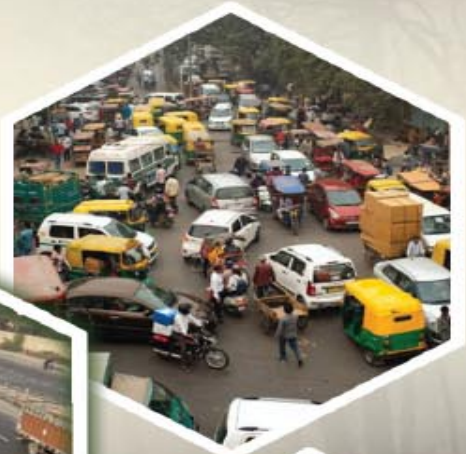


ROAD TRANSPORT SITUATION IN INDIA



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Introduction

India is considered a promising country having potential to emerge as one of the largest economies in the World provided its political system can be made more accountable and committed to pursue common welfare and development policies. It is perhaps no exaggeration that our remarkable men and material resources can make it happen sooner than later if such an asset can be utilized properly. The tremendous success achieved in areas like green revolution, white revolution, industrial, scientific and technological revolution is a proof of our capability. It helped us to remove dark era of scarcities and shortages that used to haunt and shackle our population till a few decades ago. A more appropriate, responsible and responsive political and administrative system could have catalyzed process and proved a game changer for our country to radically transform our economy into an aggressive, self-reliant and vibrant economy. It could stimulate much better dynamism and energy in the system to achieve comprehensive and homogeneous growth and prosperity including developing an inclusive and efficient transport system in the country.

However, our post independent political leaders and their inherited subservient culture disappointed us. They acquired undue hegemony to start pursuing lop-sided policies right after independence. Even after seven decades of freedom, we are struggling to overcome even basic poverty and deprivation conditions afflicting a majority of population in the country. Are these leaders having acquired absolute powers under the banner of 'electoral democracy' are not responsible for spoiling our dream of developing an inclusive homogeneous society by hijacking major development benefits in their favour. It is indeed sad that far from correcting their mistakes they are still manipulating the whole system viciously to squander huge public money and drifting larger population into a pool of exploitation. Do they ever realize that a large population is living under wretched conditions at mercy of our extravagant leaders? Is it

an exaggeration that their hostile governance system including inadequate and inefficient road transport system continues to be a severe headache for majority depriving them of any relief in mobility of passenger and goods traffic across country?

Who is responsible for neglecting dawn of comprehensive prosperity? Who is responsible for an awkward deficient planning that deprived a majority of population? Who is responsible for creating various hurdles and bottlenecks in developing a sound and efficient road transport system notwithstanding its critical importance being an engine of growth in modern economy? Are they not responsible for pushing and plaguing our country into 'irreversible' mess by denying us opportunities to grow comprehensively? Are we not socially and economically backward at large due to wrong policies? Is it not due to our presumptuous political system having poor vision and lack of commitment towards common man who expected some relief after liberation from centuries of slavery?

Is it mere coincidence that the entire political fraternity and their pampered nexus have grown filthy rich from very poor and modest backgrounds and established their illicit empires and dynasties while larger population continues to remain neglected perpetually? Is it not correct that the whole country has virtually become captive of our old and frail dynastic leaders living in palatial houses, travelling in ultra expensive cars and enjoying elaborate security at government cost while poor common public is left neglected to suffer in penury and deprivation? Is it really a free democratic country or private enterprises of political leaders having total hegemony over entire system? Have they not become arrogant masters today calling shots and terrorizing ordinary people into silence treating them as their captive slaves? Is it different or better than pre-independent 'brutal' colonial rule and erstwhile foreign rule for centuries enjoying absolute powers and extreme extravagance?

Is it not intriguing that our proxy (and fake) 'secular and socialistic' leaders adopted similar extravagant lifestyle of earlier monarchs than discarding comforts to sympathize with common public as expected in democracy? Is it wrong that they are no better than parasites clinging to power like immortal entities? Have ever seen any leader gracefully

quitting political scene or calling it a day and giving chance to progressive dynamic youth? Is it wrong that our inappropriate leaders have virtually converted entire country into their personal property and private enterprise today? It is quite surprising how even our much lauded 'independent and empowered' constitutional authorities like Courts and Election Commission are acting silent on such a day light robbery and impropriety being committed by our 'elected' leaders rendering ordinary person into a state of despair and hell. Is it an exaggeration that the situation today is so bleak and desperate that common man is literally helpless to challenge arbitrary hegemony and irregular functioning of our 'esteemed' political representatives deciding entire development agenda in their favour at their whims and fancies?

Is entire political community (or fraternity) not guilty of retaining endless power and privileges not just for them alone but their 'unelected' families too? Who gave them such immortal authority in a democracy to blatantly indulge in vested agenda at the cost of prime common agenda? Who gave them authority to avail innumerable privileges irrespective of their daily nuisance, defeat in elections or conviction in Courts? Is this country governed by certain law and principles or by arbitrary 'rules' devised unscrupulously by them only for mutual benefits of entire political fraternity? Is it their personal playground? Have they ever considered extending even minor fraction of similar privileges to common people who are actually supposed to be the 'king-makers' in democracy and install them at helm of affairs? Is it not sickening that ordinary public is discriminated and harassed everywhere? Is there any sanctity in rotating same set of rogues, old and frail leaders holding uncontested power? What does it mean? Can it happen without mutual collusion and complicity of entire political fraternity? Does it not show how the 'sacred' democracy has been consistently mauled, raped and murdered by them? Have you ever come across any non-controversial, modest and honest leader in Indian politics? Or it is proverbial scoundrels' game.

Can we expect India under their leadership to become a 'rising' and 'emerging' economy on sustainable basis when a large majority of Indian population is afflicted with severe economic insecurity down with perpetual rampant poverty, deprivation and widespread underdevelopment

even after 70 years of independence? How can we justify relentless poverty and deplorable state of common infrastructure and services (roads, railways, health, schools, water, and electricity, garbage and so on) in the light of our leaders rolling in luxuries and mobilizing huge wealth and propertities? Can somebody explain logic of terrible state haunting a majority of population in stark contrast to our 'rent-seeking' leaders making merry leading an extravagant king style life ensconced in extreme comforts?

Is it not sickening that our inappropriate leaders have no regret in hijacking struggle, sweat and sacrifices of ordinary common people who have been surviving somehow with their grit and determination under adverse political environment in the country? Is it not correct that the so called 'remarkable' growth and prosperity is due to hard work of our common people and their huge internal demand and not due to rascal leaders who have been looting this nation like earlier foreign invaders? Is it not correct that the whole socio-economic scenario could have been far more glorifying if our leaders were genuine and committed to pursuing forward, efficient and productive common development policies? Are these fake 'patriotic' and 'socialistic' leaders not primarily responsible for pushing the country into hell over years? Are they not guilty of depriving us from having a good public transport system in the country particularly when a large majority of population cannot afford personalized and are dependent on efficient public transport system? Are they not guilty of allowing deteriorating mess on road with their lack of vision, poor planning, mismanagement and lackadaisical enforcement authorities busy in pampering leaders and their officials? Have they not been focusing on acquiring most modern transport facilities for them and their families at hapless taxpayers' cost?

Existing road transport situation in India

India is perhaps unique among developing countries to have practically a wide variety of transport modes ranging from slow moving bicycles, tricycle rickshaws, horse driven carriages, camel buggies to medium speed scooter and motor-cycles, three wheeler, tractors to high speed cars, mini, medium and heavy commercial buses and trucks vying for common road space on Indian roads.



The road users including pedestrians belong to different and diverse socio-economic backgrounds usually having poor knowledge and training about traffic rules. The mixed heterogeneous traffic is governed by casual and lethargic in enforcing authorities who are generally uninterested in controlling unruly traffic on roads. They are usually busy in collecting bribes or are concerned about pampering and protecting leaders and their nexus without caring for common man who is left neglected to survive in haphazard traffic. On the other hand, the other government authorities too are quite apathetic about creating appropriate people-friendly road

infrastructure (safe vehicles, safe roads and dedicated pedestrian lanes) restricting smooth flow of traffic.



While on the one hand, the ordinary majority of private vehicle owners have to eternally cope up with bad and potholed roads, undergo pain of traffic snarls and jams to wade through rampant encroachment and illegal parking, the common public transport used by majority of ordinary people is in woeful condition aggravating their miseries. Are our leaders unaware of frequent traffic jam and snarls, bad and pothole roads and unruly traffic because they get extraordinary priorities and security on roads for their uninterrupted travel? Are they aware that common man grudges being pressurized to follow road discipline despite facing health and safety hazards? Are they aware that common man is harassed and discriminated everywhere amidst rich and influential blatantly violating the system and taming 'dubious' enforcement authorities?



There is absolutely no coordination among various government department or agencies responsible for ensuring smooth flow of mixed traffic. While revised amendments in Motor Vehicle Act/Rules have been suddenly enforced for general public, there is no pressure on federal governments to abide by new provisions. Similarly, there are probably no rules for non-motorized vehicles whose users are almost entirely at mercy of ‘discretionary’ authorities. The related road works departments are not only working in water-tight compartments but are unaccountable for frequent lapses. No wonder, the common man is totally confused and puzzled by ongoing relentless traffic mess and being pressed to follow traffic rules. A piecemeal approach to target entire problem comprehensively is bound to create a lot of uncertainty about feasibility of ‘plans’ to improve and streamline chaotic road transport situation in the country.

The common public, it seems, is destined to face bad and unsafe roads or travel in unsafe, rickety and inadequate public transport for want of adequate attention of authorities to provide safe, sound and efficient public transport system. In short, the ordinary innocent public is literally compelled to compromise with deplorable road transport situation at cost of their health and safety facing constant scare from rowdy drivers. The recent amendments imposing heavy penalties is indeed a welcome step but it is perhaps premature and insensible approach to enforce it without improving basic road conditions and removing other major deficiencies in

the system (corruption and poor quality of material and management)? Have our leaders and authorities been held responsible for recurring mess in last 50 years and sanctity of enforcing impractical rigorous road discipline overnight? Have they ever thought of relinquishing their unwarranted privileges and making it a uniform system all around? Or is it once again their deliberate and wicked designs to squeeze honest common man who has been a victim of neglect of minimum basic facilities and support for years and is waiting for some relief from this dreadful situation aggravating relentlessly? Who is going to be a crusader in this hour of grief and provide dignity to common man?

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