INTRODUCTION

Roads as channels of travel, trade and administration have played a distinctive role as the blood stream of civilization and progress. They have been aptly compared to the veins and arteries in the human body. Through them the life-blood of economy flows; they are the key to the development of economy and catalysts in the transformation of an economy from poverty to prosperity. Economic development is the technological transformation of the economy, not only in skill and labour but also in space and location, and roads are the essential elements in this whole transformation.¹ As Wilfred Owen observes:

Transport is a necessary ingredient of nearly every aspect of economic and social development. It plays a key role in getting land into production, in marketing agricultural commodities, and in making forest and mineral wealth accessible. It is a significant factor in the development of industry in the expansion of trade, in the conduct of health and education programs, and in the exchange of ideas².

Not only this but for the rural reconstruction and not to miss for the defense of the nation they are a necessity. Solutions of many problems depend on the provisions of good roads. They are the symbol of a country’s overall progress. A well know American thinker comments:

If you wish to know whether society is stagnant you may learn something by going into the universities and libraries, something also by the work that is being done on cathedrals and churches, but quite as much by looking at the roads. For of there is any motion in the society “the Road” which is the symbol of motion will indicate the fact. When there is activity and enlargement or a liberalizing

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spirit of any kind, then there is intercourse and travel, and this requires roads. So, if there is any kind of advancement going on, if new ideas and new hopes are rising, then you will see it by the road that are building. Nothing makes an inroad without making a road. All creative action, whether in government, industry, thought or religion, creates roads.  

Roads connect settlements and serve as a line of communication between them. Generally man does not travel for merely travel sake, particularly when means are limited. Even in civilizations earliest days, however, travel was perquisite of trade.  

An examination of the road network of a country during a given period illuminates the pattern, aims, and character of the state governing the country. So, they play an important part in the political life of a nation. Moreover road building and road management on a large scale would not have been possible without a strong and centralized government. 

Apart from human endeavour, geography plays the most important part in determining roads and routes of a country, but their proper development is entirely in the hands of man. Plains invite movement, while mountains and sometimes rivers, offer impediments to it. On the plains, routes usually follow watercourses, where settlements have already been denser; thus making, the plains an important commercially, administratively and politically.  

The Geography of India points to her natural isolation by giving high mountains in the North and deep sea in the south, as guardians of the frontiers. Nature, it seems, meant her to remain isolated from other

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centers of human activity. But this isolation was never maintained, as movement of political and commercial kind existed between India and other countries. Man began to follow the lines of least resistance, contributing to the establishment of routes\(^7\), on which pack animal was the only access to many areas. Thugs and Pindaris infested roads which ever existed. \(^8\) This establishment and flourishment of civilization took place alongside the rivers and they remained important till the onset of the British Empire in North India.

Punjab, which is formed by two words ‘Punj’ and ‘ab’ in itself means ‘five’ and ‘waters’, meaning the ‘land of five rivers’, lies towards the North Western part of India. Being the most fertile region from centuries due to its flowing rivers (i.e. Satluj, Beas, Ravi, Chenab, Jhelum), its richness has been an attraction for the various invaders, who kept on struggling to capture it. The earliest civilization, of India and the world, i.e. the Harappan civilization also flourished in this area along the banks of river Indus [during that time there were seven rivers flowing through it, including river Indus and Saraswati]. So, no doubt Punjab due to its economic and strategic importance, [being a boundary state] had to have a very reliable, active, smooth transportation and communication system. It was believed that who ever had Punjab under his control could rule India for a longer period, basically due to its economic gains.

This dissertation is an attempt to throw a light on the various developments that took place from time to time, slowly but surely on transportation and communication side in the Punjab. Why was the development necessary? What were the steps taken by the central as well as state government for further construction, and maintenance? How much money was spent? What was its impact on the overall


structure of society? Starting from the earliest period till 1980 an attempt has been made to leave no gaps and give maximum information.

The first chapter named “The Transportation and Communication System Before 1947”, starts with the progress of roads and river system from the Harappan ages and proceeding through the Vedic ages leads on to the Persians, Greeks, Mauryan’s, Guptas, on to the Muslims and reaches the Mughal ages. In the same way, from one age to another the communication has been taken up. After this the progress done during Maharaja Ranjit Singh’s era has been dealt with proceeding to the British Empire. In which the reasons for the construction; the administrative set up of Punjab and Public Works Department; the work done in Punjab by officers; classification of roads; names of roads constructed with its impact on Punjab is covered.

The second chapter entitled “The Road Transportation in the Punjab 1947-1980” starts with the administrative set up of province in 1947 to 1980 discussing the number of divisions, districts, tehsils in the province. Then goes on to the position and classification of roads on the eve of partition after which the road development policy from 1961 to 1981 along with financial history, increase in road mileage, transport facilities, transport corporation with year to year data’s has been taken up.

The third chapter “Railways and Other Transportation” has been divided into three parts. The first part deals with the progress of railways from the British period to 1980. Taking up reasons for construction moving on to employment of private companies for the construction, rising of funds and various railway lines constructed with year and length till 1947 is given. Then their progress from 1947 to 1980 has been taken up. The second part deals with the waterways starting from British period to 1980, which shows a heavy decline on their use for transportation purpose and use for electricity and irrigation only. The
third part deals with the airways whose progress was also slow to some extent. As the airplanes were more in use for military purpose than public purpose.

The fourth chapter "The Post and Telegraphy System" starts with the introduction of postal and telegraphy system in India during the British period going on to the management from time to time under various departments. Then the focus shifts to Punjab where the working, the total number of post offices, various works performed by them from time to time; various postal and telegraphy lines, various holidays allotted to the employees is covered, after this the postal services in erstwhile Punjab upto 1965-66 is taken up, then the growth of postal services in erstwhile Punjab and the number of telegraphy offices, telephone exchanges offices along with Personal call offices has been discussed.

The fifth chapter "Impact Of The Transportation and Communication System" gives the impact of the growth of transportation and communication system on the socio-political, economical, cultural etc. life of the people as well as the state.

In the end work has been summarized in the "Conclusion".