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## Transport, Communication and Trade in India: Objectives, Infrastructure: Definition and Its Role in Area Development, Importance of Transport, Rail Transport

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- Transport, communication and trade are important services that facilitate agriculture and industry to grow to their fullest potential. Transport carries the people and goods from one place to another. It helps both the production, distribution as well as consumption processes. Communication is the process of receiving and sending messages between two persons or agencies located at different places. Radio and Television are the means of mass-communication which provide information, news, and entertainment to the people spread over vast distances.
- Telephone and telegraph services bring the people closer to one another. Their contribution in promoting business and trade is incalculable. Trade involves exchange of goods among people living in different regions or countries of the world. It plays a vital role in accelerating the progress of agriculture and industry of a country.

### Objectives

The major objectives of this chapter are:

- To define the term infrastructure
- To explain the role of infrastructure in the development of an area
- To establish relationship between needs and mode of transport system
- To identify the pattern and networks of important roads, railways, airways, and water ways
- To describe the role of different modern means of communications
- To appreciate the role of transport and communication changing the way of life in rural and urban areas
- To explain the significance of trade in day to day life, inter-regional dependence, and national integration

### Infrastructure: Definition and Its Role in Area Development

- According to the World Book Dictionary the term infrastructure denotes the essential elements forming the basis of a system or a structure. Infrastructure covers the resources which strengthen the basis of the economy of a country. Better infrastructural services including transportation (railways, roads, ports, civil aviation etc.) , communication (telecommunication and post) , and electricity transmission and distribution boost the growth of a nation.
- Infrastructural resources always become key elements during preparation of a plan for area development. Quality infrastructure, covering the services of transportation, electricity

transmission and distribution, communication, water supply and sanitation, and solid waste management is one of the most important necessities for unleashing high and sustained growth and alleviating poverty, particularly in the backward state.

- By providing these infrastructural services an undeveloped or underdeveloped area can be developed. An area planner always keeps in mind appropriateness and balance between different services of infrastructure in an area.

## Importance of Transport

- India is a vast country. A dense and efficient network of transport is essential to promote social cohesion, accelerate economic prosperity, and ensure security and territorial integrity.
- Transport consists of three different modes - land, water, and air. Each one of them has some advantages and disadvantages. They all compete with one another. More importantly they complement each other and, in the process, constitutes a single integrated network.
- While air transport is of recent origin, the other two have been as old as the nomadic man himself. The land transport comprises road and rail transport. Of the two, the rail transport is relatively new. It is highly useful for carrying heavy goods over long distances at affordable costs. It is most convenient and cost effective for long distance passengers. The road transport on the other hand is very handy and convenient to carry goods and passenger over relatively short distances. Goods can be transported and handed over to a customer at his doorstep safely and at a reasonable cost.
- Water transport for passengers is now no more attractive, but it is an ideal means of transport to carry heavy and bulky goods along navigable rivers and across the oceans of the world. By far this is the most inexpensive means of transport despite being rather slow.
- Air transport has become tremendously popular for people who are called upon to visit urgently various parts of the world at a very short notice. Despite high fares, it is indeed very economic as it saves both time and energy. It is now also used for carrying perishable goods and precious cargo from one part of the world to another. Recently due to introduction of various private airlines, fares have been reduced significantly both at domestic and international level.
- Transport system links areas of production with those of consumption. It facilitates the movement of goods, services, and people at local, regional, national, and international levels.

## Rail Transport

- Indian railway network is the fourth largest in the world after Russia, the U. S. A. , and Canada. In a vast country like India, it has brought the people of the farthest corners of the country closer to one another. Railways are ideal for carrying goods and people over long distances. It employs the largest number of persons among the Central Government departments.
- The first train steamed off in the country in 1853 from Mumbai to Thana, covering a distance of 34 km. During these years, Indian railways have grown into a vast network. The following table may give you an idea about the growth of the railway system during the post-independence era.

### *Operations of Indian Railways*

	1950 - 51	2003 - 04

Electrified Route in thousand km.	0.4	17.5
Total Route length in thousand km.	53.6	63.2
Originating Traffic in million tonnes	93.0	557.3
Total Goods Traffic in Billion Tonne – Km * *	44.1	381.2
Passengers Originating in Millions	1284.0	5123.0
Passenger- Km + in Billions	66.5	541.2
<i>Operations of Indian Railways</i>		

Source: India 2006, A Reference Annual, P-805 - 810

\* 1000 million = 1 billion (1 million = 1,000, 000.00)

\*\* 1 tonne km = when 1 tonne of goods is carried over one km.

+ 1 passenger-km = when one passenger travels one km.

- The above table gives us an idea of quantitative progress made by the railways over 50 years. In the first place the total route length has increased very slightly. However, nearly 28% of its route length has been electrified. It means over this track the traffic is far cleaner and faster. It also means considerable saving in transporting charges of coal which the railways consumed for their own running. To that extent the railway wagons are now free to carry commercial goods of its clients.
- Similarly, the route length has increased only marginally but the passenger-km traffic has increased more than eight times. Even the goods traffic in terms of tonne-km has increased by over ten times. This also speaks of qualitative increase in the efficiency of the railways. This has become possible by electrification of part of the route and dieselisation of the track. The number of steam or coal engines had come down to mere 45 by 2003 - 04 from 8120 in 1950 - 51. Now there are 4769 diesel engines as compared to mere 17 in 1950 - 51. Similarly, electric locomotives have increased from 72 to 3003 by 2003 - 04.



- As seen earlier, the new railway lines have been added only marginally. However, there has been considerable increase in running track. In 1950 - 51 it was about 59,000 km. By 2003 - 04 it rose to nearly 84,000 km. It means considerable portions, particularly the busy ones have been converted from single to double and in some cases even triple tracks. This has enabled railways to run more trains, both goods and passengers. The railways have undertaken to convert metre gauge railway tracks into broad-gauge (1.68 metres) enhancing the capacity of railways to carry more goods and more passengers with an increased speed. By strengthening trunk route railway tracks, Indian Railways run several fast trains. Earlier there were passenger and express or mail trains, the only two categories. Now there are Super-fast Expresses, Rajdhani Expresses, and

Shatabdi (the fastest) Expresses running between busy terminals. Now metro rail is a new concept which provide faster transport facility in metro cities. Delhi is the first ones, where it is running successfully.

- Indian railways have taken several measures to improve their efficiency and usefulness to the public:
  - Considerable increase in railway running track.
  - Increase in electrification of busy trunk routes.
  - Conversion of metre gauge railway lines into broad gauge.
  - Introducing several types of fast and superfast passenger trains.
  - Running fast goods and special food grain trains.
  - Provide better facilities for reservation and other customer care services, introducing reservation through internet.
- Let us have a glance at the regions of dense, moderate and sparse railway networks.