Chapter – V

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RYOTWARI SYSTEM

Revenue is the backbone of any administration. Hence the English East India Company had aimed to collect the land revenue through different systems. The Company introduced the Zamindari revenue system, Mahalwari revenue system and ryotwari revenue system. Ryotwari system was more practical and feasible than the other two systems. Thomas Munro was the author of this system. The genesis and the development of ryotwari system are defined in this Chapter.

The British, who ruled India for nearly two centuries, realized the importance of revenue, particularly the influence of land revenue in Indian economy. The land revenue which was the heart of the British administrative system brought the British rulers into intimate contact with the lives of the Indian peasantry. In the beginning the British had some difficulty in understanding the land tenures.¹ At first as little was known by the Company servants about the tenures of the country. The detailed administration was left entirely in the hands of the natives. At that time several districts of the presidency was acquired by the British. The revenue system of the native governments was simply farming out the revenue in blocks to the highest bidder.

‘To understand the land revenue system of India was to gain a greater knowledge of Indian government, the agricultural class which pays this revenue represents about five sixths of the entire population.’² From the time when the East India Company first acquired sovereignty of the territories in India, land revenue constituted the chief part of public resource.

Due to political uncertainties and fluidity of the nature of the British rule in India until the beginning of the nineteenth century, different land revenue system was adopted at different periods. The Zamindari settlement, the village settlement and ryotwari settlement, each had its advocated both in India and in England.

¹ Baden Powell, B.H. A Short Account of the Land Revenue and its Administration in British India with a sketch of Land Tenures, Oxford 1894, 2.
² Auber Peter. Rise and progress of British power in India Vol.II. London 1837. 621.
“A record of series of experiments in assessments; reduction and enhancements, changes in one direction and another following each other in somewhat bewildering order….”

To the effective establishment of British rule in the Presidency the land revenue administration was so mismanaged that it produced no lasting effect on the tenures. The land revenue first came up before the servants of the Company, first in Bengal and then in Madras Presidency. The English in India had been “buyers and sellers of produce”.

But in 1765 the Company was granted in perpetuity the Provinces of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa by the Mughal Emperor and the whole civil and military administration of the country came under its control. From that time onwards, the servants of the Company were vitally concerned with matters like taxation and land revenue in India.

In the initial stages of their rule, the authorities in India and England thought it highly inexpedient to interfere hastily and ignorantly with the method of collecting revenue. The nature of land tenures and the philosophy of the question of right to the soil were quite out of their reach and their peculiarities were equally beyond the comprehension of the servants of the Company.

The collection of revenue by the Indian officers of the Nawab on behalf of the company under the same terms and conditions obtaining under his administration. The establishment of the Madras Board of Revenue after the Bengal fashion, but unfortunately it could not do anything because of the obstructions placed by the Provincial Councils in the way of the smooth working of its machinery. So Lord Hobart, the governor of Madras, in his proclamation dated November 20, 1794 abolished the provincial councils and appointed collectors in the place of provincial chiefs for the administration of land revenue. But it was beyond the power of these collectors to undo the evils that had accumulated through generations in the branch of revenue administration.

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6 Public Consultation dated 20th November 1794, TNAC.
Top priority was given to the newly acquired territories of Salem and Baramahal. Within eighteen days of the signing of the Treaty of Serirangapatam (March 17, 1792) the districts were entrusted to Captain Alexander Read in preference to any of the revenue officials of the Madras Presidency as they seemed to have lacked the necessary qualifications for administering a newly annexed country. Read chose as his assistants Captain Munro, Graham and Macleod to administer respectively the provinces of Dharmapuri (central division), Krishnagiri (Northern Division) and Salem (Southern Division). This little band of army officers brought to this new work more zeal than knowledge and more honestly than experience.\(^7\)

Captain Read and his assistants set out to study the land tenures of the conquered provinces and reorganize it. “Our only system” was “plain hard labour”. The outcome of this “plain hard labour” by the devoted, efficient and hard working European army officers of the Company was the evolution of the famous “Ryotwari System”.\(^8\)

The immediate aim before Read and his assistants was to restore the Baramahal to peace and order before assuming the traditional functions of government, the assessment and collection of land revenue. Read started working immediately. He was authorized by the Board of Revenue to make a settlement of lease with cultivators for three to five years. If the head men of the villages should oppose these measures the land might be let out in small portions to strangers.\(^9\)

The Board had in view been that five years would be sufficient to complete a survey and assessment of the lands. All the time it was under the impression that this would be a necessary preliminary to permanent settlement from which great benefits were expected.

Read and his assistants began an exhaustive enquiry into the nature and progress of agriculture, which according to Read were the “surest means of ascertaining an

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\(^7\) Kaye, J.W. *The Administration of East India Company A History of Indian Progress*, (First Indian Reprint, Kitab Mahal, Delhi 1966) 204


\(^9\) General Reports of the Board of Revenue, January 1, 1793, TNAC.
equitable mode of assessment and collection of land rent.” While he was engaged in his survey, he had the opportunity to examine carefully the various systems of land tenures. When he was in search of a mode of revenue administration which should be convenient to the government and the people.

A settlement with the ryot direct would be beneficial to the ryot and at the same time would ensure the revenue of the state. After describing the various modes of revenue assessment and management Read came to the conclusion that individual settlements were the best. He felt that the greater division of the country into farms, the more beneficial was it to the community and favourable to the population.

Entering into an arrangement with the individual ryot, giving him a grant of the farm for the time of lease on condition of payment of the rent. Binding each to be separately answerable for the payment of the whole revenue of his land, all combined to give advantages to the inhabitants in general and to and to revenue collectors in particular.

Thus the system which was called the ryotwari system had its origin in the Baramahal and Salem. The ryotwari system had its origin in the Baramahal and Salam districts ceded to the company in 1792 and first introduced by Read and his assistants. The ryotwari system recognized the government as proprietor of the land and undertook to determine the right of every man who paid a single rupee to the government. It was a settlement to be made directly with the ryots themselves and its object was to protect the interests of the actual cultivators of the soil.

This type of settlement in the newly conquered and ceded territories was the absence of a large class of zamindars and middle-men. The only persons available for

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10 Read’s Fifth Report to the President of the Board of Revenue dated 1st July 1793, Baramahal Records Section VI Land Rent.120, TNAC.
11 General Reports of the Board of Revenue. Vol.1-3.17 TNAC.
12 Read’s Fifth Report to the President of the Board of Revenue dated 1st July 1793, Baramahal Records, Section VI, Land Rent,34,TNAC.
collection of revenue were a few poligars whose claims had to be set aside.\textsuperscript{14} Since no intermediate agency for revenue collection was available, and such as was available to be eliminated for political reasons, the British officers proceeded to collect the revenue directly from the cultivators.

The ryotwari system, instituted in some parts of British India was one of the two main system used to collect revenues from the cultivators of agricultural land. These revenues included undifferentiated land taxes and rents, collected simultaneously. Where the land revenue was imposed directly on the ryots, the individual cultivators who actually worked the land system of assessment was known as ryotwari.

The system of ryotwari settlement consisted of contracts for payment of government revenue, assessed in monetary terms for every field with each individual ryot without joint responsibility and without intervention of a zamindar, a village headman or any other intermediary. That is why the system was known as ryotwari which literally means ‘according to or with ryots’.\textsuperscript{15}

The object of the ryotwari settlement was to fix a defined tax in money on each field whether it was wet land, dry land or garden land and whatever it produced that is to tax the land itself instead of the crop.\textsuperscript{16} The first step was to ascertain the approximate extent of the land by the actual measurement of each cultivated field and each tract of waste. The next and the more difficult step was to assess a fixed sum of money on each field thus measured. This two-fold process was what has been called the ryotwari survey.

The ryotwari survey was introduced in Salem and Baramahal under the supervision of Read by Macleod in the southern, Munro in the central and Graham in the northern divisions. It became very difficult for them to obtain a correct measurement of the extent of land in these areas. The whole system of taxation was examined and defined enquiries were instituted into the state of the country and recorded more than two million five hundred thousand acres were duly surveyed.

\textsuperscript{14} Baden Powell, \textit{Land Systems of British India}, Vol, III, Oxford, 1892,34.
\textsuperscript{16} Read’s Fifth Report to the President of the Board of Revenue dated1st July 1793, Baramahal Records Section VI Land Rent, 227-228, TNAC.
One million and one hundred and twenty-five thousand acres were duly assessed and these important operations conducted on Tipu’s frontier amidst the confusion of a newly acquired country with the consequent necessity of maintaining all military precautions in addition to the current business of the day. These were all brought to a close in five years.\(^\text{17}\)

His method was first to ascertain the average produce of each field in a favourable season; secondly to deduce its average produce during seasons good, bad and indifferent; thirdly, to convert this average produce into money; and fourthly to divide this money in a certain proportion between the ryot and the government.\(^\text{18}\)

The ryotwari system which was evolved by him not only withstood the task of time but also triumphed over the permanent settlement of Cornwallis.\(^\text{19}\) However it was necessary here to discuss how Munro developed this system and won the approbation of his superiors. This system was not entirely the brain child of Munro. It was an indigenous system followed and practiced by the people of Baramahal and the other surrounding areas which were originally under Tipu Sultan.\(^\text{20}\)

The origin of ryotwari and its experiment in Baramahal had great importance in the revenue history of Madras Presidency. The Baramahal experiment was the founding stone for the future ryotwari system in Madras Presidency.\(^\text{21}\) In 1802 by Regulation 25, the Board declared a zamindari settlement and attempted to create a class of zamindars in Salem and Baramahal, who should possess the rights of their brethren in Bengal. In two years the whole of the southern portion of the Baramahal was also sold out, though the estates did not fetch high prices. By 1805 the entire Baramahal was settled permanently according to regulations.\(^\text{22}\)

\(^{17}\) General Reports of the Board of Revenue, Vol. XIII, 15, TNAC.

\(^{18}\) Read’s Fifth Report to the President of the Board of Revenue dated 1st July 1793, Baramahal Records Section VI Land Rent, 20-22, TNAC.

\(^{19}\) Dykes. J.W. Salem, an Indian Collectorate, London 1853, 137, TNAC.


\(^{21}\) Read’s Fifth Report to the President of the Board of Revenue dated 1st July 1793, Baramahal Records Section VI Land Rent, 25, TNAC.

\(^{22}\) Dykes. J.W. Salem, an Indian Collectorate, London 1853, 137, TNAC.
After the Fourth Mysore war Read sent his resignation and Munro was put in charge of the civil administration of Canara and then to the Ceded Districts. Munro accepted the challenge of administering entirely a new province. He assumed the charge of Canara in July 1799.\(^23\) Canara was the name of an extensive tract of country, a wild and rugged province on the west coast of India, extending from the northern frontier of the province of Malabar to the southern frontier of Goa and west of Mysore.

The climate of Canara was damp and steamy atmosphere and with long rainy season. He described Canara a country of eternal rains, where a man was boiled one half the years and roasted the other.\(^24\) Munro was very much impressed by land tenure prevailed in Canara before Haider Ali’s conquest. The system that he found prevailing in Canara was more or less of a ryotwari pattern.\(^25\)

Canara was a highly developed and prosperous region inhabited by industrious people enjoying a greater proportion of the produce of the soil and being more comfortable than those of any province under any native power in India. The great number of land holders having proprietary rights in the soil and low assessments which were the special features of the old system seemed very attractive to Munro.

This system almost approximated to his conception of an ideal revenue settlement. The assessment in Canara was not fixed on each field but on estate composed of many fields. During his study of early records of Canara Munro confirmed the belief that the ryotwari system was the indigenous system of South India.

After taking the charge of Canara, Munro’s first step was to send, messengers (Harkaras) into all districts where they could venture, with proclamations warning the inhabitants not to pay any balances, unless to persons acting under my authority. Munro’s earlier experiences with the ryots of Canara were at no means of favourable.


\(^{25}\) PerumalluRaju Raju."Extracts From the Old Bellary Records". Collectorate Press 1892. Para. I, TNAC.
He met with the greatest difficulty in even commencing a settlement of the revenue with the rayats. The rayats refused to attend or come formed to make a settlement; they demanded certain conditions and required the government to concede before they would discuss the subject of the assessment. They sent a paper to Munro wherever he went a kind of bill of Rights the terms of which they required to be conceded. The rayats absconded when messengers were sent for them.

Munro’s patience and firmness succeeded in making a settlement. At last after studying the ancient records of Canara and its present circumstances, Munro made a settlement, which has formed the basis of all subsequent arrangements with reference to the land revenue of Canara.

In the beginning he allowed the existing assessment to continue. In making his first settlement, Munro did not consider himself at liberty, on his own authority to reduce the assessment much below the standard which he found in operation. He regarded himself merely as a Collector and made no other reduction in the assessment of Tipu Sultan. But he had argued upon the authorities at Madras a considerable reduction which was sanctioned by government as a temporary arrangement.

The settlement which Munro recommended for Canara was in its leading principles at ryotwari. The system introduced in Canara was based on the assessment with the landlords on the entire holdings. Munro’s settlement in Canara was with the actual land owners, the holders for the most part of small estates without the intervention of any middleman.

Munro’s services in Canara were immeasurable. He had in wonderfully short time put down crime and rebellion and substituted settled government for anarchy and disorder. Munro did not remain in Canara for more than sixteen months. He had never thoroughly liked the district he greatly disliked the climate and although he had considered, it his duty to undertake the charge when pressed upon him on public grounds. He stated his stay in Canara was the only period of his service which he did not like and about which he constantly complained. Towards the end of 1800, the change, which Munro sought,

27 Cuddapah District Gazetteer, 494, TNAC.
came in the shape of a transfer to the charge of the districts south of Tungabhadra which had just been ceded to the Company by the Nizam of Hyderabad. The services of Munro made the Madras government to sanctioned this transfer without reluctance.

As a result of the treaty made with Nizam of Hyderabad on 12th October 1800, the whole territory lying south of Tungabhadra and of the Krishna river after its junction with the former Tungabhadra was ceded districts. The area under the Ceded Districts was very extensive, it covering an area of twenty six thousand five hundred and ninety two square miles included the districts of Bellary, Cuddapah, Kurnool and also the Palnad (a sub division of the Krishna district).

The Nizam ceded these districts to the Company in perpetuity ‘for the regular payment of the expense of the augmented subsidiary forces.” Munro who was serving as the Principal Collector of Canara at that time was selected for this purpose as the Principal Collector of the Ceded Districts.

He was a good man and the ryotwari settlement obtained a fresh lease of life. When he took charge of his office there was no peace and order. The region witnessed political turmoil created by plunderers. The society suffered from insecurity and the people from desperate poverty. It was Munro who brought about’ a measure of peace’ orderliness and security’, to this place by suppressing poligars who proved to be rapacious with an iron hand.

Besides the land revenue system was in a state of utter confusion, due to the avaricious nature of the middle man namely karnams, village Munshiffs and poligars. The poor farmers were totally ignorant of what portion of land that they possessed, what amount of rent they were to pay and what it was to be paid. More over they were not sure of getting the fruits of their labour.

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28 Proceedings of the Board of Revenue from 30th May to 20th June 1805, Proceedings dated 20th June 1805

29 V.M. Reddi, Munro in Ceded Districts, Presidential address South Indian Congress, Madras, 1987, 2.

30 Arbuthnot, A.J., Sir Thomas Munro, Selections from his Minutes and other Official Writings, (London, 1881) Vol.I.341
Attempts were made by British officers to introduce this ryotwari system in other districts. In the ceded districts of Bellary, Cuddapah and Kurnool it was tried and given up. In the Carnatic districts of Tinnelvelly, Madura, Trichinopoly, and Nellore and also in Coimbatore, an attempt was made to introduce this system.

By the treaty of October, 12, 1800, the Nizam ceded the districts of Bellary, Cuddapah, and Kurnool, covering an area of Twenty seven thousand five hundred and ninety two sq. miles in perpetuity to the Company “for the regular payment of the expense of the augmented subsidiary forces.” Munro who was serving as the Principal Collector of Canara at that time was selected for this purpose as the Principal Collector of the Ceded Districts. 31

In the opinion of the British administrators, when the Ceded Districts passed into the hands of the Company the territories were in a state of political and economic deterioration with complete breakdown of law and order. Munro, with the assistance of four subordinates, set himself to the task of bringing back normalcy to this strife-torn Ceded Districts. 32

At first Munro adopted the village wise settlement in general, because there was no time for him to have detailed survey in all villages. Under his village wise system, each village was assessed at a certain valuation and the cultivators were held responsible for the sum. The village wise system also called as Mouzawar system. In 1800 Munro made his first regular village wise or Mouzawar settlement. 33

By village wise system, a total sum was calculated on the basis of the estimated revenue of all the Ceded Districts and a special amount was assigned to each division. 34 The amount for each division was then distributed among the villages and the cultivators were held collectively responsible for the payment of the sums so fixed. For assessment, the year 1788-89 was taken as the standard year for the calculation of the amount of

31 General Reports of the Board of Revenue, Vol.4-6, 76, TNAC.
32 General Reports of the Board of the Revenue, Vol. 13-15, 15, TNAC.
33 Dykes, J.W.B. Salem an Indian Collectorate. (London 1853).137
34 Read’s Fifth Report to the President of the Board of Revenue dated 1st July1793, Baramahal Records Section VI Land Rent,20- 25, TNAC.

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revenue. But in cases where, “from calamity or fraud the rent was below the just proportion” the year 1799-1800 was substituted.35

After Munro’s initial experiment in the process of evolving a more permanent system, he introduced the famous regular Ryotwari system in 1801-1802 entirely abolishing the speculating intermediaries. The settlement was effected individually with the cultivators. However the village head-man was held responsible in case of default.36 This system was termed as Kulwar settlement. The term was applied to a settlement of the land revenues where the land tax of each individual rayat was fixed and collected by Government officials without the intermediate agency of Zamindars. It was a system that rejected all competition, every rayat holding his land immediately of the Government by a patta or agreement was regulated both by the quality of the land and the condition of the cultivators.37

Munro’s Ryotwari ideas and his method of implementation in Ceded Districts were found in his reports to the Board of Revenue dated 30th November 1806 and 26th July 1807. The first report dated 30th November 1806 describes the mode in which the settlement was made before the survey was completed.38 The second report dated 26th July 1807 describes how the survey was made in the Ceded Districts and the assessment based on the survey was introduced.39

The ryotwari system was first experimented in the Baramahal region and later it was extended in certain other parts of the Madras Presidency. Though the Board was in favour of permanent settlement in these districts, there were problems to these districts. Right from the beginning Munro expressed himself emphatically against making the poligars zamindars for political reasons and this took away the only intermediate agency that could have been converted into an effective instrument to collect the land revenue on

36 Revenue Despatches to England, Letter dated 23rd March 1804, TNAC.
37 Gleig G.R. Life and Correspondence of Major General Sir Thomas Munro (London, 1830,) Vol. I. 361.
38 Proceedings of the Board of Revenue from 30th May to 20th June 1805. Proceedings dated 20th June 1805, TNAC.
39 Munro’s Report dated, 30th November 1806, Fifth Report Vol.III. 24, TNAC.
behalf of the government. This left no choice but to introduce the individual or ryotwari settlement.\(^{40}\)

Munro commenced his ryotwari survey which went on up to 1806.\(^{41}\) In the course of his survey; he was able to arrive at individual settlements with more than two million farmers. A sizable revenue was collected, though the rates were high even according to Munro. The revenue increased progressively and by 1804 and 1805 complete normalcy having been restored in these districts, the signs of improvements in cultivation were accompanied by favourable monsoons.\(^{42}\)

While the experiments in ryotwari systems were going on in the Ceded Districts, the Supreme Government of India directed the Madras government to introduce triennial village lease as a preliminary step to permanent revenue settlement.\(^{43}\) He pleaded that the backward economic conditions of the people, absence of rich farms, scanty population, meager volume of trade, small number of coins, poverty of the ryots, frequent mobility of the cultivator from one village to another, would not render the introduction of village leases a fore-runner to permanent settlement possible. He, therefore, strongly urged the retention of the ryotwari plan which he had evolved.\(^{44}\)

Lord William Bentinck, who was governor of Madras at this time, thoroughly understood the sense of Munro’s argument and recorded a minute accordingly on 22\(^{nd}\) January 1806.\(^{45}\) Munro urged that no change should be introduced in the land revenue administration of the Ceded Districts. The Government directed the successors of Munro in the Ceded Districts not to meddle with the revenue system introduced by him.\(^{46}\)

\(^{40}\) Bentinck’s minute dated 22 January 1806, Public Consultation from 2\(^{nd}\) January to 7\(^{th}\) February 1806, TNAC.

\(^{41}\) Munro’s Memorandum in the Fifth Report Volume.III.289, TNAC.

\(^{42}\) General Reports of the Board of Revenue February 15, 1808. Volume13-15, 9, TNAC.

\(^{43}\) Proceedings of the Board of Revenue from 24\(^{th}\) to 31\(^{st}\) December 1804. Proceedings from 27\(^{th}\) December 1804,TNAC.

\(^{44}\) Proceedings of the Board of Revenue dated11\(^{th}\) July 1808,TNAC.


\(^{46}\) V.M. Reddi, Munro in Ceded Districts. Presidential address South Indian Congress, Madras, 1987, 3.
But Bentinck was recalled in 1807 and Munro left for England in the same year which resulted in the revision of government policy. George Barlow, who replaced Bentinck, was a Bengal official with a bias for permanent settlement. The home authorities were pressing for more funds for the Company’s investment. In the meantime, the Bengal Judicial system had already been introduced in Madras in anticipation of the establishment of a permanent Zamindari settlement.

All these events resulted in the ultimate rejection of Munro’s ryotwari system soon after his department from India. But significantly enough, it was not replaced by permanent zamindari settlement. It was decided to introduce the periodic village lease system which resembled the Zamindari system more than the ryotwari mode of land revenue administration.\(^{47}\)

In Coimbatore which became the Company’s possession after the Fourth Mysore War, the ryotwari mode of land revenue was tried between 1799 and 1809.\(^{48}\) Although the revenue management under the ryotwari mode proved to be very successful, here it was given up in preference to village, leases based on the report of Hodgson who surveyed the district.

In the Carnatic districts of Nellore, North Arcot, South Arcot, Tinnelvelly, Tanjore, Madurai and Trichinopoly which passed into the Company’s hands in 1799 and 1801, a trial was made with the ryotwari system up to 1807 and given up for the same reason as in the ceded District.\(^{49}\)

Ryotwari system could not succeed at the beginning because all collectors were not gifted with the rare qualifications which it requires. Thus the ryotwari system in its experimental stages could not possibly deliver the goods to the people. In spite of its imperfections, the system had in it the seeds of improvement. By bringing government servants into close contact with the affairs of every village the way was cleared for the reform of abuses and the improvement of the system.

\(^{47}\) Draft of Ryotwari Regulations Dated 21\(^{st}\) September 1818, TNAC.

\(^{48}\) Abstracts of Revenue Despatches from England Volume-I 24.2.1786 to 4.11.1830, TNAC.

\(^{49}\) Francis, Madras District Gazetteer, Bellary Madras Government Press 1904.45.
As a champion of the downtrodden, he paid undivided attention to their problems. Consequently a pragmatic land revenue settlement emerged. Munro by trial and error devised a mechanism of survey and settlement of land tenure in a manner advantageous to the ryot and with assured revenue to the government. The successful working of the ryotwari system depended much on an accurate survey.

According to the Collectors who conducted the details of the ryotwari survey including measurement and classification of land varied with each local officer. It could not be conducted in all districts on uniform principles. Every change of authority was attended by change of plan. Except in the Ceded Districts, where it was completed under the person who began it.(Sir Thomas Munro)

It was true that the almost immediate introduction of the ryotwari system in the newly conquered provinces resulted in great hardships to the people. This was because it included not only an entirely new measurement of the land but also an entire change in the nature and extent of the land tax.\(^50\)

The success of the system depended principally on active, uniform and unrelaxed exercise of superintendence and personal contact and inspection on the part of the collectors over the different gradations of public servants employed under their authority. For enforcing these things collectors were expected to possess a working knowledge of the local language, pure intentions, clear understanding and active habits of body and mind.\(^51\)

The ryotwari system won its ultimate success largely because it was a form of settlement suited to the condition of the Presidency. The origin and development of the ryotwari system makes it appear that Munro who was largely responsible for this change fought for its reintroduction with a missionary zeal.

His slight preconceptions in favour of the simple peasant as a kind of “noble savage”- seemed to have led him towards ryotwari and helped to secure the abolition of the village lease system after 1812.\(^52\) One must hasten to add that this slight dogmatism

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50 Revenue Despatches to England, 1792-1818, TNAC.
52 Kaye, J.W., *The Administration of East India Company* (First Indian Reprint, Kitab Mahal, Delhi 1966), 115.
cannot be attributed to the influence of any particular school of thought other than the one that was promotion of the economic welfare of the people which was the essence of Munro’s career in India.

Looking impartially at all these things it must be admitted that although the ryotwari settlement was undertaken not hastily or heedlessly, but after due consideration and with a sincere desire to benefit the people, the results do not indicate the success of the experiment.

Though this system demanded an intimate knowledge of local conditions on the part of the collector and his European assistants. It involved enormous labour in concluding annual settlements directly with thousands of individual cultivators. They received many adverse comments, suffered initial reverses; it withstood the test of time due to the dynamic energy, hard work and commitment of Munro.53

The Home Authorities were convinced of the utility of the ryotwari system and therefore gave instructions to the government of Fort St George to introduce it through the length and breadth of the Madras Presidency.54 The only person with whom he was in perfect agreement was Sir Thomas Munro who was then collector of ceded districts. So he was the architect of the ryotwari system of the company in Madras.

Ryotwari system was an advantage both to the Company as well as the peasants. Even today the government of Madras – Tamilnadu is following the basic structure of ryotwari system. The turning of the Collector towards the Commissioner is traced out in the next Chapter.