Introduction
Introduction

Economic history traces the organic growth of the economy and its maturation process, whereby knowledge gradually advances from the superstitious, myth-addicted infancy of early civilizations to the modern state of the present day world.

Historians of economics, or in other words, economic historians, must necessarily be both historians and economist. As economists, they are interested in theoretical propositions and consequences of human decisions and, as historians; they are the “chroniclers of the events”. Modern economists who do not have historical lineage seek to emulate scientists, whose primary interest is their concern for the present and the times to come. Yet, historians are necessarily stationed in the ethos and reality of a given nationality and at the border between the past and the present. They are as much concerned with the lapses of the past as they are with its advances. This is bound to produce constructive results.¹

The garment worn by the people is one of the proofs for civilized society. It was a milestone in the development of civilization. From very early times man has used various fibers for the manufacture of cloth with which to clothe himself, flax, wool, silk, hemp and cotton have all been employed for this purpose; of these cotton fiber is by far the most universally used at the present day. It forms part of the clothing of 70% of the population of the world. It was believed that cotton fiber

has been used by the Hindus for the manufacture of the cloth for at least 4000 years\(^2\). The Sanskrit name was *Carpassa* from which the term *Kapas* (Cotton) was supposed to be derived. From 1500 B.C., till the 16\(^{th}\) century of the 19\(^{th}\) century, India was the great centre of the cotton industry, that she supplied Europe with cloth for ages and that from India, the West learned spinning and weaving.\(^3\)

Ancient Sangam literature has the date for the history of ancient Tamil society. There was enough proof in this literature for the cultivation of cotton and spinning twine from cotton. On the basis of this, it is ensured that cotton in the life of Tamilians has the tradition of 2000 years. The Brahmic engravings which belong to the period before Christ, has the proof of cotton traders. For instance, Azhagar Hill Brahmic engraving, which belongs to the first century, says about the cotton trader named ‘Attan’.

The coastal areas in Coromandel territory were invaded by the Portuguese during 16\(^{th}\) century and by the Dutch during 17\(^{th}\) century. These colonists made the weavers to settle in the coastal cities to weave garments for them to export.

**Area and periods of the Study**

From 1888 to 1909 Thoothukudi was one of the municipal port city of Tirunelveli district of Madras Presidency. Augustus Caesar (63 B.C. - 14 A.D.) engraved the countries and the cities which had trade with Rome as a map in the pillar of Roman Squire. Historians called this map as Buttingar Tabular Column. In this

---

\(^3\) Report of the sixth Indian Industrial Conference Held at Allahabad on 30\(^{th}\) December 1910, Published by the General Secretary the Indian Industrial Conference, Paper Presented by D.Clouston, Deputy Director of agriculture, Central Provinces, Berar, and Nagpur, Amraoti, 1911, pp. 1 - 18.
table, Thoothukudi was given as ‘Solcium Indoram’. Ptolemy, who belonged to 2nd century A.D refers to this as Sosi Kori. Certain scholars postulate that Sosikorai became corrupted into Thoothukudi. Cotton related trade and industries found in Tirunelveli district from 1888 to 1909, was called “In and around Thoothukudi”. Thoothukudi areas were ruled by the Portuguese from the year 1533 to 1658, by the Dutch from 1658 to 1825 and then by the British till independence.

The area selected for the study is present Tirunelveli, Thoothukudi and Virudhunagar Districts in Tamil Nadu State. The period fixed for the study is a span of 22 years starting from 1888, when the cotton related mills and industries were started in and around Thoothukudi and ending in 1909, when V.O.Chidambaram Pillai and Subramaniya Siva got rigorous imprisonment for the involvement of Thoothukudi Coral Mill Strike.

Though some researches have been carried out on cotton related topic at National and Regional levels, no detailed and substantial research has been done on the cotton related trade and industries in and around Thoothukudi (1888-1909). Hence it is aimed to do a detailed research on the subject “The Cotton Related trade and Industries in and around Thoothukudi (1888-1909)”.

Aims and objectives of the study

Understanding the intricacies involved in the research, of cotton related trade and industries in and around Thoothukudi, the researcher aims to analyse the following areas of study.
To study the historical proofs of cotton development since ancient period.

To study the trends in cotton areas, improvements of cotton before 1888.

To study the trend in cotton areas, cultivation and improvements of cotton from 1888 to 1909.

To study the structure and methods of cotton trade and marketing from 1888 to 1909.

To analyse the transportation method of cotton related trade in and around Thoothukudi.

To bring out the truth to whom and under what circumstances the cotton industries were developed in and around Thoothukudi.

To trace the growth of cotton trade since the coming of the English East India Company.

To find out facts about the condition of indigenous weavers.

To study about the socio-economic and political impact of cotton in and around Thoothukudi from 1888 to 1909.

**Methodology**

Apart from the traditional historical and analytical methods, comparative and interpretative methods have been adopted in the study of documents, primary, secondary and tertiary sources and personal accounts. The present investigation is based on the theory evolved by the western scholars as studies are not adequate in the context of India. A scientific manner of analysis is followed which marks the works in terms of deduction, inference and presentation of facts.
Source for the Study

Data for historical method have been collected chiefly from archival materials, newspapers and interviews. These sources can be termed as “papers” and “people”. While libraries provide secondary data, people are the rich sources for primary data.

This work, historical method has been divided into four distinct strategies of research. Firstly, archival “paper sources” such as Government Consultations Records, Government Departmental Proceedings, Government orders, Census Reports, Industrial Report, Madras Administration Report, Industrial Committee report, Industrial Commission Report, Native Newspaper Report, Cotton Committee Report, Agricultural farms report, etc., are consulted. Secondly, Development of Factory or Industries, Chamber of Commerce and contribution of Labour Resources has furnished data from “paper source”. From in and around Thoothukudi different Industries or Factories headquarters are covered and information regarding their early conditions, development, management programs, labour contributions and their early condition, financial position has been gathered.

With regard to “paper sources” the third strategy has been systematic with analysis of periodicals. From periodicals, facts about industrial development results, management programs, estimation regarding factories’ achievements, their failures, commodity export and labour response to administrative activities were accumulated.
To collect data from “people sources”, clinical interview is attempted as the fourth strategy. Clinical interview from factory owners, industry labours, cultivators, and weavers their socio-economical conditions and their migrations and settlement, have been gathered.

Primary data are collected from records available in Tamil Nadu Archives, Chennai. Secondary data are collected from Connemara Government library, the University of Madras library Chennai, The Tamil Nadu Archives library, Theosophical Society Library, Roja Muthaiya Research Library, Maraimalai Adigal Library, Devaneya Pavanar Public Library, the Madras Institute of Development Studies Library, Chennai; Bharathiar University Library, Coimbatore; Bharathidasan University Library, Trichy; Annamalai University Library, Chithambaram; Madurai Kamaraj University Library, Madurai; Manonmaniam Sundaranar University Library, district Library and St.Xaviar College Library Tirunelveli; District Library, V.O.C College Library and Kamaraj College Library, Thoothukudi.

This thesis contains both qualitative and quantitative data.

Review of Literature

There are some pioneering studies on the subject of cotton, cultivation, cotton related trade and cotton related industries.

R. Rathnam., *Agricultural Development in Madras State Prior to 1900*, Madras, highlights the methods of cotton cultivations and discussed some cotton tracts in Madras presidency.

C.J. Backer., *Indian Economy on Agriculture*, Tamil Nadu country side, Delhi, 1984, highlights the mode of cotton cultivations in India.

J.R. Royle., *Cotton in India*. Smith, Elder & Co, 1851, determines the cultivation of cotton in throughout India.

David Ludden., *Peasant History in South India*, Delhi, 1989, gives a good description of local as well as regional trade in the Tirunelveli area centered on market towns.

Vijaya Ramaswamy., *Textiles and Weavers in Medieval South India*, describes the settlements of textiles and weavers and determined the process of weaver’s conditions.

S. Arasarathnam., *Merchant, Companies and Commerce on the Coromandel Coast, 1650 – 1740* (Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1986), provide the model studies regarding trade.


• C.W.E. Cotton., *Hand – Book of Commercial Information of India*, Calcutta, 1919, highlights the commercialization of cotton in India.

• C.N. Vakil, S.C. Bose and P.V. Deolalkar., *Growth of Trade and Industry in Modern India, London*, 1931, highlight the cotton trade and industrial developments and cotton imports and exports in India.


• P.P. Pillai., *Economic Condition in India*, Madras, 1925, highlights the economical contribution of cotton in India.

• N.C. Bhogendranath., *Development of the Textile Industry in Madras Up to 1950*, University of Madras, Madras, 1957, provide the developments of cotton industries and also highlight the Tamil Nadu cotton mills.


• H. Raghava Aiyer., *Economics of Textile trade and Industry in India, Bombay*, 1977, highlights the both cotton trade and industrial economical growth in India.


- **K. Venkatraman.**, *Handloom industry in South India*, 1940, highlights the historical maturation of cotton handloom in Madras and also provides revival of the handloom industries in Madras Presidency.


- **C.M. Birwood.**, *The Industrial Arts of India*, Madras, 1880, highlights the cotton industrial structures in India.

- **Edwin Holder.**, *Monograph on Dyes and Dyeing industry in the Madras Presidency*, 1896, highlights the dyeing methods of cotton in Madras presidency.

However a regional study pertaining to any district in the then Tamil Nadu has not been attempted, to my knowledge, so far. The object of the work is to provide a comprehensive account of the cotton related trade and industries in and around Thoothukudi (1888 - 1909).

**Hypothesis**

It is presumed that before the establishment of the European colony in India, in the southern part of Thoothukudi of Madras Presidency, cotton production was only for self-sufficiency.

- After the Industrial Revolution, cotton was exported as raw material from Thoothukudi. This had an impact on the farming. The land for the cultivation of cotton was expanded and the production was increased.
- In 18th century, when East India Company came to Thoothukudi, it was their major duty to get cotton for their spinning factories in England. It produced more cotton to satisfy the needs of the British.
- Separating cotton seed from the cotton fiber and bundling them, and exporting them were the business which gathered hundreds of people at a place.
- On the basis of the production of cotton, its marketing and its exportation, there developed new transportation facilities.
- For making these businesses easier, machineries were used. After the establishment of cotton industries by the British, there developed another new social relations. Thoothukudi became the vital field for the development of these new relationships. These things brought about a social change, new social relationship and new class formation in that area. This industrial development was both advantageous as well as disadvantageous to the society.

**Plan of the Study**

This study is planned into five chapters excluding the introduction and conclusion.

The introduction part presents contents and research design, aim and objectives, areas and periods of the study, methodology, sources of the study, review of literature, hypothesis, and plan of the study. A modest attempt has been made for a comprehensive and integrated study of the development of cotton in and around Thoothukudi within the framework of the scope outlined.
The first chapter brings out a historical background of the cotton in the world and also in and around Thoothukudi in Coramandal coast. Especially it discusses briefly accounts of cotton developments in Coramandal coast by Portuguese, Dutch, and English. Then it briefly covers the details of cotton experiments in and around Thoothukudi by American cotton planters’ appointment by governments of Madras.

The second chapter discusses about the detail accounts of cotton cultivations in and around Thoothukudi. It also covers cotton cultivation tracts, mode of cotton cultivation, cotton varieties and common diseases and establishment of Kovilpatti Cotton Research Station in 1909 at Kovilpatti.

The third chapter discusses about the detail account of cotton trade in and around Thoothukudi. It covers local cotton trade customs, method of cotton trade, improvement of cotton forecast, harvesting and marketing seasons, types and market grades of cotton, marketing problem of cotton, commercial development of cotton, cotton trade by roads, rail borne cotton trade, sea – borne trades.

The fourth chapter discusses about the cotton industries in and around Thoothukudi. It gives details about beginning of the cotton industries, traditional cotton ginning and cleaning, modern cotton gins, establishment of cotton ginning factories, pressing industries, spinning mills, weaving industries, revival of the handloom and handweaving industries.
The fifth chapter discusses about the impact of cotton in and around Thoothukudi. Emergence of cotton society and their economical changes by cotton and swadeshi movement in and around Thoothukudi are discussed here.

Limitation of Study

The writer’s attempt in this research is very modest, in the sense that he has not totally exhausted the topic. This research has unveiled an area which needs further and deeper study not only for the sake of historical research, but also to throw more light on the sosio-economic status of the cotton society.

The conclusion part presents summary and brief accounts. After analysing the various dimensions of the thesis titled “The Cotton Related Trade and Industries in and around Thoothukudi (1888 – 1909)”, one can understand the importance of the subject matter which is discussed in the forthcoming chapters elaborately.