INTRODUCTION

Roads constitute an important factor in the day to day life of the people. The development of roads was very much associated with the growth of mankind. Roads were used as a main source of transport and communication from one place to another. The mobility of people was largely decided by the nature of roads. Roads remained the artery of the transport and communication system, especially in makers of wars and conquests, trade and commerce, industrial progress etc. For conducting wars and their allied works road was used as main source of transportation. During the medieval period chariots were used as the main source for transportation of war materials besides animals. The rulers also used chariot as the means of travels and some important roads were formed for their transportation. But in those days, roads were made by cutting trees on the ways and made small ways for the transportation of the chariots and the animals.

But things were changed, when European traders and settlers began to introduce their transportation system into the Indian soil. They began to construct roads to the harbours and ports from inland to the sea shore for the free movement of the commodities of trade and
commerce. The outcome was the emergence of roads of modern times and bullock carts were used in large scale and for the transportation of the trading commodities to the harbours and for transporting the articles to their native places. Thus from wars, roads were constructed to commerce and the length of the roads began to increase rapidly. Roads began to emerge as an important source of transportation and goods and commodities were moved from one place to other by means of bullock carts and animals.

British rule in India witnessed a radical change in road and communication system. After the establishment of their rule in India, they began to use European mode of roads and transportation in India. They considered India as their own land and wanted to introduce their roads and buildings. Madras the birth place of British rule in India emerged as an important centre for different wars, such as, the three Carnatic wars and others. The formation of Fort St. George in 1639 and the formation of ports in Madras, Bombay and Calcutta witnessed the formation of roads to connect these ports through roads. These roads were used to transport goods from inland to the ports and busy business was carried out throughout Europe. The European
settlers themselves made different forms of roads throughout the country.

British rule in Madras witnessed the establishment of new towns throughout the state and the newly formed towns were connected with the capital city of Madras through roads. Besides in the Madras Presidency, many districts were formed and the District Collectorates became key centres of administration. New roads were formed from the Collectorate to other places. Since Madras Presidency was ruled by Britishers, they loved cold climate which were available in Hill areas like Kodaikanal, Nilgiris, Yerkaud and others. So the Europeans began to form roads in the Hill areas of Nilgiris, Kodaikanal, Yerkaud and others. East India Company transported goods from Madras Presidency through the ports in the Coromandal Coast and they bought the goods from inlands. So many markets were formed and the markets were connected with the ports through roads.

After the invention of Railways in 1853, rail roads were constructed which also connected the ports. Lord Dalhousie’s period Railway was invented and it became an important means of transport,
during the 19th and 20th centuries. The Maramath Department looked after the roads and in 1845 the Trunk Road Department was formed.

During the British administration in Madras and other parts of India, wars became an essential element. The Britishers made a series of wars not only with the native ruling families, but also with other European settlers. For that, the transportation of military was essential and a number of roads were constructed for the movement of the military. Cantonments were created in important centres and roads were constructed to connect the Cantonments with the head quarters or the ports for the free movement of the military forces.

After the formation of Fort St.George in 1639, many new roads were created from Madras to other places. Madras emerged as an important centre and consequently it became the capital of South India.

After the formation of Madras Presidency in 1801, important business and industrial centres were started in Madras. Virtually Madras became a key centre for all the commercial and political activities and key roads were formed to connect Madras with other centres.
After the formation of the districts in the Madras Presidency, the District Collectors created a large number of roads not only for their movements, but also for the public movements. In important centres, markets were constituted and roads were built to connect the markets. Busy trade was going on between English East India Company and the Natives and road became an essential element of the trade.

The invention of carts both dragged by animals and human being became the main source of transportation and it reduced head carrying of goods by human being. After that automobiles became the key object of carrying goods from one place to another. For the movement of automobiles, road became essential and the result was a number of roads emerged.

In 1892, the Madras Tramways Company was floated and sanction was given to Hutchinson and Company Limited, London, with a Capital of £100,000 to start a Tramway system. It was, however not until three years later, (1895) that the first Tramway section was completed and opened for the use of the public. The Madras Electric Tramways were opened in May 1895, fully six years
before Electric Tram cars were running anywhere else in India and even in London and other large cities in England another example of Madras being ahead in its development.

In 1900, the original Tramway Company was obliged to sell the undertaking as the capital was inadequate. The purchasers “The Electric Construction Company Limited England, then operated the tramways in Madras for a period of four years. It was about this time that the first Motor cars were seen on the roads in Madras, although the first on that did not have a very successful life was put on the road in 1894 and was driven some distance down Mount Road. Messrs Simpson and Company Limited played a large part in the development of the early motor cars and buses.

In 1904, the Madras Electric Tramways (1904) Limited was formed and has been carrying on business ever since. Extension was made in 1905, 1911 and 1919 and the company has 11 miles of double track and 51/4 miles of single track.

The outbreak of the I World War brought (1914-1918) a new insight into the development of roads in new dimension. The military movement got a new impetus and the Government used the roads for
military movement. During the course of the war, the Madras Government paid special attention to roads in military transaction. There were four kinds of roads existed during 1930s and they were Trunk road, Metalled road, Unmetalled Motorable road and Unmetalled roads unfit for motor traffic. When the District Board became powerful some of the roads were looked after by them. But during the outbreak of the Second World War (1939-1945), the volume of roads increased and Railway roads and Trunk roads were also used for the movement of the soldiers. During 1943, roads were classified into National Highways, Provincial Highways, District Roads and Village Roads. The British administration paid little attention on roads when compared to Railway and other buildings. They gave first priority to military roads and roads leading to ports and harbours.

British administration in Tamil Nadu paid little importance to roads when compared to the close of the 20th and the beginning of the 21st centuries. At the outset, it followed liberal policy towards road developments, but later it gave light importance, particularly during the Second World War. For the improvements of roads, the Central Government and State Governments formed Committees and
Commissions, which seriously analyzed the development of roads. Accordingly on 3rd November 1927, the Governor General in Council appointed a Committee under the chairmanship of M.R. Jayakar, the Committee assembled at New Delhi in November 1927. Besides this Sub Committees were constituted in important centres and the members of the committee visited important places and collected data related to the development of roads.

In the Madras city, the Government took a series of measures for the development of roads. The Corporation of Madras took a number of measures of road making in the city of Madras. For instance it called for and received tenders in 1931 for the construction of roads on modern lines of road making. The corporation planned to construct concrete roads to cope with the situation of bullock cart and other traffic. Road construction contract was given to eminent personalities for the safety construction of roads.

The road transport system had a great impact in all the matters. The roads connected the villages and towns and the rural people particularly the agriculturists had a chance to contact the urban people. Hence it made a cordial relation between rural and village
areas and the people would have cordial relations. The agricultural commodities with paddy, vegetable, banana and others were moved from rural areas to urban centres and it led to commerce in large scale. The sugarcane an important agricultural product created Industries and the roads helped them to transport and sugarcane Industries.

Due to road development, the village people got employment opportunities in the towns and industrial areas which automatically enhanced the economy. Roads also enhanced the education of the rural people who travelled from rural areas to the urban centres to get adequate education. This education provided all means of higher life which automatically raised the village economy by all possible means.

Roads were constructed for the welfare of the people. Hence the Government took the responsibility of building roads. Fishermen in the coastal areas asked the Government to send buses for their movements. Government also constructed a lot of coastal roads for the development of fishermen.

The topic “Development of roads in Tamil Nadu - 1900-1947” is an important area in the History of Tamil Nadu. Though some researches on Railways were carried out in Tamil Nadu, no
substantial research a road is being carried out. Hence an attempt is being made to investigate the development of roads in Tamil Nadu during the 20th century i.e. from 1900 when the 20th century starts and ended in 1947, when British rule came to an end. Strictly speaking the British administrators laid the foundation of road development for the easy transportation of Indian goods to the ports and harbours. Besides goods, they also used roads for their easy transportation from one place to another. Different kinds of roads, such as, Trunk road, Metalled road, Unmetalled Motorable road and Unmetalled roads were created by them, Cement and Concrete Roads were created by the Britishers.

The period chosen for the study is a span of 47 years starting from 1900 and ending 1947, when the British rule came to an end. The area selected for the study is the present Tamil Nadu and occasional references would be made on the other parts of the former Madras Presidency as well as India, because the records refer to the former Madras Presidency as well as India.

The study is based on primary sources found in the Tamil Nadu State Archives and some secondary sources found in Connemara
Public Library, Madras University Library, Madurai Kamaraj University Library, Manonmanium Sundaranar University Library Tirunelveli and others. The primary sources are the Public Works Department, Government Orders, Labour Department, Public Department, Revenue Department, Finance Department, Miscellaneous Government Orders, Reports and so on.


The study is based on the following hypotheses:

1. The study is covering on the pre 20th century road system and the development of road and transport communication system in Tamil Nadu.

2. The Development of roads in Tamil Nadu from 1900 to 1947 in which different kinds of roads were constructed by the British administration. During this period road system in Tamil Nadu developed large scale.
3. Different policies were formed by the Government towards road development. The government and local bodies spent a lot of money for roads and different kinds of roads were constructed.

4. Roads have a great impact on the socio economic life of the people. For industrialisation, agriculture and urban development, road played a vital role and it enhanced the socio economic and political life of the people.

5. Roads were constructed for the uplift of the people. Education and employment of the people depended on roads movement of the people from one place to another place was very important aspects.

The methodology followed in this study is historical method in a chronological context.

The study is designed into five chapters excluding introduction and conclusion. In the introduction, the scope of the study i.e. area and period, sources hypothesis and chapterisation are given.

In the first chapter “The Origin and Growth of Roads in Tamil Nadu till 1900” describes the early stages of road development in Tamil Nadu before 1900. During the ancient and medieval period, small size roads were constructed for the movement of army from one place to another. Besides the royal families movements and war time
roads were formed to move the military from one place to another. Chariots and carts were the chief mode of transportation. Animals were used to drag the vehicles from one place to another. Horses were also used to move the people from one place to another. For the construction of temples and palaces roads were used to move the materials.

The second chapter “Development of Roads in Tamil Nadu from 1900 to 1947” explains the role of the British Government for the enhancement of roads. The important roads were connected with the roads for the transportation of goods to the harbours. Different kinds of roads, such as Trunk road, Metalled Motorable road, Unmetalled Motorable Road and Unmetalled roads were formed during the colonial period. Roads were chiefly used to move human beings, domestic animals, vehicles and so on.

“Government Policy towards the Development of Roads in Tamil Nadu” is the third chapter in which different measures were taken by the Government to the development of roads. The Madras administration adopted various measures, such as Committees and Commissions for the improvement of road facilities. Government spent liberally for the development of roads. It connected important
places through roads. For the construction of new roads and creation of new towns and cities, the Government spent liberally. During the outbreak of First World War (1914-1918) and Second World War (1939-1945) the British administration in Madras created new roads for the movement of military from one place to another.

Under the fourth chapter “Impact of Road Development in Tamil Nadu” socio economic and political impacts were analysed. Rural people got a chance to study in city and town educational institutions by using roads to go to such institutions. During the British period, many industries were started and new roads were constructed to connect the Industry by means of roads. The Europeans in search of cool climate created new hill stations like Ooty, Kodaikanal and Yercaud and roads were built to reach such places. The hill stations later emerged as the dwelling places of the rich Europeans and officials. Many agricultural centres emerged during the British period and roads were constructed for the transportation of agricultural goods from one place to another place.

“People and Roads in Tamil Nadu” is the fifth chapter in which roads constituted an important role in almost all matters. For education and employment, roads were used as a primary source for
the movement of the people. People utilized roads in their movement and the movement of their vehicles. The fisher men community in the coastal areas needed roads for the free movement fishes from one place to another and the coastal areas were connected with marketing and other places through roads. For the free movement of human beings from one place to the other place roads formed an important factor. For important gatherings and festivals of the temples, roads became the main source for the movement of the people. Hence people without roads were not imaginable. For connecting important centres and towns roads became highly essential.

Conclusion forms the last part of the study in which major findings are described.