

International Multidisciplinary Research Journal

Golden Research Thoughts

Chief Editor
Dr.Tukaram Narayan Shinde

Publisher
Mrs.Laxmi Ashok Yakkaldevi

Associate Editor
Dr.Rajani Dalvi

Honorary
Mr.Ashok Yakkaldevi

Golden Research Thoughts Journal is a multidisciplinary research journal, published monthly in English, Hindi & Marathi Language. All research papers submitted to the journal will be double - blind peer reviewed referred by members of the editorial board. Readers will include investigator in universities, research institutes government and industry with research interest in the general subjects.

Regional Editor

Manichander Thammishetty
Ph.d Research Scholar, Faculty of Education IASE, Osmania University, Hyderabad

International Advisory Board

Kamani Perera Regional Center For Strategic Studies, Sri Lanka	Mohammad Hailat Dept. of Mathematical Sciences, University of South Carolina Aiken	Hasan Baktir English Language and Literature Department, Kayseri
Janaki Sinnasamy Librarian, University of Malaya	Abdullah Sabbagh Engineering Studies, Sydney	Ghayoor Abbas Chotana Dept of Chemistry, Lahore University of Management Sciences[PK]
Romona Mihaila Spiru Haret University, Romania	Ecaterina Patrascu Spiru Haret University, Bucharest	Anna Maria Constantinovici AL. I. Cuza University, Romania
Delia Serbescu Spiru Haret University, Bucharest, Romania	Loredana Bosca Spiru Haret University, Romania	Ilie Pinteau, Spiru Haret University, Romania
Anurag Misra DBS College, Kanpur	Fabricio Moraes de Almeida Federal University of Rondonia, Brazil	Xiaohua Yang PhD, USA
Titus PopPhD, Partium Christian University, Oradea,Romania	George - Calin SERITAN Faculty of Philosophy and Socio-Political Sciences Al. I. Cuza University, IasiMore

Editorial Board

Pratap Vyamktrao Naikwade ASP College Devrukh,Ratnagiri,MS India Ex - VC. Solapur University, Solapur	Iresh Swami N.S. Dhaygude Ex. Prin. Dayanand College, Solapur	Rajendra Shendge Director, B.C.U.D. Solapur University, Solapur
R. R. Patil Head Geology Department Solapur University,Solapur	Narendra Kadu Jt. Director Higher Education, Pune	R. R. Yalikal Director Managment Institute, Solapur
Rama Bhosale Prin. and Jt. Director Higher Education, Panvel	K. M. Bhandarkar Praful Patel College of Education, Gondia	Umesh Rajderkar Head Humanities & Social Science YCMOU,Nashik
Salve R. N. Department of Sociology, Shivaji University,Kolhapur	Sonal Singh Vikram University, Ujjain	S. R. Pandya Head Education Dept. Mumbai University, Mumbai
Govind P. Shinde Bharati Vidyapeeth School of Distance Education Center, Navi Mumbai	G. P. Patankar S. D. M. Degree College, Honavar, Karnataka	Alka Darshan Shrivastava Shaskiya Snatkottar Mahavidyalaya, Dhar
Chakane Sanjay Dnyaneshwar Arts, Science & Commerce College, Indapur, Pune	Maj. S. Bakhtiar Choudhary Director,Hyderabad AP India.	Rahul Shriram Sudke Devi Ahilya Vishwavidyalaya, Indore
Awadhesh Kumar Shirotriya Secretary,Play India Play,Meerut(U.P.)	S.Parvathi Devi Ph.D.-University of Allahabad	S.KANNAN Annamalai University,TN
	Sonal Singh, Vikram University, Ujjain	Satish Kumar Kalhotra Maulana Azad National Urdu University



FUNCTION OF POSTAL COMMUNICATION SYSTEM DURING THE MUGHAL PERIOD

P. Rajkumar

Full-Time Research Scholar , Department of History ,
Queen Mary's College , Chennai.

ABSTRACT

To govern their vast empire effectively, the Mughals had to ensure the maximum degree of co-ordination and co-operation, vertically between central, provincial and local authorities and horizontally between officials at each level of government. The Empire needed comprehensive, accurate, and frequent information from every quarter and to attain these ends, a reliable dak system was maintained by the Mughals.

KEYWORDS: Dak, Dak Chawkis , Meora' (Mehras), Mughal, Zamindar, Empire, Ahmedabad, Mahajans.

INTRODUCTION

"Dak" literally meant "post" i.e., properly, transport by relays of men and horses and thence "the mail" or "letter post" as well as any arrangement for travelling or transmitting by such relays. Dak is a 'desi' (indigenous) or non-Sanskrit word of unknown origin, which means a shout: a Dakait ("Dacoit") is "one who comes with a gang to rob by raising a shout and noise (to frighten the people). It means that the Harkara or post runner, with his stick with its jingling bells, or the galloping horsemen, used to shout from a distance to warn the man in charge, when nearing a choultry or

Chowki (stopping place), used as a spot for a postal change, men and horse; and from this, the letters of communications which were expected to be received and delivered came to be known as "Dak".¹

Babur, the founder of Mughal Empire in India, developed the horse and runner services, along the road, from his capital at Agra up to Kabul. One of the Babur's administrative steps, after the First Battle of Panipat, was to measure the Agra- Kabul road and establish stations of six horses, every 18 Kos (36 miles), for conveyance

of the communications. He established regular and efficient communication between different parts of his territory as well as with Afghanistan and some other countries.² Babur wrote in his biography, "Tuzuki-i-Babari", On 'panj shambah' (Thursday), it was resolved that Chaqmaq Beg, accompanied by Royal 'Tamagachi' clerks, should make a survey from Agra to Kabul in jaribs (one kos was 200 jaribs) and at every 9 miles, minara (turret) should be erected, which should be 12 yards in height and on that



pillar, "chawkidaris" should be built. The role of these minors appear to have been linked with security as well as communication.³ At every 18 miles, barid (post) stations of six horses were posted.

Good roads were not much in evidence in Medieval India. Roads were just hardened tracks, generally difficult to negotiate during the rains. Elephants in forest areas and bullocks in plains, and camels in the dry tracts, and frequently used transport in India, particularly foot runners all over the Country.⁴ Sher Shah Suri (1540 - 1545 A.D.) re-organized and developed the communication system. He also employed the mounted post. The Shah constructed the Grand Trunk Road, from Peshawar to Sunargaon, (near Dhaka in present Bangladesh) and other roads from Agra to Burhanpur and to Chittor, and from Lahore to Multan. He built 1700 Sarais (Highway Rest Houses) all along these roads at a distance of two leagues (12 miles) from each other, which were called "Caravan-Sarais". In each rest house two horses were kept ready for dispatch of news. The intention was conveyance of news, both ways. It is stated that he used to receive news daily from Bengal, Punjab, Malwa, Rajputana, Bihar and other parts of the Empire. Sher Shah's messengers carried news from Bengal to Rohtas in Punjab (nearly 1400 miles), in less than a week and on which an ordinary traveler took four months to traverse.⁵ It is stated that he kept 3400 horses and their riders for the transmission of news.

Akbar strengthened his Kingdom and took keen interest in making the communication system effective. He established Dak Chawkis throughout his dominion, having two horses and a set of 'Meora' (Mehras) footmen, stationed at every five miles on the principal roads and placed Turki swift horses at each stage.⁶

One of these post houses can still be seen on the road between Agra and Sikandra. The news reached within five days from Agra to Ahmedabad (Gujarat). Whenever any person had to go, from the King's presence, on some special errand or had to alter the royal count, immediately he used to travel the distance on horses of Dak chawki. Four thousand swift horses were under State service. It often happened that Meora (Mehras) crossed seven hundred miles on foot, within ten days and then reached the desired manzil (stage).⁷

Dak Chawkis only carried letters, firmans, and messages but were also entrusted with other responsibilities. Provincial revenues, army, fruits from distant provinces, even Ganges water were swiftly and safely transported by them. Revenue and Peshkash⁸ were taken to the district treasuries, when scouts escorted the couriers from one station to another. Probably bullocks and carts were also changed and fresh escorts joined the train.⁹ Under Jahangir, the management of horse dak was superior to other systems. The construction of roads and their security had facilitated travelling, with the result that commodities came from Baghdad, Syria, Samarqand and Bukhara in large quantities. It is stated that India imported fresh fruits from distant places. Jahangir is said to have ordered that pigeons should be trained. These trained pigeons were first tested between Mardu and Burhanpur. It was proved that if rain and wind were not exceptionally heavy, they could cover the distance in three hours.¹⁰

As the Empire expanded, more and more Dak chawkis were established. The marked expansion in their numbers, which began under Jahangir, continued under Shahjahan, who ordered Aurangzeb, the Governor of the Deccan, to build new dak chawkis between Hyderabad and Karnataka.¹¹ Other was soon established between Hyderabad and Burhanpur and that were placed in charge of Zamindars and other officials.¹² Further, at the second siege of Qandahar, Aurangzeb felt the absence of adequate and effective Dak Chawkis and he there, established his own.¹³

Aurangzeb's special interest in the Dak system, led him to establish many more Dak chawkis, throughout the Empire. After the war with the Pathans, a chain of chawkis was established, in 1678 A.D, between the Peshawar Valley and Kabul.¹⁴ The Mirat-i-Ahmadi lists new Dak stations, constructed between Ahmedabad and Khandabpurani, to link Gujarat with Ajmer.¹⁵ Another chain of Dak chawkis was established between Ahmedabad and Broach and then on to Surat. Under Aurangzeb, the communication and secret service departments were in effect amalgamated, working together under the Darogha-i-Dak Chawki.¹⁶ In Aurangzeb's reign, when foot men who did not cover one kos, in one Ghari, were fined. Letters normally reached Delhi from Ahmedabad in twelve days, but "express" mail took only 5 to 7 days. There were 37 Dak Chawkis on the Ahmedabad - Agra route, 16 between Ahmedabad and Broach. Agra, Broach, Surat, Ajmer, Ahmedabad and Aurangabad had become important centres of Dak. The "Thanadars" and "Zamindars" were responsible for the security of Dak route and its management. It was the duty of every Thanadar or Zamindar safeguard to these Daks in their jurisdiction.¹⁷

The Dak Chawkis were the imperial centres, for communication of information. On occasions nobles and princes used its services.¹⁸

The Mughals used courier-pigeons. The pigeons carried letters in time of great urgency or during siege. But these were used only over shorter distances. The court nobles also used pigeons to carry messages and intelligence.¹⁹

Waqila-navis of each locality was the most important officer associated with the communication department since Babur's time.²⁰ The Waqais were the confidential official news-reporters, whose reports were sent for the perusal of the Emperor and his confidential ministers. The system of sending money also existed. The King and the Nobles sent money through 'Dak', but its 'Chawkis' were not in close quarters like that of the stations of foot runners. After Ahmadabad, for instance, the next chawki happened to be Ajmer; the third was Agra and the fourth Delhi. Coins were put in boxes under lock and key. The officer of the next chawki checked while taking charge and then sealed and dispatched it to the next chawki. The security of the contents was guaranteed. These were carried under armed mounted guard.

In Surat, Cambay, Ahmedabad, Kathiawar, there were rich Bohra and Arab traders who had established their companies. In the later period of Mughal Rule, these houses were called Kothis. In these Kothis, besides business, public money was also deposited. A receipt was given for the amount of money deposited and it was mentioned where it was to be cashed. The rules of receiving money were also mentioned in it. These Kothis were called 'Pedhis' in Gujarati. Referring to the working of this practice, the author of *Kulasat-al- Tawarikh*, says, "The people of the country are so honest in their dealing that any known or unknown person can deposit lakhs of rupees with these Mahajans or Pedhis, without any witness. These good natured people return the money when demanded, without demur or hesitation. It is interesting to note that if any person, due to the fear of being looted on the way, cannot carry big sums in person and these well behaved people (Mahajans) take the money and keep it in their custody. Then they give a slip of paper in Hindustani to their agents, who are spread in all parts of the country. That paper is called Hundi in this country. These honest agents, in spite of residing 200 miles away, pay up the amount without hesitation in cash. According to the letter which does not even bear a stamp and envelope. The wonder is that the hundi, which is the slip of paper, can be sold to other person, if desired. And the purchaser can draw the full amount, written on it, from the Mahajans. Still greater wonder is that on account of the insecurity of the way, goods, baggage and other things are deposited with them and these people send the property safely to the owner. This procedure is called "Bima" in this country."²¹

It is known from Khafi Khan that the soldiers of Aurangzeb's camp were supplied regularly with the "Akhbars", which were the private news-letters. They were semi-public and they were read by a large circle of readers. They were widely read and publicly discussed. They were, in fact, in every sense newspapers i.e., public vehicles for the dissemination of news of the day.²²

There was no general system for sending information open to all. However, there was some private system of sending information like correspondence of the travelers, traders, factors and occasional envoys, particularly Europeans. They followed the same system as that of Mughals. A Pattamary i.e, a foot messenger, was generally employed for the purpose.²³ Private Post in Mughal India was indeed largely dependent on professional foot carriers called, Pattamari (Pattamar, Patamar) on the Western Coast.²⁴ Merchants and Bankers (Sarrafs) had to keep up correspondence, with their agents or factors, to transmit bills of exchange and advices and instructions. They also offered the facility of dispatch of letters through couriers to others. As the East India Company's operation expanded, it began to employ its own couriers.²⁵

To conclude, Darogha-i-Dak Chauki was the Superintendent of Intelligence and Posts. He had his agents everywhere. Horses were stationed at various stages for the uses of the messengers. The latter brought news from every part of the country. The Superintendent was in charge of news-writers and news-carriers. He had to send weekly abstracts of the news to the Capital. Thus in the Mughal period, the status of the postal communication system got an impetus because of the proper maintenance rendered by a specific department which is certainly a next stage of improvement from the period of the Delhi Sultanate. The messengers carried information to the Imperial Government and also to the public. Message were properly checked in order to avoid any threat to the peaceful administration and prosperous society. No doubt, the post communication

system functioned successfully by with certain restrictions.

REFERENCE

1. Farooquee, A.K.M., Roads and Communications in Mughal India, Idarah-i-Adabiyat-I, Delhi, 1977. pp.128-29. Annual Reports of the Post Office Department, (ARPO) Activities, 1970-1971, New Delhi, 1971, p.33; ARPO ,1992-1993, New Delhi, 1993, p.28.
2. Annette Susannab Beveridge, (tr.), Baburnama , Delhi, 1970, pp. 629-646
3. Ibid. pp.338 and 445.
4. 'He came home by Post', in Calcutta GPO Centenary (1868 AD to 1968 AD) Calcutta, 1968, p.13.
5. Nadvi Abu Zafar, 'The Postal System of Medieval Hind-Pakistan' in Journal of the Pakistan Historical Society, Vol. II, Part I, p.206 The broad road stretching from Bengal to the banks of the Indus at Rhotas, along which noble rows of trees and wells of good water at short intervals, shaded and refreshed travellers invited the weary and the hungry to enter.
6. Farooquee, A.K.M., op. cit., p.127. Dak Chawkis were full of harkaras who lived in the Chawkis and immediately ran to the next Chawki when they received a letter. There were in all 4000 Mewras, who were traditionally regarded as good-runners, posted at these chawkis to relay news from all parts of the Empire. The mounted messengers usually brought the letters from Bengal to Agra (if from Dacca to Agra, then 990 miles) in seven days and from Gujrat (Ahmedabad) 534 miles, (if from Surat, then 680 miles) to Agra in five.
7. Nadvi Abu Zafar, 'The Postal System of Medieval Hind-Pakistan' in Journal of the Pakistan Historical Society, Vol. II, Part I p.211. Geoffry Clarke, The Post Office of India & its Story, William Brandon and Son Ltd., London, 1920, p.12.
8. Farooquee, A.K.M., op. cit., p.138. Peshkash - tribute payable by native chiefs, also gifts offered by nobles, foreign merchants, and others on special occasions as to secure favours.
9. Ibid. pp.138 and 228.
10. Nadvi, Alizafar, 'The Postal System of Medieval Hind-Pakistan', p.208. Jahangir writes, "I ordered these pigeon dealers to train them. They trained five pairs in such a way that when I saw them flying from Malwar, even though it was raining heavily, they reached Burhanpur in two or 1 ½ pahars (six hours or 4 1/2 hours). If the atmosphere is calm and quiet, they can reach in one pahar (three hours).
11. Farooquee, A.K.M., op.cit. 140.
12. Ibid.
13. Ibid.
14. Bruce, J., Annals of Honourable East Indian Company, Vol. II, London, 1810, p.47
15. Farooquee, A.K.M., op. cit., p.140
16. Ibid. p.146.
17. 'The Way the dak service began', in Times of India, ~1990, p.3.
18. Farooquee, A.K.M., op. cit., p.146.
19. Ibid. p.142.
20. Ibid. p.147.
21. Nadvi Alizafar, 'The postal system of Medieval in Hind-Pakistan', p.210.
22. The Newspaper in Islamic Culture, January, 1928, p. 122; Usha Masson, Means of Transport and Communications, (1650-1750 A.D.), Delhi University, 1963, p.415.
23. Ovington, J., A Voyage to Surat, in the year 1689, Jacob Jonson, London, 1696, p.149
24. Henry Yale and A.C. Burnell, Hobson, Jobson, William Crooke, London, 1903, p.687.
25. Ovington, J., op.cit., p.149. Whenever the English, at Surat, were under a necessity of writing to Bengal, Madras or any other part of India, a person was sent on purpose upon the errand.

Publish Research Article

International Level Multidisciplinary Research Journal For All Subjects

Dear Sir/Mam,

We invite unpublished Research Paper, Summary of Research Project, Theses, Books and Book Review for publication, you will be pleased to know that our journals are

Associated and Indexed, India

- * International Scientific Journal Consortium
- * OPEN J-GATE

Associated and Indexed, USA

- EBSCO
- Index Copernicus
- Publication Index
- Academic Journal Database
- Contemporary Research Index
- Academic Paper Database
- Digital Journals Database
- Current Index to Scholarly Journals
- Elite Scientific Journal Archive
- Directory Of Academic Resources
- Scholar Journal Index
- Recent Science Index
- Scientific Resources Database
- Directory Of Research Journal Indexing

Golden Research Thoughts
258/34 Raviwar Peth Solapur-413005, Maharashtra
Contact-9595359435
E-Mail-ayisrj@yahoo.in/ayisrj2011@gmail.com
Website : www.aygrt.isrj.org