CHAPTER VII

IMPACT

The road transport system that developed through centuries had left behind an indelible imprint in the minds of the people. It provided various facilities to develop their mental and physical ability by means of sending them to the workspot, educational institutions, trading centers not only to boost their economic profile but to enrich their social behavior and political attitude. As such the impact of road transport is graphically narrated in the ensuing pages.

ECONOMIC IMPACT

Road transport plays a significant role in the overall development of a nation. As it centered on the economic activities of production, distribution and consumption it is of much importance not only to bring the raw materials and the labourers to the industrial centers and workspot but to distribute the finished products to different markets where people can buy and sell their goods and services.\(^1\) As a result of an increase in the efficiency and sufficiency of transport facilities, it facilitates the flow of goods from one place to another quickly.\(^2\) Moreover, from the growth of different industries in different parts of the world, it is realized that the growth of transport enables exchange and promotes competition. At every stage in this complex situation of production process, the value of materials has been either enhanced or reduced or even balanced by means of quick transportation.\(^3\)

However, breakdowns or interruptions in transportation due to natural calamities or political evolution or otherwise affect production schedules and

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closure of industries too. Sometimes, the existence of efficient means of transportation activates speedy movements of labourers in the production centers on time. Prior to the industrial revolution, producers of goods especially small scale as well as cottage industries were restricted in their endeavors and profit earning is governed by the efficiency of transportation. That is, the transportation of perishable commodities at suitable markets during festival seasons may fetch profit. However, if such articles are not brought to the market within the stipulated time there may incur loss too. Therefore, traders preferred speedy as well as safe means of transportation. From this it is inferred that each producer is a general craftsman rather than a specialist.

Hence, once products have been manufactured they must be conveyed to wholesale distribution points by boat, railways or truck. Here, they are sold and transported to retailers and eventually to consumers. It is realized that at each stage, the producer, the wholesaler and the retailer seek the most efficient means of transport because their profits greatly depend on the kinds of market they can reach. At the same time, the consumer also looks to transportation facilities to bring to him both the necessities and luxuries of life. In day to day trade activities, even if goods are brought to the market within the specific time, the traders can divert the articles to other market, whenever the prices varied from one market to another. Usually, a trader prefers to send the articles to other markets expecting higher profit if prices are low in a market where the goods are already sent. To attain these objectives of speedy transport facility is a must.

The Government of Tamil Nadu also paid special attention to promote the conveyance of passengers as well as facilitate trade by means of arranging suitable transport facilities by all means. This could be evidenced from the fact that special facility is provided to the fish vendors to bring fish to the markets through racked buses in Kanyakumari District.\(^9\) Though it is not liked by the co-passengers on board, it is a boost to the fishing community which enables them to bring fish to the nearby markets quickly and to eke out a living. Even today, such facility is available mostly in the coastal villages in Kanyakumari District. It helped the people residing in the urban areas to buy fresh fish like their counter parts residing in coastal areas.

A Decade back, members of the fishermen community fought with the government to provide them with the special type of buses with racks to transport their vessels containing fishes from the coastal areas to nearby towns and cities. The transport department also provided such buses in areas having sizable fisherfolk population. In the Kanyakumari District such buses were introduced to connect Manakudy with Nagercoil, Kanyakumari with Nagercoil and Rajakkamangalam, Colachel, Thoothoor and other coastal areas connecting with the neighbouring urban places. Though in the initial stages the fisherfolk were enthusiastic in using such buses,\(^10\) now they have lost the importance as special buses with racks. At present, these buses are giving unnecessary disturbances to the commuters, because of the reduction in the number of seats. Nowadays, quick transportation facility greatly helped the traders to bring flowers and vegetables from Bangalore to Kanyakumari similar to fish from Kerala and Tutucorin to Kanyakumari easily depending on the availability and demand. Moreover, efficient transport helps the labourers and government servants to reach their destination and return to their residence easily. It is a noteworthy fact to state that, employees travel more than 200 kilometers easily.

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10 Ajantha Subramanian, *op.cit.*, pp.3-5.
As a result, they can return to their homes daily and stay with their family members in their native place which helps them to avoid not only unnecessary expenditure but helping to protect their health.\textsuperscript{11}

Human beings have demands, both personal and collective, that can be satisfied only by transportation services. First, there are the problems of “getting to work”. In an agrarian society (that is, preindustrial), the farmer lived at his place of work, is only concern with transportation occurred when he had a surplus to sell at a nearby market. In like manner, the shopkeeper as well as the craftsman usually lived at his place of business and hence were not confronted with the problem of finding transportation to work. Even in many early industrial towns where the number of workers was not large, enough houses were built within walking distance of the mill or mines or that one was too spent more than a few minutes walk from his place of employment.\textsuperscript{12}

However, in certain locations in the 19\textsuperscript{th} century and almost everywhere in the 20\textsuperscript{th} century, this situation was greatly changed. The developed countries have mainly concerned themselves with urban transport and have been able to look at it not as business proposition but as a means to wean away people from personalized modes. Farmers numerically decreased, and they looked increasingly to roads and railways to bring them seed, tools and fertilizers and to carry away their produce. But, the problem of getting to work became complicated with the growth of giant industrial, commercial and financial centers.\textsuperscript{13} As soon as the numerous advantages of the factory system were realised, it became obvious that the hundreds and thousands of employees needed could not physically live in the buildings in which they worked or even

within walking distance. The result was the appearance of suburban, metropolitan centers and finally megalopolitan areas, in which the demand for private and public transportation was constantly present and continuously more difficult to satisfy.  

With the introduction of farmer’s market (locally known as Ulavar Chanthai) in most of the towns and cities of Tamil Nadu the farmers are benefited to a great extent. They are relieved of middlemen who earn a profit by their mediation between the farmer’s and vendors who sell the farm products. The opening of the farmers markets is a boon to the farmers who can sell their products directly to the consumers. All the farmer members of this market are provided with an identity card by the government. With this the farmers can transport their products from the field to the market free of cost in the state transport buses. Further, transport is a public utility service that creates time and place utilities. It makes commodities available for consumption at the time when they are most needed.  

A commodity, which has no use or only a little utility at the place where it has been produced, must be transported to the place where it has demand. Because of transport services, the productivity of agricultural lands that has been exhausted on account of long and unwise uses has increased through the application of improved manures and fertilizers.

Industries depend upon transport and transport creates new industries. Industrial development would not have taken place if there had been no transport. Transport industries have been set up in all the countries of the world to move huge quantities of goods as well as millions of passengers.

SOCIAL IMPACT

Transport plays its dominant role not only in the economic sphere but also in the social sphere where it has considerably influenced the life of the people. It helps in securing raw materials and finished products in large quantities and varieties. It has also raised the standard of living of the world. As a result, they find an easy solution to their mundane and monotonous life, ease their tension and make their life happy. It enlarges their relationship which helps to arrange matrimonial alliances. It is envisaged that passenger transportation is an important part of the sociological problems of society. 17

Mobility or the lack of it affects social groups, the character and structures of neighborhoods and regions. It is understood from one’s long travel experience that the modern man is more prone to mobility in the pursuit of places, pleasures, pilgrims and profession. The improvement in transport has profound social consequences. The workers seeking homes some distance away from the noise and dirt of mills, cement factories, fertilizers and chemical factories and other factories frequently settled in outlying areas. 18 The process of outward movement and settlement is still a continuous process which enables them to settle down in a healthy environment. Before the introduction of 108 ambulance service, the road transport is the only means of transport used by people of the low income group to admit their diseased people to the hospital situated in the nearby and distant areas. Consequently, transports help the people to save their lives.

In public transport system, there is ample room for social intercourse among people of different states. Communal hatred and differences among the commuters based on caste, religion and economic status do not find a place.

Thus public transport provides a chance to establish an egalitarian society.\textsuperscript{19} Moreover, in modern times even uneducated people do not ask the person sitting besides him (in the bus), his caste or religion. In the past, people particularly the so called caste Hindus never hesitated to ask about the caste, community and religion of others. To a great extent, public transport system has attempted to minimize such evil practices.\textsuperscript{20} People belonging to the lower strata have got opportunities to mingle freely with the men of higher strata. India in general and Tamil Nadu in particular have a large number of social and religious ceremonies.

Similarly, during festival occasions like Deepavali, Pongal, Christmas, New Year and Ramzan families may long for getting together. The public transport system helps the people to go to their native places to enjoy the festivals and entertainments connected with all their family members. Not only transport buses but railways, airlines cater to the needy people to join their families at remote places. In fact, the globe has shrunk, thanks to the public transport system. In the Kanyakumari District special buses were put on road during annual festivals in certain temples, churches and mosques. In Suchindram, a semi urban area in the southern most part of the district has annual festivals celebrated in the Tamil month of \textit{Marghili} (December-January) and \textit{Vaikasi} (May-June). During that festival lasting for ten days, the Kanyakumari State Transport Department plies special buses in the different routes connecting Suchindram.

Likewise, another festival in the district is that of Mandaikadu considered to be the Sabarimalai of women devotees. Women in large numbers attend the festival not only from the Kanyakumari District but also from Kerala. The transport department used to ply special buses from various parts

\textsuperscript{19} Ramanathan, R., \textit{Indian Transport Towards the New Millennium Performance, Analysis and Policy}, New Delhi, 2004, p. 34.
\textsuperscript{20}“Faster Pace of Vehicular Growth and more Transport Facilities”, \textit{Tamil Arasu}, Vol.III, No.13, Madras, May 1973, p. 34.
of Kanyakumari District as well as Trivandrum, the capital of Kerala. The most important Christian festival is that of the Roman Catholic St. Xavier’s Church at Kottar during the month of November. This ten day festival is attended by the people of this district as well as from various districts of Kerala. The transport department takes necessary steps to ply special buses from various places of the district and Kerala. For these festivals, besides buses belonging to the transport department, omnibuses and tourist carriages helped the people of Kerala to attend. Besides these important festivals, on new moon day in the month of Masi (February - March) special buses are plying to Kanyakumari. Thus it can be seen that the transport department has a cultural impact in the social and religious life of the people of this district.

Similarly, during festival occasion undertaking pilgrimage to religious centers commonly practiced by people of all religious sets especially the Hindus, the Christians and Muslims.\textsuperscript{21} The growth of bus transport greatly motivated the pilgrims to reach the destination within the stipulated time to offer worship. Moreover, quick road transport facility minimized the expenditure of the economically depressed communities who are not offered to go by airways. It also encourages the tourist to visit many of the tourist spots and hill stations situated in far places and spend their leisure time happily which helped them to forget the difficulties and detractions in life. The quick transport facility encourages the students to peruse the studies in reputed educational institutions situated at a distance. It helped to equip their skill and knowledge.

During natural calamities especially flood, earthquake, drought, epidemic the services of road transport are utilized to shift quickly the affected people to a safe place which enable them to save their life and property. Separate seat arrangements are provided to the physically handicapped.

persons and the free bus pass extended to the visually impaired persons greatly enhanced a prestige of the transport department. These measures motivated such people to earn not only an honest living but keeping them on a par with the abled people and prevent them from isolation. The transport system helps all the people to sit together without caring for their caste, creed and economic status which in one sense expanded the horizon of unity in the midst of diversity.

**POLITICAL IMPACT**

In the political sphere, the road transport did meritorious service. For instance, the political leaders from the lower cadre to the higher-ups easily moved from one place to another for political propaganda. Most of the leaders utilise the available transport facility to take their party members to a particular destination where public political meetings attended by eminent political leaders are held. Consequently, people from all walks of life got opportunity to listen to the speeches of eminent political leaders enabled them to update their political knowledge, to understand the day to day political development, the introduction of welfare measures by the ruling as well as opposition parties.

The transport department has a large number of employees both white caller official staff and the workers including drivers, conductors and mechanical staff. In their capacity as workers they have their own association. Each political party moves the labourers to form trade unions affiliated to the political party concerned. Though there may be many trade unions affiliated to different political ideals, only a couple of associations or unions are recognized on the basis of their strength. As far as the State Transport Department is concerned at present the trade unions affiliated to the Draivida Munata Kazhalagam, Anna Draivida Munata Kazhalagam and Indian National Trade Union Congress, All India Trade Union Congress are the recognised ones.

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They play an important role during times of elections spending monetary and physical support to the respective political parties.

Moreover, transport facilitates ease political propaganda. Party members are able to distribute the pamphlets, bit notices and other booklets stating either the contributions or the failure of the party in power by the ruling and opposition party members. Simple road transport serves as the cheapest medium of communication and propaganda. In actual life, we come to know that some of the ideologies and achievements of political parties are pasted in the body of the buses in the form of wall notice. One could notice such activities in the day to day life. The road transport plays a vital role in transporting the people to attend to the grand political conferences and other conferences such as World Tamil Conference held at different parts of the state free of cost. It motivates the listeners and delegates to study the political philosophy of the parties in general and update their knowledge in language, culture and various other spheres of life in particular.

The need for adequate and efficient transport system for promoting economic development is well known. While considering the creation of new transport facility in backward regions however, it must be borne in mind that transport is only one of the essential elements for development of the region and it is not necessary that capital intensive transport projects will by themselves bring about economic development. There has also been persistent demand for subsidising transport operations in backward and remote areas on the plea that the traffic and the low level of income would not generate the kind of demand which could bear the cost of providing transport services. While the responsibility of ensuring efficient operation of transport services in these regions is that the state, it does not necessarily mean that the state should be direct provider of these services. Whether it relates to providing transport services in the backward area or in isolated and hilly region, the state could involve private operators and award routes on the basis of least subsidy, so that benefits are targeted and costs become apparent.
An efficient transport system is a pre-requisite for sustained economic development. It is not only the key infrastructural input for the growth process but also plays a significant role in promoting national integration, which is particularly important in a large country like India. The road transport system also plays an important role of promoting the development of the backward regions and integrating them with the mainstream economy by opening them to trade and investment.