

THE ENIGMA OF DSSC



"It is here at the Staff College, the 'think tank' of the Services, that the middle piece officers of the Indian Armed Forces and selected civil servants upgrade their knowledge from the mechanics of soldiering to the level of conception of ideas in the sphere of military, socio-political, economic and scientific fields, and integrate them into the larger aspects of national life."

Lt Gen F N Bilimoria, ex Commandant DSSC.



The main gate welcomes all visitors to the DSSC

From modest beginnings in 1947, the College today boasts of laurels and recognition beyond compare. Being one of its kind in the entire world, as the only institution to provide, under one roof, staff training to officers of Army, Navy and Air Force, along with officers of the civil services and those of the Commonwealth and friendly foreign countries, DSSC has acquired an enviable reputation both abroad and at home.

Situated in the lap of the lush green Nilgiris and surrounded by innumerable tea plantations and eucalyptus trees, DSSC stands tall as an epitome of Indian military proficiency.





Entrance of the College, 1948

Need for a Staff College

It was in 1856 that the British first felt the need for specially trained officers to improve their military efficiency. The Duke of Cambridge, then Commander-in-Chief, set the qualifications required of a staff officer and soon the senior department of the Royal Military College (established in 1802) at Sandhurst was designated to train British officers in organizational skills and intellect with a new name 'The Staff College'. The senior department began admitting students based on an examination. It had its own Commandant and professors and was open to officers of all arms. The first batch consisted of 30 students.

In 1862, the College shifted to Camberley. Since 1864, officers who passed out of the College began to be distinguished by the letters 'psc' (passed staff course). The tradition continues till this day.

The syllabus included mathematics, military history, topography, astronomy, French, German and Hindustani. The general officers in the field army required staff officers who could sketch rapidly, build bridges, make roads, construct field works, all very quickly and to be fluent linguists.

A Staff College in India

The mutiny of 1857 came as a rude shock to the British. Subsequently, major reforms were constituted and the Indian Army was reorganized and reduced in strength.

In 1868, under the Secretary of State for War, Edward Cardwell, a Royal Commission considered the possibility of a Staff College in India. Though an Indian Staff Corps had been set up to provide the Indian Army with British officers, they were not staff trained. General (later FM) Lord Strathnairn contended that India should have a Staff College of its own. However, the proposal was turned down. The Government felt that suitable instructors might not be available in India. Moreover, India presented an unsuitable climate and lack of opportunities to study modern battles.

Repeated requests were turned down until 1902, when Lord Kitchener took over as Commander-in-Chief. He proposed to establish an Indian Staff College, very similar to the one at Camberley, with the same regulations, syllabus, entrance examination, and a possible interchange of instructional staff, and also an inspection by the Camberley Commandant. Though his proposal met with the same apprehension, his efforts bore fruit and he was successful in overcoming all opposition. The proposal was sanctioned in 1905. An Indian Staff College was to be established in Quetta (now in Pakistan).