Chapter – I

Introduction
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INTRODUCTION

England had produced great administrators. Thomas Munro was one among them. Thomas Munro’s life and work in India may be divided into four periods. The first, from 1780 to 1792, was purely military, and during most of these twelve years he was in active service in the wars with Haider Ali and Tipu Sultan.

In the second, 1792-1807, he was employed in the civil administration of the country. From 1792 to 1799 in the Baramahal, this had been ceded by Tipu Sultan. In 1799-1800 in Canara and from 1800 to 1807 in the districts still known as the Ceded Districts, acquired by the treaty with the Nizam in 1800. The third period, 1814-1818, after an interval of six years in Europe, was spent partly in civil and partly in military duty.

He was sent out by the Court of Directors in 1814 as ‘Principal Commissioner for the revision of the internal administration of the Madras territories’- judicial and financial, and during 1817 - 1818 he was in command of a division of the army in the last Maratha war. The fourth period, after a short visit to England in 1819, was that of his governorship of Madras from June 8, 1820, until his death on July 6, 1827.

The English East India Company acquired large territories in south India after the end of the fourth Mysore war. The territories were surveyed and divided into districts. The control areas were named Baramahal later Salem and western part of south India became Canara districts. The establishment of district administration was a great challenge to the English East India Company. Thomas Munro responded to the challenge effectively.

Revenue is the backbone of any administration. Ryotwari system was more practical and feasible than the Zamindari and Mahalwari systems. Thomas Munro was the author of the Ryotwari system. He also served as Judicial Commissioner the powerful rank in the Company’s Administration.

As the Governor of the Madras Presidency Thomas Munro introduced many reforms to strengthen the position of the English East India Company and to the welfare
of the people of South India. As a parliamentary member he had played a constructive role in the British Parliament.

In Madras, Munro laid the foundation of a form of district administration that has survived with some changes to this day. The Collector was made head of the district and besides his fundamental responsibility of revenue, was also in charge of managing the police and was vested with magisterial powers. Under him came a large retinue of Tahsildars who apart from revenue collection, also had quasi-judicial powers in their sub-districts. In time, Munro’s methods became an absolute success and were extended all over South India.

Sir Thomas Munro was a rare phenomenon among the ordinary mortals. His unflinching interests in the welfare of the Indians made him toil day in and out. In fact Munro was one of the greatest administrators who added luster to the pages of Anglo-Indian history in the opening decades of the 19th century.

Hence the scholar attempts to make a study on ‘Munro’ the Governor of Madras Presidency.

OBJECTIVES

This research work has the following objectives:

1. To describe the life and military achievements of Sir Thomas Munro.
2. To explain the ryotwari system and
3. To examine the administrative skills of Sir Thomas Munro.

SOURCES

This work is based on primary and secondary sources. Military Records, Munro Collections, Confidential documents, Board of Revenue Records, are the most important primary sources that are consulted for this study. Books, Gazetteers and articles are the secondary sources

METHODOLOGY

This study is based on descriptive and analytical method. All the data are collected from the sources available in the Tamil Nadu Archives, Egmore, Chennai,
Connemara Library, Madras University Library and Central Library at Coimbatore. The available statistics have been arranged chronologically to present the thesis. All the sources are available in the Tamil Nadu Archives, Egmore, Chennai.

**REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

Munro was deployed in the remarkable volume by S. Srinivasaraghavaiyangar recording the ‘progress of the Madras Presidency’ in the last half of the nineteenth century. This was a work intended to refute criticisms that British rule had produced poverty everywhere in India; it was one of several defensive works planned by the viceregal council in 1887.

Sir C.E.Buck, secretary for revenue, circulated a confidential minute to Madras and other governments requesting each to answer ‘recent allegations that the people of India suffer from a daily insufficiency of food’, and requesting ‘any information of a positive character’ on the ‘condition of the poorer classes of India’.

The unexpected sources of these allegations were reported to be such respected officials as Sir W.W. Hunter and Sir Charles Elliot. In 1890, Srinivasaraghavaiyanagar, the Inspector-General of Registration in Madras, was ordered by the Governor, Lord Connemara to produce the response from Madras, examining whether such criticisms were ‘wholly untrue or partially untrue’ during the previous fifty years.

Other voices critical of the Raj also used the emblematic Munro. These included Indian critics, among whom R.C.Dutt was the most prominent. In 1900 Dutt sent a series of letters of the Viceroy, Lord Curzon, indicating some of the same policies of the Government of India as those of retired British ICS officials.

Dutt’s charges were answered by Madras, in part by challenging the latter’s assertion that Munro’s early ryotwari had been violated by Madras regimes after his death and that his early ryotwari should be restored as a means of achieving a more just revenue system. In answer, Madras sought to correct Dutt’s reading of Munro so as to seize his symbolic authority back to the Raj, where it belonged. But, this effort came at a cost. For example, the Madras authorities denied Dutt’s assertion that Munro in 1812 and
after had held that assessments under ryotwari were permanent and that therefore later revisions violated the rights and just expectations of cultivators.

This assertion was met by a mix of casuistry and fact: Munro, it was claimed, did not use the terms ‘fixed’ and ‘permanent’ to mean unalterable. It was argued that Munro had said that the level of ryotwari assessment could be increased under state needs—what Hodgson had long before ridiculed as Munro’s war levy. The effort of the Madras authorities in 1902 was as plain as it was pained; they had not only to maintain Munro as a morally pure founder of the Madras system, but also to resist Munro’s words being used to defame the successor imperial regime.

For imperial historians at this early point in the twentieth century, Munro, along with a few others, was invoked to demonstrate the welfare concerns of some, at least, of the Company period. P.F. Roberts in 1916 extolled Bentinck’s commitment to ‘the welfare of the subject people (as the) main, perhaps the primary, duty of the British in India’ and located that commitment first in Munro. In his evaluation of the Company Raj, Roberts saw the need to acknowledge the ‘blunders’ and ‘political crimes’ of the servants of the Company, but even so there were a handful of Britons who almost balanced all evils.

These included Munro, and they were amongst the greatest Englishmen of their day. Nevertheless, contradiction appears again; the problems of the new imperial order created under Crown rule had to be displaced upon the earlier Company era. However, as the need to maintain the moral basis of the conquest of the Company era continued, the villainies of the Company had to be offset by early heroes such as Cornwallis, Bentinck, Munro, Thomason, and Metcalf-Roberts’ pantheon.

The relationship between the era of Company rule and crown rule was reversed by nationalist historians of post-independence India. In one of the major assessments of the Imperial Raj by Indian historians of the Nehru epoch, the Bharatiya Vidyabhavan’s History and Culture of the Indian people, Munro is accorded considerable honour. His governorship, from 1820 to 1827, is seen to have chiefly involved in expanding a compassionate ryotwari, which by reducing the level of assessments and other improvements, mitigated the worst evils of agrarian poverty.
CHAPTERIZATION

This research work is divided into ten Chapters.

The first Chapter is introduction, in which, nature, scope, objectives and sources are stated.

The second Chapter provides the early life and military achievements of Sir Thomas Munro.

An army cornel became the collector of Company areas, is described in the third Chapter.

The challenges of the collector are discussed in the fourth Chapter.

The introduction of ryotwari system and its advantages are examined in the fifth Chapter.

The powers of the Judicial Commissioner are evaluated in the sixth Chapter.

The seventh Chapter outlines the achievements of Munro as the Governor of the largest Madras Presidency.

The eighth Chapter traces the skills of the brilliant administrator.

The qualities of a gentle Parliamentarian are reviewed in the ninth Chapter.

The tenth Chapter is conclusion.
Map -1

General map showing Munro’s territory