MEANS OF COMMUNICATION
Chapter V

MEANS OF COMMUNICATION

Prior to the British administration the modes of communications were head loads, on animal backs and horse drawn carts. The hills had neither wheeled vehicles nor improved roads. Because of the slopes and rough terrain, building of roads was very difficult to the natives. The head loads were carried along bridle paths which were connected with villages and the main market towns.

Natives did not need much transport, because of their swidden cultivation. Messages were passed on from person to person. Goods like milk, ghee and honey were carried on human heads and shoulders from the Nilgiris to Sirumugai, Karamadi and Gundalpet.

The barter system prevailed among the inhabitants mostly. Movements were entirely on foot. The Hill communities had developed hospitality to a great extent. Any new comer was treated at least with a drink of butter milk. This culture sprouted out of necessity to treat the early travellers.

Road Transport

The streets of the towns were only of mud and not even metalled. Until 1813 no road existed when necessity arose for the construction of roads for
commercial purposes. It however engaged the attention of the Government.

As the bridle paths were not fit for horses, Sullivan moved the government to sanction Rs.300/- for making roads.

Ferreria, Francis Buchannan and Grigg made an attempt to lay paths but in vain. It was in the year 1821 that the first Bridle path was made to the Hills from Sirumugai near Mettupalayam and to Kotagiri via Dimhatti. Evans Mc.Phrerson took two years to complete this bridle path.

An extra laying of 17.6 k.m. road connected Sirumugai - Dimatti pass with Ootacammund. Laden ponies and passengers used this route until the opening of the Coonoor Ghat. The Board of Revenue caused the provision of the expenditure of the road in the provincial Budget.

In 1830 Mr.James Thomas the then Collector made another path from Kotagiri direct to Mettupalayam. He took quick action to build this road, because he experienced many problems and difficulties in his journey from Coimbatore to Ootacamund.

Ghat Roads or Passes

There are six ghat paths or roads which were formed by the travellers and traders. These passes were
foot paths and beaten paths. These passes had existed before the advent of the Britishers to the Nilgiris. The Coonoor and Kotagiri ghats are on the East or South East angle of the plateau and terminate at Mettupalayam. At the north west and south west angles of the plateau are the Gudalur and Sispara ghats. The former communicated with Wynaaad and the latter was directed to calicut. The Coonoor, Kotagiri Gudalur and Segurghats were open to wheeled traffic, because the other ghats were very narrow, slopy and swampy with sholas and streams and it was difficult to build the ghat road as wheeled roads. But the necessity for the construction of roads for commercial purposes engaged the attention of the Government. About 1823, an attempt was made to construct roads by a group of pioneers.

**Sundapatti pass or Melur pass (Mannar Ghat)**

It was an old ghat road, connected with Ootacamund in the year 1840. As Sullivan discovered this ghat, it was also called Sullivan Ghat\(^7\). This ghat connected the road with Coimbatore and Malabar and was used by the Tobacco Smugglers as well the Salt traders. According to Baikie and Francis this road was the oldest one and a Travellers bungalow was built near Manjakombai to facilitate the travellers\(^8\).

**Sigur Ghat (More phonetically the seegor)**

The Sigur Ghat was at one time the favorite approach
for visitors from the northern parts of the presidency and was the first road constructed for wheeled traffic. Th Nilgiris was well connected with the Mysore plains by the old Billikal path, by which the natives reached the markets in the north. It was built by the sappers and Miners from 1836 to 1838. It was completed under captain Underwood at a cost of Rs.63749-2-69.

The British preferred the Bangalore - Mysore route to reach the hills. Therefore the path was levelled and improved in the late 1830. Many bridges were built, among which two bridges are very noteworthy. The first one is an iron girder bridge which is across the Sigur River and the other one is across the Moyar River. A bridge near Teppakadu was preferred to the road proposed. The original wooden bridge which had been built in 1841 was washed away by the floods in 1847 and the one which was cast by Major Cotton lasted till 1877 and then the woodwork was replaced in 1897 at a cost of Rs.7000/-10. However it was used till the opening of the Gudalur Ghat. The name Sigur Ghat was substituted by 'Kalhatti Ghat'.

Gudalur Ghat

On Sullivan's initiative, the construction of this road was started in 1823. This Ghat is 17 miles from Ootacamund. Traffic was very rare along this Ghat. That S.R. Lushington is said to have travelled through this path in 1829 testifies to its completion before 1829. The Kundah Ghat was the main lifeline
for the Journey to calicut and the "tappal" (Postal letter) runners did their postal work quickly along this path.

New Gudalur Ghat

The Gudalur Ghat was so named from the village of Gudalur. The new ghat was constructed in 1868 by Col. Farewell and Browning. It was opened to vehicular traffic in 1870.

Later the Britishers examined the above route declared it as a fair weather road. The Wynaad gold boom of 1879-82 necessitated the Government to sanction a huge amount for the improvement of this Ghat\textsuperscript{11}. Rs.183250/- was spent on improvement and an extention of the road by a few miles was effected\textsuperscript{12}. Shelters were built along the path. A bridge was built across the Gudalur Ghat near Pykara streams which were crossed by basket boats until 1830. Government took over the ferry in 1834 and the bridge over Pykara was built in 1857 and rebuilt in 1896. The Gudalur – Teppakadu Section was formed between 1865 and 1867 which gave a still shorter route to Ootacamund. The Sigur Ghat was replaced by the Gudalur Ghat\textsuperscript{13}. This road was much useful for the Britishers to have gold mines in Wynaad, and they spent a large amount for the development of the road.
Coonoor Ghat

The opening of Coonoor Ghat marked a new era in the transport history of the Nilgiris. This was the first road for wheeled carriages like bullock carts and tongas. Human Carriages (palanquins) as a regular mode of transport began to disappear in the hills.

The first ghat from Mettupalayam to Coonoor (now known as the old Coonoor ghat) began in 1829. S.R. Lushington paid much attention to build this road. During his period of Governorship of Madras presidency he paid his visit to Nilgiris through this road. He directed Lt. C.F. Littardy to trace a path upto the Coonoor ravine and a path was traced along the Kateri Valley in 1830. Captain Murray was another English man who co-operated with Li-Hardy for the completion of the road successfully. Eight pairs of cattle were required to pull a laden cart in this path. Karamadai, Mettupalayam, Coonoor and Ootacamund markets were well connected by this road. This path cut short the distance from the plains to Ootacamund by nearly 30 k.m.

All the goods from the market were taken through this road only. This resulted in neglect of the Kotagiri and the Sigur Ghats. The Coonoor road became the chief route from Madras to Ootacamund and the travellers from Madras preferred to stay at Coonoor.
Palanquin bearers and relay ponies were kept for services. Travellers were given facility to cross the Bhavani river by basket boats. Later in the year 1840, the masonry bridge was built at a cost of Rs.12500/-. It was washed away in 1847. The bridge which exists now parallel to the latest one was built in 1847 with steel girders. There was tremendous progress in communication.

New Coonoor Ghat

It was completed in 1871. It marks a very important epoch in the development of the hills as a holiday resort for visitors. It was the first true carriage road up to the ghats. The tedious 'Palanquin' days were over now. Speedy tongas with relays of ponies every third mile, bore the traveller to his destination at Coonoor or Ootacamund. The new road was most convenient to the travellers to travel to the hill station. Heavy baggage was easily brought up by country cart.

The new Coonoor road was constructed under the guidance of Lt.G.V.Law. It was eighteen feet wide and had a gradient of one in eighteen (1/18\(^{\frac{1}{2}}\)). The whole road was macadamized. Thirty two timber bridges were built to cross the streams on the way and the road crossed the old ones at nine points. Its chief defect was its zigzags numbering no less than twelve. At present, the new Coonoor Ghat has 14 hair pin bends (curves of the road is in the shape of the hair
pin bend). That was metalled and maintained with great care for which the National planters Association was instrumental.

A handsome suspension bridge over the Kallar river was built in 1894 at a cost of Rs.56000 to replace a wooden bridge on masonic piers which had been washed away by floods in 1891. The ghat remained the chief route to the hills until the railway to Coonoor was opened in 1899. The new Coonoor ghat was graceful with its evergreen vegetation, the Indian flora and fauna. Jungle cries of the Wild animals like wild beasts, Monkey, Jungle fowl, songs of the birds, noise of the water and the crashing of trees were enchanting. The whole road as such was full of botanical spirit, and natural wonders.

**Sispara Ghat**

The Sispara Ghat also known as 'Kondah Pass' was initiated by S.R.Lushington in the year 1831. This ghat was very useful to the Britishers to fetch the invalids from Bombay by steamer via Calicut (Kerala). The road was completed in 1832 and was considered for a long time the 'tappal route' between Ootacamund and West coast. It was the longest road connection to Ooty, its total length being over 165 k.m.

Captain Murray of the pioneers and Lt.Le.Hardy, camped themselves at Avalanche and opened the road in 1832. It connected the remote places like Bangi Tappal, Sispara, Walaghat and Sholaghat. It took 6
years and a cost of Rs.30,000 to finish its construction which was over by 183821.

Steamers could sail through the then navigable Beypore river. Thus the western sea was reached in one day from Ootacamund through the Sisapura Ghat.

Wild elephants and tigers posed problems and the Collector of Malabar was asked to shoot down the animals. Britishers built the travellers bangalows at Sirpara, Sholaghat and Walaghat. But coolies and cattle were rarely available. In order to shoot the wild animals two shooting centres were built at Pirmund and Bison Swamp. The pleasant Avalanche hill and the most romantic peak called "Mokootee peak" are situated in this Sispara Ghat22.

Kotagiri Ghat

This is another route from Mettupalayam, and connects Mettupalayam with Ootacamund. It is connecting the plateau in the north east angle of the Mountain. Salem, Coimbatore, Mettupalayam and Kotagiri and Ootacamund are connected by this road.

It was the oldest road cut for the ascent of the Nilghiris. The original sanatorium was built at Dimhatty in the vicinity of Kotagiri Ghat. Though the Government paid a large amount to construct this road it fell into disuse because of the natural calamities. The bad condition of the road led the
government to undertake an extensive repair in 1845\textsuperscript{23}. Until the opening of the Coonoor Ghat, it was the chief route of travel to Ooty from the south of the plateau.

New Kotagiri Ghat

The new Kotagiri ghat was constructed in 1870 to 1875 by Cap. Murray to facilitate the improvements in the old Kotagiri ghat\textsuperscript{24}. It had an easy gradient of 17 feet towards Mettupalayam. It followed the south side of the Erkad river gorge for 21 miles finally arriving at Kotagiri. But it was put to little use by the visitors. The route was fairly level and an excellent carriage road of twelve miles led to the hill station.

Constructing of Roads

In a Mountainious tract the value of wide, good and well graded roads cannot be over-estimated. The construction of roads in the Nilgiri hills was a turning point in the British communicative and transport system and also in their administrative and economic side. The hill station was tucked away in a corner part of the western ghat. Since, the population was very low, it was a tough engineering feat to construct roads in the rough terrain, to erect bridges and culverts over the streams and rivers.
Road and transport system in the Nilgiris was a gift of the English Government because the government and the provincial administrators took more interest and paid great attention to build roads in the Nilgiris. Personal interest of the individuals also led to the construction of the roads. Engineers were appointed to look after road construction. In the year 1863-64 the perfect laying of roads actively began in the district and has since been systematically carried out. The Local Funds Act and the Town Improvement Act were applied to this district in 1871. These Acts entrusted the local fund authorities with the responsibilities of construction and maintenance of all communications within their Jurisdiction.

Transport and communication system of the hills were improved far better than those of the plains. Certainly no hill station or town in the plains had so large a proportion of beautiful drives and walks as in Ootacamund. The Nilgiris had a length of 155 miles of metalled and 467 miles of unmetalled roads in 1901-02 which increased to 387 miles and 414 miles respectively in 1911-12. During British administration. Many drives, roads and walks were made and named after the Governors. The Grant Duft Drive in Lovedale, Cannemarra walk near Marlimund the Wenlock road, the Havelock drive and Amthill drive are a few of them to quote. As a result of this the district possesses a large number of roads, most of which are different from their original construction. The
district became more prosperous with the construction of roads.

The only trunk road of the district was built from Mettupalayam in the east to Gudalur (Wynaad) in the South east edge. The road runs towards the western direction and touches the two important towns of Coonoor and Ootacamund. A second high level line runs east along the edge of the plateau of Lady Canning's seat, Lamb's Rock and Dolphin's Nose affording access to the town of Coonoor for numerous tea and coffee estates. The latter one extends down the hill slopes towards Mettupalayam and a third road line runs to the west and south of the district, in the neighbourhood of Kateri and Kolakambe wherein lie most of the Nilgiri coffee estates. From Kateri branches a line which runs to Devashola and Melur where there are large cinchona estates and Kateri is now connected with Ootacamund by a branch road to Yellanalle. A road line has been laid connecting the Kundas with Devashola and hence with Coonoor. A fourth line forms from Hulikal Droog. From Ootacamund another feeder line was formed towards Sigur ghat and Mysore.

From Ootacamund also Branches of the line runs from Ootacamund to Devashola and Melur and from there a third but very incomplete line runs south-west towards sisapura on the Kundas and there are few other connecting branches. It appears that very much has been effected to open out the district by
roads. But much remained to be done for the Nilgiris to become self-sufficient in communication and transportation. The lofty part of Kundah and their western slopes and the northern crests of Kodanad and Naduvattam are in almost the same primitive condition as when the Nilgiris were first discovered.

The role of planters was no less important in making the roads. The planters association was receiving annual grants from the government for the upkeep of certain roads till 1879-80. Ootacamund roads were transferred to the District Board for maintenance.

Pioneers and convict labour from Coimbatore and Salem were utilized for the construction of roads. Letter Correspondences, between the district Collector and the government went on quickly and the Government had taken proper responsibility for sanctioning the amount for the expenditure of the constructions of road. Public Works Department and the Municipality took over the roads and paths within their jurisdiction. Kallar and Ootacamund road was under the maintenance of public works department and the municipality transferred from the District Board. District Engineers were appointed to lookafter the administration of the construction of roads. The Board of Revenue authorised the Municipal commissioners to construct roads in their municipalities. Estimations were prepared for the widening, draining and metalling of the roads by the District Collectors.
and the District Engineers. Captain Morant was a main force in this regard. The convicts especially supervised these works. The government sanctioned the necessary amount for building, the timber bridges and metal roads. Many resolutions were passed by the Local fund Board, regarding provision of funds for certain roads in the circle. Usually funds were demanded before the monsoon for constructing bridges and to have necessary repairs. Extraordinary expenditure was incurred in removing obstructions to traffic on the Coonoor ghat caused by Landslips during the heavy rains of the Southwest monsoon and the Northeast monsoon.

Indian Engineers and overseers were also appointed to look after the construction of the work. The roads and roadsides, drains, water courses etc were kept scrupulously cleaned. The cleanliness of private grounds was insisted upon and maintained.

Wastelands were treated as common land and used for road construction. The Expenditure for the road was observed by the Board of Revenue and it was provided in the provincial Budget. The Board not only endorsed the opinion of the Board of Revenue, but also provided grant from the provincial grant and part in a provincial budget. Fund from the Local Board (Municipal Fund) was also spent for construction of roads and the required amount was spent for repairing. In 1885 many roads were repaired by the Local Fund Board as given in the annexure.
In 1879-80, the Government transferred the entire execution of the maintenance and construction of roads from the public works Department to the Local Fund Board, which subsequently employed its own engineers staff and others to supervise the road construction. Though the Local Boards Act of 1884 increased the funds of the Board Act of 1871, by which a sum of not less than two-thirds of the land cess along with the income from tools was spent on communications.

Under this pretext, the District Boards spent a very meagre amount on roads which resulted in the interference of the Government in 1895 which directed the local bodies to spend not less than half the income from their land cess upon roads. As this was not adhered to the Government withdrew its orders in 1900 and instead, granted 25 percent of their land cess to the local bodies for the improvement of roads in addition to the amount alloted from the state Government. From 1920 the Government also began to give special grant from time to time for special repairs of important roads for the maintenance of Second class roads and for the construction of bridges and culverts. The payment of all these grants were also made, provided that the roads were kept in good condition. While superintendents and engineers of the public works departments were entrusted to build the construction of trunk roads. The collectors of the respective districts were entrusted with the second class roads. In 1931 the council of state
took necessary steps for the development of road system. In 1933 the state Government decided to promote the comprehensive programme of road development. For that purpose the government appointed a special officer to take a survey of the presidency including Nilgiris District.\textsuperscript{46}

Mr. Vipan was the person appointed as secretary for the department of survey. A detailed survey was submitted to the government by Vipan out of 616 kilometers of metalled roads, 38.5 kilometers were unmetalled motorable roads, and 558 kms were unmetalled roads. There were 112 k.m. of trunk roads and 154 k.m. of Second class roads and the Government sanctioned an annual grant of Rs.51,160/- for the former and Rs.4,000/- for the latter.

The report submitted by Vipan spoke about the condition of the Nilgiri roads. "The Ootacamund - Gudalur - Mysore road was in a very good condition and the surface was well maintained and the second class roads were also in a fair condition". The scheme recommended the construction of several roads in the Nilgiris district covering a distance of 31 k.m. which were later constructed by the Nilgiri District Board.

In 1940 the Chief Engineer (Building and Road) became the controlling authority for the erstwhile District Board Engineers Service and the Local Fund Assistant Engineer's Service and the Local Fund
Assistant Engineers (Communications) for the better inspection and Superintendence of Distinct roads. In 1942 a new post of Chief Engineer (Communications) was created followed by the creation of six road divisions and a road circle.

Village roads

Bridle paths and footpaths were indispensable as the means of communication between villages and hamlets. They connected themselves with the main roads for the convenience of pedestrians. Provision was made in the village plans for the formation of such paths and also for their improvement. The local fund Board was of the opinion that the main roads of the district should be completed before the village roads were undertaken. Contributions were utilized for the construction of main roads the building up of the village roads.

Construction of Bridges

Britishers were experts in the constructing of Bridges across the rivers and valleys. To strengthen the transport and communication funds were provided for the expansion of carriage of stone crushing machines. Before the construction of the concrete bridges all the bridges had been built in timber - Especially in the forest areas the wood was more and the construction was economically cheaper. As a
A staggering amount was spent on the roads and bridges the Europeans cared to maintain them. Roads in the Nilgiris were always been in bad conditions. The nerve lines of the Nilgiris broke and things come to a standstill due to rains. Indigenous resources find it very difficult even to maintain what the European hands achieved more than one and a half century ago.

Introduction of Transport Facility

The mode of transport had been introduced in the Nilgiris much before many cities and towns in the plains possessed them. The Government addressed the Military Board and the quarter Master General to provide all assistance to the travellers in the Nilgiris. Mail tongadake company of Nilgiris, a branch of Madras carrying company was established in 1862. It served very efficiently in the Nilgiris in the pre-automobile age.

Since 1850, the local authorities were concerned with the communications within their jurisdiction. The provisions for maintenance of communication were made in the Town Improvement Act which came into force in 1850.

The tongas drawn by pairs of relay horses could reach Ootacamund from Mettupalayam in 5½ hours (The time taken by the train to cover the same distance even to day).
There were water proof wheeled coaches with venetian and glass windows, drawn by relay pairs of bullocks exchanged every five miles. Luggages were conveyed similarly. The companies running such carriges through Gudalur and Coonoor Ghats were very lucarative concerns as they paid dividends of cent.

The automobiles were introduced in 1900. The Nilgiri Automobile Association and the Nilgiri branch of automobile were started in the year 1904. The Britishers felt that motor traffic was important in the hills through the traffic was very dangerous in hilly tracts of course there was no organised body of motorists then existing in the Madras Presidency.

The Nilgiri Automobile Association was organised to educate the public opinion, to encourage motor traffic, and to assist municipalities, in drafting any necessary local regulations.

The travellers were not ready to accept the revolution in the transport system. So the pioneers in this field encouraged the public to take up motor traffic. The first motor meet was organised and held in 1905. In 1906 the travellers were given trial cars which suited the planters. The automobiles with steam engines and sophisticated cars were plied in various routes in the Nilgiris.

In 1907 a hill climb was held. This test was more helpful to the motorists to know the elevation of the
area. The motorists formed the routes according to there were five main routes namely.54.

Route No.1  -  Bangalore to Ootacamund 185 miles
Route No.1a -  Mysore to Ootacamund via Segur Ghat
Route No.2  -  Coonoor to Ootacamund via Aravanghat 11 miles
Route No.3  -  Ootacamund to Coonoor, via Lovedale, Devashola, Manjakombai, Kolakombai - Kateri - Runnymede - Coonoor - 42 miles.
Route No.4  -  Ooty - Kotagiri - K kondanad - 18 miles.
Route No.5  -  Coonoor - Kotagiri (via) - Wellington orange grove road - Spring field - Kotagiri - 13 miles.

A good transport system was indispensable to the Nilgiris plantations farming and such other activities. The India princess the European planters and officers and the tourists brought upto date vehicles to the hills.

Railway

Even before the second Ghat Road was constructed in 1854, proposals for the construction of a railway line from Mettupalayam to Coonoor were there. Various proposals were put forward by the different companies to take up the work. But they did not receive the
approval of the Government. In 1886 a contract was entered into between the Secretary of state and the Nilgiri Railway Company for laying the railway line and in August 1891, the first road was cut by the then Governor of Madras Lord Wenlock.

The Nilgiri Mountain Railway was one of the marvels of the European engineering skill. The proposal for a railway line upto Coonoor was mooted in 1854. On completion of broad gauge between Podhanur and Mettupalayam in early 1870's several proposals were made for mountain line. The engineers of Darjeeling Railways expressed their enthusiasm in establishing a mountain railway in Kotagiri Valley, Wellington and Ootacamund. M. Riggenbach, a Swiss Engineer and the very inventor of the Riggi System of mountain railways offered to take up the constructions in 1876. A new company called the Nilgiris Railway Company, was formed in 1885 with a capital of Rs.25 lakhs raised in London. After a contract made with the government, a survey was made by W.G. Gilchrist, a state Railway Engineer. The company commenced the work with the help of Wenlock on August 3, 1891. The complete line was liquidated in 1894, but a new line was completed in 1898, and it was handed over to the Madras Railway company. The rebuilt line was opened in June after its damage in the severe cyclonic storm. The government purchased the line on January 1st 1903. The total cost of the Mettupalayam Coonoor line came to Rs.38,00,000/-. Nineteen via ducts, several of them are 60 feet high and 13 tunnels, the longest being 48 feet length were
the reasons for a huge initial cost. Abt rack type or Riggi System of track was laid between Kallar and Coonoor. It was estimated that the profit from the Railway was 3 percent of the actual capital outlay with a maximum sum of 18 lakhs for 2 years. The government constituted a plan with the capital of Rs.30,75,112. This railway was opened for traffic as under\textsuperscript{59}.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section railway</th>
<th>Date of opening</th>
<th>Miles</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mettupalayam to Coonoor</td>
<td>15th June 1899</td>
<td>16.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coonoor to Fernhill</td>
<td>15th Sept. 1908</td>
<td>10.86</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fernhill to Ootacamund</td>
<td>15th Oct. 1908</td>
<td>1.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>28.96</strong></td>
</tr>
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Again in the Governor General's Council they sanctioned another application of the General rules for working railways under construction. They were not to be used for the public carriage of passengers, animals, or goods to the Nilgiris. But in the same year it was again decided that the Railway line was opened for the public carriage of passengers animals or goods because the Britishers found that it was for the transport and other material communications. In 1899 15th June the traffic was opened to the public. The government enjoyed the capital of Rs.30,75,112 within the period of 5 years.

Details of construction

1. Permanent way - The permanent way consists of flat footed steel rails 50th to the yard laid on the Pyn gadu sleepers. Between kallar and Coonoor (twelve miles). There was also a central rack rail.

2. Ballast - Rack section was ballasted with clear broken granite and the adhesion section with hard gnesis.

3. Fencing - The line was unfenced throughout the rack, but later it was fenced.

4. There are 16 tunnels between Ooty to Mettupalayam. The sharpest tunnel is on 318 feet radius.

Gradients the gradients were built on this railway line.
1. Between Kallar and Coonoor from one in 40 to in 70.
2: Between Kallar and Coonoor from one in 12.28 to one in 29.27.

It worked on the Abt system an improved modification of the Rigi Rack Rail principle. All these Engineering ideas were exploited by the engineers who built the Darjeeling Railway, for a narrow gauge adhesion line with a ruling gradient of 1 in 25 was constructed on the hill slopes.

The method consisted of two steel racks laid in the centre of rails and bolted to the sleepers. The engines were provided with two sets of cylinders whose pinions engaged with two sets of racks. This system ensures smooth and safe climbing over the rugged hilly track. This is the only one of its kind in India and second in the world. The line-less racks upto Ootacamund, was completed at a cost of Rs. 20,00,000.00 under C.F. Sykes and Hales and was opened for the traffic in September 1908. A fleet of a Swiss made steam engines and twenty coaches are operated. Three coaches pushed by one engine from the rear could reach up to 13 kmph on rack section (i.e. Kallar to Coonoor) and 30 kmph on non rack section (i.e. Coonoor to Ooty). The electrification of the line was declined by the Railway Board. The gold boom of Wynaad drew much attention from the authorities. It was proposed that the railway line could be extended to Beypore and Mysore connecting Gudalur which was the centre of
gold reclamation. In 1937 a distinct improvement took place but in 1939 as the railways were endeavouring to improve further, attempts were made to catch up with the area of maintenance and replacement. World war II started at this juncture. Soon after the war India attained Independence and the proposals were not converted into action.

Monetarily the Mountain Railway was never a success. The recurring maintenance of its lines were costly. So the closure of the line was also thought of. But the line rendered the hill more accessible from other parts of South India and the slow train journey through the wooded slopes, precipitous cliffs and gushing mountain streams, has never failed to thrill the passengers then and now.

Postal and Telegram

Postal Service came into action in 1826. The first Post Office of the hill station was inaugurated at Ootacamund in the same year. The place of the Post Office was changed now and then. A room in the public quarter No.1 was appropriated for the Post Office. It finally came to the present building (Head Post Office near the Collectrate) built originally for the commandant's office and other public offices in 1829.

The first Post Office, which was under Military hand, had one writer and two delivery peons. This Post Office delivered 2000 covers per day during the summer and 700 during the off season and earned a
revenue of Rs.68,000/- per year\textsuperscript{65}.

In 1829 two writers and 5 peons were employed. There were no changes in it till 1837 when Colonel Thomas King was appointed as post master drawing a subsidy of Rs.100 per month, with two clerks and four delivery peons\textsuperscript{66}. As the office of the commandant was abolished in 1840, the post office was passed on to Revenue Department. Thus the joint Magistrate of Ootacamund took over the control.

Postage was calculated taking the weight and distance into account. It cost 8 annas (today Paise 50) for a letter weighing up to one tola to reach Madras from Ooty in five days\textsuperscript{67}. Postal stamps were introduced in 1854 and the criteria of distance disappeared. Relay runners were posted in both Coonoor and Gudalur ghats. Horses were employed for quick services.

In 1837 the commandant of the Nilgiris was also appointed Deputy Post Master of Ootacamund. Later the post was given to the Assistant Commandant. He was also appointed as staff officer of Joint Magistrate and Deputy Post Officer. The state of affairs continued until 1843, when the Post department was passed into non-military hands. Then another Postal Office was opened in the stables of the commandant of the Madras Regimental Centre Wellington in 1855\textsuperscript{68}. This served the military station and later on was called Wellington
Barracks Post Office.

The place used as jail was converted into a travellers Bungalow which was later assigned to the post office. Till 1848, it was used for postal purposes but in 1866 the whole of the building passed into the hands of the postal department which continued to occupy it until 1878. Then the Britishers decided to have a combined post and Telegraph Office.

There were four post offices in Nilgiris in 1883. One each at Ooty, Coonoor, Kotagiri and Gudalur.

Parcels, Covers and Stamps

Every parcel was securely packed in a closed cover or case. The name and address of the addressee and sender were clearly written on the cover. Parcels containing valuables were sealed. The public were warned against the use of flimsy covers for articles transmitted by the parcel post. Heavy articles were sent with only paper covering insecurely tied with string. Covering with strong cloth or wax cloth at the edges was recommended. In order to safeguard the contents from pressure, boxes of wood or tin were used. Every parcel was accompanied by a separate paper headed with the address of the parcel. It also contained a declaration of its contents and value under the signature of the senders. The names of the senders were given. A substantial paper was enclosed on the outercover for the address postage stamps (at
the rate of 8 annas per 1.6 - 40 tolas) were stamped on the parcel cover. Receipts were claimed for both Inland and Foreign Parcels. Post masters declaration was enclosed with all the parcels. Compensation was also collected if the parcel case was damaged. Parcels of any doubtful substance like opium and others were forbidden.

The system of value for payable parcels were introduced in 1870. According to that the value of the contents was realized from the addressee. The senders of value payable parcels were responsible for the proper packing and protection of such articles contained in them. The system of value payable parcels were extended to over land parcels booked in London. The overland mail from Ootacamund was despatched every Wednesday. Ordinary mails were cleared daily. The last clearance for Inland mail was at 7.30 a.m. The overland letters were posted from 8 a.m. Registered posts were presented before 7.15 a.m.

There were two kinds of post cards Inland and Foreign. For the foreign post cards ¼ anna adhesive postage label was affixed to it near the embossed stamp in payment of the additional postage. There was a fraudulance of the reuse of stamps detached from covers or parcels to which they were affixed.

Government orders regarding the Postal communication rules and regulations were sent by the Post Master General. All the communications from
the secretariat were sent to Ooty to the address of "Stone House Hill, The Nilgiris". The postal address of the secretariat was not "Ootacamund". Thus a systematic arrangement was made in the postal department for sending the parcels and the letters.

However, there were peons for delivering letters on arrival. The arrival and departure of overland mails were marked by hoisting flags. Arrival of pay was also made known to the residents of Ootacamund by the same method perhaps using different colours of flags. A flag post was erected by private subscriptions in 1856, in front of the public office which was replaced by (a new one at a cost of Rs.354) the government. The post offices functioned in the evenings and nights. The money order facilities managed by Treasury Department.

The mails were conveyed by railways to the Nilgiris after the advent of the railway transport. They came to Ooty via Mysore and Segur pass by mail runners. The road establishment consisted of 26 runners and two mail supervisors. The mails from Mettupalayam were also conveyed by runners. There were 54 runners to cover a distance of 40 kilometres. It took the runners five hours and 10 minutes to cover the travel uphill and four hours and thirty minutes down hill.

The European residents of the Nilgiris were very keen in the able functioning of the post offices for it was an important link with their mother countries.
There were occasions of removal of 'tapal' peons for misconduct. The abolition of runners system and the introduction of Tongas in 1878 ensured quick service. The postal services literally crossed the mountain barriers.

**Telegraph**

Introduction of Telegraph was another important achievement of the Britishers under their administration of communication. The telegraph services to Madras state came into existence in the year 1855.

The Nilgiris in 19th Century was little known to the outside world. In 1853 Ooty was connected to Bangalore by a telegraph line. Lord Dalhousie inaugurated the Ooty Telegraph office on 1 April 1855. He received the first message through this line in the same year. The telegraphic office was opened on May 4, 1855. The rates were Rs.1-0-0 for 6 words with in India and Rs.1-8-0 for words to Burma and Ceylon. The telegraphic line from Ooty to Bangalore was established through Srirangapattanam, Mysore, Gundalpet, and Sigur. After his visit to Nilgiris Dalhousie compelled, the authorities to provide a telegraph line from Ootacamund and Kotagiri. Memorandum was received by Lord Dalhouse for extention of the line to Coonoor, Coimbatore and Palghat. By the end of the year 1855 Ootacamund was connected with calicut.
The Ooty Coonoor telegraph line was inaugurated during 1858-59. The permanent line from Ooty to Madras via Mettupalayam was constructed in 1871. Usually the bamboos were erected as light poles and later it was replaced into teak poles. The first woman telegraph master in Ooty in 1885 was a memorable event in the history of telegraph in the Nilgiris.

In 1887 the Meteorological Department was established at Ooty. It was allowed to send weather telegrams. It was very much useful to the Governors for their visit to this station. In 1927 after the power projects came into work successfully, the Electrification of Ooty telegraph office was done. In 1953, Teleprinter system came to Ooty which is the only station connected to Madras by Teleprinter.

In the Madras state, the Ootacamund Telegraph office is the oldest. Thanks to Lord Dalhousie for whose use this line was first laid down. In 1883 the line was connected with four circuits (viz) Madras, Coonoor, Lovedale and Devala with the main office. In 1932 Bandot system was installed.

Now the telegraph office has been provided with modern high speed telecom system like store and Forward Telegraph System, Store and Forward Gentex System, point to point Teleprinter circuits to Madras, Coimbatore, Gudalur, Wellington and Aravankadu besides Morse circuits to stations in Nilgiris district and
public call offices on subscriber trunk dialling and trunk call system.

**Telegraph Service**

Departmental Telegraph officers were operated by Telegraph Masters and Signallers. The entire signalling staff were, Europeans or Anglo Indians during the 19th Century. Signallers were trained and tested in Lawrence Asylum at Ooty for their appointments at Sanawar and also at Ooty.

The telegraph linemen were controlled by the Telegraph Master (T.M.). The Deputy Telegraph Masters of Ooty Exchange were incharge of the telephone system.

In April 1885 the telephone exchange was connected with the telegraph office and messages to and from stone house were transmitted by telephone. The system was worked under the Telegram subscription rules and each department using it, keeps a deposit account with the telegraph Master.

In the early stages, the Nilgiris was connected with the Indian Telegraphic system via Mysore on the one side and via Mettupalayam on the other. The government line was joined in the later route to those of the Madras Railway Company at Mettupalayam. But now all wires leading out of the district are connected to the Indian Telgraphic system by two different routes. One is the Bangalore route and the
other the Coimbatore route.

During the British period the district Postal and Telegraph department was managed by the Imperial postal and telegraph department. It worked generally satisfactorily. The village postal system introduced during the preceding year facilitated to some extent communication with the rural parts, but the further extension of the system had been postponed for want of village officers who could be appointed as rural post masters. The system however would be extended, when the new settlement has been introduced and the village establishments have been revised.

Imperial Telegraph was set up in two places follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Places</th>
<th>Opened in the year</th>
<th>No. of the message and despatched</th>
<th>Reasons for which opened</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ootacamund 28.10.1881</td>
<td>354</td>
<td>Lawrence</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ootacamund 12.01.1882</td>
<td>979</td>
<td>Asylum</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lovedale</td>
<td></td>
<td>under guarantee</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Devala</td>
<td></td>
<td>from</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coonoor</td>
<td></td>
<td>Madras</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Telephone

The Nilgiris district was connected by a net work of post and telegraph offices and telephone connections. Almost all parts of the district are connected by telephone. The first telephone exchange
at Madras was installed in 1882 and a Magneto board and 10 telephones were working for the government.

The exchange at Ooty was working during the summer season and all the telephones were disconnected during inclement weather in winter. The exchange was housed in stone house belonging to government. Due to its cold climate the government officers were not willing to come to the hill station. The exchange was also closed.

When telephone service was expanded phonogram service was made and it was available to subscriber who asked for the facility. The first telephone office at Ooty was provided with a 50 line RAX. The effort taken by the Britishers for the improvement of the communication system in Nilgiris was very much beneficial to the public ever since its inception.
References

3. Letter from the Secretary to the Collector of Coimbatore dated April 8, 1819.
5. Proceeding of the Board of Revenue, 6th June 1874.
6. The Nilgiris district communicates with the neighbouring provinces by means of six passes of ghats, the roads in which have been cut and kept in repair at the public expenses.
18. Lt.Law was the builder of Law's Ghat in Kodaikanal.
25. Ibid, P.84.
37. Proceedings of Board of Revenue, No.4819, 17th July, 1874.
38. **Proceedings of Board of Revenue**, No.4630, 16th July, 1874.


42. **Proceedings of Board of Revenue**, No.756, dated 1st April, 1874.


45. Second class roads, The roads from Coonoor to Kotagiri, Melur, Kolacobai, Kateri were the Second class roads that were maintained by the erstwhile District Board in Coonoor Taluk.


49. **Proceedings of Board of Revenue**, No.1834, 8th March, 1874.


64. There is no record as to where the office originally was but according to Sir Frederick Price, it might have been housed in the Government Bungalow and shifted to various places.
65. Letter from the government to the Collector of Malabar dated Sept.27, 1834.
68. Appraisal of the post Offices in the Nilgiri District, Office of the Senior Superintendent

70. **Proceedings of Board of Revenue**, No.2136, Nov.21, 1879.


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