Evolution of Modern Communication System in Travancore; Historical Analysis

ANCY ANGEL. A. M

Abstract:- The communication system essayed an important role in bringing the revolutionary changes in the life of the common people. From the sign language of the ancient time to the current revolution in communications, mankind has covered a journey of thousand years. Travancore, a small Princely state in British India had developed its own postal system much before the postal reforms of the world. It is known as called *Anchal* system. Along with introduction of Telegram, Travancore witnessed tremendous revolution in the field of communication.

I. INTRODUCTION

No other system has contributed so significantly as letters in the development of human civilization. Not only in India, but all over the world, the postal services are accepted as the largest communication system. The history of the development of postal services is very interesting. Along with the existence of human beings the development of the send messages by using signals one way or the other, kept on improving with the passage of time, they pictures their thoughts and sometimes sent messages in the form of signs through the sound of drums. Indian postal system progressed and developed in various time period. Sign scripts belonging to the Indus valley civilization, which is regarded as one of the most developed civilizations of the world, have also been found which shows that messages existed the also. Also the development of communication reached its zenith during the time of British.

➢ *Evolution of Postal System in Travancore*

In Kerala, the state of Travancore had its own postal service, known as *Anchal* department and issued its own stamps. The *Sirkar Anchal* is one of the oldest institutions in the country. It was established much before the introduction of postal communication by the Indian postal department. Shungoonny Menon in his 'History of Travancore' says that, in 959 M.E (1784) His Highness Rama Varma after his return from Rameshwaram and improved the *Anchal* and established it on better principles. This was long before the days of Sir Rowland Hill's penny- postage and the reform of the postal system of the world which he achieved. He introduced penny- postage only in 10th January 1840.

An *Anchal* has to carry a stipulated quantity of articles, as to cover a specific distance and then have led to entrust the same to another '*Anchal'*. Some type of a relay arrangement would continue till the article had reached the destination.

The *Anchal* who delivered article to the addressee was known as *'Anchal* man' and the other runners in the system were called '*Anchal'*. It is said that the name *'Anchal'* was derived from the word 'angel', synonym for messenger.The regular *Anchal* services extended up to Cherthala (from Trivandrum) and beyond as early as 1765. In the beginning, the important functions of Travancore *Anchal* services were confined to carry, service envelop from muffusil station, carry vegetables for the use of the palace, flowers to the principal pagoda of the capital, Sri Padmanabhaswamy Temple, etc.

Real transformation in the field of communication starts with the intervention of British. In 1892 the Madras government suggested the amalgamation of the *Anchal* with the British postal system. In1903- 04, the total number of *Anchal* offices were 150 and the number of the letter boxes 179. The total number of private and official covers posted during the year was 928 miles. The data shows, how postal system reached into the nook and corner of the Travancore. The rates in the *Anchal* department are generally lower than those of the British Indian post. On April 1951, the *Anchal* postal system was amalgamated to the nearby post offices or redesigned as post offices in the same location.

Historically, only very few institutions have ever come closer to human life as the post offices.

➢ *Evolution of Telegraph Services in Travancore*

The introduction of telegraph services revolutionized entire realm of modern communication system. In 1863, the Government of India revolved Cochin with Tuticorin through the Travancore territory by telegraphic communication and the Travancore Government readily permitted the line to pass through Travancore in their own hands equally with that through their own territories. In the course of a year, the line was ready as far as Trivandrum and telegraph office were opened first at Alleppy then at Quilon and lastly at Trivandrum. According to the Census of 1971, 85 villages had been provided with telegraph offices and the number telegraph offices were also 35. But, in 1972 when the Techno- Economic Survey of Malappuram district was conducted, the number increased to 44 which were spread out in 44 villages.

The development in the field of communication accelerated the growth of Telegraph services in the state. These services connected common people to the world of communication. The role of British was inevitable in this.

➢ *Impact of Modern Communication in Travancore*

Both the postal system and telegraph has contributed significantly towards cultural exchange, growth in business and domestic economy and social unification in a vast and diverse country like India. It has played a unique role in the socio- economic development of the country by providing one of the most effective and easy mode of communication to the general public. Even in this age of internet, the importance of words filled with emotions written on a post and has not diminished. In the case of Travancore both post and telegraph services revolutionized socio- economic and political life of the people.

Socially, prior to the post and telegraph, it took days, weeks, and even months for messages to be sent from one location to another. With the coming of Telegraph messages could be sent in mere minutes and the world thus became much smaller. This is the most important impact of post and telegraph to the social world. Apart from this, Travancore was a state run by the caste rules and regulations. There were a social hierarchy in the state and the lower caste people where the social evils such as unapproachability and unseeability were in existence. These communication reforms influenced the existing society by reducing caste rigidities. If the Postman may be a person belonged to lower or upper caste, people never refused to accept letters and parcels from them and vice versa. This resulted in the weakening of the existing social order.

Politically, post and telegraph services had contributed a number of services for the political unity of the country during the period of Indian national movement. It served as a medium of spreading messages of national leaders like Nehru, Gandhi...etc, which influenced the whole people and tried to arouse a feeling of national consciousness among the people irrespective of caste, class, creed and religion.

Economically, the telegraph freed communication from the constraints of space and time and revolutionized global economy and society. In Travancore, both these services enhanced trade and other business activities. It accelerated the growth and development of economic activities. Apart from this, postal services provided certain value added services and introduce certain reforms for creating stability in the state. The distance between places began to shrank and it resulted in the development of economic transaction between countries. It reduced the gap between urban and rural. Moreover, this resulted in the economic growth and development of Travancore.

II. CONCLUSION

The word 'communication' means 'to share'; it is the activity of conveying information through the exchange of thoughts, messages, writing, ideas…etc. In this era of communication revolution the contributions of post and telegraph are noteworthy. In general, both these services work together for reducing the communication gap between people, states, and even countries. Compared to other departments, post and telegraph department have the maximum goodwill. One of the main reasons for this is that, it works toward connecting people.

In Travancore, we had the prestigious *Anchal* system; it had a unique and enviable position among the postal services of different states of Indian Union. As a native state with a majority of common people, the introduction of post and telegraph services transformed their life and so they relied upon it. To sum up, until and unless we are sincere to the age old system, which for a pretty long time had been a life line of generations, the system may sometimes get into the extinction in near future. It will be absolutely injustice that, the present day society does to our future generation. Post and telegraph system can really boast of a prosperous future as it had in the past, if it is properly equipped according to the changing situation.

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