



Traffic Problems

In the process of evolution, from primitive age to the modern age, somewhere man discovered the wheel. The discovery could be after seeing a log of wood going down the slope to make a wheel. The two important inventions in the progress are fire and wheel. These two inventions are the foundation of man's development from Stone Age to the industrial age.

Man used to wander for hunting and used to get green fodder for pet animals kept in the tribes. These groups included men, their wives and children. Tribes used to carry the belongings on the backs of animals like camels, horse, donkey, yak, reindeer etc. Later man discovered agriculture. Knowing food grains could be grown by sowing seeds in the soil, man stopped wandering and started farming. Human settlements were established. Villages, towns, cities, came into existence. Laws and rules were formulated. Life became speedier than the nomadic stage. With the discovery of wheels one started using wheels for the transport. Bullock carts, house carriage came on the roads. Kings used chariots. Roads were built for the vehicles. In 19th century James Watt invented steam engine and the train drawn by steam came into existence. Thus man made his life speedy using fire and wheel. In the beginning of 20th century man invented aeroplane and started moving in the sky. In between, the invention of car came into existence. Driving a car needed smooth, sturdy roads. Thus a new technology of making roads

developed and new roads came into existence. Vehicles started running on roads. Rules of transport came into existence as it became necessary to control the vehicles and avoid accidents. A system implementing the traffic rules came into existence. Traffic police - controlling traffic on the road and the red, yellow, green signals are its examples. In the last 100-125 years, the world has developed a lot. A big network of roads has spread in the world. Vehicles like two-wheelers, four wheelers, light, heavy, vehicles transporting passengers and goods ran on the roads. Many problems arose due to such traffic. Some of them are quite serious. Attention should be paid to them. Some problems have to be solved on a War-footing.

1st decade of 21st century has just now ended. Urbanization has increased a lot in the last 20 years in India. Small towns are becoming cities and cities are becoming megacities. They are connected. Travelling within the city has become unavoidable. People have to travel to their offices, factories etc. and back home. Children and students have to go to schools and colleges. The distances of the travelling has increased to 25-30 kms. People from the big cities come and go in a circumference of 40 to 50 kms every day for their work or education. Similarly they travel from one end of the city to the other end for shopping, meeting their friends and relatives, to attend functions etc. Thus travelling has become an inseparable part of the life and to have vehicle has become a need. Travel by walking is not possible for the long distances. Traffic has become so heavy that it is impossible to use a bicycle.

Further using cycle for a long distance is not convenient. A person gets tired and more time is wasted. Hence people give preference to automobile vehicles like moped, scooter or motor-cycle.

Recently the average of our economic development is 8% due to the changes in the economic policies. As a result, economic transactions have increased. The urban middle class, which is a new rich class, has considerable amount of money with them. Having a four wheeler has become a status symbol for this class. Hence the number of four wheelers are also increasing. Take the example of Pune. The population of *Pune* and *Pimpri-Chinchwad* together is nearly 60 lakhs and the number of two wheelers is nearly 20 lakhs. The number of four wheelers has also increased. The equation of "one family - one vehicle" has become out dated. In a family of four i.e. husband, wife, son, daughter, everyone has a separate vehicle. Therefore a family has at least two vehicles. Same condition prevails in other cities.

Table 1**Maharashtra - number of vehicles till 31st March 2011**

Vehicle type	Pune	Mumbai	Maharashtra
Two wheelers	15,51,198	10,44,829	1,24,29,011
Motors	2,84,780	5,62,526	20,27,080
Jeeps	40,205	23,892	3,94,647
Auto Rikshaw	62,889	1,08,715	6,40,700
Truck	34,435	7,697	3,34,863

The total number of registered vehicles in Maharashtra is 1,74,34,099.

Table 2

The types of vehicles in Pune (31 March 2011)

Type of fuel	No. of Vehicles
Petrol	16,67,109
Diesel	3,81,681
L.P.G.	32,225
C.N.G.	912
Others	10,187

Pune has got a new identity as 'the city having the highest number of two wheelers'. It is necessary to think, is it good or dangerous? Pune's traffic system has become a serious problem. There is no enough space for parking. Suppose if 20 lakh vehicles run on the road, where will they be parked? The vehicles are parked on both the sides of the roads and a very little part of the road is available for traffic. It is a main reason for the traffic jam. Even the footpath is occupied by the vehicles. As a result the pedestrians have no alternative but to walk on the road. Thus traffic speed becomes less and accidents occur on the roads. These vehicles need a large parking space. The corporation or a private professional has to invest money for getting space for parking, construct shade, use manpower to look after it etc. But this investment is useless or unproductive in a sense because this space otherwise would



be used for constructing homes, making gardens, lawns etc.

The narrow roads becoming narrower due to the parking of vehicles, leading to traffic jam. Many parts of a city experience such traffic jam. People get stuck up. They can't reach the places in the stipulated time. There is pressure on the system of traffic control. Traffic police and citizens have conflicts between them. It sometimes leads to fights.

Social health is disturbed. We should think of productive time that is wasted. Many productive hours are wasted due to traffic jams. This indirectly leads to a great loss of the city and the country.

This is an indirect loss due to traffic jams, the expenses of fuels are increasing. If a vehicle is stuck in a jam at least for fifteen minutes, the fuel burns for same time. By fuel we mean petrol, diesel and L.P.G. gas. The prices of the fuels are sky high. The vehicle owner finally has to bear the extra burden of the expenses on the fuels. India depends on the import of petroleum products. We have to purchase the fuel from the international market. As the petroleum reserves are limited it should be used frugally. But petrol is used on a large scale due to more number of vehicles. This directly or indirectly affects the government treasury as well as the common man.

Due to the combustion of fuels, the amount of carbon-di-oxide in the atmosphere is increasing. The air is getting polluted. It directly affects human health. People have to face diseases like T.B., Asthma, Cancer, Skin Diseases etc. Especially small children and babies are affected a lot. Besides, the vehicle drivers suffer from the diseases of eye, back-bone, neck, hip etc. due to continuous driving. Today sickness has become unaffordable. A person has to pay a bill of five to ten thousand rupees even for simple treatment for two days. Spending is exorbitant for different diagnosing tests, hospital admission, I.C.U. and surgery. If we measure the working hours wasted due to illness, these losses are high.

As a measure against the increasing number of vehicles, traffic jams, we can think of widening of the roads, four lane or eight lane roads, flyover bridges. For this money has to be invested on a large scale. It adds to the employment. But even after they invest, the problem of traffic is not solved but it accelerates. The equation of-the more wide the roads, the more number of vehicles retains the problems.

We suffer physically due to increasing pollution. The mental peace of the people is equally important. They have a stress of reaching a place in time. This stress increases due to traffic jam. The mental stress and suffering increase due to the conflicts with the people and traffic police. If we have peace of mind while driving the vehicle, accidents won't occur or they would be avoided. But disturbed, stressful mind causes accidents. The number of road accidents has increased so much that no one bothers about it. Human minds have become blunt. We have lost our sensitivity. Is it a good sign? The time has come to think about it.

Disposal of old vehicles is also a big problem. Using old vehicles means encouraging pollution, the capacity is less; speed is reduced, need more fuel and emit more smoke. The smoke of the fuel pollutes the air. The vehicle owner has to spend on maintenance often. In developed countries, after the usage up to a particular period, the vehicles are strictly not allowed on the roads. We also have such rules. But they are only on papers, not strictly implemented. Thus these pollution causing vehicles continues to run on the roads. Problem of the old



and out of use vehicles, lying in front of houses, in the parking areas, is that of getting rusted. In India such vehicles, tyres go in scrap and are recycled. But these vehicles are a great problem in the developed cities. The newspapers there show the photographs of the heaps of old motors and tyres.

Increasing number of vehicles, give rise to many problems like, 'traffic jam, increasing accidents, deaths, pollution, physical and mental stress, and more expenses.' Vehicles are essential but what should be done about these problems?

Capable, easy and affordable public transport system can be the best solution to this problem. Take the example of *Pune*. In *Pune* there are 20 lakh personal two-wheelers. If the average cost of one vehicle is Rs. 50,000 it means the *Puneites* have spent Rs. 10,000 crores on the vehicles. This money can be invested in buying vehicles like Volvo, which are spacious, good and cause less pollution. If one Volvo costs roughly one crore rupees, then ten thousand Volvos will be available. Imagine these buses will be available on all roads of *Pune*. If the frequency of the buses will be more, why will people bring their own vehicles on roads? If the public transport system is affordable, easy and comfortable, along with the middle class, high class people will give also prefer public transport. Personal two and four wheelers will be used for limited purpose. Pollution and traffic jam if avoided; wasted hours will be saved. They can be used for productive purposes. Finally the production will increase. The wheel of economic cycle will move faster and the city will become prosperous. This is not a dream. It is easily possible. Only we should have strong will power. The idea of B.R.T.S. is based on this principle. But the project, which was started in Pune some seven years ago, is a failure due to lack of willpower. The politicians keep an eye on the elections and lure people with the dreams of Ring railway, sky bus, B.R.T.S. or Metro.

After getting elected they ignore everything. That is why our transport system suffers. But who cares?

Today what is the condition of public transport system? It may be P.M.P.L. of Pune, K.M.T. of Kolhapur or Public transport system in any city, red-tapism prevails everywhere. The numbers of buses are insufficient compared to the population. They have lack of money for buying new buses. Even after getting funds through J.N.N.U.R.M. buses are not purchased. Old buses run on the roads. Nobody looks

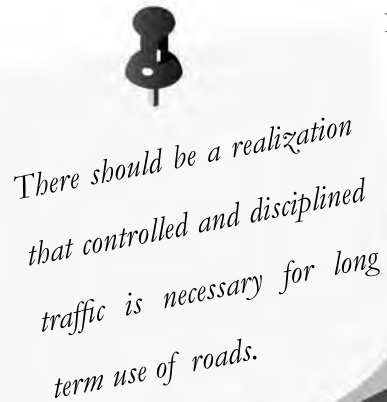
after the maintenance and repair. Broken window panes, torn-seats, dirt, arrogance of drivers and conductors, full loaded buses, not caring for women, children, old aged people, is this called public transport?

If one thinks of travelling by an auto rickshaw, it is also troublesome. One has to suffer driver's arrogance, such as meter not working properly, saying no to a nearby place etc. These are the reasons of increasing number of personal vehicles. To correct this system is not in the hands of the common people. Those who have the power, lack the will power. Still it is possible to improve the condition. One should take some measures on personal and public level. Let's think of it.

In the olden days, 3-4 decades ago, there were not much automobile vehicles on the roads. Their production was less and the prices were not affordable. Then people made use of cycles. They got cycles on rent. There were shops renting cycles. The cost was also quite affordable. People would hire cycles and after use, returned it. If the same system is followed for the two wheelers, it may be useful. If the occupation of giving two and four wheelers of good quality on rent is started, people won't like to keep their own vehicles. Numbers of vehicles will become less. Vehicles will come on the roads only when needed. We should seriously think about this alternative.

Generally the central part of the cities has all the offices (govt. and private) and shops for market place. From vegetable market to the wholesale – retail market of many goods are crowded in one place. So people have to come there for purchases. This creates problems of traffic. Such market place should be delocalised. People can save their time. If every part of the city have markets separately from vegetables to food grains, cloth, books etc. the traffic of vehicles in the central part will be reduced. In the same way, location of schools, colleges, factories, government and private offices should be away from each other.

One more thing should be taken into consideration. Generally the timings of the daily chores in the cities are the same. Schools, Colleges, Offices, Banks etc. are open from nine in the morning to five in the evening. Naturally the roads get crowded at the same time. Generally Sunday is a weekly holiday. Except Sunday, everyday there is traffic jam for a particular period. If the working times of various establishments are staggered, then this crowding of vehicles can be avoided. School colleges will work from seven in the morning to three in the afternoon.



There should be a realization that controlled and disciplined traffic is necessary for long term use of roads.

Banks will work from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. Government offices will work from 10 am to 6p.m. The second shift of the factories will begin at 12O'clock etc. Due to these changes, the employees of the concerned places will come on the roads, step by step. The load on the traffic will become less, if the weekly holidays of different establishments are kept different. Schools, colleges and government offices will be closed on Sunday. Market will be closed on Monday, private offices and banks will be closed on Wednesday and factories will be closed on Thursday.

In foreign countries, vehicles with particular numbers are allowed on the road only on the particular days. For e.g. Vehicles who have last digit of the registration no. 1 won't come on the roads on Monday. In this order vehicles with last no. 2, 3, 4, will not come on the roads on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday. The number of vehicles on the roads can be reduced. Traffic jam can be avoided. Fuels like petrol, diesel, gas etc. will be saved and lastly pollution will become less. A day in a week can be regarded as weekly holiday for the vehicles. Measures like these should be thought of.

We must look into the working of toll plaza policy where most of the time traffic is jammed. Either reduce toll posts by charging onetime toll with the purchase of the vehicle and or having bar code system of each vehicle and directly deducting money from the account of owner when it passes toll posts without exemption to anyone.

Traffic problems can be solved to some extent by taking such measures. But other alternatives to roadways also should be found out. Take the example of *Mumbai*. There are three lines of railways in Mumbai namely central, western and harbour. Trains run on these lines. Hence the load on the roadways has become less. Imagine, what would have happened in Mumbai if it had no alternative of local railways. It is the best alternative. Mumbai is like an island. It is surrounded by sea on

three sides. Can water ways become a way of transport? Two rivers namely *Mula* and *Mutha* flow in Pune. *Mutha* flows through the centre of Pune. It doesn't have water throughout the year. It is true, but there are 4 dams on the river. If water transport is started by bringing a certain quantity of water in the main course of river from the dams, the pressure of crowd on the roads can become less. Of course, such decisions are to be taken by the experts. We can think of it only as an alternative.

In the last 2 decades, discussion on infrastructural development is going on. Roads come under basic amenities. The work of road development is going on under the scheme of Prime Minister National Highways. Under the scheme of 'village roads', roads are constructed up to small villages. Stress is given on the improvement of the basic needs for the healthy growth of cities under the scheme of J.N.N.U.R.M. Preference is given for building new roads, bridges, fly overs, skywalk etc. Preference is also given for the maintenance and repair of the roads. A large amount of capital is spent on the roads. Taxes, toll etc. are charged for the recovery of the expenses. The development of roads is necessary but its economic burden is also more. Hence controlled and disciplined traffic is necessary for long term use of roads.

Today traffic rules are openly broken, nobody obeys the signals. Everyone is in a hurry to go ahead. Adulterated fuel is used in the vehicles. The P.U.C. (Pollution under Control) is not done regularly. Vehicles run in the opposite direction on the roads having – dividers. The rules of one way traffic are broken. There are many such cases of indiscipline. If we break the traffic rules, don't follow the rules for controlling pollution, then we have no right to speak about the traffic system, which is in shambles. Whom do we blame? We have to begin from ourselves.

