointment of drill Havildar, drill Naigue and drill Assistant. The Sergeant Major did not have the power to order punishments to recruits, native Officers or Non-commissioned Officers. He was responsible for training

\(^{32}\) Standing Orders Of The Nayar Brigade, Published by His Highness Rajah Of Travancore and the British Resident (Trivandrum, 1876), p.22.
recruits of both Battalion and reported to the Battalion Officers, if any slackness was shown by the drill instructors and recruits. The drill Havildar and drill Naigues duly assisted the Sergeant Major in the discharge of duties. The recruits received drill instructions on the basis of the rules in force in the British Native Infantry Regiments. After having passed in the drill lessons, the recruits were supervised by the Sergeant Major for firing lessons. He had to report to the Battalion officer on duty when the first part of the recruits was trained and ready to fire the ball ammunition.\textsuperscript{33}

After the introduction of Western Pattern of military training by the European Officers, the existing Nayar Officers position began to decline. The native Officers from Travancore took to subordinate ranks in the Nayar Brigade.\textsuperscript{34} The Nayar Officers consisted of both commissioned and Non-commissioned Officers. They commanded a unit of the Battalion. The highest post held by a Nayar in the Nayar Brigade was that of the Subadar Major, who supervised the duties of all Subadars. While parading during state ceremonies he assumed command. The

\begin{footnotes}
\item[33] Regulation and Proclamation of Travancore, op.cit., p.178.
\item[34] Army Regulation India (Calcutta, 1887), vol. II, Part I, p.48.
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Subadar Major also supervised the Native officer of the Company's and informed the European Officer about the discipline and character. Every company headed by a Subadar was responsible to the European Officer of the Battalion relating to fines, arms, clothing, pay and leave. The Native Assistant Officer reported daily to the European Officer on the general functioning of the Battalion. The Officer served as a link between European Officer and other Native Officers. The Havildar Major was under the charge of native Assistant. The Orderly Havildar assisted by Company's writer in drafting reports of the Company to be signed by Subadar and handed it over to the Native Assistant. The Orderly Havildar was in charge of roll call. All the native Officers, Non-commissioned Officers and sepoys were present on the spot except on Sunday morning when the roll call was made.

After the introduction of Western Military System in the Nayar Brigade, it was reorganized in three stages in 1819, 1826 and 1830 respectively, when certain changes were made in the strength of the Brigade. An important event was that the name Nayar Brigade was assigned to the force in 1830. The

35. Interview, With Captain S. Kesavan Nair, 17 October, 1954.

duties and liabilities of the Commanding Officer, Battalion Officers, Sergeant Major, Quarter Master were assigned, according to Western Pattern. The native Officers and soldiers were subjected to all kinds of duties and reduced to subordinate ranks, unlike men of the British Native Infantry Regimental Force. Hence there were conspiracies and desertion in the force. Few British Commanding Officers like Dury made radical changes in the force for the relief of the soldiers, which facilitated soldiers to have leisure hours.