CHAPTER III

RAILWAY NETWORK IN TAMIL DISTRICTS
The historic rail journey between Bombay to Thana engendered a transport revolution in India. If the first chapter in the history of Indian Railways was opened in 1853 in 1856 yet another milestone in the history of railways was reached. On 8th May 1856, the 65 miles rail journey planned between Royapuram and Wallajah Nagar added one more chapter in the history of railways in Tamil Nadu.¹

Every step in the direction of connecting Madras presidency went in accordance with the plans drafted by Dalhousie. He suggested two lines one for the north-western and another for the south-western traffic. The imperial defence weighed more than any other consideration because Madras had a considerable army and the Madras army was required to strengthen the British government. Acknowledging the political,

commercial, social and imperial motives, the Court of Directors gave their assent to the immediate commencement. After conducting satisfactory survey the construction process was undertaken. As a staunch supporter of laisse-faire, Dalhousie thought that railway construction was none of government’s business and hence he favoured private companies on the basis of guarantees on the investment.

Following Bombay-Thana line (1853), Calcutta-Raniganj line (1885) and Madras-Arakonam line (1856) the government pursued a vigorous construction scheme from 1857 onwards. The development of Indian Railways passed through five different phases each had its own peculiarities and characteristics. They were the lines constructed under

The Old Guarantee System 1849-1869

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3 M.R. Kulkarni, Industrial Development in India, p.33.
The New Guarantee System 1869-1882

The Modified Guarantee System 1882-1924

The Nationalisation Programme 1924-1944

Integration and regrouping 1948.4

The two railway companies that undertook the work were the Madras Railway and Southern Indian Railway. The South Mahratta line was inaugurated under company management with a limited guarantee. Between 1870 and 1880 all new lines including the metre gauge feeder systems recommended by Lord Mayo were built under state management and state funds.5 All of India’s early railways including the important lines leading to inland from the port cities were built under the guarantee system. After 1869 the provincial government and the District Boards began construction. In 1902 the Indian Railways were worked by thirty three separate administrations including 24


private companies, 4 government agencies and five princely states.\(^6\) In the Budget of 1899-1900 for land acquisition an additional grant for Rs. 1,39,000 was allocated for 30 guaranteed companies. The construction agencies were not definite in numbers.\(^7\)

In the presidency of Madras, the consulting Engineer for Railways to the government exercised the function of inspecting officer on the Madras Railway, South Indian Railway, Mysore State Railway and Nizam’s State Railway. Besides all the local lines in the presidency were supervised by Assistant Engineers.\(^8\) The correspondence in the Railway Department had been transferred from the office of the secretary to the Public Work Department (here after PWD) from 1.9.1865.\(^9\)

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\(^7\) G.O. No. 194 (PWD Railway) 2.2.1900.


\(^9\) GO. No. 491 Finance Department, dated 30.8.1865.
For construction purpose priority was given on the basis of political and commercial grounds. The Despatch of the Secretary of State contained information on railway construction in India. A distinction was drawn between political and commercial railways. The line from Pothanur through Coimbatore to the foot of Nilgiris was considered a political line. But the traffic upon it yielded a fair return for the outlay. Therefore it was a commercial line also.\(^10\)

The government found it necessary to define the productive, protective and provincial undertakings. The first work meant an undertaking which could be estimated to pay within a minimum period of five years from the date of the line being opened for traffic with a guaranteed interest of 4 per cent on the capital invested. Such work was constructed out of borrowed

\(^{10}\) *Proceedings of the Board of Revenue*, No. 1408, dated 5.51868.
money. The lines which were not remunerative and hence could not be constructed out of borrowed money were designed to protect people from famine. Such works were classified as protective works.\textsuperscript{11}

The Famine Commission had gone at length into the subject of railways as a productive work for the distribution of food on the famine-stricken areas of Madras Presidency. Sir Andrew Clarke, in his speech at the Viceroy's Executive Council observed, "the railway system must continue to expand and expand till every inhabitant of India is with 50 or 100 mile of railway". In Tamil Nadu the suffering of the people in Chengalpattu and North Arcot districts during famines were really heart-rending. The laying of line in North Arcot was due to the horrible nature of famine. Lord Amphill enlisted the sympathy of the people by touring the famine-stricken areas in

person. The South Mahratta railway line was a famine-feeder line.12

The construction of railways proposed during the stated quinquennial period commencing from 1870 was follows.

1870-1875 : Madras to Cuddalore - 100 miles
1875-1880 : Tuticorin to Tirunelveli - 30 miles
          : Cuddalore to Tanjore - 100 miles
          : Tirunelveli to Madurai - 100 miles
1880-1885 : Tanjavur to Madurai - 100 miles
          Kanchipuram to Chengalputtu - 20 miles
1884-1890 : Madurai to Dindugal - 40 miles
          Arokanam to Kanchipuram - 20 miles
1890-1895 : Dindigul to Coimbatore - 40 miles
          Tirunelveli to Trvancore Frontier - 40 miles

12 Swadesamitran, Madras, Report on Native News Paper Report, dated 16th July 1901,
A line from Tirunelveli towards the south to connect the state of Cochin and Travancore near Aralvoymozhi 40 miles from Tirunelveli, was also proposed.\textsuperscript{13}

There were three groups of lines projected in the Madras Presidency according to the geographical proximity. The northern group proposed to be laid was north of Madras. The western group included all lines proposed on the West Coast together with the extension from Bellary. The southern group included all lines laying south of the Madras.\textsuperscript{14} The Madras Chamber of Commerce stressed the need for the east coast line from Calcutta to Madras. It was considered essential to link the districts of Madras with the seat of the government. Lord Connemara, the Governor of Madras, had inaugurated 500 miles of railway. The Madras Chamber of Commerce adopted the principle that the control of the railway in Madras should be

\textsuperscript{13} Proceedings of the Madras Government (PWD) 19.9.1866.

\textsuperscript{14} GO. No. 3533-358, PWD (Railways), dated 19.9.1868.
exercised from the Madras city. Governor Wernlock took steps for the operation of Madras-Vijayawada line.\textsuperscript{15}

The Madras Chamber of Commerce wanted to beautify the city of Madras by laying railways connecting the towns with the port to augment the economic value and the associated trade benefits.\textsuperscript{16}

The railway system in Madras upto 1885 was exclusively made under guarantee system. The survey for the extension of the line between Madurai and Tuticorin was made in 1862 by Carr, the Chief Engineer of Great Southern of India Railway Company. Captain Lindsay conducted thorough examination of the country to make a list of places. The government of Madras in the month of September 1868 recommended to the government of India a scheme of railway

\textsuperscript{15} R. Tirumalai, \textit{The Voice of an Enterprise}, pp. 58-59. Baron Connemara was the Governor of Madras from 8th December 1886 to 1st December 1890.

\textsuperscript{16} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 106.
extension with a broad gauge line from Karur to Tirunelveli via Dindugal and Madurai with a branch from Kyatar to Tuticorin. The scheme was ordered to be executed by the Great Southern of India Railway.\textsuperscript{17}

In April 1872 sanction was accorded to an estimate amounting to Rs. 96,12,000 for constructing a line 213 3/4 miles length on the metre gauge from Tiruchirapalli via Dindugal and Madurai to Tirunelveli and Tuticorin.\textsuperscript{18} Work was at once commenced and pushed on with vigour. The revised estimate for the construction of the line was Rs. 196,64,022 or at the rate of 49,460 per mile.

The lines formerly owned by the erstwhile Great Southern of India and Carnatic railway companies were amalgamated on the 1st July 1874 under the title South Indian

\begin{itemize}
\item[\textsuperscript{17}] Proceedings of the Madras Government (PWD), 20th September 1871.
\item[\textsuperscript{18}] Report on the Administration of Madras Presidency, 1872-73, p. 114.
\end{itemize}
Railway which on 1st January 1891 was purchased by the state and handed over together with Villupuram-Guntakkal railway for working as one undertaking. The existing South Indian Railway Company under new dispensation came to be known as South Indian Railway System.\textsuperscript{19}

The Railway was worked based on the terms of contract between the Secretary of State and the South Indian Railway Company. The Original South Indian Railway Company ceased to exist at the end of 1890 when the railway was purchased by the State and the purchase price was £ 4,197,557. The later company was established with the capital of £1,000,000. The Agent was for carrying out the work of the lines after their acquisition by the government.\textsuperscript{20}


\textsuperscript{20} Indian Railway Administration Report, Vol, 1906, p. 189.
SOUTH INDIAN RAILWAY SYSTEM

Source: History of Indian Railways constructed and in progress corrected upto 31st March 1923.
The system included a list of lines comprising different areas of network. The total mileage of SIR proper was 1,130 miles. This was divided into Madras and Tuticorin section covering 446.54 miles—Gudur branch with 84.10 miles, Villupuram-Dharamavaram with 279.18 miles. The first phase of construction started in 1859 and was opened for traffic in 1879. The second phase of construction was completed in 1888 and the traffic was thrown open by 1892.\textsuperscript{21}

\textbf{II}

The Railway system had two main lines with various branches which had run respectively to the west coast and southward to Tuticorin with feeder lines, District Board lines and chord lines connecting the entire area of Tamil Nadu under its sphere. It had varied system of gauges.

\textsuperscript{21} Ibid., p. 190.
South Indian Railways 5'6 gauge  - 445.94 miles
South Indian Railway 3'3 3/8 gauge  - 872.13 miles
Suramangalam - Salem 5'6 gauge  - 3.86 miles
Nilgiri Railway 3'3 3/8 gauge  - 28.96 miles

The District Board line covered two important areas

one was Thanjavur District and the other in Tirunelveli district.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gauges</th>
<th>Miles</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Peralam - Karaikal Railway</td>
<td>3' 3 3/3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Podanur - Pollachi Railway</td>
<td>3' 3 3/3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pondicherry Railway</td>
<td>3' 3 3/3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tanjore District Board Railway</td>
<td>3' 3 3/3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tirunelveli Tiruchendur Railway</td>
<td>3' 3 3/3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Morapur-Hosur Railway</td>
<td>2' 6</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tirupattur-Krishnagri Rail</td>
<td>2'6'</td>
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<tr>
<td>Manamadurai -Sivagangai</td>
<td>3' 3 3/3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tiruchirapalli-Pudukottai Railway</td>
<td>3' 3 3/3</td>
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Tanjavur District Board Line

Mana Madurai - Sivagangai

Mayavaram - Tarangambadi

Tiruthuraipudni-Vedaranyarm

Peraslam - Karaikal - Line to French Territory

Pondicherriy Railway - Line to French Territory

Nilgiri Railway - Rack Rail - Hill Railway

Suramangam Salem Railway - District Board

Tirupatur - Krishnagiri - Famine Feeder Line

Manamadurai - Sivagangai - Chord Line

Thiruchirapalli - Pudukottai - Chord Line

Tirunelveli - Tiruchendur - District Board Line

Tiruchendur - Kulasekharapatnam - Light Railway. 

The Morappur-Dharmapuri was another famine protection line like Tirupathur Krishnagiri. These narrow gauge

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lines were dismantled on August 1941 and November 1941 respectively.\textsuperscript{24}

The construction progressed satisfactorily year by year. The major network had been completed by 1900. After the First World War, the development implied in supplementing and stream lining the main line. The following were the important lines that connected places in Tamil Nadu.

Tiruchirapalli - Pudukottai : 32 miles
Dindigul - Pollachi : 74 miles
Madurai-Bodinayakanur : 55 miles
Virdhunagar - Tiruchirappalli Chord line : 110 miles
Salem-Virudhachalam : 83 miles
Tiruchirapalli - Manamadurai : 94.22 miles.\textsuperscript{25}


\textsuperscript{25} See \textit{Indian Railway Administration Reports 1925-26, 1927-28}.
The Madras and Southern Railway System (M&SMR) 5'6' gauge

The former Madras Railway became the Madras and South Mahratta Railway after it was purchased by the Secretary of State for India. On 1st January 1908 the then existing Madras Railway with the exception of Jolarpettai and Mangalore Section together with the 3'3 3/8" gauge section of South Indian Railway company, from Katpadi to Gudur and Pakala to Dharamavaram was made over to the Southern Mahratta Railway. The System of M&SMR comprised mainlines from Madras to Vayasarpady, Vyasarpadi to Wallajah (Arcot), Katpadi, Gudiyatam, Ambur, Vaniyambadi and Jolarpetai. It had branches connecting Royapuram Beach, Washermenpet and Basin Bridge. The Ranipettai branch covered Arcot and Ranipettai. Jolarpettai to Bangalore cantonment formed the Bangalore branch. The M&SMR
had only few miles in Tamil Nadu. On the other hand the entire Tamilagam was well served by South Indian Railway.\textsuperscript{26}

The first line from Madras to Arcot was opened on 18th July 1856. The South Indian Railway metre gauge line had a very large mileage in this district. The oldest portion was from Kanchipuram to Arakonam. Then it was extended upto Chengalpattu. The extension was inaugurated on 8th May 1865.\textsuperscript{27}

The most important section was from Villupuram in South Arcot. This line ran through Palar, Vellore, Katpadi, Chittor towards Pakala Junction,\textsuperscript{28} where one branch line diverged through Chandragri to join the previously existing metre gauge line between Tirupathi and Nellore. This line passed

\textsuperscript{26} History of Indian Railways Constructed and in Progress Corrected up to 31st March 1923, p. 116.

\textsuperscript{27} Madras Railway Company, 31 May 1853, Part III, p. 30.

through Ranigunta junction and Kalakasti to Gudur where it intersected the east coast section of the Madras Railway.

Arakonam, the production workshop sprang into importance since it was a junction. The north west and south west lines of Madras Railway met there. It was also a terminus of South Indian Railway which ran from the mainline at Chengalpattu. In the early period a small workshop was set up at Royapuram. Thereafter it was shifted to Perambur.\textsuperscript{29}

The Javadi hills situated in south west of North Arcot were made up of small plateau which were covered with fine forests. Enormous quantities of timber was cut for making sleeper. Vellore situated on the right bank of river Palar had a station on the Villupuram branch of South Indian Railway. There

was a large scale trade in grain and sweet scented flowers which were sent by rail to Madras.\(^{30}\)

The railways of Tiruchirapalli district included the main line of South Indian Railway between Madras and Trivandrum. The main line had its branches to Erode. The Erode branch proceeded westward from Tiruchirapalli along the southern bank of Kaveri into Coimbatore district. The section from Thanjavur to Trichirapalli and then to Erode was originally built on the standard gauge that was opened for traffic in 1862 and to Karur in 1866 and from there to Erode in 1879.\(^{31}\)

Ponmalai or Golden rock in Tiruchirapalli was shrouded with railway workshops. Since the opening of the line throughout the portion from Madras to Tuticorin was considered as the main line with branches to Arakonam, Pondicherry,

\(^{30}\) Ibid., p. 30.

Nagapatinam, Erode and Tirunelveli, coal and wood were burnt for locomotive purpose on the mainline south of Tiruchirapalli.\(^{32}\)

The South Indian Railway entered Madurai from Tiruchirapalli in 1875 and then towards Tirunelveli, a distance of 100 miles in 1876. Madurai Danushkodi line was opened for traffic in 1902.\(^{33}\) The construction of a branch line from Madurai to Pamban commenced from 1 January 1903 and was completed in 1920. Madurai to Bodinayakanur line was opened on 19th November 1928.\(^{34}\) This line had busy goods and passenger traffic. It also opened up a rich and fertile tract of the country and stimulated a valuable trade in cotton, cardamom, coffee, garlic, chillies and tobacco. It helped to open the tract of the country and the Travancore hill to trade with Theni.


\(^{34}\) *GO. N. 263, PWD, (Bridges and Road)*, dated 29.7.1903.
Theni rose into a prominent marketing centre after the opening of the South Indian Railway.\textsuperscript{35}

A railway line from Dindugal to Coimbatore via Palani and Udumalaipet was considered very important. Ottanchatram, 18 miles from Dindugal, was a trading centre of tobacco. Palani-Pollachi route was very significant as a market centre.\textsuperscript{36} This route opened up diversified, populated and fertile area producing cotton, sugar cane, coffee, tea and cardamom. It is to be noted that Pollachi was also an important pilgrim route and a cattle market centre.\textsuperscript{37} Similarly, Madurai Bodinayakanur line was dismantled in 1942 on account of II World War. Railways had to supply tracks for shipment abroad. 17 branch

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{35} Indian Railways Administration Report, Vol. I. 1925-26, p. 27.
\textsuperscript{36} GO. No. 315 ( Railways), dated 15.2.1907. \\
\end{flushright}
lines were dismantled and one among them was Madurai and Bodinayakanur and rebuilt again in 1953.\textsuperscript{38}

The Metre gauge South Indian Railway from Madurai to Tuticorin continued upto Olakur in the district and ran across the terrains of Dindivanam, Villupuram, Cuddalore and Chidambaram for a distance of 88 miles, connecting the port of Cuddalore and Porto-Novo by rail. A branch line from Villupuram for 24 miles was opened in 1877 connected Pondicherry. Villupuram Dharamavaram section connected the Southern Mahratta Railway. Nellikuppam town in the Cuddalore taluk was under South Indian Railway.\textsuperscript{39}

Coimbatore situated on the left bank of the Nooyyal river on the trunk road from Madras to Calicut was connected by south West line of the Madras Railway standard gauge on


\textsuperscript{39} \textit{The Gazetteer of South India}, Vol. II, p. 127.
the east from Erode. It ran across the Palghat gap on the western frontier, from Podanur while a branch line held to Mettupalayam. The South Indian Railway line intersected, stretched across the Kaveri up to Erode where it linked the Madras Railway. It was connected to metre gauge in 1879. Mettupalayam situated on the bank of the Bhavani at the foot of Nilgiri hills was a terminus of the Nilgiri branch of Madras Railway. Podanur in Coimbatore was a railway junction and a site of railway workshops.40

The Pondicherry Railway Company was incorporated for the purpose of connecting the town of Pondicherry from Villupuram to Gingee between French and English territories.41 The French settlement of Pondicherry served the nationalists a lot. The Secretary of State in correspondence with the French Government sanctioned an arrangement by which the Carnatic

40 Ibid., pp. 93-94.

Railway Company had undertaken the construction of a broad gauge line from Arakonam to Cuddalore with a branch line to Pondicherry. The government of France promised a subsidy of £ 8,000 a year for 20 years. The English stood to gain a lot by Pondicherry traffic. A few line to the northwest and south west of Madras Railway facilitated import of cotton, from Bellary and transmission of the same to Pondicherry.\footnote{GO. No. 353-358 PWD(Railway), dated 19.9.1868.} Its object was to place the port of Pondicherry in communication with the system of south India. The line which was 7.85 miles long was sanctioned in 1878. There were two stations, one at Villanur and the other at Pondicherry.\footnote{Asylum Press Almanac, p. 301.}

Karaikal Peralam Railway line was partly in French and partly in British territory. It was 3'3/8" gauge 14.65 miles long constructed with the object of placing the town and ports of Karaikal with the railway system of south India. The scheme
was sanctioned in 1895 and the line was operated in the following year. From Peralam a branch line was built in 1898 to connect it to Karaikal, Tiruthuraipondi and to Point Calimere.

The District Board of Salem constructed a broad gauge line from Saramangalam to Salem junction. The ownership of the line was retained by the South Indian Railway for the purpose of dividends. Salem Attur 2'6" gauge was proposed by the Agent of Madras Railway, 36 miles in length from the town of Salem to the town of Attur in January 1900 and the government allotted a grant of Rs. 3,000 for the purpose of survey.

The Mettur Railway station was located at a distance of 25.62 miles from Salem. The section between Salem and

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Mecheri was built as a light broad gauge branch line guaranteed against loss by the Madras government. It connected Bangalore. The section beyond Mecheri to Mettur was constructed and thrown open for traffic on 15th April 1927. The Krishnagri town in the Salem was connected with Tirupathur on the Madras Railway by a road 24 miles long and by a narrow gauge 2 feet 6 inches railway.\(^{47}\)

The Nilgiri railway was a seat of engineering unique in the East and though constructed originally by the government was worked for them by the South Indian Railway company. The old Nilgiri Railway Company was registered on 30th September 1885. A new company went into liquidation in April 1894. A new company was formed in 1896. The line from Mettupalayam to Coonoor was completed in 1899. The opening mileage was 16-99 miles.\(^{48}\)


It was in 1876 M. Wriggen Baur, a Swiss Engineer, first designed the Nilgri Mountain Railway. In the beginning his plans were rejected. It was reconsidered in 1882. He prepared a project which was calculated to cost Rs. 1,32,000. He was assisted by Major Morant of the Royal Engineers who was the District Engineer in the Nilgiris.\(^{49}\) In 1891 the Governor of Madras Lord Venlock sanctioned the project. It took eight years to complete the line between Mettupalayam and Coonoor. It was commenced on June 15, 1899. The total cost of the project was 75 lakhs.\(^{50}\) In 1895 the original company went to liquidation and the assets were taken over by syndicate in London.

The construction of the line was undertaken by the new company in 1896 with the capital of Rs. 18,00,000. The Madras Government consented to guarantee interest at 3 per cent for two years and 4 per cent for 5 years. The government also


\(^{50}\) *The Hindu*, Madras, 9 December 2000.
agreed to supply land free of cost and leased it to them for 99 years. The line was on the metre gauge.\textsuperscript{51}

Nilgiri Railway was purchased on the metre gauge from the company which owned it from January 1st 1903. Thereafter it was managed by the Madras Railway under the provisional agreement subject to six months notice of termination. The capital outlay to the end of 1902 amounted to 49,08,431 while the net earnings to Rs. 1,12,111 to the end of 1902 equivalent to 2.28 percent of the capital expenditure.\textsuperscript{52}

The British engineer Richard Wooly rendered much service to the Railway construction of Coonoor. He agreed to advance some money on condition that he should be given contract for the construction of the line. His offer was accepted


\textsuperscript{52} Report on the Administration of Madras Presidency, 1902-03, p. 59.
and he was the first Agent and Manager of Nilgiri Railways. The line was of metre gauge on the ABT system which was an improved rack rails on rigid principles. A special mechanism of rack and pionon system was used to radient the steep gradients. The total distance from Mettupalayam to Ooty was 46 km, of which 19 km was of rack rail. The Vintage Swiss Steam Engine nicknamed ‘Rack Iron horse’ had no difficulty in pulling the coaches.

Ramanathapuram was connected by South Indian Railway from Madurai. In 1906 the survey for an extension from Rameswaram to Danushkodi, 13 miles in length had been launched. From Tiruchirapalli to Ramanathapuram about 104 miles with a branch line from Devakottait to Arantangi was surveyed in 1908. The South Indian Railway also conducted a survey from Ramanathapuram to Kilakarai, a distance of 13

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53 S. Raghavayangar, *Memorandum on the progress of Madras Presidency in the last forty years*, p. 20.

miles. The Pamban branch of South Indian Railway running to 91.33 miles with a value of Rs. 68,90,000 was a project placed for the sanction of the government. The scheme for the extension across the Pamban channel to the east end of Rameswaram, 9 miles long, at a cost of Rs. 28 lakhs was submitted to the opinion of Board of Directors.\footnote{Report on the Administration of Madras Presidency, 1906-07, 1907-08, p. 188, p. 66.}

In 1907 the construction of the Railway from Rameswaram to Danushkodi was sanctioned by the Railway Board. The Pamban on the mainland, which was only three miles away from Madhavapuram was opened on January 1914. Dhanushkodi to the end of Rameswaram was connected in December 1914.

III

The District Board was authorised to utilize the funds for the construction of branch lines. The part played by
the District Boards of the Madras Presidency in making use of the branch lines was significant. Under section 57 of the Local Board Act of 1884, the District Boards were authorised to levy a cess (tax) not exceeding three pies in the rupee on the annual rent value of the all occupied land, to be utilised solely for the construction of railroads. The undertaking in Thanjavur was the first of its kind in India.\textsuperscript{56}

The unique feature of the Railway in Thanjavur was that with the exception of the mainline from Kollidam to Thanjavur and the extension from Agathyampalli to Point Calimere and Arantangi to Karaikudi. All the lines in the district were constructed by District Board. H.S. Thomas, the president of the District Board earlier suggested the idea of railway in Thanjavur. He recommended to the Board as early as 1878 to take up the scheme keeping in view the income from railways.

The funds required for the construction was equally shared by the District Board and the Madras government.\textsuperscript{57}

The main line from Madras to Dhanushkodi ran through Sirkali and Mayavaram and the line entered Thanjavur district at Kollidam from where it ran towards Nidamangalam on Tiruvarur, Nagapatnam and Nagore. Vallam was an important business centre. It was a pilgrim centre also. A railway line was constructed at the cost of one and a half lakhs connecting it with other lines.\textsuperscript{58}

The Mayavaram Mutupettai line was an important branch extending the south Indian Railway to Mutupettai. The contract was made on November 1890 with the secretary of state and on 2nd April 1894 with the South Indian Railway Company.\textsuperscript{59} By the terms of the contract, the funds for the


\textsuperscript{59} Ibid.
Mayavaram Mutupettai section were in the first instance provided in equal proportion by the government of Madras from the provincial revenue and the District Board. On 1st January 1900 Thanjavur District Board got the government section and became the sole owner. The purchase of money Rs. 12,34,740 was treated as a loan at 4 per cent interest per annum. The extension was carried out by the South Indian Railway at the cost of Thanjavur District Board. The survey for the lines from Nidamangalam to Mannarkudi, 8.33 miles, Tiruthuraipundi to Vedaranyam were subsequently constructed at the cost of Tanjore District Board.

Mayavaram-Karaikudi line passed through Peralam, Tiruvarur, Thiruthuraipundi, Pudukottai and Arantangi. The line upto Mutupettai was completed in 1894, Pudukottai in 1902, Arantangi in 1903 and upto Karaikudi in 1905. Subsequently the

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railway line from Tiruthuraipundi to Vedaranyan, 21 miles in length was constructed.\textsuperscript{61}

Thanjavur had the advantage from the commercial point of view of being situated on the coast. The railway naturally took a large share in the carriage of articles of internal trade. The direct route from Madras traversed the district from north to west passing through the towns of Mayavaram, Kumbakonam and Tanjavur.\textsuperscript{62}

By Montford Reforms, dyarchy was introduced in the province. Railway was a subject reserved under their authority. The Tanjore District Board possessed ownership of line from Mayavaram to Piliarpatti to Kalkori. In those days private influential persons like Tiruvadutharai Adeenum, Rajaretnam Pillai and Annamalai Chettiyar had a control over rail traffic.

\textsuperscript{61} \textit{GO. No. 230, Railway,} dated 9.12.1905.

At Tiruvaiyaru there was a railway station and Annamalai Chettiyar even constructed a bungalow near the railway station.63

The management of the Tanjavur District Board Railway was taken over by the government of India from 1st April 1929. At that time the net earnings of the railway decreased from Rs. 6.2 lakhs to Rs. 1.97 lakhs.64

The Thanjavur Pudukottai line was constructed at the cost of Rs. 17,27,000. The traffic of Thanjavur Pudukottai line passed through Surankotti, Orathanadu, Pappanadu and Pudukottai. The Zamindar of Pappanadu Rao Bahadur P.S. Rajappa in 1934 adopted a resolution to extend the line form Pappanadu to Pudukottai town. His request was carried out by the Agent of South Indian Railway.65

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63 Interview with the Librarian, Mr. Padmanaban, Thanjavur Tamil University, Thanjavur on 10.11.1998.


65 GO. No. 1016 PWD (Railway), dated 19.5.1937.
The District Board Railway worked in the district of Tirunelveli also. When the East India Company took over Tirunelveli there were no roads fit for wheeled traffic. Earlier in 1836 Captain Colonel Sir Arthur Cotton suggested that the problem of communication might be solved by a system of cheap rail roads to be worked by cattle. By this method Palayamkottai was sought to be linked up with Madurai. But the scheme was abandoned since similar attempt in Madras ended in failure.66

The government of Madras recommended to the government scheme of railway extension in 1868. Accordingly, a broad gauge line from Karur to Tirunelveli with a branch to Kyatar and Tuticorin to be executed by the Great Southern of Indian Railway was planned.67

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The survey of the southern portion of the extension between Madurai and Tuticorin was made in 1862 by Carr, the Chief Engineer of the Great Southern of India Railway company. Captain Lindsay, the consulting Engineer received a letter from the Collector of Tirunelveli Buckles on the desirability of railways in the extreme south of Tamil Nadu. In his letter dated 14th April 1868, the Collector gave a positive nod for railway extension. He wrote letters to the Chief Engineer and Consulting Engineer, the acting Agent in connection with railways in Tirunelveli.68

In 1872 the construction of the line, 215.75 miles in length, on the metre gauge from Tiruchirappali via Dindigul and Madurai to Tirunelveli and Thoothukudi was accorded sanction. The cost of construction per mile was Rs. 50,000/-. The Government sanctioned Rs. 96,12,000/- but it was later revised

68 Selection from the Records, Formation of Tuticorin, Tinnevelly and Quilon Branch Railways, Tirunelveli, 1916, pp. 2-5.
and the cost of the line worked out to Rs. 1,06,64,022 at the rate of Rs. 49,600/- per mile.\textsuperscript{69} This was against the Collector's estimate of £ 7,000 to be the cost per mile including stations and rolling stock. Keeping the intense nature of traffic, the extension of line was advised from Madurai to Kayatar. Then branch lines to Tirunelveli and to Thootukudi were also suggested (The mileage from Karur to Madurai 84, Madurai to Tirunelveli - 96, Kayatar to Thoothukudi - 30).

The line was most remunerative for the railway project. The collector expressed his wish that the line should pass through Virudhunagar Sattur and Kaytar (all centres of trade), Sivakasi in the west and Ettyapuram on the east which yielded much cotton and tobacco. The salt trade from Thoothukudi was expected to thrive much if the railway

\textsuperscript{69} Report on the Administration of Madras Presidency, 1872-73,, p. 171.
competed with the road. Thoothukudi had further advantage of leading materials from Colombo.\footnote{Selection from the records, \textit{Op. cit.}, pp. 10-12.}

Again the Collector suggested that the rice form the region of Tambaraparani and timber form the hills would be carried if the line passed the line of Trunk road from Madurai, Virudhunagar, Sattur, Kovilpatti and Kayatar, the areas which enjoyed considerable trade in cotton, grain, chillies, tobacco, cloth and sugar. The profit of the line would cover the interest of 5 per cent up on the cost of construction. Sivakasi was a great centre of cotton trade, and Srivilliputur possessed trade traffic in dry chillies and grains. Besides it was famous for temple Pagoda and car festival.\footnote{\textit{Ibid.}, p. 14.}

From Tirunelveli the line should go through the rich village of Pettai, Suttamalli, Kodaganallur, Cheranmadevi,
Karukurichi, Kallidaikurichi, Ambasamudram, Ambur, Alwarkurichi, Kadayam and the places were considered the emboriam of grains and cloth. They were exported to Travancore through Ariyankavu pass. If the areas suggested by the collector was laid on Tirunelveli region, it was hoped that north and south, east and west would be well served.

The route proposed by Carr and the route recommended by the R.K. Buckle and Captain Lindsay were considered favourable. But the route suggested by the collector even considered the most favourable directions. Captain H.L. Prendergast, The Acting Consulting Engineer wrote to the Collector on 29th January to decide the railway terminus. Later the Tachanallur was decided as terminus by Logan and Captain Smith.\textsuperscript{72}

\textsuperscript{72} Ibid.
The South Indian Railway entered Tirunelveli from the north near Virdhunagar and ran south straight to Maniachi through Sattur and Kovilpatti. From Maniachi, the line ran east on the coast completing the communication between Madras and the chief southern part of the presidency namely Thoothukudi. The trunk road from Tirunelveli to Madurai lost its importance since the opening of the South Indian Railway in 1876 which ran in the same direction. From Maniyachi the railway branched off to Tirunelveli and on to Shenkottai on the eastern frontier of Travancore through the fertile taluk of Ambasamudram and Tenkasi. In 1903 the Tirunelveli-Shenkottai line was opened. It was extended to Western Ghat through the gap in the ghats near Courtallam.

73 Maniyachi was connected with the murder of collector Ashe. At present it is Vanchi Maniyachi in memory of Vanchinathan of Shenkottai who was the chief accused in the Tirunelveli Conspiracy case.

The District Board resolved to levy a cess under the District Board Act IV of 1884 for the construction of much needed line connecting Tirunelveli bridge station with Tiruchendur on the coast. A railway cess was imposed for the purpose. Line was surveyed and the estimate cost was estimated to be 20 ½ lakhs of rupees. The cess accumulated since July 1, 1903 to March 1915 was over to Rs. 8 ½ lakhs. A revised estimate was drawn for 17 lakhs. L.K. Buckley was the president of District Board. The construction of railway line between Tirunelveli and Tiruchendur depended upon heavy capital. The preliminary survey was made in 1903. Between 1904-1905 budget estimate was prepared and revised. Rs. 20,52,000 was allotted for the revised estimate. Meanwhile the District Board applied for a loan for Rs. 25 lakhs. At that time M. Morse was the consulting Engineer for Railways. Therefore the Board
proposed to issue debentures bearing $4\frac{1}{2}$ interest to the extend of Rs. 6 lakhs.\textsuperscript{75}

Fleming was the Collector of Tirunelveli in 1916. At the same time the 'final report' was submitted by D. Arulanandam Pillai. He was the special Deputy Collector for Tirunelveli Tiruchendur Railway work. Between 1922-23 the construction of Tirunelveli-Tiruchendur line 30.18 miles was completed and the line was opened for traffic in February 1923.\textsuperscript{76}

It passed in the direction of Palayamkottai, Seydinganallur, Pudukudi, Alwartirunagri, Nazareth, Kurumbur and Kayalpatinam terminating at Tiruchendur.\textsuperscript{77} The line traversed through the rich paddy fields, jaggery producing region, salt factory and pilgrim traffic of Srivaikuntam, Alwartirunagri

\textsuperscript{75} GO. No. 182, 183, Public Work Department, dated 22.1.1904.

\textsuperscript{76} Madras Year Book, Part. II, Madras, 1923, p. 893.

\textsuperscript{77} GO. No. 60 (Railway), dated 2.2.1917.
and Tiruchendur. Tiruchendur is a famous pilgrim centre, and a
centre for jaggery and salt pans was 24,000 tons of salt was
taken to Palayamkottai and to Tirunelveli during festive
occasions.⁷⁸

In Tiruchendur Taluk, Kayalpatnam was an important
trading centre. Most of the people were traders of Muslim
community. They were recruited for rail services. Through this
station jaggery was exported, more than that coconut, textile,
timber and tiles were imported.⁷⁹

Kulasekarapatnam Light Railway line was actually
not much more than a glorified tram line designed to carry
jaggery to the factory of Tissayanvillai from Tiruchendur. The
South Indian Railway encouraged Parrys & Co., to contemplate
a more ambitious light railway connecting the area with the rail

⁷⁸ GO. No. Railway, dated 26th August 1905.

⁷⁹ Ibid.
bed at Tuticorin. It was meant for carrying both goods and passengers. The 16 miles stretch of the line from Kulasekarapatnam to Tissayanvilai was opened on 18.7.1915. Udangudi to Tiruchendur continued to occupy a place of honour in the Dare House Board Room. The factory was closed in 1926. The railway from Kulasekarapatnam factory to Tiruchendur was spread over 27 miles charging 5 annas as fare and ran till 1940 with a printed Board ticket No. 5342. In 1940 due to World War II the railway was uprooted and demolished.80

For the teri country, the hopeful solution was offered by the possibility of developing a system of light railway lines. The East India Distilleries had already laid a line in this tract for the purpose of conveying palmyra juice and jaggery from the surrounding village to its sugar refinery at Kulasekarapatnam. The company had already obtained permission to carry

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80 Hilton Brown, Parry of Madras, p. 207. Parry and Co - Madras City’s Premier British Agency House entered upon groundnut trade and they were more successful in enterprise and they concentrated on distilling sugar. C.J. Baker, An Rural Economy, pp. 374-375.
passengers over the selection of the system. These railways were run for the interest of trade and public convenience.\textsuperscript{81}

Tirunelveli attracted pilgrim traffic. The travelling public from Madras, South Arcot, Thanjavur, Trichirapalli, and Madurai were going to Papanasam, Tenkasi and Courtallam. The water falls of Papanasam and Courtallam earned much tourist traffic. Railways owned by the District Boards were working in the Districts of Guntur and Tirunelveli till 1946-47. There was discussion in the Madras Legislative Assembly regarding the collection of Railway cess by the Tirunelveli District Board Bhaktavasalam, the Minister for Public Works reported that Rs. 2,80,900 was in the hands of District Board in 1947.\textsuperscript{82}

The village of Singampatti, the headquarter of a Zamindari, was extensive area covering forests with two main

\textsuperscript{81} H.R. Pate, \textit{Tinnevelly District Gazetteer}, p. 241.

\textsuperscript{82} \textit{Madras Legislative Assembly Debates}, 27 November 1947, p. 667.
waterfalls, the Pechimuthar fall and Banathirtham falls. The former flowed from a height of about 230 feet and the latter was a sacred place of pilgrimage where about 20,000 people congregated during Adi Amavasi day. A great portion of the forest was fit for tea, cotton, rubber and other plantation. There was an abundant natural growth of cardamon in the upper region. The forest was abound with wild animal of all description and it was a place fit for game. The Raja of Singampatti asked the Agent of South Indian Railway to include Kallidaikurichi in the Railway Guide Book for the purpose of travelling public. The Agent demanded Rs. 250/- as fees for the inclusion of the area which the Raja refused it as high amount.\footnote{Letter from T.N.S. Thirthahpathy, Raja of Singampatti, to the Agent of South India Railway Company, Trichirapally on 9.5.1927.}

Travancore Branch of SIR consisted of a British Section and an Indian section. The British section was to complete the line through the British territory upto Shenkottai
and to provide for the portion of the rolling stock. The completion of the line was ready for rails to Shenkottai and supply of rails and staff from Tirunelveli to Ambasamudram (24 miles). The completion of the 28000 feet tunnels at Ariyankavu pass was a work provided the key to the opening of communication with Quilon.84

L.E. Buckley, the acting Collector of Tirunelveli issued a draft declaration for the acquisition of 48 acres of land for the construction of Travancore branch of SIR in Tenkasi village. The grant proposed for Madurai Pamban Railway and Tirunelveli-Quilon for the financial year was Rs. 60 lakhs in 1900.85 An arrangement was made by the Travancore Durbar to set apart a sum of Rs. 17 lakhs for the construction of Shenkottai-Quilon extensions of SIR. The Travancore Darbar promised a guarantee of interest out of the money raised from

84 GO. No. 752 (Railway), dated 21.5.1900.
85 GO. No. 1674 (Railway), dated 3.12.1900.
the public. When there was a difficulty in raising the loan, the durbar came forward with an advance R.L. Campbell, the Executive Engineer at Tirunelveli, was directed by the administration to take charge of the additional land needed for the construction of Travancore branch of SIR in the village of Kilakadayam and Kadayam Perumpottur in Ambasamudram Taluk.\textsuperscript{86}

The English acquired land free of cost for railway construction. Later for additional occupation of land they gave minimum compensation. Usually the collector was the authority for the transfer of land. In 1900 R.L. Campbell was the executive Engineer to Tirunelveli deputed by the railway administration to take possessions of additional land for the construction purpose. 30 cents of Melekallur village was also taken over on compensation to the owners. From

\textsuperscript{86} GO. No. 1024 PWD (Railway), dated 6.6.1901.
Cheranmahadevi village in Ambasamudram taluk land acquired was taken over by the district administration.\textsuperscript{87}

After 1925, the Government of India finally decided to stand by state management, ownership and control terminating the contracts of old companies. It was also decided not to encourage further the financing of branch lines by private companies.\textsuperscript{88} Tamil Nadu was covered by rail network by trunk lines, provincial lines, feeder lines, District Board lines and Chord lines and by 1930 the process of electrification had been commenced which changed the whole fact of railway administration. The Great Depression showed down the further expansion of railways and the outbreak of II World War shifted the priorites of Government that began to give importance to war time needs.

\textsuperscript{87} GO. No. 7521 (Railway), dated 21.5.1900.

SOUTH INDIAN RAILWAY