Chapter Seven

LAND REVENUE ADMINISTRATION - RYOTWARI SETTLEMENT
In the years 1792, 1799 and 1800-1, the newly acquired territories of the Madras Presidency had to be organised for internal administration. As the requisite Civil Officers were not available, the Governor-General, Lord Cornwallis, determined to settle Barahmahal, in 1792 with the aid of military Officers, who knew the languages of the country. Col. Read was given charge of administration of Salem with Munro and others as his assistants. In 1799, Coimbatore was entrusted to the care of Macleod and Hurdis. In 1801, Ceded Districts were undertaken by Munro.

Munro, with his usual insight in Ceded Districts (1801-7) studied the revenue problems. He found out that in the country here already existed a system of revenue collection which could be, with certain modifications, utilised with great advantage to the Government as well as the people. At first he planned a just distribution and equalisation of known assessment. Afterwards he undertook the actual survey of field as dry (irrigated) and wet (non-irrigated) Takkal gardens, or improved land. He classified the soil as "black cotton", red and so on. When Col. Munro resigned the important charge of the affairs of this extensive territory, he recorded his opinions in a report. He pointed out that a change was required in the revenue administration, but this change was not to be such as to render its character suspicious. He did not consider it
prudent to introduce innovations in the country which had recently been settled. He further observed that in the country managed by him the revenue was easily collected and the system was beneficial.

He observed that one-third of the produce was the highest point at which an assessment should be made without harming the interests of the peasantry. The two main points of consideration in the ryotwari settlement, which Munro had, as early as 1807, expounded in his report to the Board were (a) the cultivators were at liberty to till the extent of land and determine the quality of land, (b) the payment of land revenue was to be on the lands actually cultivated. He advocated a Permanent Ryotwari Settlement in the Ceded Districts, in which a reduction of twenty-five per cent was required in the survey rate of assessment. He suggested that every ryot be at liberty to take up more land for cultivation or give up a part of his land. As long as the ryot paid the rent he was to be considered the owner of the land. Usually, no remissions were to be made in assessment except for bad seasons. All the land not rented by the ryots was to be the

1. Dutt, Romesh Chandra, Economic History of India, p.138. Extract from Munro's report:

"That it was essential to its welfare that there should be an actual change, but nothing should be done which might excite suspicion ..... the disturbances by which it was formerly agitated had been too recently settled to render it either prudent or safe, to hazard any experiment of innovation, that the country was quiet and well affected, that no troops were required in it, that the revenue was collected with greatest ease, that the way most likely to secure these advantages would be continued as early as possible the system".
property of the Government. In short, Munro desired the settlement to be with the individual tenant, increasing or decreasing in accordance with the land under cultivation. The waste land cultivated by the farmer was to be assessed after a number of years.

William Bentinck, who succeeded Edward Clive as Governor of the Madras Presidency, was of the same opinion. He supported the revenue system advocated by Munro. He observed in 1806, that in Bengal Zamindari Settlement had proved beneficial, where a hereditary Zamindari already existed. But in Madras there was no such class of Zamindars. The Zaminderis artificially created through the sale of land by auction, had proved detrimental to the interests of the government and the country. Bentinck appreciated the principles of Permanent Settlement, but it was not suitable to the conditions prevailing in Madras. He also cited the case of Canara where great advantages had accrued from the ryotwari system, due to equal distribution and definite amount of land tax. Every ryot was at liberty to enjoy the fruits of his labour.

1. Selection of Papers from the records of East India House, Vol.I. Madras Revenue Selections. Revenue Letter from the Court of Directors to Fort St. George, dated 17th December 1817, p.506.

Bentinck did not rest at recording minutes in favour of the Ryotward Settlement and supporting Col. Munro. He personally visited Calcutta, to have a conference with the Governor-General, on the continuation of Permanent Settlement as ordered previously by the Supreme Government and the Court. He put forward his opinion against its continuation in the country, enumerating various disadvantages. Another mode of revenue collection by making settlement with each individual was far more congenial to the conditions of the country and the people.

But Bentinck was not successful in convincing either the Supreme Government or the Court of Directors on this issue. The Court reprimanded him on his visit to Calcutta, in a Public despatch dated 10th February, 1807. They refused to recognise the decisions arrived at the conference between the Governor and the Governor-General.

On Bentinck's abrupt removal, opposition to Permanent Settlement ceased. His successor Barlow approved and extended it with the concurrence of Minto.

Bentinck, on reaching England, apprised Home authorities of civil consequences of Bengal Settlement, and exclusion of Indians from responsible posts in the government, which

1. Ibid. Revenue Consultation, dated 28th November 1806. The minutes of William Bentinck, p.552, para 27.
was one of the causes of disturbances at Madras. The Home authorities did not take proper notice of Bentinck's observations.

Thus we have seen that Bentinck and Munro had failed to convince the Board of Revenue at Madras, and the Court of Directors in England about the benefits of Ryotwar Settlement. In 1807, Munro went back to England for his well earned rest after long service in India. There he personally influenced the Home authorities in favour of the adoption of Ryotwar system of land revenue. He expounded his system of administration which included not only land revenue, but judicial and Police reforms also. The basis for this was the village community in accordance with ancient customs and usages of India, when these villages acted as autonomous republics. In these republics the Potail or the headman was assisted by juries in the administration of justice.

Col. Munro further observed in his report of 15th out August 1807, that the chief defects pointed out against Ryotwar system were the great details of account, interference of revenue officers in cultivation, the expenses of revenue collection and the fluctuation of public revenue. Munro did not consider these defects to be irremediable. Through the survey of the country when each field was surveyed and its rent fixed, the accounts would become just a list of ryots and fields. The additional expense was to be offset by higher

gradual yield of revenue. He concluded by observing that it was the only system prevailing in India previously and no other mode of revenue collection could be permanent.

In the Home Government Buckinghamshire became President of the Board of Control. He was a great antagonist of the Court in general matters relating to the Company's affairs, but on the question of reformation in Madras administration, he concurred with them.

In the Board's Office James Cumming became incharge of Revenue and Judicial departments. He was one of the ablest officers that ever occupied a responsible position, and became an expert in revenue matters. When Munro went back to England on leave, Cumming was highly impressed by former's knowledge of Madras administration, and realised the necessity of introducing Ryotwari Settlement of revenue at Madras.

Buckinghamshire appointed John Sullivan as one of the paid commissioners at Board's Office. Sullivan took keen interest in Madras affairs. He had a first hand knowledge of the country as he had served as a civilian in Madras. He was a friend of Munro and highly valued his opinion. He appreciated Munro's evaluation of Madras affairs, thus concurred in Ryotwari settlement of revenue.


Buckinghamshire highly valued Sullivan's advice on judicial and revenue matters. He himself possessed first-hand knowledge of the Madras Presidency. As Governor of Madras had sanctioned RYOTWARI Settlement of Revenue in Ceded Districts under Col. Read and Lionel Place.

The Court was already anxious for reforms in Madras after general unrest of Sepoy Mutiny at Vellore and White Mutiny in the Company's army officers. Munro gave evidence before the Select Committee of the House of Commons against extension of Permanent Settlement to Madras. He convinced Buckinghamshire, Sullivan and Cummings and the House of Commons the advisability of Ryotwari settlement. George Canning was also impressed by "originality and surety of his ideas".

The Home authorities directed Minto the Governor-General against extension of Permanent Settlement to Ceded Districts and conquered provinces.

The Court's orders for the Introduction of Ryotwari System

The Court of Directors, influenced by the opinions of Bentinck and Munro, who had returned from India, and the reports of those who held various posts in the revenue department, decided to introduce Ryotwari system in Madras Presidency. They had received disquieting reports on the working of Village Lease System here. The Court considered it to be the

best mode of revenue collection in these territories, which would safeguard the individual rights. In a Revenue despatch dated 16th December, 1812, the Court of Directors gave specific orders for the gradual change over from Permanent Settlement and Village Leases to the Ryotwari System.

The Court Deprecates Board of Revenue for obstructing Ryotwari Settlement

The Court of Directors expressed satisfaction at the Madras Government's endeavours for the introduction of Ryotwari Settlements but strongly deprecated the stand taken by the Board of Revenue. The Court in a letter dated 12th April, 1815, observed that the Board of Revenue in the Madras Presidency had tried to justify its unauthorised action in the introduction of the decennial lease system. The Board ventured to discuss the advisability of introduction of Ryotwari Settlement while the proper course for it was to implement the orders conveyed by Home authorities. The Court observed that in many instances the Board induced the Government to deviate from the instructions from England.

While making the list of districts in which the Ryotwari System was to be introduced, the Board had omitted Nellore, without giving any specific reason therefor. The district of

1. Revenue despatch from the Court of Directors to Fort St. George, dated 16th December 1812, p.503, para 19.
2. Ibid. Revenue letter from the Court to Fort St. George, dated 12th April 1815, p.642, para 112.
Coimbatore which was included by the Government and the Board in the final list for Ryotwari Settlement but excluded by the Collector. Thus, the Board acted against the instructions of the Government when it authorised the Collectors to conclude Village Leases. The Court approved the parties with whom Settlement was made and the terms contained therein. The Board considered the necessity of reducing the rate of assessment in the Ryotwari Settlement but the Court was not amenable to it.

The Board of Revenue possessed proper knowledge of local conditions in the various districts gathered through the correspondence of the District Collectors. In the establishment of Decennial leases the interests of the Company were kept in view. The Board considered this Village Lease System of revenue collection to be the best one, in accordance with ancient institutions of the country. Except for expressing its desire that the orders from Home were to be fully implemented, the Court did not take any disciplinary action against the Board or revoke the settlement. The Board of Revenue had no partiality for Ryotwari Settlement, to which it was opposed not as a matter of policy but on account of expediency.

The Court of Directors instructed the Madras Government that in the unsettled provinces Ryotwari Settlement was to be made the mode of revenue collection, and the Village Leases
were to be terminated after the expiry of the period. These orders of the Court created consternation in the Madras Government. Now, the Madras Government was quite anxious to implement the orders from England. It instructed the Board of Revenue to make enquiries from the Collectors regarding the expiry of Village Leases and the suitability of introduction of Ryotwari Settlement of revenue. The Government further instructed the Board to make enquiries regarding the introduction of Ryotwari Settlement in the villages of Trichnopoly, Nellore, Palnad, Coimbatore, Tinnevelly, Madura and Dindigul and Northern and Southern Arcot in which the decennial Village Lease had not been conducted. It was observed that the Court's orders regarding waste land could not be implemented without causing injury to the people and the Company.

The Collectors described the condition of the country under Village Leases as anything but prosperous. The Board of Revenue made a list of the places where revenue was unsettled. Thus, the system which the Revenue Collectors had propagated for about a decade came into existence. This famous Ryotwari system, after its successful execution in Madras was extended to the other parts of India also. Even today it exists in the country, though with some modifications.

1. Ibid. Revenue Letter from the Court of Directors to Fort St. George, dated 16th December 1812, p.534, para 33.
2. Ibid. Revenue Letter from Fort St. George to the Court of Directors, dated 25th August 1813, p.573, para 5.
3. Ibid., p.574, para 7.
The Madras Government after receiving orders from the Court for the introduction of Ryotwari Settlement, directed the Board of Revenue to study the problem thoroughly. The Board in its turn instructed the Collectors to submit the required data to the Court. The Government in a letter dated 1 25th August, 1813, informed the Court of Directors about the progress made in Ryotwari Settlement. It informed the Home authorities that it was not possible to introduce Ryotwari System in those places where Village Leases had been concluded, but after the termination of the lease, Ryotwari could be introduced. The Government ordered the Board to form Ryotwari Settlement in those villages in Trichinopally, Nellore, Palnad, Coimbatore, Tinneveli, Madura and Dindigul, the villages in Ceded Districts, Northern and Southern Divisions of Arcot. In accordance with the instructions from England, the rights of the tenants were to be respected. The renters were authorised to realise the usual rent and no more. The government expressed its feeling of embarrassment over conferring the proprietary rights to the ryot, temporarily or permanently. The feeling of ownership thus aroused would complicate matters, as the "assessment swallow up almost the whole of landlord's rent which alone constitutes value and in

1. Ibid.
2. Ibid., p.573, para 3.
truth the essence of proprietary right in soil]. The government observed that the ryots were compelled by it to take more land than it was possible for them to cultivate.

In introducing Ryotwari Settlement the Board of Revenue experienced many problems. While conducting it in Trichnomally the Board found that reduction in Tirwas (paddy) land rent on wet lands had impoverished the Mirsadars. The Board further observed that in Dindigul, Madura and Tinnevelly lower rate of assessment was essential. The reduction in the rate of assessment was made only temporarily to give impetus for hard work, after a while the rate would again be increased.

Now, the Court of Directors in its despatch dated 12th April, 1815, laid down the policy to be adopted in revenue administration. They refused to agree to suggestions for reducing the rate of assessment in Ryotwari System, pointing out that in this system no intermediary agency existed between the government and the ryots. So, a greater amount of revenue could be realised, as there were no Zamindars to oppress the cultivators and to collect undue rents from the ryots. The Court further observed that the Company's finances did not warrant any reduction of this kind and it expressed its surprise at this suggestion from the Board of Revenue.

1. Ibid., p.575, para 19.
2. Ibid. Despatch dated 12th April, 1815, from the Court of Directors to Fort St. George, p.644, para 122.
3. Ibid., p.645, para 123.
The Madras Government represented that the judicial system was incompatible with the *ryotwari* system. To this the Court replied that they did not intend to oppress the *ryots*. Through Judicial despatch of 29th April, 1814, they had directed reforms in the judiciary.

**Systematic Opposition by the Board of Revenue**

As the Board of Revenue still considered the Village Lease to be the best suited mode of revenue collection, the Madras Government in its letter dated 5th March, 1813, protested against the Court's decision favouring the *ryotwari* system. It observed that as agriculture was considered to be the source of progress and prosperity of the country the government's share was to be fixed. By permanent fixation of land revenue the government's interests were secure. It considered Permanent Settlement "strictly as a question of fiscal policy" which was beneficial to the interests of the country.

Again in 1814 the Madras Government observed that *ryotwari* Settlement was not for safeguarding the rights and interests of the *ryots*, but it was a "violent encroachment on landed property, where it really exists than ever was attempted under any other system". The interests of the *ryots* were managed by the governmental agency, which had no sympathy

---

1. Ibid. Despatch dated 5th March, 1813, from Fort St. George to the Court of Directors, p.557, para 135.
with him. The Ryotwar Settlement proposed by Munro did not in any way settle the problem of land revenue, but left it as unsettled as it was ever before. The peasant had become subject to the interference of the Government officials who hampered his progress. The Madras Government made an appeal to the Court in its wisdom and justice for a moderation in assessment. This appeal to the Court was of no avail.

The settlement of Ryotwar system was delayed on account of judicial and administrative reforms directed by the Court in 1814. Even after the promulgation of judicial and Police regulations in 1816 the Board of Revenue at Madras still advocated Village Lease Settlement in 1818. It appreciated the great facility and regularity of revenue collection under Permanent Settlement. The Zamindars and Poligars were considered the nobility of the country. The Board observed that though the Village Lease system did not achieve equal success everywhere yet from the reports of the Collectors it was apparent that considerable progress had been made in the prosperity of the country. While in this system the head renter oppressed the ryot; in Ryotwar, the Tehsildars, with the authority of the Collectors, made exorbitant demands on them.

**Court's Instructions regarding Treatment of Ryots**

The Court of Directors, on receiving the report from

the Madras Government on the exercise of pressure on the 
Ryots, observed, in a despatch dated 12th April, 1815, the 
evils of these measures. It was pointed out that in extension 
of cultivation "their operations were rather pernicious than 
salutary". It was by no means the Court's intention that the 
revenue servants of the government should exercise undue 
pressure on the Ryots. The instructions conveyed by the 
Board of Revenue to the Collectors were defective. The 
Court disapproved of any arbitrary action on the part of the 
Board of Revenue in stripping the Poteils and Mirsadars of 
their hereditary and official privileges and possessions in 
concluding Decennial Leases.

No material progress was made in the introduction of 
Ryotwari settlement at Madras till 1819. The Board of 
Revenue, the authority for conducting the revenue administra­
tion, was totally opposed to the Ryotwari Settlement. It had 
reluctantly obeyed the Court's orders directing the introduc­
tion of Ryotwari Settlements, but secretly encouraged the 
Collector to form decennial leases. The Board tried to 
convince the Court about the usefulness of Village Leases 
in the interests of the Company as well as the people. Between 
1812 and 1818 though the Court's instructions were for the 

1. Madras Revenue Selection. Revenue Letter from the Court 
of Directors to Fort St. George, dated 12th April, 1815, 
p.646, para 126.
2. Ibid., p.647, para 128.
Roytwari Settlement, the Village Lease was the predominant mode of revenue collection.

It is evident that the Board of Revenue retarded progress of Ryotwar Settlement. Only if the local authorities were willing, the orders from the Court could be implemented in spirit as well as in letter. It was under the personal supervision of Munro himself that the system visualised by him made real progress.

**Corruption in the Revenue Department**

In the administration of Madras, numerous instances of extensive embezzlement, repeated malversations, and fraudulent combinations crept up in the Revenue Department, on the part of Indian servants of the Company. These abusive practices were not limited to one or two provinces but extended throughout the Presidency. In the Province of Coimbatore extensive embezzlement came to notice. Considerable embezzlements of the cash had been unearthed at Malabar, Masulipattam and Guntoor. A system of corruption had been organised in South Arcot Division. Abuses of this kind existed at Nellore and Guntoor in Salt Department, at Coimbatore and Cuddapah in Customs. The corruption of two head Indian servants at Jagir gave ample proof of maladministration at Madras. The regulations for the prevention of and punishment for these crimes were inadequate.

---

1. Ibid. Revenue Letter to Fort St. George from the Court of Directors, dated 22nd May, 1818, p.755, para 86.
The government of the Madras Presidency in 1815 appointed a Commission to enquire into the state of affairs at the Presidency and suggest measures for its prevention. Col. Munro and John Sullivan were appointed members of the Special Commission for Coimbatore District. The Commissioners submitted their report on 26th February, 1816, in which they brought to light a scene of malversation, fraud and embezzlement unparalleled in the annals of British India.

Abuses in Coimbatore Revenue Department

The cash keeper of Collector of Coimbatore, Cassy Chetty, was involved in embezzlement and fraud against the Company. He joined as a Treasurer in 1806 at Coimbatore. There he induced all Tehsildars to join him in a conspiracy for embezzlement. He was taking advances from the Government Treasury, which amounted to pagodas, 205,305 for purchasing commodities. From tobacco monopoly he embezzled pagodas 50,000. He induced the people to pay him nazrana which was a fee levied by him at the time of Decennial Lease and for appointments. It was collected through Potsils and Tehsildars. The revenue was declining in the district while these embezzlements were taking place. His agents took Village Leases of ninety villages. Cassey Chetty derived profit out of them. At the same time he traded in various commodities

in these villages. His dealings in ghee created a general discontentment, as it affected the business of merchants who monopolised it. These people rose against him. The following figures were given for Cassey Chetty’s embezzlement.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Pag.</th>
<th>Fan</th>
<th>Cash</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Extra collection in villages</td>
<td>300,156</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Embezzlement in Tobacco monopoly</td>
<td>143,913</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Embezzlement in sandal-wood</td>
<td>54,696</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Sundry receipts from treasury Star Pagodas</td>
<td>8,199</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>593,869</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Of these the following was appropriated by Cassey Chetty:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Pag.</th>
<th>Fan</th>
<th>Cash</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Receipt from extra villages</td>
<td>87,162</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sandalwood monopoly</td>
<td>54,696</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Repair of Tanks</td>
<td>44,000</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tobacco monopoly</td>
<td>136,126</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sundry receipts from treasury</td>
<td>8,199</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>330,320</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

No person but Gopalah Munshi and writer were permitted to carry on the business.

1. Ibid, p.488.
The astutely conceived net of embezzlement could not go on undiscovered. It was an open secret before long. On 26th May the Government Vakeel applied to Zillah Court, Dharapuram, praying that the informant and Cassey Chetty might be summoned and summary enquiry be made into the charges of embezzlement. But the Court, for want of authority to make a summary enquiry, declined to interfere. The inadequacy of Government Regulation to check these evils became apparent. In November, 1813, a statement by Thirmal Pillai and residents of the Province, was also presented to the Zillah Court, Coimbatore, and was transmitted to the Collector. This petition gave a detailed account of embezzlement in various modes conducted by Cassey Chetty. Another petition on 27th January, 1814, was presented to the Governor-in-Council by Sonmy Chetty giving the same details. Not long after Thirmal Pillai personally proceeded to Madras and presented a petition to the Government about malversation of Cassey Chetty which amounted to Pagodas 530,000.

The Board of Revenue did not believe in the existence of corruption and embezzlement on such a large scale. Instead of taking full cognizance of abuses prevalent in Coimbatore, they attributed the petitions to the false and malicious accusations, apt to be brought up against Revenue Officers. From their past experience, as well as the high regard which they had for the merits of Collector, they paid scant attention to the complaints. The Board ordered an enquiry into the

1. Ibid, p.489, para 17.
This turn of events proved highly dangerous, as it gave scope for those abuses which so long disgraced the administration of government at Coimbatore. The inhabitants of Dharmpuram addressed to the Governor-in-Council another petition on 23rd January, 1815. In this petition also Cassey Chetty was accused of fraud and embezzlement. On account of his being too close and friendly with the Collector, no notice was taken of the petition. Thirmal Pillai, the chief Mirasdar of Erode, was appointed Vakeel by these people. An application to Zillah Court was submitted by them for transmission to Government, but due to friendly relations between Zillah Judge and the Collector, the former disposed of the petitioners in a curt manner. Again the inhabitants submitted another petition to the Collector, who, instead of making an enquiry, endorsed its submission to the Government. The petitioners concluded that from the Collector due to his connections with Cassey Chetty, and from the Judge on account of his connections with the Collector, they had no chances of having their grievances redressed. So, as a last resort they sent their Vakeel Thirmal Pillai to Madras for presenting the petition to the government.

1. Ibid, p.490, para 20.
The enquiry was now unavoidable. The case was referred by the government to the Board of Revenue, who gave instructions for instituting an enquiry. But instead of receiving a report from the Collector, the Board received representations from him that the Indian servants of the Police and Judicial Departments had entered into a conspiracy to defame the Indian servants of the Revenue Department. The attention of the Board was thus diverted. Immediate credit was given to the report of the Collector, as to "prevent further embarrassment to the collection of revenue and to punish those who might be proved to have been implicated in this attempt to obstruct the measures of government of its public officers".

The Government believed in the conspiracy of the Judicial and Police servants against the Revenue Officers. It instructed the Judge to make a further enquiry against the Judicial and Police Officers. Now, the Judge being already pre-possessed with guilt of these officers, gave his verdict without making complete investigations, against the Judicial and Police Officers. As the report of the Judge was in accordance with regulations, the Government sent for the approval of Provincial Court of Circuit and Appeal. The

1. Ibid, p.491, para 22.
2. Ibid, para 23.
Judge of the Circuit Court also concurred in the opinion of the Magistrate and dismissed some of the judicial servants. The Governor-in-Council on that occasion observed that the suspicion of the Collector of Coimbatore was justified, when he made an appeal to the Board of Revenue in this connection.

The investigations against Cassey Chetty and other servants of the Revenue Department were abandoned.

The accused who were sentenced by the Zillah Court appealed in the Sadr Court against the decisions. After conducting a thorough investigation in the case, it was found that Cassey Chetty and others were the real defaulters. A forgery had been practised by them on the servants of the Judicial Department. The Sadr Adalat in its proceedings on 15th August, 1816, found Cassey Chetty and others to be guilty of extortion in the first place. If the Sadr Adalat had not unearthed the crime, innocent people would have been punished and the real culprits would have escaped. In this case, the Collector, Judge, the Board of Revenue and even the Governor-in-Council was misled through the craftiness of Cassey Chetty. All the investigating authorities had put too much reliance on the Collector, who was either unaware or implicated in the whole affair. This state of affairs certainly exhibited carelessness, negligence and partiality on the part of the Board of Revenue. The Governor-in-Council had also not acted prudently.

1. Ibid, p.492, para 27.
The other party opposed Cassey Chetty not because they were prompted by public spirit but because he had become two powerful and had monopolised their trade. The Commissioners enquiring into his case observed: "he has not done more mischief by his own peculation than by instigating those of every revenue servant in the country far beyond what they ever thought of and by rendering the universal practice of concealing and falsifying accounts".

On receiving the report of this deplorable state of affairs at Coimbatore, the Court of Directors was justified in criticising the whole affair and reproving the Board of Revenue and the Madras Government for negligence and partiality. The Court itself did not act too promptly, it was after five years of the enquiry that they considered it fit to criticise the actions of the Board of Revenue and the Madras Government.

The Court of Directors' Censure of the Board of Revenue

The Court strongly censured the Board of Revenue by observing that the Board must be considered as an "institution" ill-calculated to answer the ends of calculating authority. The repeated charge brought against Cassey Chetty by Arnachallem Chetty on the 16th May, 1810, was subjoined by the petition of Thirmal Pillai addressed to the Zillah Court of Coimbatore, in November 1813, and the petition of Sammy Chetty in January, 1814, were ignored by the Board. Again

1. Ibid, p.492, para 28.
Thermal Pillai's stating the detailed account of malversation should have aroused suspicion of the Board of Superintendence. These great and increasing charges were not against only Sheristadars, but cash keeper, which should have created the apprehensions of some mischief. If personal hearing had been given to petitioners the Board would have been able to find out the truth of the complaints.

The Board justified itself on giving the repeated injunctions to the Collector to make enquiry against servants. It failed to envisage the possibility of the Collector being an instrument of his servants either by a weak or blind confidence in them or by corrupt participation.

The Board of Revenue gave the plea of being so far away from the scene of action. The Court observed that considering the expediency, one of the Board's members should have been deputed in the province for enquiry. The report of the Commissioners was submitted to the Board of Revenue "in order that they might be enabled to adopt the measures necessary for checking the abuses which prevailed in the provinces". The Board was called upon at that time to report about the implication of the Collector, Mr. Garrow, in Cassey Chetty corruption which was a matter of great importance not only to the justification of Garrow if he were innocent but also to the honour and interest of the services. The Board was

1. Ibid, p.493, para 29.
2. Ibid, para 31.
required to make observations of the Commissioners report respecting the measures best calculated to promote the ends of justice, to recover the property, which has been embezzled and to secure the interests of the Company).

The Board of Revenue made an unfavourable impression upon the Court by its report in which it tried to justify its lack of supervision and making a sort of attack on the special Commissioners thereby exculpating the late collector under whose charge the embezzlement took place. At some places in its report, a criticism was directed towards the Commission which was something uncalled for. The Court did not censure Mr. Savory, the Judge of Dharampuram, who had pronounced, without due investigation, a sentence of guilty on the officers of his Court. The moment his error was pointed to him, he retraced his steps without reserve.

The Governor-in-Council instructed the Board of Revenue to devise measures to meet the ends of justice, and secure the interests of the Company as the existing Regulations for the detection of abuses were inadequate. In respect of Garrow, the late Collector, if at all he had been participant in the fraud of his subordinates, the Government was ordered to recover the amount from his estates.

The untimely publication of the Commissioners' report had a derogatory effect on the public morale. The Board of

1. Ibid, p.494, para 31.
Revenue considered the acts of special Commissioners irregular and unwarranted by the Regulations.

The Court of Directors deplored the evident defects in the administration. They were apprehensive lest the abuses that had occurred in Coimbatore should take place in other parts of the Company's territory. The Board of Revenue in their confidence of the Collector and the Collector either in his ignorance or as an accomplice of the fraudulent and cunning Casey Chetty for seven years could not discover and prevent abuses. By the death of Mr. Garrow, the question of his being retained in service did not arise, but his implications on the frauds were to be enquired. The Court pointed out that the existence under a public Officer of abuses of great extent and long duration which were attended with great profits to his immediate dependents and on which ordinary degree of vigilance would have enabled him to prevent is to a certain degree evidence of corrupt participation.

The ill-health of Mr. Garrow, which affected his powers of supervision, does not relieve him of his responsibility.

The delay in the institution of enquiry and the attitude of various responsible officers along with the Board of Revenue was considered deplorable by the Court.

The Court's Censure of the Madras Government

The Court considered the administration in Madras Presidency as lax and the supervisory authorities wanting in

1. Ibid, p.489, para 16.
superintendence. It was pointed out:

"It is incumbent for us to declare the deep sense with which we are impressed with the misconduct of those to whose supineness or misguided judgment of the continuation of such extraordinary abuses to be ascribed".

The Court, though it did not absolve Savory, the Magistrate, or the government of guilt, considered the Board of Revenue to be mainly responsible. They abstained from passing any severe censure on the conduct of the members of the Board, taking into account their character and long service in the Company.

The Court further observed that as the posts of the members of the Board of Revenue were of great importance, the government should be very careful in selection to these posts. Here not only honest and trustworthy persons were required, but those who also possessed revenue knowledge and had a keen eye for scrutiny into the affairs.

This Cassey Chetty embezzlement case was typical in that it depicted the negligence and corruption prevailing in the administration. The partiality and ignorance of the authorities were helpful in the perpetuation of these evil practises. The Court of Directors was justified in being shocked at this deplorable state of affairs.

1. Ibid, p.496, para 44.
2. Ibid, p.497, para 45.
In another letter dated 2nd January, 1822, the Court of Directors observed that after going through the report of the Commissioners, proceedings of the Board of Revenue and explanation of Sullivan the Judge, it declared the Board to be partial to Garrow. He intended to hoodwink the Board about his corruptions. The Court further appreciated the work of Sullivan as second member of the Commission, while Col. Munro was the first one.

**Progress at Coimbatore**

At Coimbatore, where much evil had prevailed in the revenue department, Sullivan, the second Commissioner, was appointed to eradicate it. The government in a letter dated 30th January, 1824, to the Court reported its satisfaction on the revenue settlement of Coimbatore. The country had prospered and progressed, and land revenue up to the amount of Rupees 23,13,701 had been realised without any defaulters. Sullivan had regulated the assessment properly, he had fixed the proportion, keeping in view the difference in the conditions of land. The Court of Directors expressed satisfaction at the favourable settlement of revenue in Coimbatore.

---

1. Ibid. Revenue Letter from the Court of Director to Fort St. George, dated 2nd January, 1822, p.501, para 35.
2. Ibid, para 34.
3. Ibid. Revenue Letter from Fort St. George to the Court of Directors, dated 30th January 1824, p.503, para 41.
Regulation I of 1819

The Permanent Settlement existing in some parts of the Presidency required modifications for removing the difficulties experienced by Zamindars. Therefore, Regulation I of 1819 was enacted by the government for the purpose of giving the Zamindars a right to transfer the property, but it failed to provide security to the individual ryots from the oppression of the Zamindars. By Section 9 of Regulation XXVI of 1802, the Division of landed property was prohibited, but, now, this section was rescinded and the division of landed estates became legal. The Board of Revenue was given the right to confirm or reject the division after scrutiny. The transfer and sale of sub-division thus assessed became valid in the Court for preventing fraud and corruption or error in the distribution of the public assessment upon landed property in general.

Progress in Ryotwari System

When Sir Thomas Munro became Governor, all the opposition of the Board of Revenue to Ryotwari Settlement ceased. It made rapid progress under his patronage. In making the revenue assessment various points were elucidated by him. Under Ryotwari System the amount of revenue was fluctuating in accordance with the land actually cultivated; and not on waste

1. Ibid. Revenue Letter from Fort St. George to Court of Directors, dated 2nd October 1819, p.506, para 369.
land. In case of floods, scarcity of rains and other natural calamities the exemption from revenues was to be given. The Collectors were directed to induce confidence in the mind of peasantry.

The Madras Government directed the Board of Revenue to issue proper instructions to the Collectors for their guidance. The Board accordingly informed the Collectors that in the Ryotwari Settlement they were to make assessment on the kind of land and not the actual produce. Remission was to be made afterwards by reducing the rate of assessment, if necessary. After the assessment of each field by the Collector, the ryots were to be given liberty to sow whatever crops they wanted to cultivate. No assessment was to be made on the land not under actual cultivation.

Settlement in Southern Arcot Division

The agricultural conditions of the South Arcot Division exhibited a marked deterioration owing to the unfavourable seasons. Mr. Gunliff, the sub-collector, reported the injudicious conduct of the renters of land who gave inferior land on higher terms to facilitate the full rent on superior land. The Government of Madras tried to remedy the situation by taking corrective steps in the mode of granting the land on Cowl and reducing Tirwas. After coming under the direct control of the Government, the condition of the ryots, instead

1. Ibid. Revenue Letter to Fort St. George from the Court of Directors, dated 18th May 1826, p.529, para 60.
of improving, further deteriorated. In order to encourage ryots their extreme poverty was to be kept in view. The right of Mirasdar on the land, and certain rights according to them, as the descendants of headmen of village were considered indisputable by the Government. But their right to limit the property of ryots in their permanent hereditary possessions were not accepted because those measures were prejudicial to the prosperity of the community.

Reports of the Collector

The Collectors submitted their reports to the Board of Revenue on the progress made in Ryotwari Settlement. The Government submitted its proceedings to the Court. The Court of Directors concurred with the Government of Madras in considering the report of Hyde the Collector "as worthy of high degree of applause". His views regarding the rights of Mirasdars and other classes of agricultural population exhibited a thorough and minute knowledge of the subject. The measures adopted for the introduction and establishment of Ryotwari System were satisfactory.

On the instructions of the Board of Revenue, Fraser surveyed land and made assessment of the Village Carvor so that the advantage of Ryotwari System might be appreciated throughout the district in his charge. The Board appreciated the diligence and efforts of Fraser.

1. Ibid. Revenue Letter from the Court of Directors to Fort St. George, dated 18th August, 1824, p.528, para 49.
The Collector of Trichonopally submitted his report to the Board respecting the survey, classification and assessment of village Tertaloor, selected by him for experimentation of Ryotwar Settlement. The Collector informed the Board that the village had been measured, and the land classified, but regarding the assessment some difficulty arose as the village was divided into thirty carrahs or shares out of which only twelve shareholders agreed to money rent (tirwa) and the remaining eighteen refused to cultivate their lands on any other terms, except by established division of produce (warum). The Collector solicited instructions regarding the measures to be adopted.

In view of the experimental stage of the system, the Board advised the Collector to carry on assessment both in kind (warum) and on money rent (tirwa) and compare the results. The Board approved of the Collector's method of measuring the land according to Munro's plan. Secretary Campbell instructed Lushington, the Collector, to proceed on the principles of Ryotwari plan of assessment and establish Ryotwar Tirwah in all Amenee villages of wet districts and in all rented villages so that after the expiry of Decennial lease, the annual settlement be immediately made on Ryotwar plan.

1. Ibid. Minutes of the Board of Revenue, 26th November 1818, p.515, para 1.
The measures for the introduction of Ryotwari Settlement, its general introduction and progress was carefully watched by the Governor-in-Council, who were pleased to note the attention paid by the Board of Revenue and the Collectors to the orders of Honourable Court of Directors for the settlement of Ryotwari Settlement.

Appraisement of Ryotwari Settlement by the Court

The Court of Directors, on reviewing the situation of revenue affairs in the Presidency of Port St. George, expressed their confidence in the experience, judgment and zeal of Sir Thomas Munro, the Governor, and his associates. Though the revenue exactions were high, there were no complaints of deterioration in the condition of people. The Court expressed much solicitude about their welfare.

Security of Ryots

In the settlement of land the protection of ryots was considered of primary importance by the Court. No security was afforded to them except the condition of not exacting beyond the survey rates which were usually considered too high and more than the land was able to pay. The Board of Revenue presented the revenue figures for the first four years as such:

1. Ibid. Revenue Letter from the Court of Directors to Fort St. George, 10th September 1823, pp.521-22, para 107.
2. Ibid. Revenue Letter from the Court to Port St. George, 12th December 1821, p.522, para 31.
The Collectors favoured a reduction of Pagodas 78,809 in the first years due to bad season, on the condition that the sum be added in remaining years. The Board of Revenue did not approve of it and recommended remission. The Collector and the Board did not admit of over-assessment. They declared the assessment to be as high as the exhausted state of the country could bear, but expressed a confident expectation that it would be realised. The improvement in the country could not be expected under such a heavy assessment, so they proposed a reduction of ten to seven per cent.

The Governor-in-Council observed the evil of over-assessment in all the parts of the country. Therefore, a general reduction in the assessment was recommended. A regulated standard for assessment was proposed in which a third of gross produce of land was to be the government's share.

Sir Thomas Munro judiciously advised the Collectors to have accurate information from the ryots themselves and from the revenue records of previous years. They were asked to form estimates. If an error was unavoidable, it should be the lower rate of assessment and not higher. The Court of Directors relied on Munro's wisdom, honesty, integrity and judicious calibre. In matters relating to revenue and judicial
affairs they had fully accepted his recommendations. Since 1806, Munro had repeatedly advised a reduction in assessment in various minutes, recorded by him, so as to ameliorate the condition of cultivators who were experiencing great hardships due to high revenue exactions, which were beyond their means. The Court of Directors chose to keep quiet over this important matter.

The Working of Ryotwari System

Mr. Grome's report on the working of Ryotwari Settlement had evinced keen interest in the minds of the Court of Directors, in making one village of each taluk and in the whole district Settgrad, a settlement not annual but for a term of years with ryots or immediate cultivators individually. This mode of collection had been an unparalleled success; revenue had been realised without arrears, in all but one village, where the management was responsible. The land was again subrented to ryots. "The principle", says Mr. Grome, "of the renters' settlements with ryots, has been to distribute the whole of the land of the village to the ryots, and each ryot having a fixed portion, including cultivated and waste for which he is answerable to the end of Decennial Lease. Each ryot, says the Collector, has his security, but all the royts of the village are not jointly responsible for each other."

1. Revenue Letter from the Court of Directors to Fort St. George, 12th December 1821, p.523, para 35.
The ryots here insisted on money rent and rejected the warum settlement.

Ryotwari Settlement in Malabar

Vaugham, the sub-collector, very successfully administered the revenue of Malabar in Fusly year 1230 (1820 A.D.). Not a single incident of imprisonment or property distraint due to non-payment of assessment occurred. At the end of the Fusly year, astoundingly small balance remained. The Board of Revenue instructed the Collector not to put up that land for sale on which arrears had accumulated as abated assessment. The Court expressed complete approbation of Vaughan's administration of Malabar.

Discipline in Revenue Administration

In the revenue administration of the Company at Fort St. George, the covenanted servants of the Company, whether of the rank of Collector or Sub-Collector were required to pay due respect to their superiors. But sometimes the subordinate officers adopted an attitude of insubordination towards their immediate superiors.

In the revenue administration of Canara the attitude of John Vaughan, Sub-Collector, who had successfully administered the District towards Harris, the Principal Collector, was disrespectful and insulting. The government took a serious view

1. Revenue Letter from Fort St. George to the Court, 19th February 1822, p.543, para 77.
2. Fort St. George, Revenue Consultations, Minutes of Sir Thomas Munro, dated 13th December, 1822, p.585.
of his conduct, because if no cognizance had been taken, every assistant would be encouraged to set the authority of his superior at defiance, unless regulation for compliance was produced, because both happened to be senior merchants in rank. He might refuse compliance with the orders of Board or Sadr Adalat on the same grounds. The Governor-in-Council transferred John Vaughan, the sub-collector of Canara, to be sub-collector and Magistrate of Cochin. The Governor impressed the necessity of a sub-collector or Collector to be completely under the authority of the Principal Collector. The sub-collector was not authorised to enter into controversy with his principal or try to find fault with him. The Governor strongly disapproved of insubordination.

The land revenue administration in Madras from 1800 to 1825 had passed through three phases. In the initial stage the system prevalent in the country was carried on. It consisted of farming of villages which were given on a stipulated rent to a renter. In this the government was interested only in its own share. No consideration was ever given to the condition of the ryots or the fact of heavy exactions. The Court of Directors instructed the Madras Government, in a letter dated 21st April, 1795, for the adoption of revenue and judicial system of Bengal in Madras. The Supreme Government was authorised by the Court to expedite these measures in the subordinate Presidency of Madras. The Governor-General, Lord Wellesley, in 1800 directed the Madras Government for the
formation of Decennial Leases in Northern Circars. No consideration was given to prevalent local conditions. The Court, again in 1801, instructed the Madras Government for concluding Permanent Settlement. They were interested in a regular and easy collection of land rent, which constituted a principal source of income to them. Another object of the Court was to get the maximum amount of land revenue.

On the Court's order Permanent Settlements were made in the Presidency, but they failed in places where Zamindars had not existed previously. Erroneous assessment at Dindigul became a scandal. The Court realised their mistake and authorised the Madras Government for Decennial and Triennial Leases, for which proposals had been put forward by the Board of Revenue. The second phase in revenue collection started in the mode of Village Leases. The failure of this system was reported from various districts. The condition of the peasantry had deteriorated. Its main cause was high exactions of revenue, without taking into consideration the conditions of ryots. The Collectors were aware of it, the Board was apprised of this fact, and the Governor-in-Council felt helpless over it, because the Court did not desire any reduction in the rate of assessment, which would ultimately affect the revenues.

In the third phase, was the change over to Ryotwari Settlement as proposed by Col. Munro. Though the Board stuck to the Village Lease system, the Court reprimanded it. The Madras Government had to obey the orders from Home, even though
reluctantly. This Ryotwari Settlement did not in any way ameliorate the conditions of the peasantry. The middleman between the Government and the peasantry was eliminated. A direct contact with peasantry was established. But it was of little avail, the amount of money which was pocketed by the middleman was now taken by the government. The official appointed for revenue collection did not spare any pains to get the highest amount. Through this mode of revenue collection the government squeezed out the utmost from the people. The country had become a "human cattle farm".

Such a thing was far from the intentions of the origination, Sir Thomas Munro, of this Ryotwari Settlement. He had kept in view the happiness and the prosperity of the people. He wanted to avoid the intermediary agency, so that the ryots were not unduly oppressed. He had not visualised the Government officials making undue demands on them. One of the most important components of this Settlement as expounded by Munro had been totally ignored. It was the reduction in the amount of assessment by lowering the land rent. This the Court of Directors refused to sanction. Even Munro had not succeeded in making the Court agreeable to this essential part of the Settlement, though after initial reduction he promised gain to the Court on account of increase in population and cultivation of the country.

The Land Revenue Settlement in the three Presidencies of Bengal, Madras and Bombay was not uniform. Local conditions
and customs were taken into consideration. Thus we find a settlement with landlords or joint bodies in Bengal. The Permanent Settlement of 1793 with Zemindars in Bengal did not require any survey or record of rights or any defined methods of settlement. In Madras, at first, the Bengal system was applied, but afterwards prohibited as has been discussed in Chapters Six and Seven. Ryotwari system of Madras which was finalized in 1820, during the Governorship of Munro, regarded occupants as proprietors of the land. Settlement of land revenue was made for thirty years. There was uniform system of assessment with annual remissions. A resettlement of land revenue was confined to rise in prices. There was no General Revenue Code.

In Bombay during the Governorship of Elphinstone Ryotwari Settlement was introduced on the basis of field assessment. There was no theory of ownership. The rights of occupants were defined by law, and settlement was made for thirty years. The system of assessment was uniform and defined by rules. Here a complete Code of Revenue was enacted for the guidance of Collectors and the ryots.

The three systems of revenue settlement were made according to local conditions. As it has been examined that the influence of the Home Government in the revenue administration had a detrimental effect on the Madras Presidency. The

modes of revenue collection had been criticised by various authorities. Frederick John Shore, after describing the wretched conditions of the country, observed that the Collector who was considered first rate by the Government, was a curse to his district. A first rate Revenue Secretary was the curse of the whole country. The conditions were miserable on account of the resumption laws. He further observed that the administration was solely interested in the revenues, on account of its being the instrument of a mercantile Company. Even their good intentions were tinged with the motives of highest revenues, too often at the expense of justice, good faith and good policy. From the Chief Governor down to the lowest subordinate all were imbued with the same spirit and object of promoting his own profits, "which were best calculated by the policy 'the greater the extortion of revenue from the people of India, the more rapid would be their promotion to higher and lucrative posts'."

Another critic of the revenue system was Crawford, the spokesman of Bengal merchants. He objected to this land tax in Asia, which aimed at absorbing all the resources of the country, because that subjected the contributors to the violence and corruption of tax-gatherers. It left the peasantry "exposed, naked, palpable and defenceless to arbitrary power and fiscal rapacity".

The revenue policies of the Home Government cannot be defended. In order to make the most out of the land revenues, it rendered people miserable. Land and property leads to litigation, so the land revenue settlements and judicial system are inter-connected. The Permanent Settlement at Madras failed in many places, similarly the judicial system was also not successful. When Ryotwadi system of land revenue was introduced at Madras by Minro, a similar judicial system was also enacted here. Land revenue and judiciary formed the backbone of Madras administration.