

## Chapter-III

### Indian Postal Employees: A Profile

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#### **Key Terms:**

- 1) **Departmental Staff:** *Postal staff appointed on permanent basis in the departmental offices especially in the urban area with service benefits equivalent to other regular staff of Central Government.*
- 2) **Extra-Departmental Staff or ED Staff:** *Staff employed in the rural as well as in urban post offices purely on temporary basis with salary and other facilities provided not at par with their departmental counterpart.*
- 3) **NFPE:** *National Federation of Postal Employees*
- 4) **NUPF:** *National Union of Postal Federation.*
- 5) **RMS:** *Railway Mail Services:*
- 6) **Rajan Committee:** *The first committee set up by the central Government in the year 1957 to investigate the service matters related to ED Staff.*
- 7) **MadanMohan Committee:** *The Second committee set up by the central Government in the year 1970 to investigate the service matters related to ED Staff.*
- 8) **Savoar Committee:** *The Third committee set up by the central Government in the year 1984 to investigate the service matters related to ED Staff.*
- 9) **Talwar Committee:** *The Fourth committee set up by the central Government in the year 1995 to investigate the service matters related to ED Staff.*
- 10) **TRCA:** *Time Related Continuation Allowances; A system prevailed in the Indian postal department for fixing payment for ED staff.*

### 3.1. Introduction

Workers in a certain working set-up experience job stress for different reasons. It may be dispositional or be the outcome of the very nature of the job. Stressors originating from the nature of the job as well as from the place of work are however, controllable and manageable. While, stressors originating from the dispositional factors are hardly assumed controllable. Researchers in the field of Industrial and Organisational psychology repeatedly argue that the stress situation of a group of employees should first be looked from the requirement of the job they are attached, along with the nature of their work place.

While measuring the stress factors of the Indian postal employees the work environment including working hours, physical infrastructures etc. of the postal department are also to be looked into. The recruitment procedure, promotional facilities, training opportunities and retirement nitty-gritty are few employees' related issues to be dealt with to understand the stress situation in a comprehensive manner. In this chapter an attempt has been made first to assess all these jobs and organization related factors of Indian postal employees.

Indian Postal department is a network of almost 1,56,000 office ends with almost 5,80,000 employees (including Departmental and Extra-Departmental employees) providing service to the nation successfully for more than 150 years.<sup>1</sup> However, the report of Talwar Committee (1997)<sup>2</sup> showed that the total number of Indian post offices were 1,52,000 and the number of employees were 5,95,785 (as on 31-03-1995) out of which departmental staff was 2,85,960 (48%) and extra departmental staff was 3,09,825 (52%).

It seems that during this period i.e., in last almost 10 years (i.e. from 1995 to 2005) the number of staff has been reduced by 15,785. But the number of post offices were increased to the tune of 4000 units (from 1,52,000 in 1995 to 1,56,000 in 2005). *That makes a clear indication that a process of downsizing of the postal employees is being carried on.* As per the report available from

different sources the creation of new post in the department remains closed since the year 1984. It is note worthy to mention a report published in a monthly journal of one of the major postal employees unions, published in August 2005 stated that since the year 2001 the central Government has been abolishing two-third of the posts retired in every year in the department of post <sup>3</sup>

The postal department is a service department, wholly belonging to Govt. of India and it still plays an effective role in providing basic infrastructure to all other economic units of the country irrespective of private and public, which in turn contribute to the whole economy of the country.

It is believed in terms of modern management that an organization is known by its employees. Postal employees in India however, look to be the most distressed section. They are over loaded with work and are engaged with the responsibilities of money related transaction without having basic requirement of security measures. They deal with customers in massive number every day with very restricted physical resources at their disposal. And moreover, they are poorly paid and provided with very limited other facilities. Even the present Indian society is not ready to accept the fact that an employee serving at a counter in a nationalized bank and another one serving in a Post office, both discharge same sort of responsibility. It is unfortunate that employees of postal department are less honored in our society and poorly paid and recognized by the state.

This is the only organization under union Govt., which called Nation-wide, strikes in almost every year under the regime of every central Govt. The employees' unions irrespective of political affiliations seem to be united in pursuing their long pending legitimate demands. Even several times they called off their pre-announced nation-wide strike in pursuance to the assurance by the concerned ministry. There is no denying of the fact that grants of pension/contributory provident fund for the Extra-Departmental employees are the bone of contention. Four different high level committees have been formed by

the Government of India to look into the matter related to pay and allowances of the Extra-Departmental staff. Report of almost all these committees favoured the enhancement of pay and allowances of the Extra-Departmental Staff. But the ministry of finance of Govt. of India regularly denied repeated promises from the concerned ministry in this regard. To comment on this unprecedented happening Justice Talwar in his report (1997) observed "... the Govt. first made a commitment and later on backed away from fulfilling it because of the reservations shown by ministry of finance. The Govt. is collectively responsible and it is not a healthy sign that one ministry proposes and another disposes. Commitments made by one ministry have to be honored by the ministry of finance and the Govt. also should not go back on the assurance given to the house"<sup>4</sup>

It would be worth speaking that such a group of people numbering almost 5,80,000 are working under massive uncertainty and thus do not ever feel safe. They are stressful in real sense and thus cannot be effectively productive nor will they remain anymore capable of discharging their duties in the way it is expected from them.

### **3.2. Genesis**

Though the Europeans made modern postal system popular, there was reference of postal system in existence among the Egyptians during 2000 B.C. Another reference by Confucius in the late 6<sup>th</sup> century demonstrates that postal system was already renowned under Chou dynasty in China (1111-255 BC) with great efficiency.

In India there was evidence of a system of carrying messages during the reign of Allauddin khilji in 1296. It was Sher Shah Suri, who, during his short reigns of 5 years built 2000-miles long road from Bengal to Peshwar for the use

of his postal service. He built 1700 'serais' or relay posts where horses were changed in regular intervals to carry posts for common people<sup>5</sup>.

Long back in the year 1837, the Imperial postal system was introduced in British India. It was obviously made to favour the people and property of East India Company. The system was firstly experimented in few selected cities only. In the name of 'District Postal system' a parallel system was in vogue at the same time in the rural areas. The employees engaged in this district postal system were called Extra-Departmental Agents. There were two postal systems prevalent in the country till the year 1906. However, from 1<sup>st</sup> March 1906 these two systems were amalgamated.<sup>6</sup>

The post and telegraph Department introduced number of 'Branch Offices' under Imperial post in the year 1867. Quite a number of Branch offices were put in the charge of Schoolmasters. "All new offices are placed on an extra-department footing for the period of first six months. A large proportion of these new offices are on a very inexpensive footing, many of them being in charge of Schoolmasters who receive small allowances for discharging postal service"<sup>7</sup>

Investigation of various old records collected from different Philatelic Association show that till the year 1880 the Schoolmasters, shopkeepers, Government Pensioners and others who were entrusted with postal work in branch offices were initially referred to as 'miscellaneous agents'. Their number shown in the annual report for the year 1881-82 under that very heading was only 338 (three hundred thirty eight). The official explanation of the objective of entrusting the postal work in villages to schoolmaster, shopkeepers, and other was made in following statement.

Justice Talwar in his report (1997) commented, "This is an economic method of extending postal facilities to places which are too poor to support an independent post office; and the success already attained in this direction promise a considerable future development of the cheap agency system".

As per the statement of Mr. Ivie. G.J. Hamilton on 31<sup>st</sup> March 1908, the total Extraneous Departmental Agents was 11,387 and the number of other regular staff was 77,013. The staff pattern as on 31-3-1908 was as follows:-

**Table: 3.1**  
**Number of employees in the year 1908: Departmental and Extra-Departmental**

1.	Work shop	33
2.	Superintendents and Asst. Superintendents Inspector	594
3.	Post masters, including Deputy assistant, sub and Branch Post master	6590
4.	Clerk	12715
5.	Road Establishment	20639
6.	Postman and Other servants	24654
7.	Village Postman	8335
8.	Signalers and other servants employed for telegraph work in Combined offices	3453
	Total Departmental staff	77013
	Extraneous Departmental Agents such as school master, station master etc.	11387
	TOTAL	88400

(Source: Outline of the postal history and practice. A report by Mr. I.G.H. Hamilton, 1910.)

It is evident from the fact that the growth of the employees of Indian Postal department was not fully nationalized since its very inception. The city-based post offices were equipped with telegraph facilities with full time staff where as rural based offices were given birth through out India by appointing private agents called 'Extraneous Departmental Agents' and thus created two definite categories of staff in the same department.

Various report made in the British India Postal system depicted that not only Schoolmasters but also people of other professions were also engaged in postal services in rural Branch post offices. A massive Communication network of the stature of Indian Postal Department is vested in the hands of few untrained, ill-equipped people, called extraneous staff so as to reduce the total

cost. Secrecy, sanctity and absolute responsibility for money transaction are some of the essential pre-requisites of any postal system. But in our system two different classes of employees are created and obviously the low paid employees with virtual no service security cannot motivate themselves as their permanent counterpart do through out the time.

Indian postal system has gone through several changes for last more than 150. Till 31<sup>st</sup> December 1984, the postal, telegraph and telephone services were managed by the Posts and Telegraph Department alone. In January 1985, however, two separate Departments for the Posts and Telecommunication were created. On 1<sup>st</sup> October 2000, BSNL, another new department is created. This came as a new entity to operate telephone services in different parts of the country as a public sector unit.

Over and above the private postal system were also allowed to play in the market. This ultimately took a major share of letters and parcel communication. According to World Bank survey in just two years ago, the domestic courier industry had a business worth 24.9 billion Rupees and the share of India post was only 10% of the total market.<sup>8</sup> Money orders through Post office also got a serious setback by the introduction of bank draft and many other modern banking instruments including telegraphic money transfer through nationalized banks. Over and above the recent trend of reduction of interest rate in small savings (as a part of policy of the central Govt. under new economic policy) took a heavy toll again from the post office only.

The importance, usefulness and excellence of Indian post offices are being reduced day by day. Government in the place of policy maker indulged the telecommunication sector by providing massive number of options to play with and investing colossal capital either from domestic or foreign market while, on the other hand closing down different business options of post offices. It (Govt.) also encourages two different systems of working classes in the same

department and thus making the whole group of employees demoralized. It would not be a realistic thinking from any part of the policy makers to reduce the postal system any further because a major portion of Indian rural population is still depending on it. Till date, official communications are being made through traditional postal system. Rural small savings, postal life insurance are still not negligible in spite of recent aggressive financing policy of various rural banks.

### **3.3. Colonial legacy**

Since independence, the number of post offices were increased by 6.5 times (from 22,116 in 1944 to 156,000 in 2004-05). In terms of number of offices it's a massive growth but in reality the picture may speak a different story all together.

In a Memorandum to Justice Talwar Committee on postal Extra departmental staff system (1997), by All India postal Employees union class III and ED, reported that out of total growth of almost 1,34,000 (156,000-22616) post offices, total no of extra departmental post offices are 1,26,385. Almost all of these offices are situated in a rented house with a maximum monthly rent Rs. 200 along with an extra departmental Branch Post master whose basic pay starts either from Rs.1260 (for working hours equal or less than 3 hour 45 mints) or Rs1600 (for working hours more than 3 hours 45 mints).

To spread Postal services among common Indian people, the British rulers started rural Post offices with non-departmental low paid staff so that relevant expenses can be reduced. After 1906 the term village postal system was made abolished and in place of 'Village Post offices' these were designated as 'Branch Post office'.

Annual Report of 1928-29 had shown following classification of extra departmental Branch post masters in whole India.

**Table: 3.2**  
**Profession wise name of the 'ED Agents'**

Profession wise name of the Agents	Number of branch post masters
School master	7680
Station master	335
Telegraph master	14
Government Pensioners	298
Hospital Assistants	24
Pound keepers	131
Misc. Govt. Servants	185
Traders and shopkeeper	993
Village Headman	123
Land Holders and Cultivators	3568
Planters, Zamindars	571
Medical Practitioner	173
Licensed stamp vendors	229
Moulovis, village gurus	319
Indian state	119
Unclassified	715
<b>Total</b>	<b>15477</b>

( Source: Reference: Appendix 16 of the annual report 1928-29.)

It was first stated by the then authority that only Branch-Postmaster would be extragenious in nature for the period of six months only. But the above table included 17 persons who were employed on extragenious nature but not at the category of postmaster in branch post offices

The basic policy of employing ED staff was first violated. As per annual report 1929-30 the extragenious staff other than Postmaster has been increased from 17 to 1179. However the report does not clarify the category of those agents employed in other than Branch post master categories.

The trend of employing extra departmental staff other than postmaster got maintained after independence too. Creating branch offices on extra departmental basis did not suffice. Even Sub-post offices in urban areas were also initiated on extra-departmental basis. In late 1970s the number of sub-post offices abruptly increased from 758 (1/4/71) to over 12000 (1.4.83). So not only Branch post offices sub-post offices were also created on extra-departmental

basis in urban and semi-urban areas of the country making the whole working environment chaotic in real sense.

At present 52% of total 580000 employees are of extra departmental status. They were given separate names and status other than departmental employees but they discharge same responsibility as their departmental counter part does. They work for the country but get a biased treatment from the Government so far as getting facilities are concerned.

### **3.4. Present set up**

In whole of our country we have at about 1,56,000 post offices including GPOs, Head post offices, Sub-post offices and Branch post offices. For administrative advantages, whole country is conveniently divided into 19 circles. Total staff strength at Present is 5,80,000 out of which (48%) are departmental staff and remaining (52%) are extra departmental. Even out of total 1,56,000 post offices, 1,26,500 offices are headed and fully managed and run by extra departmental staff. Except North-eastern states, all other states in India have one postal circle each. Usually each district represents a separate division except in case of extraordinarily large district where more than one division does exist. Every division has at least one head post office in the district head quarter. In case of large district more than one head offices may be there in sub-divisional head quarters. Each circle is represented by one general post office or GPO.

#### **3.4.1. Departmental Staff**

Unlike other central Government departments, the Postal department does not have any Service commission for recruiting staff in the department. Usually requisition of staff is sent by various divisions to the concerned circle, which in turn with the appropriate approval from the concerned Ministry arrange the actual process of appointment. Appointment is generally made in the concerned division on the basis of marks obtained by the candidates in different

examinations. No test in the form of written or viva is conducted by the department. However, such regular appointment remains closed since 1984 . New appointment has been made banned for a long period of time as a part of policy of the Government where new posts are not created. However, inter-departmental appointment through departmental promotion continues during this period. Even extra departmental staff are allowed to be recruited in postman and class-V categories through departmental examination. But in no case the recruitment was substantial in number and most offices are suffering from shortage of effective number of employees. Over and above the policy makers abolished various posts after retirement of the existing departmental staff. As per the policy of the central Government two third numbers of posts of the total number of retiring employees are being abolished every time. The policy remains same through the period, though the Govts at the center are being changed several times during this period.

The required qualification for all the categories at the operational level except postman and class-V category is 12<sup>th</sup> standard (10+2). For postman and class-V staff, the minimum qualification is fixed 8<sup>th</sup> standard. For the category of the employees getting basic salary Rs. 7500 and above the requisite minimum qualification is graduation of any stream. For departmental staff various categories and their pay structure are as follows:

**Table: 3.3**  
**Present Pay Structure of Departmental Staff**

Name of the Staff category	Basic Pay Amount in Rs.
Group D Staff	Cat-I 2550-55-2660
	Cat-II 2610-60-3150
Postman	Cat-I 3050-75-3950
	Cat-II 3200-85-4900
Postal Assistants	4000-100-6000
Postal Supervisor I	4500-125-7000
Postal Supervisor II	5500-175-9000
Postal Supervisor III	6500-200-10000
Group B Staff	7500-250-12000
Group A Staff	8000 and above

(Source: Swamy's Hand Book- CCS (Revised Pay) Rules, 1997.)

For every departmental staff (except Group-D) there is a provision for attending the compulsory training programme for at least 15 days duration. The all India central training center for postal employees is situated at Darbhanga in Bihar. In addition to that employees who are engaged in computer operation are allowed to have special training programme. However, on the job training like any sort of refresher courses or orientation courses are usually not arranged for the in service employees.

The age of retirement for the departmental staff is as usual sixty years like the employees working in other central Govt. departments. All departmental employees enjoy the facilities of earned leave encashment to the extent of 300 days provided the retiring employee has sufficient number of leave on his credit. All the departmental employees are entitled to enjoy following number of leave per year; Casual Leave: 10 days, Earned Leave: 30 days, half –pay-Leave 20 days.

The departmental staffs perform various types of jobs in respective post offices. A sub post office in urban area, accounts office in sub divisional town or Head post offices in the District Head quarters are mainly run and managed mainly by the departmental staff.

#### **3.4.1.1. Jobs usually performed by the Departmental Staff.**

Counter service such as: Selling of stamps and postal stationeries, booking of Registered Articles, Parcels, Speed post, EMS or Electronic Mail services, Money order Booking, Electronic Money Transfer, Savings Bank related work, Recurring Deposit related work, MIS related work, Insurance and discharge or National Savings certificates and KVP, Postal life Insurance, Mahila Samridhi Yojana, Insurance and discharge of Postal Orders, Certificate of Posting etc. are usually performed by the departmental staff in the urban post offices.

Apart from these counter related works other jobs performed by Departmental postal employees are;

1. Delivery of letters, parcels, Money order, Registered items with utmost Care to the common people.
2. Discharging payment of Pension to massive number of retired Govt. Servants.
3. Accounts offices also perform Accounts works in relation to postal employees' salary, pension etc. in addition to above written tasks.
4. Discharging and maintaining of Postal Life Insurance Transactions.
5. Discharging and maintaining the accounts of KVP, NSC and other postal savings Accounts.
6. Receiving and Keeping proper Accounts of Telephone bill, Electric bill paid by Common people.

#### **3.4.2. Extra Departmental staff.**

From the year 1906 'extraneous' or extra departmental agents' had been included in the strength of department staff. The word 'extraneous' and 'extra' having two different dictionary meanings, were thought out prefixed to the designation 'Departmental agents'. This implied that extra departmental agents, as an entity, were distinct from departmental agents. The break-up of the staff strength depicted in the postal Departmental shows that apart from the departmental employees, the other employees engaged to do postal work are the so-called, 'extraneous' or extra-departmental agents. This sort of staff pattern is unique in nature in the Indian Postal Departmental. No other Govt. owned as well as Private department in this country or else where in other countries follow this system of functioning. A major number of staff is treated extra departmental or rather non- departmental who are as such working with full-fledged staff with same capacity to accomplish the same organizational objectives:

The growth of number of ED employees in Indian Postal Department is tremendous. Today out of 156,000 post offices almost 90% are situated in the rural area, and obviously these rural post are fully run and managed by extra departmental staff. The enormous growth of ED staff as reported in report of Justice Talwar (1997) was as follows during last hundred years.

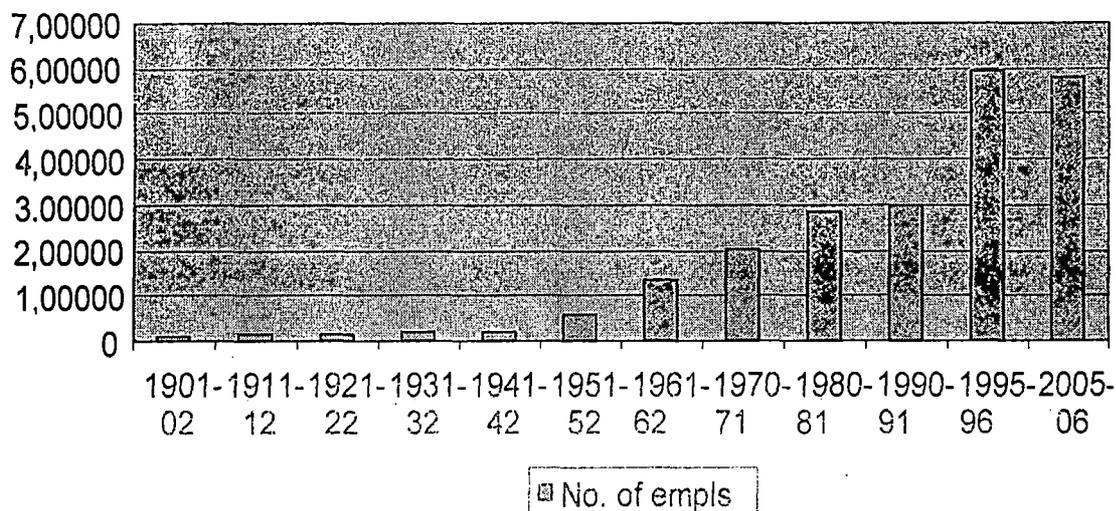
**Table:3.4**  
**Growth of Extra-Departmental Employees'**

Year	No. of empts	year	No. of employees
1901-02	7,925	1911-12	12,269
1921-22	12,634	1931-32	16,954
1941-42	20,389	51-52	56,480
61-62	1,37,460	70-71	2,02,122
80-81	2,84,419	90-91	2,98,743
95-96	5,95,785	2005-06	5,80,000

(Source: Talwar committee report. 1997, p 11)

**Figure: 3.1**

**Figure showing Growth of Extra-Departmental Employees for last 100 years**



\* [The exact number of ED staff since 95-96 is not available in any document issued from the department. In a report of Global consultants spruce image of India Post, world's biggest mail network (AFP) Khaleej Times Online, 21-08-2005 the total number of Indian postal employees showed was 5,80,000. On the basis of percentage of ED employees i.e., 52% of total strength in 95-96 it is estimated that the number of ED employees in 2005-06 would be 3,01,600 (52% of 5,80,000)

\* (At the time of independence total strength was 20746 and of which almost 5000 ED agents fell within the Geographical territory of Pakistan, were transferred from the Roll of Indian P&T Department))

The number of ED agents today is more than that of the departmental employees. Out of 3,09,825 ED agents in 1995-96, about 1,82,808 ED agents were other than ED Post masters. This massive and disproportionate growth of the number of ED staff took place in the post independence period.

A perpetual struggle of the ED staff along with their Departmental counterpart is initiated for a long period of time with the demand of a better recognition of such ED staff in terms of appropriate salary, regularization of service, pension benefit etc. It would be note worthy to mention a judgment of the Supreme Court in this context, in Gokulnanda Das's case where it has been declared by the honourable court "that an extra departmental agent is not a casual worker but holds a post under the administrative control of the state and that, while, such a post is outside the regular civil services, there is no doubt that is a post under the state" <sup>9</sup>. Till the year 2005 the Government of India did not accept the long standing demand of the postal employees to recognize the service of the ED staff at par with their departmental counterpart.

### 3.4.2.1 Appointment and Qualification of ED Staff.

As per the existing rule the required educational qualification of the ED agents are as follows:-

**Table: 3.5**  
**Required qualification of ED Staff**

1. ED- Branch Post Master and Sub Post Master	10 <sup>th</sup> Standard
2. ED- Delivery Agents, Stamp Vendor	8 <sup>th</sup> Standard
3. Other Category of ED staff	below 8 <sup>th</sup> standard even illiterate

(Source: Letter no: 17-366/91- ED and Trg dated 12/3/93 and 43-48/80 pen dated 30/1/81)

However, the data collected by the Talwar Committee on all India basis shows that about 8% of ED agents are Graduates about 51% are having the qualification of Higher Secondary or Secondary and about 31.74 are middle pass (8<sup>th</sup> Standard), 8% are Primary pass and only 1.26% only are illiterates.<sup>10</sup> As per the departmental instruction the recruitment of ED agents has to be made through employment Exchange only. The Supreme Court has held that the restriction imposed by the Central as well as state Governments for filling up the Govt's jobs through employment Exchange only is invalid. As per the judgment of the Court the Govt. can only use Employment Exchange as a medium of recruitment but publication of notice calling for such appointment should be made available in the newspapers also. However, every ED staff of postal department gets an opportunity to seat for the selection process for the appointment of department staff in the postman and class-V categories irrespective of their academic qualification. Indian postal department however, does not have any service commission of its own for selection of staff. It is the prevalent culture of the department to arrange departmental internal selection examinations for the appointment of certain percentage of vacant posts.

### 3.4.2.2 Working Hours.

So far as ED agents are concerned working hour is the bone of contention in their service. The Department substantially authenticates the part-time nature of job through working hours. At present the Branch office is to remain open for three hours only in a day irrespective of the workload. According to the data collected by Talwar Committee from different circles, 50.8% of Branch Offices are kept open for 3 hours, 34.2% Branch Offices for 4 hours and 14.2% Branch Offices even for 5 hours.

At present the time related payment for ED staff is categorized in two scales; Scale for those working less than 3h45m and scale for those working for more than 3h 45m

The system of TRCA (Time Related Continuation Allowance) has been introduced to settle their pay structure. The present recently enhanced pay structure for the ED employee as par the revisions made in the last pay commission is shown below:

**Table:3.6**  
**Present Basic Pay Structure of ED staff**

Category of ED staff	Basic Pay Rs.
1. ED Mail Carrier/ Packer/ for (3 h-45 m or less)	1220
for (5 hours of less but more than 3 h 45 m)	1545
2. ED Branch Post Master for (3 h-45 m or less)	1280
For (5 hours of less but more than 3 h 45 m)	1600
3.ED-Delivery Agents/ Stamp Vendors For (3 h-45 m or less)	1740
4. ED Sub Post Master	2125

(Source: Report on Postal Extra-Departmental Employees, 1997, Justice Talwar, p.29)

In addition to this basic pay they also get a Dearness Allowances of 67% (Present Rate as on 01-01-2006). No HRA and other civil allowances are admissible to them. Through 50% of the D.A. is merged with the basic Pay for other central Govt. employee including the departmental employees but for ED employees this merger is still awaited.

As per the report of Justice Talwar 31% on the ED Branch Post Master in all circles reported that they were not provided with any training at the time of appointment 49% received training for 3 days and 20% hand training for 7 days.

“However most of the Branch Postmaster considered training to be Useful. 88% of the ED staff favored training for at least 2 weeks. 7% preferred for 3 weeks and 3% suggested for training tenure of 4 weeks.”<sup>11</sup>

It is the norm of the postal department that the trainings of ED-Sub-post master and ED- Branch postmaster should be extended by the officer of the rank of Inspector of post offices but in Practice it is found that training is given by mail overseers.

### **3.4.2.3 Social Security**

The retirement of ED staff is fixed at 65 years of age. However, the departmental staff gets retired at the age of 60 years only, like other staff of the central Govt.. It may be due to fact that during the initial period various Government pension holders were appointed as ED Branch Post Master and they were given at least 5 years of time to work with the department. However the ED employees do not get any pension or any other benefit equivalent to pension at their retirement.

The department of Post in their affidavits in reply to the petitions before various central Administrative Tribunals have emphasized the Pension matter of ED staff in following way;

".....they are a class apart, they cannot be compared to the regular civil servants, they are part-time workers and are allowed to pursue other avocations during their leisure time and that the allowance they get is meant to supplement their income from the other source and, therefore, they can not be compared with full-time Government employees of the Central Government for grant of Pension" <sup>12</sup>

On 3<sup>rd</sup> Aug 1994 an order from the desk of the secretary of the postal department conveyed about the reservation of Union Govt. in paying pension benefit to the ED employees on the ground of financial implications. In contrary it is to be mentioned that "Pension" is a property as the Hon'ble Supreme Court of India has laid it down. It is a property right Under Article 31 (l) of the constitution and the claim of pension "is also property under Article 19 (l) (f) and is not saved by sub-article 5 of Article 19".

In a welfare state like ours the contemplated social service to be provided cannot be equated in terms of financial gains. The deficit of the department of post, it appears, is mainly on two grounds firstly in rural areas a post office is opened with the full knowledge that it would be running at a huge loss and secondly, because of low tariff on postal charges.

The information available for the financial year 1993-94 depicted a total loss of Rs. 388 corers due to operation cost and low tariff. The details of which is as follows:

**Table: 3.7**  
**Head wise financial loss of the Department in the year: 1993-94**

<u>Items of costs</u>	<u>Amount In cores</u>
1. Post Card	94.45
2. Printed Card	12.05
3. Letter Card	69.80
4. Regd. News paper (Single)	34.67
5. Regd. News paper (Bundle)	4.31
6. Book Post	20.99
7. Parcels	10.10
8. Registration	122.18
9. Value Payable	4.52
10. A/D Card	1.39
11. Indian Postal order	13.54
<b>Total</b>	<b>388.09</b>

(Source: Report on Postal Extra-Departmental Employees, 1997, Justice Talwar, p.47)

It is true that by granting pension to ED agents that burden would increase further but on that ground the right accrued to the ED agents by the law of the land cannot be denied to them. The Government, being the employer, should bear this burden just as they are doing it in the case of other 39 lakhs employees working for the state.

The ED employees at present are entitled to ex-gratia Gratuity at the rate of half month's basic allowance as drawn by them immediately before the termination of service for each completed years of service subject to a minimum of Rs. 6000 or 16 and a half month's basic allowance last drawn, which ever is less. In contrast the permanent Departmental employees getting pay up to Rs. 3500 p.m. getting a minimum amount of gratuity from Rs. 1,00,000 to Rs. 2,50,000 w.e.f. 1.4.1995 at an enhanced rate.

The ED agents are also not provided with any provident fund facilities. Justice Talwar (1997) on his recommendation advocated that GPF should

also be applicable to them and they may be given the facility of advances, and withdrawals from their fund. It is also recommended that the Govt. may introduce the deposit linked insurance scheme in respect of the ED agents and suitably fix the amount.

ED employees at present are allowed to enjoy 10 days leave for every 6 months continuous work they perform. There is no provision of overtime facilities for the ED staff. No medical allowance is paid to them nor even they are reimbursed any medical expenses by the department.

### **3.5 Different Commissions .**

Since 1957 the central Government has made 4 different committees to look into the matters related to pay and service conditions of the extra departmental staff. These 4 committees were set up in the years 1957, 1970, 1984 and the latest one in 1995. The first committee, known as Rajan Committee, was set up after the constitution of second central pay commission. The second, was the Madan Kishore committee and the third was the Savor committee. These two committees were formed consequent to the setting up of the third and fourth central pay commission. The fourth committee was formed in the year 1995 just before the fifth central pay commission constituted.

The first central pay commission was of the considered view that the ED agents fell within the purview of the pay commission but second and third pay commission excluded them from the same purview with the ground that the department of post have treated them as agents and a class apart from the regular staff. The third pay commission however, held that the ED agents were not the holder of civil posts. However, the fourth pay commission did not agree with that perception. It was observed that the matter was beyond controversy that ED agents were holders of civil post. In this context the Savor committee was constituted to look into the service conditions of ED

agents. And finally just before the fifth pay commission another committee headed by Justice Charanjeet Talwar was constituted to look into the same issue with a greater perspective including the retirement and pension objectives of the ED agents.

The first two committees however were entrusted to examine the financial implications of the recommendation of the pay commission in favour of the ED agents. However, the revenue generation by the rural post offices became the main constrain and accordingly these committees could not make any positive recommendation for enhancing the allowances to the ED agents. These committees did not look into the matter of social justification of the status of ED staff who work for the country in the Govt. establishment but not recognized by the state with true value.

It has been the experience at all levels that the remuneration of the ED agents is very poor. There are limitations in increasing it, not only due to lack of resources, but also because of low volume of works they are assigned with. In this circumstance it is virtually impossible for the ED agents to subsist exclusively on the emoluments he/she receives from the department. It is, therefore, essential to ensure that he has an alternative source of income so that he/she receives from the Department would be in the nature of a supplementary income. If this condition is not imposed, the discontent of the individual and constant agitation for increase in the allowances will be a permanent problem to be faced by the Department".<sup>13</sup>

While commenting on ED agents working in the Metropolitans, classified cities and in urban areas, the Savor committee in his report observed "Mostly they (ED agents) work in the same office side by side. Common examples are of Stamp vendor, Mailman and Sorter. The only difference in performance, as admitted by supervisory officers, is that ED employees ordinarily give higher output of work per hour than the regular

employees. Yet the ED employees engaged in cities are denied not only proportionate wage for identical work but also other recurring benefits".<sup>14</sup>

The fourth committee headed by Justice Talwar submitted his report to the concerned ministry in April 1997. This was the latest committee set up by the Government of India to go into the service conditions, wage structure and to examine the reasonableness of introducing a social security scheme for extra-departmental agents working in the department of post. Among several recommendations he made, few important recommendations are as follows:

- i) The ED agents should be considered as civil servants of Govt. of India. The system should be renamed as 'Rural Postal System' and the ED employees should be called as 'Rural Postal Employees'
- ii) The committee has proposed to increase the emoluments of the extra-departmental agents by payment of salary on pro-rata basis of payment to the whole-time departmental employees.
- iii) It proposed to have assured career progression within the ED system if not promoted to departmental staff category.
- iv) The committee also recommended that the ED agents be granted pension, gratuity and General provident Fund. The minimum pension has been fixed at Rs.610 /- per month.

The central Govt. however did not comply with the recommendations of any of these committees in full extent. However, the nomenclature of the ED agents have been changed. At present they are called Gramin Dak Sevak. The salary structure however, is proposed to enhance but not at par with the recommendation nor did the Govt. follow the recommendation of fifth pay commission. Social security in terms of pension and other facilities are still denied to the ED staff and till date they were not even offered the status of civil servants.

### 3.6 Postal Employees' Union

Postal employees' Union has a long background in the Indian soil. They fought together for the interest the employees of the department whether departmental or extra-departmental. All the recognized union has a long history of struggle in their achievements as well as in their failure. Though there is sharp difference of political ideology and affiliation but remarkably they fought together to protect the common interest of the postal employees. The joint effort of the unions belonging to different political affiliation made possible several all India based strike successful in protest against the oppression of the common employees.

4 (four) days all India postal strike in the year 1993, 7 (seven) days all India postal strike in the year 1996, 1(one) day and 8 (eight) days all India postal strike in the year 1998 and most rigorous strike in the history of the Indian postal employees i.e., 14 (fourteen) days all India postal strike in the year 2000, were some of the joint efforts by the unions irrespective of the political inclination and affiliation. It would be noteworthy to mention here that all these strikes were held to protect the right of the ED agents of the department along with other related issues. Few strikes were even called to protest against the non-compliance of the promise made by the authority in the process of settling earlier strike. Leaders of almost all the unions do not differ at least in one point that the whole postal department is the most neglected organization under the central Govt. and the concerned ministry of the central Govt., in whichever political combination it belongs to, does have an agenda if not opened, to downsize it (the postal department) to the lowest extreme.

As per the norms of the department the employees' union must be recognized by the department through valid membership of the union. The prevalent rule is that at least 30% of the membership of the total strength must be there in favour of a particular union for due recognition by the department. At

present 2 (two) National level unions are recognized in the postal department; National Federation of Postal Employees (NFPE) and National Union of Postal Federation (NUPF). The former one i.e., NFPE is more strong in terms of the number of membership. As per the information available 65% of the total membership of the postal employees belong to this particular union. Though NFPE maintains direct political contacts with the left parties still it is not an affiliated organ to the largest left trade union unit i.e., CITU. On the other hand NUPF is a union having direct political affiliation with Indian National Congress and its close allies and it is also a constituent organ of INTUC.

The subsidiary postal unions under NFPE are; All India Postal Employees' Union Group-C; All India Postal Employees' Union Post Man and Group-D, All India Postal Extra Departmental Employees' Union, All India Postal Administrative Office Employees' Union, All India Postal RMS and MMS Employees' Union ( Group C and D ), and All India Postal Accounts Employees' Union. Similar numbers of subsidiary unions are also attached with NUPF almost in the same fashion. Bharatiya Majdur Sangha a Trade Union outfit of Bharatiya Janata Party also has a postal employees' union at their credit but due to insufficient number of members this very union is not recognized as yet by the department. Each and every circle has a separate branch of these subsidiary unions and these branching spreads from circle to divisions and from division to office units.

In recent years where trade union movements in third world countries are facing various new challenges to combat with, the postal unions in India seems to be perhaps in the in right track. Though in the process of collective bargaining apparently they were not so successful but their mass support base remains almost intact. The common members of the unions do have great faith in their leadership and a unique sense of unitedness is observed among the postal employees.

### 3.7 Physical Infrastructure

We, the urban based people are generally accustomed to interact with district post offices or offices situated in the cities and urban areas. The departmental staff runs most of these offices and the postmasters of these offices are also from the departmental employees. The district offices may have building of their own but sub post offices in urban areas are run in most of the cases on rented house. General understanding of the common Indian people is that most of the post offices in the country seem to be sick and equipments in use are backdated and slow in nature. The branch offices situated in villages depict more and more poor picture. It is difficult to assume these offices as central Govt.'s establishment. Village post offices cover major portion of the rural India. Among these village post offices 13% of Branch offices cover a population less than 2000; 47% of Branch offices cover a population of more than 2000 but less than 5000; 15% of Branch offices cover a population of more than 5000 but less than 7000 and 18% of Branch offices cover a population of more than 7000.<sup>15</sup> It would be noteworthy in this context that most of these offices are run and managed by single man called extra departmental Branch postmaster.

Leaving the question of office infrastructure of urban based post offices aside, if we look into the issue of basic and minimum infrastructure of village based Branch post offices an interesting picture comes out in the surface. According to the data collected by the Talwar committee 56% of the Branch Offices do not have a single chair to work with and 50% do not have a single tables and 14% of such post offices are not provided with scales-balances, weights etc. The reasons given by the field officers to the committee during its visits was that the available funds are not even sufficient to provide furniture in the departmental sub offices in the urban areas. Branch offices in the rural areas, therefore, get the last priority. In practice ED Branch postmaster/ED sub postmaster purchase tables and chairs from their own meager resources.<sup>16</sup>

### 3.8. Summing Up.

- 1) The Indian Postal department possesses a massive and loose structure with almost 1,56,000 office ends spread all over the country. There is a sharp discrimination visible in the status of the offices situated in the rural and urban areas of the country.
- 2) 52% of almost 5,80,000 employees are of Extra-Departmental status. This huge work force is not getting equitable treatment at par with their departmental counterpart. This sort of discrimination can be sorted as the root cause of all anomalies existed presently in the department.
- 3) The influence of the employees' union on the work force is predominant and the political division of these unions is also sharply prevailed in the post offices.
- 4) The Government though constituted 4(four) high level committees to solve the employees' related problems, nothing constructive could be done to dissolve the burning issue like recognition of ED staff in terms of their salary and other job facilities.
- 5) In most of the cases both types of the employees seem to be overloaded with heavy and monotonous jobs. There exists nothing which can reduce the same in the near future due to the fact that new appointment and creation of any new posts are not being ventured by the department since the year 1984.
- 6) Whole department has been suffering from a sense of scarcity of resources in terms of providing basic infrastructure necessary for the department. The physical working environment remains age old and in exception of few selective cases, the department for a prolonged period of time has taken up no long-term effort of modernization.
- 7) In the age of huge subsidy by the government (i.e., before 1991) the accumulated financial loss of the department took a heavy toll. The post 1991 scenario changed a little. The postal tariffs were enhanced by few times of the old rate but due to opening up of the postal sector to private

courier operators, the benefit of the enhanced postal charges could not suffice to compensate the financial loss of the department. Hence, as per the latest report the market share of carrying the postal items for this Government owned department has been reduced down to 10% only.

- 8) The whole situation all of sudden caught this massive number of employees somehow in to a big surprise. They started feeling unsecured and in few cases find themselves in the room of huge uncertainty. These sudden changes along with 'not so flexible' attitude of the Government, compelled the employees to observe several nationwide strikes without putting much thought on the consequences of such strikes.
- 9) Meantime, the employees seem to have lost the social dignity to some extent what they used to enjoy just few years back. The employees, in the course of all these developed certain symptoms of psycho-somatic consequences due to various adverse elements job or organization.

## Notes, References and Reports:

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- 12) Ibid. p. 45.
- 13) Savor committee report, 1985, para 12-12.
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- 15) Talwar committee report, 1997. p 23.
- 16) Ibid. p. 68.