



# A JOURNEY OF COCHIN RAILWAY MAIL SERVICE



by Joseph Stephen

**The purpose of this exhibit is to tell one of the most fascinating and important story of the *Railway Mail Service of Cochin.***

Prior to 1900 the Madras Railway line was only up to Shoranur. The ***Shoranur-Cochin Railway***, was the only line owned by the Cochin State. This line was however, leased to the South Indian Railway Company under an agreement for construction, maintenance and operation.

When the first ever passenger train whistled its way to Kochi on **July 16, 1902** through the newly built Shoranur-Cochin railway line, it was the result of sheer hard work and pains taken by the **King Rama Varma XV, the then Maharaja of Cochin**, who had dreamt of seeing a train chugging into the princely state. Records at the archives reveal that the Maharaja had a prolonged, detailed correspondence with the Resident of the British Empire since 1862 on the ways and means to establish the railway line.



Finally, the State was asked to bear the entire expenditure involved in laying the lines. The Kingdom of Cochin then was not rich enough to bear the substantial investment. But the Maharaja made the decision to sell a part of the valuables in his custody. The treasury records of Kingdom of Cochin substantiate the fact that the Maharajah sold **14 gold elephant caparisons (thanga nettippattams)** that belonged to the Sree Poornathrayesa temple at Tripunithura and other personal ornaments which belonged to the Cochin Royal Family to fund the project.

It was during the **Diwanship of P. Rajagopalachari (1896-1901)**, the railway line was completed and under the **Diwanship of C.G. Herbert (1930-1935)** the line was converted from Metre Gauge to Broad Gauge. The total length of the railway line from Shoranur to Ernakulam was **65 miles**, but it passed through certain portions of the Travancore State to a total length of **18 miles**. For protection of the customs revenue of the Travancore State, special arrangements were made, with the approval of British Indian Government, to establish customs houses at Angamali, Alwaye and Edapalli, the three stations in the Travancore Territory.

During the early 30's the Cochin section of the Railway line was converted into a broad gauge and was extended to the Cochin Harbour Terminus on the Willingdon Island by connecting the Island with the main land. The purpose of converting the line into broad gauge was to give proper access between towns of South India and the Port. The extension involved establishment of new railway stations.

The Anchal Railway Mail Service was introduced by **Diwan Pattabhirama Rao** and it was at his instance that the Anchal Mail began to be carried from Ernakulam to Shoranur. Until the Anchal Department was abolished and taken over by the Indian Posts and Telegraphs Dept., Unlike the Post Office Red elsewhere the Cochin State had for its Anchal System a bright green colour and Railway Mail Coach therefore was painted in green with the Royal Emblem in gold colour.

After the establishment of the railway line, the Anchal Mail Service was commenced in 1904 (as per the earliest recorded mail). There were several distinct post marks on the Cochin Railway Mail Service, these postmarks were in use for Incoming trains and those for Outgoing trains. The letters coming down from Shoranur to Ernakulam were franked with **"C.S. IN"** and the letters going out with **"C.S. Out"**, the letters **"C.S."** presumably stand for "Cochin State or Cochin-Shoranur". Both the "IN" and "OUT" cancellations are found with Set numbers, **SET No. 1, 2 and 3** denoting that the day and night service of the Cochin State Section of the Railway was run by three sets of clerks working in relays. There is one another distinctive type of Railway Postmark which is not a cancellation. This postmark consists of a series of triangles, one within the other, containing the inscription **"Posted in Wrong Train"** in the interspace between the two outer triangles. This postmark was applied to mails which were posted on the wrong train.



Letter dispatched from Oorakam on 28 Kar, 1079 (12/08/1904) to the Maharaja of Cochin, Tripunithura with CS IN/Set No. 1. This is the earliest type of cancellation without bisecting lines in the center, unlike the later cancellation the date here is inscribed at the bottom.



Surface route Oorakam to Trichur - 3 Miles  
and from Ernakulam to Tripunithura - 6 Miles Type 1  
Railroute - 45 miles. Dia: 23mm



6th Raja 4p. postcard from unspecified town to Trichur, posted in an incoming train to Ernakulam - CS IN/26 Kar 24 (10/08/49)/Set No. 1 with "Posted in Wrong Train" postmark. Trichur A.O. delivery cancellation not clear.



Type 2  
"Posted in Wrong Train"  
triangle 26/11/5mm