INTRODUCTION

The thesis entitled ‘Colonialism and Modernisation, History and Development of Southern Railway, A Case Study’, offers an insight into the evolution of the most important transport system of South India. This topic is an unexplored area and the period of the study is from its origin upto 2001.

Michael Adas in his book ‘Machine as the Measure of Men’, theorises that scientific and technological measures of human capacity peaked in importance through centuries of European overseas expansion. The British took pride in the superiority of their technology and understanding of the world. This hegemonic position coupled with their ambition, made them the colonizers of India.

Colonialism is understood as a social formation, which had control over a number of modes of production and forms of exploitation. Colonialism was first in the form of mercantilism, and then it transformed itself into capitalism. It is said that Britain acquired colonies in the non –European world including India for missionary work, glory, adventure and trade in exotic luxury goods. Eventually they became the rulers of India. For the perpetuation of their rule they had to make the people of India inferior to them. Thus the process of modernisation was introduced in all spheres of life by them. It was a continuous and open-ended process, which emerged after the Industrial Revolution in Europe. This is synonymous with Europeanisation and got strengthened in India by the aggressive policy pursued by Lord Dalhousie (1848-1856), the Governor General of India. He
started the process of modernisation in education, transport and communication. The first decisive stimulus to large scale railway construction set out the commercial aim to develop India as a market for British goods and a source of raw materials. Thus he became instrumental in connecting different parts of India with railways. The flow of finance capital stimulated the expansion of the process which made Lord Dalhousie to carry the sobriquet ‘the architect of railways in India’.

The Indian Railway system today is the largest state owned enterprise in Asia and the second largest state owned Railway system in the world. The introduction of railways has not only caused remarkable increase in the quick communication between different parts of India but also brought about profound changes in the habits and outlook of the people.

For hundreds of years roads and water ways were the only means of transport in India and elsewhere too. Railways which carry millions of men and women from one place to another and also tons of materials from the producers to the consumers have no comparison at all with any other means of transport. Earlier, horses and other animals were used for moving the trains on the wooden rails. The credit for the introduction of railways with steam engine goes to Britain. In 1825, the Stockton and Darlington Railway made history as the first Railway handling public traffic. The railway line was actually commenced in 1821 by the famous inventor of the steam locomotive George Stephenson, but it took four years to complete the construction. In due course railways were introduced in other countries of the world also.

The economic development of a country is possible only through the growth of its means of transportation. The history of Indian railways is more or less the history of India in modern times. Several reasons induced the British to construct railways in India. Through the introduction of railways the British tried to provide both a market for their goods and a source of raw materials for
them. The rapid industrialization and the introduction of factory system in Europe compelled the British to find market for their finished products. They also wanted to get an uninterrupted supply of raw materials for their finished products.

If the conquest of India had been made by the British muscles, the consolidation and maintenance of the colonial authority was facilitated by the new means of transport introduced by them in India. We have seen that the railway policy formulated by Dalhousie for India underlined strategic, economic and political usefulness of the railways for the British. The mutiny which followed his rule proved this true and so the British policy makers left no stones unturned to build a railway net-work connecting the several political and economic centres of India. If political consolidation and military compulsions prompted its construction, economic interests nourished and sustained it.

The railway promoters in England who were quite assured of the possibilities and potentialities of the general facilities of India pressurized the East India Company to introduce railways in India. The early railway policy of the British seems to have been largely dictated by military needs. In order to maintain stability and to bring peace and harmony in their annexed territories, the British had to transport their troops periodically and without much loss of time. The successful running of the first train in England and the opportunities and profits which accompanied it attracted the attention of the finance capital to invest in the area of railways. The political interest of the British also led to the introduction of railways in India. The British realized the importance of a cheap means of transport for the progress of the country materially and for the efficiency of the administration. The railway promoters of India wanted rapid extension of railways since they thought it would promote political stability.
The railway era began in India on 6 April 1853 when the first train covered a distance of 21 miles from Bombay to Thane. In the following years tremendous changes occurred in this transportation system. In fact, not a year passes without some part of the country getting the benefit of a new track. It extends its arms to remote villages, jungles, deserts or even mountainous areas.

In the South the first railway line was opened on 16 July 1856 by the Madras Railway Company. Then it ran between Vyasarpady and Walajah Road, a distance of 63 miles. Later along with other railway companies it encompassed entire colonial South India. Though the development of railways till independence was tremendous, its growth after independence is beyond our imagination. Formation of zonal divisions played an important role in shaping the economic destiny of the nation. Southern Railway, as the first railway zone, came into being in independent India on 14 April 1951. Southern Railway has its headquarters in Chennai and in 2001 it had the divisions of Chennai, Thiruchirappalli, Madurai, Palaghat and Thiruvananthapuram. (Salem division was formed in 2005). It covers the states of Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Pondicherry and small portions of Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka. This section of Indian Railway is different from the rest of India as its revenue is derived more from passengers than through freight.

All modes of transport - Railway, Road and Air are interdependent, mutually advantageous and complementary to one another. We can not deny the fact that a cheap and efficient transport system plays a vital role in the economic development in its own sphere of action. But without a railway, a town or village is some how cut-off from the main stream of life. Though the railways were introduced to facilitate the commercial interest of the British, it played an important role in unifying the country. Railways will always be successful due to its advantage of bulk carrying capacity both in passenger and freight traffic.
Southern Railway facilitates mobility of labour to the new centres of activity. As commercial activity and industry expanded, large number of jobs was generated in trade, commerce, transport, storage and communication sectors. It brought about radical changes in socio-economic spheres as people of different castes, creeds and status had to travel in the same coaches. It created harmonious understanding between different sections of society and it also spread the message of unity.

The role of Southern Railway in bringing the integration of the people living in different regions with diverse physical features is indeed unique. The Railways annihilate distance, cut geographical barriers and enable the people to intermingle. Equally vital is the part played by Southern Railways in the preservation of law and order.

**OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

The specific objectives of the study are:

1. To find out the important reasons that led to the introduction of Railways in India.

2. To analyse the functions of various railway companies that were the predecessors of Southern Railway.

3. To evaluate the activities of Southern Railway as the first railway zone after independence.

4. To give stress on the most important project of Southern Railway.

5. To evaluate the modernization process of Southern Railway including the passenger welfare programmes.
6. To analyse the socio, economic, political and cultural impact of Southern Railway.

METHODOLOGY

Methodology adopted is historical, analytical and critical. Both primary and secondary sources have been used for the study. Factual details have been presented chronologically. The collected sources including documentary and non-documentary evidences were subjected to a systematic and rigorous process of analytical operation. The use of external and internal criticisms enabled to locate the correct data. The sources were analysed and interpreted in a most dispassionate and objective manner. Southern Railway forms the nucleus of the thesis and all other matters are discussed in relation to it.

HYPOTHESES

The working hypotheses of the present work are.

1) The colonial power started the new transport system mainly for their own interest.

2) The construction of railway drastically affected the socio, economic, political and cultural scenario of South India.

3) Railways, which was started as an effective instrument of colonial extraction turned out to be an inevitable tool of national integration after the formation of different zones.

4) Construction of Railways in the colonial period was a part of the process of modernization and Southern Railway is now carrying it forward.
REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Among the major works mention must be made specifically about M. Sanyal’s *Indian Railways - One Hundred years 1853-1953*, V.K. Agrawal’s *Managing Indian Railways the Future Ahead*, A.K. Chopra’s *Indian Railway’s Silent Transformation*, J. Johnson’s *The Economics of Indian Rail Transport*, K.S. Ramaswami’s *Transport in India*, M.S. Rao’s *Indian Economy*, S. Palanichami’s *Development of Indian Railways in the Madras Presidency 1853-1947 a Case Study in British Colonialism*, Aruna Awarthi’s *History and Development of Railways in India*, T.V. Ramaswamy’s *The Functions of State Railways in Indian National Economy*, Y Saraswathy’s *The Railway Board A Study in Administration*, M.M. Agrawal’s *Indian Railway Track* and G.S. Khosla’s *History of Indian Railways*. These works have provided valuable data on the topic and also helped to construct the theoretical framework of the study. Strange as it seems to be, only a few railway personnel have written their memoirs. R.R. Bhandari’s *Southern Railway a Saga of 150 Glorious Years* is a valuable work and it throws light on the development of Southern Railway.

These books contain a lot of factual information presented in a systematic manner, but no serious study has been made to analyse the history and development of Southern Railway. This study is a modest attempt to find out the origin, development, important projects and the modernization process of Southern Railway.

CHAPTERISATION OR DESIGN OF STUDY

The thesis consists of five chapters excluding an introduction and a conclusion. The first chapter is entitled ‘Colonial Power and the Introduction of Railways in India’. As the name shows the chapter reviews the transport system of India during the colonial period and the reasons that
induced the British to start railways in India. It also traces the emergence of different railway companies and the rapid development of railways in India.

Second chapter is named ‘Origin and Development Southern Railway’. It attempts to analyse the circumstances that led to the formation of Southern Railway in India. This chapter also throws light on the different divisions and departments of Southern Railway. The third chapter ‘Pamban Railway Bridge - a plaudit of Southern Railway’ deals with the role of Southern Railway in linking India and Srilanka through Pamban Railway Bridge. It also discusses the engineering marvel of Southern Railway’s scientific and technical achievement. Fourth chapter ‘Modernisation in Southern Railway’ describes the process of modernization in Southern Railway. Fifth and the last chapter ‘Impact of Railways in South India’ gives importance on the impact of railways in the socio, economic, political and cultural life of the people of South India. Conclusion presents the findings of the study and suggestions. A detailed bibliography, appendices and maps are also annexed for reference and enquiry.