Chapter III
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The seeds of disintegration of Travancore army germinated even during the later days of Rama Varma while he sought the military trainers from English Company for his army. Sending military officers and assistants of the Company to the native states was not uncommon in those days. In lieu of the demand, the Company sent its own military for the protection of Travancore at the latter's expenses. It demoralised the Travancore military and also drained its resources, as it cost four lakh rupees to the Government every year. The king borrowed a huge amount of money from the British as well as from merchants to tackle the situation. Not content with that, Rama Varma imposed a new war tax, in addition to nilavari, a tax on wet lands and kadamvari, a tax on garden lands, on the people. Politically Travancore faced an unfavourable situation. While Balarama Varma (1798-1810) a weak ruler became the king of Travancore, Wellesley (1798-1805), a determined person, became the Governor General of the Company in 1798. The attitude and talents of these two rulers had a noted bearing on the question of the survival of the military in Travancore. The financial burden coupled with the diplomacy of the British in Travancore caused the downfall of military in Travancore.

Dissolution of king’s Nayar Forces

The political instability at the accession of Balarama Varma to the throne of Travancore caused disastrous consequences in every sphere of Government. The young king was weak and vacillating and was in the hands of a few favourites. In consequence of the bad companion’s advice, the king removed the able Kesava Das, the Commander-in-Chief and Dewan from his office in 1799. Through his proximity with the young king, Jayantan Sankaran Nambutiri, a Malayali Brahmin from the Zamorin’s territory, got himself appointed Dewan on 1799. He chose his close associates Sankaran Narayanan as Finance Minister and Mathu Tarakan, a Syrian Christian merchant, members in council. These three unprincipled and corrupt formed a triumvirate and abused their official position. They used to collect the revenue of the Government through the inhuman and barbarous methods of extortion. Their arbitrary and tyrannical proceedings led to the general discontentment and unrest through out the country. It led to the rise of Velu Tampi who raised the banner of revolt against the triumvirate. The Dewan asked Velu Tampi to pay Rs. 3,000. In turn Velu Tampi collected armed men from South Travancore and encamped around the fort of Trivandrum demanding the removal of the triumvirate. Shocked over it the king removed the

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4 The office of *Dalawah* came to be known as Dewan from the reign of Rama Varma. Kesava Das became the first Dewan of Travancore.
6 Velu Tampi hailed from an influential Nayar family of Talakulam in Southern Travancore and served as *karvakkar* or Tahsildar.
coterie from office and punished them by banishing the Dewan and imprisoning Sankara Narayanan and Mathu Tarakan at Udayagiri and Trivandrum respectively.

While there was an internal political instability in Travancore, Lord Wellesley longed to increase the influence of the English in Travancore. Being a staunch imperialist, he wanted to bring each and every native state under his subsidiary system. Through the system the foreign policy and defence of native state came under the control of the English Company. Consequent of it forces of the Company could be maintained at the cost of Indian states and they could gradually reduce the forces of the native states. With the policy in mind, the Governor General asked the king of Travancore to consult Maj. Bannerman, the Resident, on the appointment of the successor to Kesava Das as Dewan. The English also wanted to prevent the French attempt to reestablish their hold in Travancore. But the ultimate motive of Wellesley was to dissolve the Travancore troops and permanently station the Company forces. With that ulterior motive in mind he appointed Col. Macaulay as the political Resident of Travancore (1800-1810). Col. Macaulay tried to fulfil his mission and fortunately had a good opportunity in Travancore. He found Velu

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7 The subsidiary system brought out by Wellesley stipulated that the native ruler who entered into the subsidiary alliance either to provide money or territory to the Company whose forces would be stationed there to protect the state.

8 While two battalions of Company forces were sent to Travancore to defend it against Tipu's invasions in 1788. George Powney, the commander of that forces became the first political Resident of Travancore. He acted as the representative of the Company in Travancore.


Tampi as a suitable person to achieve his goal. Meanwhile Velu Tampi who served as Finance Minister was elevated to the position of Dewan with the open support and approval of Col. Macaulay. The arrival and encamping of the Company forces in Travancore, was not to the liking of the military of Travancore. It created a feeling of discontentment and spirit of rebellion in the minds of the soldiers. Spending of large chunk of money on foreign forces increased the grievances of the men of Travancore military. Added to these, the Travancore soldiers were more involved in the *sibbandi* services, since the defence of the country was left to the hands of British forces. Besides rendering these services to Travancore, they were expected to do the same to other territories. It is said that king agreed to provide 400 Travancore soldiers to carry out *sibbandi* services to Malabar Government. The soldiers felt that the Government move was definitely the consequences of the deployment of the Company soldiers. These suspicions and hardships forced the Travancore soldiers to revolt against the Government on May 25, 1798. Though the uprising was put down, the discontent and disaffection of soldiers against the Travancore Government continued.

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13. Through *sibbandi* service the soldiers were asked to perform menial works to various Government establishments.

The closeness between the Dewan Velu Tampi and the Resident Col. Macaulay emerged as a detriminal factor to the interest of the Travancore forces. The Resident guided the Dewan in administrative affairs. Right from the beginning he urged the Dewan to increase the battalions of British forces in Travancore. Apart from that he asked the Dewan to initiate the steps for the reduction of the native forces. Despite these demands of the Resident certainly affecting the independence of Travancore, Velu Tampi emerged as the closest friend of Col. Macaulay. Velu Tampi's interaction with and dependence on the Resident forced the latter to expect the former to act as the agent of the British Government. But on the advice of the Resident, the Dewan introduced a number of administrative reforms. Their closeness and reforms invited opposition from the native officers.

The military was the major department, which invited the attention of Col. Macaulay for introducing reforms with ulterior motives. The Dewan finally succumbed to the pressure of the Resident. He introduced the military reforms on the pretext of pruning the economy and strengthening the organisation of the army. But it went against the traditions and customs and benefits enjoyed by the soldiers. Through the reforms he planned to make the payment only to the regular soldiers who permanently remained in service. Further he agreed to post one English officer to each corps of Travancore

military\textsuperscript{17}. These reforms were calculated to bring the Travancore troops under the control of the English Company. Moreover the reforms would reduce the strength of the Nayar soldiers, since majority of the Nayar soldiers served as militia. An ordinary soldier was paid six and half rupees per month\textsuperscript{18} and that amount certainly could not meet their daily family requirements. Hence the soldiers from the long past involved agricultural pursuits to make both ends meet. Generally they did it when their services were not required in the army. The payment only to the regular soldiers forced many Nayars to desert the military which would lead to the reduction of its strength. It naturally increased the dependency of Travancore upon the English Company for its defence.

These military reforms met with severe opposition from the rank and file of the Travancore forces. They understood the ploy of the Resident and the co-operation rendered by the Dewan for its implementation. But he was opposed by his colleagues who had supported his elevation to the Dewanship. A conspiracy was hatched under the palace samprati\textsuperscript{19} Kunjunilam Pillai to assassinate the Dewan. Even the high officials of the state viz., the Commander in Chief, accountant, treasurer, commander of the northern division etc., were involved in the plot\textsuperscript{20}. They demanded the king to issue a royal warrant for the arrest and execution of Velu Tampi. They proposed

\textsuperscript{17} For. Sec. Con. Proc., May 17. 1804. p. 15914
\textsuperscript{18} Ibid., May 17. 1804. p. 15276
\textsuperscript{19} He was the Pay Master General who stood as an influential officer in the royal court.
\textsuperscript{20} Ibid., May 17. 1804. p. 6316.
Neelakantan Chempakaraman to be appointed the new Dewan of the state. The Dewan, who was always moving from one district to another on circuit with a select party of his officials, came to know of the conspiracy. On the advice of Col. Macaulay, Velu Tampi proceeded from Alleppey to meet the king on March 17, 1804. But the Dewan was denied audience with the king due to the machinations of the conspirators. Ramalinga Mudaliar, the writer of the Resident, met the king to represent the cause of the Dewan. But the king did not concede. Ultimately at the personal intervention of the Resident, the life and job of the Dewan was saved. The Resident convinced the king about the conspiracy and activities of the officials. He urged the king to punish the persons who disturbed the relation between the king and Dewan on March 16, 1804. Under the compulsion of the Resident, the king arrested eight high officials of the Government who involved in the conspiracy against Velu Tampi on March 27, 1804. Though the official threat to Velu Tampi was over, the soldiers' anger continued against him.

23 Ibid., p. 20.
24 The list of eight persons submitted by Col. Macaulay to the king as follows:

1. Papoo Tomby - An officer of place in charge of ladies apartment
2. Mootoo Pillay - Accountant
3. Palvanaven Pillay - Commanding the force
4. Conjee Neelum Pillay - Former Samprati
5. Neela Kanta Pillay - In charge of northern division
6. Cochee Narayn Pillay - Pay Master General
7. Ahevadamum Pillay - Treasurer
The plot on the Dewan was followed by an outbreak of revolt of soldiers in the same year in November. The Dewan continuously took measures to reduce the expenses of the Government to tackle the problem of arrears of subsidy, given to the Company for subsidiary forces. He decided to do away with the allowance provided to the soldiers by the Government. It was not clear, whether it was monthly allowance or war time allowance. The Dewan took the decision with regard to the reduction of allowance, with the tacit approval of the Resident. The Nayar soldiers of the army condemned the move and opposed it tooth and nail as they lost traditional right. There arose a profound feeling of discontentment among them that the Dewan was oppressing the natives to please the English. The irritation of the soldiers led to the widespread revolt in the military. The soldiers rose in revolt on November 16, 1804 in various military stations viz., Alleppey, Paroor, Trivandrum, Mavalikkara and Udayagiri. Their complete fury went against both the Dewan and the Resident and wanted to murder them in retaliation. They abandoned their military stations and broke up the forts of Udayagiri and Mavalikkara, releasing the prisoners. Since many soldiers joined the revolt there was a great enthusiasm among them. They proceeded towards the capital, Trivandrum from different centres with a tremendous war cry. More than 10,000 soldiers joined in the march.

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25 The allowance called by the name of pidipanam meaning holding money.
26 N. Balakrishnan Nair, Swaranvabhiman, p. 196.
27 Ibid., p. 197.
When the revolt erupted, the Dewan stayed at Alleppey. Since the forces at Alleppey joined the agitation, the Dewan escaped to Cochin to save his life. On the night November 16, 1804, realising danger to his life at Alleppey, Col. Macaulay also left for Cochin where Company forces garrisoned. Velu Tampi and Col. Macaulay discussed the seriousness of the rebellion and decided to put down it at all cost. The Dewan collected the sepoys of the Carnatic Brigade, which was loyal to the Government, and moved towards Quilon. The subsidiary forces, stationed at Quilon were alerted to be ready for action. The Madras Government was informed of the developments in Travancore by Col. Macaulay who was given freehand to deal with the revolt. Meanwhile fearing the spread of insurgent towards the territory of the Company, the Madras Government contacted the officer commanding southern division of Company forces. He was ordered to co-operate with the Resident of Travancore to tackle the situation in Travancore. Subsequently Col. Macaulay ordered a body of troops from Tirunelveli to march towards Trivandrum.

The rebels reached Trivandrum and surrounded the fort. They demanded the removal and hanging of Velu Tampi and appointment of their leader Neelakantan Chempakaraman as new Dewan. The king was in a precarious position as no man of worth was at the capital to assist him to tackle the situation. He tried to contact different sources.

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29 Ibid.
for help. He sent his loyal officers with royal nittu to Nanchinad, the southern part of Travancore, to seek their assistance. In the royal nittu, he asked them all to proceed to Trivandrum as he faced threat from soldiers headed by Neelakantan Chempakaraman Pillai and Padmanabha Chempakaraman Pillai. Dr. Claudius Buchanan, a contemporary who witnessed the event, revealed that fearing over the life of the Dewan, the Resident and himself, the king sought the help of the fishermen of the coast and bowmen of the hill. The fishermen armed with bludgeons and the hillsmen with bows and arrows arrived in immense number to the capital. Seeing these people with their weapons, the rebel Nayar soldiers fled from the capital leaving their weapons. Velu Tampi, with the help of the Carnatic Brigade and subsidiary forces, put down the revolt in other places. The rebels of Mavalikkara, Alleppey, Udayagiri and Trivandrum were disarmed and secured. Several commissioned and non-commissioned officers of the corps surrendered with their arms. Many of the soldiers and officers were imprisoned and few of them were instantly dismissed from service. The revolt of 1804 was finally brought to an end on the December 18, with the surrender of the rebels of Paroor. The task was achieved through the combined operation of the soldiers of the Carnatic Brigade and the Company.

31 Royal nittu means kings order. People of Nanchinad were always considered as loyal to the Travancore king.
33 Dr. Claudius Buchanan’s letter dated November 1, 1806. Quoted in Pearson, Memoirs of Claudius Buchanan, p. 238.
34 Ibid.
After quelling the rebellion of the Nayar soldiers completely, the Dewan started the process of punishing the soldiers and officers of the rebellion decisively. Several rebels were either beheaded or shot at the orders of the Dewan. Many of them were put before the mouth of guns to blow them into pieces. Fifty of the ring leaders of the rebellion were caught and hanged. One rebel leader Krishna Pillai was cruelly tied by his legs on the back legs of two elephants which were made to run in opposite directions. Even at that stage the rebel courageously insulted the Dewan face to face without minding his fate. The body of the rebel was torn into two pieces while alive. Velu Tampi inflicted such barbarous punishment to terrorise and demoralise his opponents. Many soldiers who fled to jungles, never returned to the army or their native place. Seeing the horror of the punishments, many of the rebel soldiers crossed frontiers to save their lives. The Travancore Resident alerted the neighbouring district collectors and asked them to return the Nayar soldiers found there to Travancore.

The effective measures of the Dewan secured his safety and that of the Resident. He established peace and order throughout the kingdom. Through a royal proclamation, the Government disbanded the traditional military, except a body of 8,000 soldiers, majority of which belonged to the Carnatic Brigade. The traditional Nayar forces that cherished themselves as the pillar of the Travancore military were

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36 Pearson, op. cit., p. 238.
37 P. Shungoonny Menon, op. cit., p. 228.
dissolved and removed from the service. It was due to the
dstatesmanship of Col. Macaulay that Velu Tampi played knowingly or
unknowingly into the hands of the British. The 1804 revolt
temporarily brought to an end the Nayar military, which was revived
again in 1809 by the same Dewan.

Demand for the abolition of Carnatic Brigade

The suppression of the rebellion and the dissolution of the
Nayar forces strengthened the hands of Velu Tampi in administration.
Similarly it gave favourable situation and more opportunity to the
Resident to interfere in the affairs of the Travancore Government. The
British Government utilised the chance for the modification of the
treaty of 1795 and thereby wanted to increase its hold on
Travancore⁴₀. The Governor General, Wellesley wrote to the Madras
Government directing it to use the favourable situation to modify the
1795 treaty so as to get more benefits to the Company. The subsidiary
force, stationed in Travancore, was to be made permanent⁴₁. Hence
Col. Macaulay took every step for a new treaty in order to stabilise the
Company forces in Travancore as desired by Wellesley. The Resident
along with the Dewan tried to convince the king of the necessity of a
new treaty between Travancore and the Company. But the king, on the
advice of his close associates, opposed the inclusion of any new clause
in the proposed treaty⁴₂. On the other hand to pressurise the king, the

⁴₂ P. Shungoonny Menon, op. cit., p. 230.
Resident requested the southern command of the English Company to place three native battalions at the eastern frontier of Travancore. He got the approval of the Madras Government for parading the troops from Palayamkottai to Malabar⁴³. Unable to bear the threat and coercion, the king finally relented to sign the new treaty.

The treaty of perpetual friendship and alliance was signed accordingly between Col. Macaulay and the king of Travancore and the same was ratified by the Governor General in Council on May 2, 1805⁴⁴. In the introduction, it is stated that the purpose of the treaty was to protect Travancore from foreign foes. It became a necessity because the 1795 agreement had failed to fulfil the desire of the contracting parties. But the real intention of the Company was revealed by the fact that it stipulated one more regiment of the Company forces for Travancore. The expenses of the new regiment were to be met by Travancore, besides earlier payments. The amount of the expenses of new regiment was fixed at Rs. 4,01,655 and the total subsidy payable by Travancore was estimated at Rs. 8,00,000 per annum⁴⁵. Further Travancore was liberated from the obligation of sending its forces for the services of the English Company. The subsidiary forces, allotted for Travancore would be stationed either in the territory of the English or in Travancore at the discretion of the Company⁴⁶.

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The treaty of 1805 was made for the fulfillment of the aspirations of the Company and for the increase of its influence in Travancore. Infact the treaty was dictated to the king of Travancore. It facilitated the British to encamp a strong contingent of its forces at the cost of Travancore Government. The burden of subsidy would not allow the Travancore Government to organise and maintain a strong force. The treaty indirectly consumed the native force. The British were able to replace the Nayar forces with the subsidiary forces, using Velu Tampi Dalawah as a tool\(^{47}\).

After the dissolution of Nayar forces and increasing the subsidiary forces in Travancore, Col. Macaulay moved on the line of abolition of the Carnatic Brigade. Better trained and disciplined, the Carnatic Brigade was well armed and effectively organised. In the past the soldiers were recruited from out side the country and several Europeans served in the army. Since the dissolution of the traditional Nayar forces in 1804, many loyal Nayar sepoys and officers joined in the Carnatic Brigade. Seeing the talent and effectiveness of the forces, British sought their services as per the clauses of 1795 treaty. They had already served under the British at Madurai, Tirunelveli and Malabar to the satisfaction of the Company\(^{48}\). From 1794 the Carnatic Brigade was under the command of Lt. Col. Daly who was promoted colonel by the king of Travancore\(^{49}\). The Carnatic Brigade, under Col.

\(^{47}\) C. III, N. No. 10.


Daly served loyally to the king of Travancore and took a major role in the suppression of 1804 revolt.

The question of the Carnatic Brigade was preceded by the dispute on the payment of subsidy by the Travancore Government. At the very beginning of the discussion of the proposal of 1805 treaty, the king was opposed to the additional subsidy of four lakh rupees. But to tackle the situation and to convince the king. Col. Macaulay consented for the reduction of two lakh rupees in the additional subsidy for two years. But the king continued to express his inability on the payment of additional subsidy. Meanwhile the Dewan undertook several measures to increase the income of the Government. He reorganised the trade, industry and commerce and took suitable steps to draw more income on the land taxes. Not content with those resources, the Dewan began to utilise the income of Devasvams. Unfortunately the subsidy, given to the Company fell in to arrears.

Col. Macaulay utilised the opportunity to move against the Carnatic Brigade, the standing army of Travancore. He expressed that it was not reasonable on the part of Travancore to keep an army, while causing the subsidy fell in arrears. He wrote to the Madras

50 Col. Daly's antecedence was not clearly known. It is believed that he hailed from England. He formerly served as non-commissioned officer in the British king's army, afterwards under the English East India Company and finally joined the Travancore force. His son H. W. Daly served in the Nayar Brigade. His daughter was married to Alexander Macleod of Madras army. He died at the age of 78, in 1736 with the pension of Travancore Government, T. W. Venn, Cochin Malabar, pp. 23-24.


52 A. Ramanatha Aiyar, A History of Travancore, p. 64.
Government on December 29, 1805, stressing the implementation of the treaty of 1805 by the king of Travancore. Through the letter the Resident impressed upon the Madras Government for the need of the dissolution of the Carnatic Brigade. The king of Travancore was spending not less than Rs. 12,500 for maintaining these armed forces. Col. Macaulay attributed to the king of Travancore the plea for permanent remission of half of the additional subsidy in order to maintain the Carnatic Brigade. He recommended that the remission of half of the additional subsidy could be granted to him, if he agreed to hold the Carnatic Brigade only for a particular period. Meanwhile he urged that the subsidiary forces in Travancore must be reinforced with additional Company forces. The measure was necessary to impress upon the king that his own force was not necessary for the defence of the kingdom. The Resident was very particular to do away with the Travancore force that was not under the control of the Company.

Confused over the representation of both the Resident and the king of Travancore, the Madras Government referred the dispute over the subsidy and the Carnatic Brigade to the Governor General in Council for a firm and final decision. But the reply of the Governor

53 In 1806, the Resident of Travancore was placed under the immediate authority of Madras Government, as a measure of decentralisation.
54 Letter from Col. Macaulay to the Governor of Madras, December 29, 1806, Poli. Cons., Vol. 25, p. 87.
55 Ibid., p. 89.
56 Ibid., p. 87.
General on the affair reflected views of Col. Macaulay. It considered the king's demand for the remission of subsidy was quite against the provisions of the treaty of 1805. He pointed out that the subsidy, paid by Travancore was increased because the Company took the responsibility of protecting Travancore from external threat and internal rebellion. The claim of Travancore to maintain a force for the defence of the king was contrary to the spirit of the treaty of 1805. Thus the king of Travancore was discouraged and opposed from all quarters of the Company in India for maintaining the Carnatic Brigade.

The Government of Travancore on the other hand was not prepared to do away with the Carnatic Brigade. On account of various considerations the king wanted to keep up the Carnatic Brigade. The soldiers were extremely loyal to the Government and served in Travancore during the very difficult days. The king felt that without their assistance, the collection of taxes was impossible. In case the Carnatic Brigade was dissolved, the soldiers would be left with hunger without jobs and face starvation. The king also considered that the Carnatic Brigade was the symbol of dignity and royal authority. Without a powerful force he would lose the support and respect that he enjoyed with the people. He also felt that his personal safety depended on the existence of the Carnatic Brigade. While the king

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58 Letter from Governor General to Governor of Madras, April 9, 1807, Pol. Cons., Vol. 26, p. 1060.
considered the disbandment of the Carnatic Brigade would be derogatory to his position, the Madras Government rejected the fear of the king on the ground that it was devoid of solid foundation. The Madras Government vehemently demanded the discharge of the Brigade due to the political consideration, besides economic point of view. They were worried over their security and survival in Travancore because in the Travancore court there was a considerable goodwill towards the French Government and ill-will against the British. At that time English were seriously fighting against the Napoleonic French which posed a threat throughout the world. The British felt that disbandment of the Carnatic Brigade was essential for their survival in Travancore.

The Government of Travancore tried to pay the subsidy as far as possible, inspite of its request for the remission of the same. A lumpsum payment of Rs. 3,45,312 was paid to the English Company in July 1807, towards defraying the arrears. Subsequently in the same month another amount of Rs. 56,343 was paid to the Company by the Dewan of Travancore. Not satisfied with the payment, Col. Macaulay continuously insisted on the full payment of arrears. He observed that the revenue of Travancore was sufficient to defray the arrears of subsidy to the Company. He claimed that the income of Travancore was not less than 12,00,000 rupees per annum after

payment of all charges of the administration and payment of full subsidy, with the exception of expenses of the Carnatic Brigade\textsuperscript{64}. The version implied that the Government was spending a huge amount, more than twelve thousand for maintaining the Carnatic Brigade. The average expense of a soldier was calculated at rupees ten, including the expense of salary, weapons, allowances etc., per month and therefore the expenses would reach Rs. 80,000 per month and it would be Rs. 9,60,000 per annum. Therefore Col. Macaulay stood very firm on the disposal of the Carnatic Brigade.

The issue of subsidy and the Carnatic Brigade between the Company and Government of Travancore gradually eroded the cordial relations so far existed between the Dewan and the Resident. The Resident continuously interfered in the internal administration of Travancore. But there was a change of mind in Dewan towards the interference of the Resident. With a view to improving the finance of Government, the Dewan attached the property of Mathu Tarakan\textsuperscript{65} for defaulting the payment of tax on various accounts. Unable to tolerate the overbearing attitude of the Resident, in 1807 the king asked the Governor General to recall the Resident\textsuperscript{66}. Subsequently the relation between the Dewan and the Resident got strained.

\textsuperscript{64} For. Pol. Con. Proc., September 1, 1807, p. 337.

\textsuperscript{65} Mathu Tarakan, a rich business man, was imprisoned for his corrupt activities as a member of triumvirate. He got his release and became very close with Col. Macaulay.

On July 9, 1808, Col. Macaulay directly wrote a letter to the Dewan asking him for the discharge of the Carnatic Brigade and thereby to relieve the financial condition of the State\textsuperscript{67}. But the Dewan firmly turned down the demands of the Resident and reminded him of the utility and services rendered by the Carnatic Brigade to the state. Contrary to the spirit of the treaty, the Dewan continuously carried out the recruitment for the Carnatic Brigade to its full establishment. The affairs of Travancore could not be left out, since it was important from the military point of view. Therefore the British proceeded to mobilise their forces against the Travancore forces.

**Preparation for a showdown**

Realising the hostile move against him by the British, Velu Tampi initiated necessary preparations to face the challenge of British. He was ready to meet the Company forces for the cause of the Carnatic Brigade. Velu Tampi received full support of his troops, officers and people in his confrontation against the British\textsuperscript{68}. The anti British faction of Travancore extended their full co-operation to the Dewan and there was a frequent interaction between them\textsuperscript{69}. Knowing the strength of the British, Velu Tampi made an elaborate military preparation. On account of it, he made an extensive tour over the kingdom on the pretext of administrative necessity. He met the higher


\textsuperscript{68} C. M. Agur, *op. cit.*, pp. 528-529.

\textsuperscript{69} Letter from Madras Governor to Governor General, November 23, 1808, Sec. Sun. Tr. 1809, Vol. I, p. 98.
and local officials of the Government to give necessary direction on military affairs and also met local chiefs and sought their support against the British. With a view to studying the minds of the neighbouring states and solicit their support, he sent messengers to them. The messengers carried out his request to Malabar, Srirangapatnam, Madurai and Tirunelveli. In his letter to Zamorin, he sought his co-operation in the name of religion and thundered that he would expel the English from Travancore soon. Unfortunately the same letter was safely transferred to the Company collector in Malabar, who sent it to the Governor of Madras. With the intention of getting support and co-operation for his fight against the Resident, Velu Tampi nurtured a good friendship with Paliath Achen, the Dewan of Cochin who held a strong antipathy against Col. Macaulay. Maintaining a close communication and contact with the French in Mauritius, Velu Tampi requested them to send their force in January 1809. Seeing support from many quarters, the Dewan was determined for an all out fight against the Company. He kept his contacts and arrangements secret as far as possible.

Apart from the external contact, the Dewan strenuously started preparation to strengthen his own military. As a first step, he appointed his brother the Commander-in-Chief of the entire forces of Travancore. Even the Carnatic Brigade, which was under the

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70 N. Balakrishnan Nair, op. cit., p. 283.
71 C. M. Agur, op. cit., pp. 530-531.
72 George Woodcock, op. cit., p. 190.
command of Col. Daly, was brought under the supervision of the new commander. The maintenance of soldiers was also bestowed on the new commander. The Dewan revived the traditional militia system to increase the number of men with arms. He instructed the military officers to train the able bodied men in use of arms in every district of the kingdom. He furnished orders to the administrative officers of division and districts to direct every cutchery officer to enroll certain classes of people for the army. Men, enlisted by the local officers, were secretly taken to the nearby army camp where they were given appointment and training. The Dewan and his brother, with their hard labour strengthened the military to face the British.

Not satisfied with these arrangements, the Dewan nominated special agents and sent them towards the different parts of the country for the purpose of conscription of more soldiers. He also decided to recruit the non-military castes of people for the army. In South Travancore Velu Tampi employed one Nagamony, a man of Nadar community from Cape Comorin, to recruit 8,000 men from Nadar Caste for his militia. He instructed him to train them with spears. The Dewan also employed one Manduvatu Vaducal to recruit 2,000 Nayars from each adikaram and totally 16,000 soldiers from eight adikarams from the west of Padmanabhapuram. These soldiers

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75 Ibid., p. 532.
77 Adikarams refers a revenue village, the lowest administrative unit in Travancore.
were trained with bows and arrows and involved in daily practice. Similar to that in December 1808, in Attingal, four miles from Anjengo, 6,000 Nayars were recruited and trained them with bows and arrows. The dismounted troops who had settled in Nagercoil were ordered to get ready for action in any time. With in a short span of period a large number of able-bodied men were recruited from every part of the kingdom and were trained with all types of weapons. The Dewan expected an immediate showdown with the Company forces. In order to instill a fighting spirit among the soldiers and get the confidence of the people, the Dewan spread the message that in the event of war the French and Marathas would come to the assistance of the king of Travancore.

Besides the conscription and training of new soldiers, Velu Tampi ordered to produce enough arms and armaments in large quantities to face the British forces. He instructed the army personnel to prepare and arm the common people, to meet the Company forces in the event of war. In the southern part of the kingdom a large number of people were employed to manufacture weapons day and night. They were involved in making gun powder, fabrication of bows and arrows, lances and cleaning the arms. From Aramboly iron mine, iron was transported to Udayagiri to make different kinds of

78 Ibid.,
79 Ibid., p. 545.
81 Ibid., p. 530.
weapons. Gun powder was fabricated in large amount in the *marunthu kottai*, west of Padmanabhapuram. Consequent of the efforts of Dewan, the entire military was sufficiently armed with traditional and modern weapons. A report of Col. Macaulay suggested that apart from Nayars, most of the Nadars inhabited in huts, from Padmanabhapuram in the west to Aramboly in the east, were generally armed with bows and arrows. Military installations in different parts of the kingdom were strengthened with additional forces and weapons. Expecting the arrival of additional British troops through Aramboly pass, the Dewan issued orders for strengthening the eastern defence. The eastern fort known as Aramboly lines was thoroughly repaired and three large guns were erected for its defence.

After preparing his military for any eventuality, the Dewan started correspondence with the Resident. He asserted that in case the Resident was not prepared to modify the treaty of 1805, he would like to lay down his office. Since the Company was not infavour of alteration of the treaty, the Resident persuaded the Dewan to resign. Col. Macaulay offered him Rs. 500 as monthly pension from the Company and asked him to reside in Cherakel in Calicut. Agreed to the proposal of Col. Macaulay, Velu Tampi resigned from the office of Dewan on December 27, 1808. The Resident directed Col. Daly to

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82 Intelligence report to Col. Macaulay on December 21, 1808, Ibid., p. 545.
83 Extract from Col. Macaulay’s report on January 21, 1809, Ibid., p. 691.
accompany Velu Tampi towards his new residence in Calicut, the Company territory. Meanwhile Col. Macaulay instructed Lt. Col. Chalmers, the commander of subsidiary forces stationed in Quilon, to catch Velu Tampi and his associates on their journey. On the other hand Velu Tampi refused to move with Col. Daly and repudiated the claim of his resignation. He ridiculed Col. Macaulay, for having believed the drama enacted by him and proclaimed before Col. Daly that "now Col. Macaulay’s head was kicking about the streets of Cochin". Consequent of these developments the direct fight between the British and the Travancore was certain and imminent. Velu Tampi as well as Col. Macaulay took the whole affair as a personal matter and confirmed their views that led to the destruction of the Travancore army.

Destruction of the standing army of Travancore

The fight, leading to the destruction of Travancore forces, started with the attack on the residence of Col. Macaulay, at Cochin on December 28, 1808. A section of Travancore forces joined with the Cochin Dewan, surrounded the house, with the motive of murdering Col. Macaulay. They stormed the residency and made brutal attack on the guards killing them on the spot. Unable to find the Resident they left the place after destroying the provisions. Col. Macaulay hidden

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88 Later Col. Macaulay received a compensation of 11,000 pagodas, i.e., £4,500 for the loss of personal belongings ransacked, T. W. Venn, op. cit., p. 30.
himself in a small room, with the help of a servant the whole night and moved towards Cochin in a vessel on December 29, 1808\textsuperscript{89}. The Resident immediately alerted Lt. Col. Chalmers of Quilon and the Government of Madras for sending adequate forces from different directions. On the other hand Velu Tampi ordered to interdict the food supplied to English Company's subsidiary forces stationed in Travancore. His soldiers began to confiscate the cattle and food grains, which had been sent to the camp of Company soldiers\textsuperscript{90}. Meanwhile the Company moved a detachment under Lt. Col. Cuppage from Malabar and another detachment under Lt. Col. Sentleger from Tiruchi to reinforce Lt. Col. Chalmers' subsidiary forces in Travancore. Subsequently on December 29, 1808 the Travancore army seized thirty four Englishmen, including Dr. Hume near Alleppey. Some of them were murdered and others were inhumanly drowned in sacks\textsuperscript{91}.

Velu Tampi planned to attack the English subsidiary forces, stationed for the defence of Travancore in Quilon. He moved the heavy forces from Paroor with sufficient arms and ammunitions\textsuperscript{92}. On the other hand Lt. Col. Chalmers ordered Cap. Clapham who came from Malabar, to attack the house of Dewan. The Company forces, with five companies of soldiers with a gun ascended a height near the house of Dewan. Surprisingly they found another height, where large number

\textsuperscript{89} W. J. Wilson, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 206.

\textsuperscript{90} Francis Day, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 57.

\textsuperscript{91} V. Nagam Aiya, \textit{op. cit.}, Vol. III, p. 460.

\textsuperscript{92} W. J. Wilson, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 206.
of Travancore forces whose strength was increasing hour by hour\textsuperscript{93}. On December 30, 1808 fire fighting broke out between the forces of two sides and Travancore forces gave a strong resistance. Unable to counter the Travancore forces, the British forces were reinforced by Maj. Galbraith Hamilton with two companies of additional forces. The combined forces were able to defeat the Travancore forces and captured the house of the Dewan with arms and ammunitions including six four pounders\textsuperscript{94}. The Travancore forces were moving from place to place. While a troop of 4,000 Nayars and one battalion of the Carnatic Brigade were crossing Ivicka bar\textsuperscript{95}, the Company forces under Maj. Hamilton met them. The Company forces attacked the Travancore forces crossing the bar and killed 409 men. Despite losing many of the soldiers in drowning, Travancore forces started the cannon attack on the Company forces after they reached the bank of the bar. Since the attack was heavy, Company forces withdrew from the scene\textsuperscript{96}. So far no one either British or Travancore got any decisive victory.

Meanwhile Col. Daly, who commanded the Carnatic Brigade, refused to fight against the British forces. He was imprisoned in his own residence under the order of the Dewan\textsuperscript{97}. In 1809 the Dewan set

\textsuperscript{93} H. F. Murland, \textit{Baille-Ki-Paltan, A History of 2nd Battalion, Madras Pioneers (1759-1930)}, p. 131.

\textsuperscript{94} \textit{Ibid.}

\textsuperscript{95} Ivicka, located five miles north of Quilon, is a bar or estuary, having quarter mile broad and half mile long connecting sea and a large lake [Back water].

\textsuperscript{96} W. J. Wilson, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 207-208.

up his camp at Kundara, a few miles east of Quilon. He ordered water boats, armed with guards to ply between Cape Comorin to Malabar and to collect information on the movements of the British. He directed all the Sarvathikariyakkars and Valia Sarvathikariyakkars to inform him about the developments and to take necessary orders from him at Kundara through the post horse. With a view to arouse national feelings among the people of Travancore, Velu Tampi issued famous proclamation known as ‘Kundara Proclamation’ on January 14, 1809.

Velu Tampi made elaborate preparation to attack the British cantonment at Quilon on January 14, 1809. A strong contingent of forces was stationed eight miles east of Quilon and another section of forces at Paroor, eight miles south of British cantonment. Through the arrangement Travancore forces cut off the communication between Quilon and other British military camps. On January 15, soldiers of the Carnatic Brigade, along with the newly recruited Nayar soldiers, numbering 30,000 moved towards the British Camp. With heavy cannonade supported by several four pounders, Travancore forces started the attack on Quilon. A heavy artillery fire repulsed the

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98 P. Shungoonny Menon, op. cit., pp. 251-256. In the ‘Kundara Proclamation’ Velu Tampi observed that the English took up the territory of Nawab of Arcot through fraudulent means after having close association with them for long years. The British wanted to play the same game towards Travancore. He further stated that they were danger to our country and enforced inter-caste marriage and Christianity among the people. His pronouncement received a wide acclaim among the people and it gave a new fillip to his militia to fight against the British. Fearing the people’s response towards his proclamation, the Government of Madras issued a counter proclamation on January 17, 1809 to pacify the people.


attack by the British, with a heavy loss to Travancore side. In the fighting more than 140 persons were wounded or killed in the British force\textsuperscript{101}. Heavy arms and ammunitions, left by the Travancore forces, were recovered by the British. Noted among them were six iron guns, poundered from fifteen to four and ten brass guns, poundered from six to two\textsuperscript{102}. Despite these defeats and drawbacks, Travancore forces pursued the Company forces. About 3,000 Travancore forces arrived at Cochin to attack the British camp and they were faced Maj. Hewith on January 19, 1809\textsuperscript{103}. The Travancore forces blockaded the mouth of the river in Cochin and cut off the communication between the British forces in Cochin and sea. Maj. Hewith wrote a letter on January 19 to Col. Macaulay seeking his help for military assistance. He observed that on the other side of the river, Travancore forces erected batteries of two guns which prevented the movement of British forces. He requested the Resident to despatch an armed cruiser to save them. Subsequently a serious encounter broke out between the two forces, in which Travancore lost 300 of their men and two guns and sixty one wounded and eleven soldiers died on the British side\textsuperscript{104}. Though ultimately British acquired victory in the battle of Cochin, it proved the fighting qualities of Travancore forces, trained by Velu Tampi.

In order to reinforce the subsidiary forces of the British, a contingent of forces under Lt. Col. Sentleger, reached Aramboly from

\textsuperscript{101} Ibid., p. 1053.
\textsuperscript{102} Ibid., p. 1052.
\textsuperscript{104} W. J. Wilson, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 208-209.
Tiruchi via Palayamkottai on February 3, 1809. Aramboly was well protected by mountains as natural barriers and fortifications erected by Travancore. The road from Palayamkottai passed through the Aramboly pass that was blocked by a gate, protected by two large bastions. Maj. Welsh observed that the entire fortifications were defended by fifty pieces of cannons and 10,000 men, well prepared and organised by the Dewan. Since the fortification was strongly built and well guarded Lt. Col. Sentleger waited for additional reinforcement from the north. New forces came under Maj. James Welsh, reached Aramboly on February 5, 1809 and subsequently the British contingent at Aramboly emerged as a strong force. The operation against the fortification started on February 6, 1809 but the British found it difficult to cross the fortification. Since the entrance was well protected, they had to cause a breach certain distance away from the gate. The job of climbing the wall at convenient place was entrusted to Maj. Welsh, since breaking wall of the fort appeared impossible from outside. The third regiment under Maj. Welsh moved with necessary ladders and pioneers on February 9, 1809 night and climbed the wall through a hill on the southern extremity of the works. On this mission, certain aboriginal mountain dwellers

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107 The British force at Aramboly finally composed of His Majesty's 69 regiment under Lt. Col. W. M'Leod, five companies of first battalion of third regiment of Cap. Pepper, second battalion of third regiment and first battalion of thirteenth regiment under Maj. Lang, five companies of second battalion of thirteenth regiment under Stewart, sixth regiment of native cavalry under Maj. Nuthall, artillery and field pieces under Cap. Frank and 400 pioneers under Cap. Smithwaite. The whole forces had to act under the supreme command of Lt. Col. Sentleger, *ibid.*, p. 287.
108 W. J. Wilson, *op. cit.*, p. 211.
helped the British. Maj. Welsh accomplished the task of storming Aramboly lines and the whole fortification came under the British control. Unable to face the artillery attack of the British, the large contingent of Travancore forces stationed there retreated. The British records speak that in the conflict, Cap. Cunningham lost his life and in total ten soldiers on the British side wounded or died. The British acquired a huge haul of arms and ammunitions left by the Travancore forces. The prize catch of the campaign to the British was thirty one iron guns, varied from sixteen pounders to half pounders and nineteen brass guns ranged from nine pounders to one pounder.

The breaking of Aramboly fortification and subsequent victory of British at the southern border was a blow to the military prospects of Travancore forces. The hope of Velu Tampi against the British was shattered by the border conflict. On the other hand the British considered it as a tremendous victory and that was evidenced by the letter of congratulations sent to Lt. Col. Sentleger and Maj. Welsh from the Governor of Madras. From Aramboly the British forces moved towards the interior land of Southern Travancore. The British forces were intercepted by the Dewan’s forces in Suchindram, on the bank of the river, eight miles east of Cape Comorin on February 17, 1809. It was the last battle in South Travancore, in which heavy cannon fight

109 N. Balakrishnan Nair, op. cit., p. 326.


broke out between the two forces\textsuperscript{112}. More than 600 Travancore forces valiantly fought against the Company forces and at the end they retreated to different directions leaving several of them dead. The British attack was carried out under the command of Col. M'Leod and they also lost a few of their soldiers and more than fifty men were wounded. The Dewan's forces lost nine capital guns to the British forces\textsuperscript{113}.

Succeeded continuously, the Company forces under Lt. Col. Sentleger moved and occupied Nagercoil and Kottar without any resistance. They proceeded towards Trivandrum facing no opposition on the way. On February 19, 1809 the British forces took possessions of Padmanabhapuram and Udayagiri forts, the strategical centres which were already abandoned by the Travancore forces. Without firing even a single shot, the British forces brought these forts under their control\textsuperscript{114}. Before leaving the Padmanabhapuram fort, the local forces carried along with them all the valuable treasures from the palace there but they left behind a huge quantity of weapons. The British were astonished to see the quality and quantity of weapons found in these forts. Different kinds of guns made in England, mounted in carriages were found there. 125 iron guns, ranging from thirty two pounders to one and twenty five brass guns, varied from twenty eight to quarter pounders and four mortars were recovered.

\textsuperscript{112} R. Caldwell, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 268.

\textsuperscript{113} Col. James Welsh, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 292-293.

Apart from that 159 bags of lead, 400 hand arms, 6,000 shot rounds, 15,000 cartridges and 8,000 arrivals besides numerous other types of weapons were recovered by the British. With the loss of Udayagiri, Travancore forces almost lost their fighting capacity.

From Padmanabhapuram Lt. Col. Sentleger proceeded in the direction of sea coast and reached Colachel sea port. On February 21, 1809 he took possession of it and used the port to open the communication to Quilon through sea. He established contact with Lt. Col. Chalmers who commanded the British forces at Quilon. Cap. Townsend carried out the fight against Travancore forces at Shenkottai which was already taken by him. In this battle there was heavy loss on the side of Travancore while the British lost two men and got wounded twenty eight soldiers. But in the north skirmishes continued between the two sides and the Nayar forces often attacked the British camps. The British faced critical movements till the arrival of information of the fall of Aramboly lines. Hearing the news the native forces dispersed themselves. Since the nervousness and hopelessness caught the Travancore soldiers, Paravur and Travancore lines in the north came under the hands of Lt. Col. Cuppage. The British forces collected huge quantity of arms and ammunitions from the Paravur fort, left by the Travancore forces. The haul of weapons constituted numerous kinds and notable among them were foreign

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116 W. J. Wilson, op. cit., p. 213.
117 R. Caldwell, op. cit., p. 268.
made iron guns ranging from twelve pounders and thirteen brass foreign made guns on the range of seven to two pounders. In addition to that they found forty ammunition boxes, 154 barrels, 70,000 cartridges, forty two gun powder in cloth, 233 gun powder barrels, twenty rockets, six arrow bundles and 12,796 shot rounds, besides enormous war like materials for different use\textsuperscript{119}.

The British forces under Sentleger reached Trivandrum from Colachel and encamped near the capital on February 26, 1809. Another force under Lt. Col. Chalmers already marched from Quilon and stationed a few miles north of Trivandrum on February 26, 1809\textsuperscript{120}. The defeat of Travancore forces in all centres and fearing the concentration of the British army around Trivandrum, king Balarama Varma pleaded for peace with the Company. Utilising the chance to furtherance their interest, the British dictated terms for giving up military operations. Agreed to their conditions the king disowned Velu Tampi and issued arrest warrant against him\textsuperscript{121}. Finding his position as precarious, disowned by all including Paliath Achen of Cochin, Velu Tampi roamed from place to place as fugitive. Balarama Varma sent officers every nook and corner of the state to catch him and offered Rs. 50,000 for those who apprehended Velu Tampi. As a courageous military leader he declined to surrender. Velu Tampi ate his lost food in the house of Koil Tampuran at Kilimanur to

\textsuperscript{119} Ibid., pp. 1687-1692.
\textsuperscript{120} W. J. Wilson, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 218.
\textsuperscript{121} P. Shungoonny Menon, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 257.
whom he presented his sword as memento. He entered into the Bagavathi temple at Mannadi and committed suicide on March 28, 1809. It is said that Velu Tampi compelled his brother to cut his neck. Col. Macaulay, not satisfied with the death of Velu Tampi, paraded the dead body in the city of Trivandrum and exhibited it on a gibbet. However the inhuman act of Col. Macaulay was condemned and regretted by the Governor General Minto. The new Dewan Ummini Tampi wrecked the act of vengeance on the family of former Dewan Velu Tampi.

The defeat of Travancore forces at the hands of British during the various battles of 1808-1809 sealed the fate of the standing army of Travancore. At the end the king Balarama Varma came under the complete control of Col. Macaulay and British military officials. He agreed to pay subsidy regularly and to act as per the treaties of 1795 and 1805. Expenses of the British on the 1809 war were demanded from the king and he consented to pay it. The entire defence of the kingdom was entrusted with the British who distributed their forces in different parts of the territory. Large number of Travancore forces lost their life and many were wounded in their fight against the British. The British acquired the whole arms and ammunitions, produced and preserved by the Travancore army, after defeating the Travancore forces in a number of battles. Col. Macaulay was able to fulfil his long

122 The sword was kept as a priceless momento in the Kilimanur palace and the same was presented to the President of India, during his visit to Trivandrum in August 1957. A. Sreedhara Menon, *Gazetteer of India, Kerala – Trivandrum*, p. 773.

cherished dream of the destruction of Travancore forces. On the
demand of the British, the king disbanded the remaining Carnatic
Brigade and the Nayar battalions except a few companies for palace
ceremonies\textsuperscript{124}. Not contended with it, Col. Macaulay sought to
humiliate former Travancore forces. In the words of Col. James Welsh
“All the native officers of the Highness late Carnatic Brigade being
brought into the camp-prisoners and disgraced by the drummers of
line, who cut their jackets of their backs and then turned them out
with the ‘Rouges March’”\textsuperscript{125}. Besides, Travancore was strictly
prohibited from the production of arms and ammunitions\textsuperscript{126}. The
total fortresses, lines, arsenals and magazines of Travancore came
under the domain of British forces in 1809.

The weakness of king Balarama Varma, impractical policy of
Dewan Velu Tampi and the diplomacy played by the British caused the
disintegration and destruction of the Travancore military. During the
initial days of office, Velu Tampi inextricably allied with Col. Macaulay
and thereby strengthened his position and authority in the
Government set-up. It led to the abolition of the traditional Nayar
force in 1804, the root of the Travancore military. Through that
measure, the Dewan unwittingly helped the British to strengthen their
power and influence in Travancore. However his relationship with the
Resident deteriorated and the latter was bent upon destroying the


\textsuperscript{125} Col. James Welsh, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 299.

\textsuperscript{126} Extract from the Minutes of Consultation, No. 5, October 8, 1819, Se. Re. Mad.Govt., p. 8.
Carnatic Brigade. In his fight against the British, Velu Tampi reorganised the military whose strength rose from 8,000 in 1804 to 40,000 in 1808. The recovery of weapons from Udayagiri and Paravur in 1809 by the British revealed the well organised position of Travancore army. But the circumstances were not in favour of Travancore which led to the defeat of the native forces\textsuperscript{127}. In 1809 Travancore military was not a match to the organised artillery of the British Company. The self-contradiction and impracticable mission of Velu Tampi failed to get enough support from the people of various sects. But the lack of patriotism among the leaders and soldiers was the inherent characteristic of that age\textsuperscript{128}. The definite result was the dissolution of the standing army in Travancore. Nevertheless the Travancore army made a heroic attempt against the British forces. Had they won in the 1809 battle against the British, a formidable military would have emerged in Travancore.

\textsuperscript{127} A. Sreedhara Menon, \textit{A Survey of Kerala History}, p. 335.

\textsuperscript{128} Dharm Pal, \textit{Traditions of the Indian Army}, p. 177.