

**RAIL TRAVEL IN THE 1860s:
TOWARDS A SOCIAL HISTORY OF THE INDIAN RAILWAY**

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CERTIFICATE

*Certified that the dissertation entitled **RAIL TRAVEL IN THE 1860s: TOWARDS A SOCIAL HISTORY OF THE INDIAN RAILWAY** submitted by **AJITA DAYAL** is in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the degree of **Master of Philosophy** of this University. The dissertation has not been submitted for any other degree of this university and to the best of our knowledge is her own original work.*

We recommend that this dissertation be placed before the examiners for evaluation.


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Hita Singh

CONTENTS

	Introduction	i
Chapter One :	Changing Perceptions of Time and Space	1
Chapter Two :	The Experience of Rail Travel	26
Chapter Three:	Working for the Railways	50
Chapter Four :	Crime, Law and Order	71
	Conclusion	98
	Bibliography	102

Introduction

The principal objective of this study is to analyse and describe the interaction between the railways and Indian society in the 1860s. When they were introduced in India, the railways were a new technology and a faster means of travel as well as being an important instrument of imperial policy. In addition to Europeans, the railways employed Indians and Indians along with Europeans were users of railway transport. Even those who had no direct relationship with the railways could not remain oblivious to its presence. Faster speed, precise time, and shortening distances became symbols of the age that the railways came to represent. As a metaphor of change, and especially of rapid transformation, the railways had arguably no other competitor in the artistic imagination.

India, with its complex social structure, heterogeneity and cultural resilience shared a multi-faceted relationship with the railways. For many, the rail journey was the first point of contact with modern technology and mechanical time. The railways brought to the fore some of the existing contradictions and prejudices within Indian society. It became a focal point for the interaction between the British and the Indians, and served as a mirror for race relations though in less stereotypical ways than many would have imagined. Even as the working of the railways gradually changed the very rhythm of social existence,

railway policy, in turn, was guided by contemporary Indian notions of social hierarchy and norms of behaviour. It is this complex interface between the railways and Indian society which is the principal concern of this study.

Eric Hobsbawm has argued that

the analytical advantage of the colonial situation...is that here an entire society or group of societies is sharply defined by contrast with an outside force, and its various internal shifts and changes, as well as its reactions to the uncontrollable and rapid impact of this force can be observed and analysed as a whole. Certain forces which in other societies are internal or operate in a gradual and complex interaction with internal elements of that society, can here be considered for practical purposes and in the short run as entirely external, which is analytically very helpful.¹

However, even though the railway was an "outside force", to consider it as "entirely external" and study its "rapid impact" on Indian society in terms of cause and effect would not bring out the complexity of this interaction. For instance, railways were traditionally viewed as the harbingers of westernization and modernization. This view has been convincingly repudiated by Chris Bailey, who suggests that social change needs to be viewed as a continuous long term-process, and primarily a product of the internal dynamics of Indian

¹E.J. Hobsbawm, "From Social History to the History of Society", in M.W. Flinn and T.C. Smout (eds.), Essays in Social History, Oxford. Clarendon Press, 1974, p. 22.

society. According to Bailey, railways achieved only a superficial westernization.²

This dissertation attempts to study this process of interaction through four inter-related chapters, each examining a distinct aspect of this complexity. The sources used are mostly those pertaining to the East Indian Railway Company. The period studied is the 1860s, the decade which saw the completion of the first trunk line⁵ connecting the four main cities of the country: Bombay, Calcutta, Delhi and Madras.

Existing historical scholarship on the Indian railways has focussed on four main areas: the construction of the railways, their early working and railway policy; their working as an instrument of Imperial rule; the impact of the railways on the Indian economy; railway labour and the growth of unionization.

From this study's point of view, the most useful descriptive narratives were those relating to the early years of the railways and published before the end of the 19th century. The earliest of these is Edward Davidson's, The Railways

²C.A. Bayly, Rulers, Townsmen and Bazaars: North Indian Society in the Age of British Expansion, 1770-1870, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1988.

of India: with an account of their rise, progress and construction.³ Based on the dispatches and reports kept at the India Office at London. Davidson's study describes how the first lines of the East Indian Railway, the Great Indian Peninsular Railway and Great Southern of India Railway were constructed. The book presents an interesting insight into British perceptions of the role of the railways in India, and of the conditions in India that affected construction and availability of labour. Horace Bell's, Railway Policy in India⁴, written in 1894, is the earliest work on railway policy. It focusses on the concerns of the government and the railway companies and the ends which they sought to secure through their policies.

In the first decades of the 20th century, there were two important books that described the development of policies, working results and administration historically. These were N. Sanyal's Development of Indian Railways⁵ and C.P. Tiwari's The Indian Railways: Their Historical, Economical and Administrative Aspects⁶. They provide a useful account of contemporary critiques of railway policy, the conditions of third class travel and the lack of

³ London, E & F.N. Spon, 1868.

⁴ London, Rivington, Percival & Co, 1894.

⁵ Calcutta, University of Calcutta Press, 1930.

⁶ Ajmer, Yedic Yantralaya, 1921.

employment of 'natives'. S.C. Ghose's Lectures on Indian Railway Economics⁷ covers areas not emphasised in the above two books. For instance, the lectures describe objectives and methods of train and traffic control and the nature of Indian passenger traffic. The administrative structure and policy of the railways are also critically analysed.

The railway appears in the nationalist critique of economic policy as an instrument for the 'drain of wealth'. The nationalists analysed the terms of the guarantee interest payments, the deleterious effects of the railways on Indian industry, the high cost of material and construction, and the use of railways for the export of food grains. Dadabhoi Naoroji's Poverty and Unbritish Rule in India and R.C. Dutt's Economic History of India are two the best known writings within this genre.

The controversial "impact" of the railways on the Indian economy, especially on development of industry and changes in cropping patterns, has continued to be the focus of later studies, as, for instance, in John Hurd's essay on railways in the Cambridge Economic History of India⁸ and Bipan Chandra's

⁷Part I, II and III, Calcutta, University of Calcutta Press, 1923.

⁸Dharma Kumar, (ed) The Cambridge Economic History of India, vol.2: c. 1757-c. 1970. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1983.

analysis in The Rise and Growth of Economic Nationalism in India.⁹ These studies also referred to administrative unification, the spread of education and modernization as the socio-cultural aspects of the impact of the railways on India. A more recent attempt to study, at the micro level, the relationship between the expansion of the railways and economic change was in Hurd's article, "Railways and the expansion of markets in India, 1861-1921."¹⁰ Hurd concluded that "as railroads expanded, prices in districts across India began to converge towards a single price. The unavoidable implication is that despite possible institutional and religious barriers the expansion of markets did take place."¹¹

McAlpin in her article, "Railroads, Prices, and Peasant Rationality: India 1860-1900"¹² proved Hurd's conclusion to be wrong by showing that "transport capacity sufficient to free farmers from the need to store grain against bad years was not developed until a decade or more after transport sufficient to permit merchants to equalise urban prices for grain was available."¹³ Price responsiveness became evident only in the 20th century, which contradicts the

⁹New Delhi, People's Publishing House, 1966.

¹⁰Explorations in Economic History, 12, 1975, pp. 263-288.

¹¹*Ibid.*, p. 275.

¹²Journal of Economic History, 34, 3(1974), pp. 662-683.

¹³*Ibid.*, p. 683.

view that the introduction of the railways from the 1860s onwards was responsible for large scale changes in Indian agriculture.

The financing of the railway has been studied in the context of economic conditions in Britain and British policy of *Laissez Faire* by Daniel Thorner.¹⁴ Thorner identified the factors and circumstances that resulted in the acceptance by the East India Company of the terms of the guarantee contract. Thorner also traces the setting up and growth of the East Indian Railway Company as well as the Great Indian Peninsular Railway Company and analyses the strategy that these Companies adopted which helped them secure such favourable terms. The financial arrangements of colonial India and the economic relationship between Britain and its colony have also been analysed by Sabyasachi Bhattacharya.¹⁵ Bhattacharya critiques British *Laissez Faire* and shows how utilitarianism and non-interventionism became a form of discriminatory interventionism in its application to India. Frederick Lehmann's essay reinforces the argument that British economic policy sought to secure the interests of British industry and capital.¹⁶

¹⁴Investment in Empire: British Railway and Steam Shipping Enterprise in India 1825-1849, Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 1950.

¹⁵"Laissez Faire in India" in The Indian Economic and Social History Review, Vol II, No. 1, January 1965, pp. 1-22.

¹⁶"Great Britain and the Supply of Railway Locomotives of India: A Case Study of 'Economic Imperialism'", in The Indian Economic and Social History Review, Vol II, NO.4, October 1965, pp. 301-305.

Railway labour has been studied to trace the growth of unionization in the early 20th century as, for instance, in Lajpat Jagga's work. Ian Kerr's recent study, Building the Railways of the Raj: 1850-1900,¹⁷ focusses, for the first time, on the construction labour force. The contribution of this labour force is largely undocumented in the British records of the period which focus on the progress of the various projects, mode of construction and the management of the construction process. Given the nature of the sources, Kerr's study despite being a pioneering work too is handicapped by this limitation.

The framework of existing scholarship on the railways has not permitted an exploration of the most immediate aspect of the introduction of railways in India: its interaction with Indian society. This is the subject of the present study. It studies the following four aspects of this interaction: changing notions of space and time; the experience of rail travel; working for the railway, and, crime, law and order on the railways.

Chapter one analyzes how rail travel changed perceptions of time and space and in what way existing concepts of the physical world determined the use of this new technology. This chapter reviews the evidence of rail travel in the 1860s to understand contemporary notions of socio-cultural time and the reactions to the use of clock time or mechanical time, which first came into

¹⁷New Delhi, Oxford University Press, 1995.

general use because of the railways. This chapter examines how these two notions of time defined and determined each other. Next, the chapter trace the stages through which the concept of one standard time for India evolved, relating it to the expansion of the railway network. Finally, it seeks to understand how perceptions of space and distance changed with rail travel.

The railway passengers represented a cross section of Indian society and the duration of rail travel became also a view of social patterns in the larger society. Chapter two seeks to describe the experience of rail travel in terms of the social contact in the railway compartment and on the platform. The chapter describes the clash of perceptions of caste-oriented social hierarchy of the Hindus with a class conscious and racially-ordered view of hierarchy of the British.

Chapter three examines the British policy regarding the European work force of the railway. This policy is viewed in the context of the British concern to maintain the social distance between the rulers and the ruled and the notion of superiority of the white man over the 'native'. This chapter seeks to examine the context in which the railway colonies - small enclaves of a westernized life style - were set up and to understand what role they were designed to fulfill. It also seeks to the understand the world of the first 'native' employees and the attitudes that they encountered in the work place.

Chapter four examines the development of the law and order system and relates its evolution to the introduction of railway transport. This chapter first examines the evidence of crime on the railway in the 1860s and the earliest arrangements for policing the railway. Through this discussion it attempts to understand the fears and insecurities of the railway companies and the government which defined their respective policies.

Chapter One

Changing Notions of Time and Space

Peasant or workmen, irrespective of caste or creed, are ordinarily staid and even lethargic people, and the women share this characteristic in full measure... They cannot be hurried. What other minor causes cannot achieve, however, is left for the railway journey to produce. The vision of a train seems to epitomize the clash of conflicting world traditions-the progressiveness of the West and the somnolence of the East.-Indian State Railways Magazine. 1899?

Not only did the railways increase the speed of travel, but - no less significantly - they provided the first opportunity of long distance travel (an option which had until then existed for just a minority) for a large section of India's population. The extent of passenger traffic exceeded all British estimates, and was, until 1869, larger than the volume of goods traffic. This new means of travel made it possible to reach destinations earlier considered too distant, thus transforming concepts of distance and space. As Dionysius Lardner put it, in one of the earliest studies of the railway age, "[d]istances practically diminish in the exact ratio of the speed of personal locomotion."¹ The higher speeds of locomotion must also have had an impact on the perception of time of the average Indian passenger, introduce as it did a relatively sudden change in the pace of his social existence. In less obvious ways, therefore, rail travel was responsible for re-defining existing differentiated notions of time, but more concretely the railways also sought to legally establish a single uniform time for the whole country.

¹Dionysus Lardner, Railway Economy: a treatise on the new art of transport, its management, prospects and relations, New York: A.M. Kelley, 1850, p.5.

Socio-cultural Time

Dominant 19th-century British attitudes towards India, influenced by writings such as James Mill's, *History of British India*, were largely dismissive of Indian scientific knowledge, religion and society.² Specifically, the Indian view of time was thought to be cyclic and opposed to the secular linear time of Europe with its related belief that change was progress.³ The cyclic view of time was considered to be a product of traditional Hindu philosophy; and, it was believed, that this philosophy did not recognize historical change because of the central belief that time was tied into an infinity of recurring cycles.⁴ Further, it was argued, that since the Hindu conception of a transcendent reality is believed to be the basis of phenomenal world, it generated a "kind of paralysis of the individual sensitivity to time."⁵

Besides its philosophical shortcomings, the Hindu approach to time was regarded, by the end of the 19th century, as an obstacle in the way of progress. As Michael Adas puts it:

² Michael Adas, Machines as the Measure of Men: Science, Technologies and Ideologies of Western Dominance, Delhi, Oxford University Press, 1990, p. 166.

³Romila Thapar, Time as a Metaphor of History: Early India, Delhi, Oxford University Press, 1996, p. 4.

⁴*Ibid.*

⁵Hajime Nakamura, "Time in Indian and Japanese Thought", in J.T. Fraser (ed.), The Voices of Time, Amherst, University of Massachusetts Press, 1981.

Most colonizers would have heartily agreed with Lord Curzon's conviction that Indians operated according to a time sense which was not only different from but doggedly contrary to that which the British sought to establish in the sub-continent.⁶

These views are now recognized as being 19th-century stereotypes, and Indian cosmology is understood to comprise both linear and cyclic times. However, it remains true that in early India time reckoning was largely based on natural time and used the luni-solar calendar where "time markers, both of the individual life cycles and involving the environment,... were gradually ritualised."⁷ Ritual time, as this has been termed, was established according to calculations based on the phases of the moon and the more precise solar and seasonal units. This system still prevailed largely unchanged till the end of 19th century.⁸

Natural time may also be described as socio-cultural time which has been used to represent the rhythms of traditional life.⁹ As Emile Durkheim argued,

⁶Michael Adas, Machines as the Measure of Men: Science, Technologies and Ideologies of Western Dominance, Delhi, Oxford University Press, 1990, p. 248.

⁷Romila Thapar, Time as a Metaphor of History: Early India, Delhi, Oxford University Press, 1996, p. 10.

⁸*Ibid.*, pp. 10-11.

⁹In his essay, "Socio-cultural time", Sorokin wrote: The possession of ways and means to time the behavior of the members of any group in such a way that each member apprehends the 'appropriate time' in the same way as do other members has been possibly the most urgent need of social life at any time and at any place. Without this, social life is impossible. Cited in Jeremy Rifkin, Time Wars: the primary conflict in human

"societies organise their lives in time and establish rhythms that then come to be uniformly imposed as a framework for all temporal activities."¹⁰ Modes of transport play an influential role in establishing this socio-cultural time. The time taken to cover a certain distance, for instance, can be viewed in not just numerical terms, but as a subjective perception of that distance in terms of the means of transport available.¹¹ Consequently, if there is a change in the dominant mode of transport, it will probably have an impact on that society's idea of time.

Mechanical Time

British rule in India in the 19th century witnessed a clash between indigenous socio-cultural time and a culture organized around mechanical clock time. Mechanical time was not rooted in the periodicities of nature, cosmic clocks and annual agricultural calendars that ordered time for rural agricultural societies. By the 18th century, the use of clocks was already popular in

history, New York, Henry Colt & Co, 1987.

¹⁰Cited in Stephen Kern, The Culture of Time and Space: 1880-1918, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1983, pp. 19-20.

¹¹See: Wolfgang Schivelbusch, The Railway Journey: the industrialization of time and space in the 19th century, Berg, Leamington Spa, 1986.

Europe.¹² While clocks had been used to control social activity even in the medieval period, it was in the early years of the industrial revolution that clock time was used by factory owners and merchants to control the work time of their labour. Edward Thompson's incisive essay, "Time, Work-Discipline and Industrial Capitalism", brings out clearly the distinction between task-oriented labour within peasant societies and timed-labour within industrialised societies.¹³ Hired labour replaced family labour, there was division of labour and allocation of roles so that time became the employer's money. But the creation of the industrial work force was gradual:

...by the division of labour; the supervision of labour; fines; bells and clocks; money incentives; preachings and schoolings; the suppression of fairs and sports - new labour habits were formed, and a new time-discipline was imposed. It sometimes took several generations (as in the Potteries) and we may doubt

¹² See: David S. Landes, Revolution in time: Clocks and the making of the modern world, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1983.

¹³ According to Thompson:

First, there is a sense in which [task-orientation] is more humanly comprehensible than timed labour. The peasant or labour appears to attend upon what is an observed necessity. Second, a community in which task-orientation is common appears to show least demarcation between 'work' and 'life'. Social intercourse and labour are intermingled - the working-day lengthens or contracts according to the task - and there is no great sense of conflict between labour and 'passing the time of the day.' Third, to men accustomed to labour timed by the clock, this attitude appears to be wasteful and lacking in urgency.

E.P. Thompson, "Time, Work-Discipline and Industrial Capitalism", in M.W. Flinn and T.C. Smout (eds.), Essays in Social History, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1974, p. 42.

how far it was ever fully accomplished...¹⁴

In India, it was the Railways that made the general population aware of mechanical clock time. Railway working necessitated the keeping of accurate time over distances along the railway line. This was essential for the safe running of trains on a single line:

to avoid collision, detention and unnecessary loss in steam, coal, oil, allowances to the train crew, and capacity, also to ensure safety and to give preference to important trains and to arrange crossings of trains at convenient points.¹⁵

Construction of time-bills, keeping all these requirements in mind, was done using graphs for easy visual representation. A time bill's vertical lines represented time, the day of 24 hours being divided into 24 sections and each section into ten or twelve small sections of six or five minutes each in the chart. Horizontal lines represented distances, which for the sake of convenience were taken to be at uniform lengths of five miles each. Diagonal lines represented trains. The fast trains were marked out, first at speeds of 25 miles per hour, and the next fast train at $16 \frac{2}{3}$ miles per hour; finally, the slow trains at $12 \frac{1}{2}$ miles per hour. The stoppages at each stations needed to be for six minutes. Slow and fast engines were used to pull either heavier loads or lighter loads. Train movements also had to be based on the capacity

¹⁴*Ibid.*, p.64.

¹⁵ S.C. Ghose, Lectures on Indian Railway Economics, Part II, Calcutta, University of Calcutta Press, 1923 pp. 13-14.

of the section between two stations in terms of lines and sidings to receive and dispatch trains.

Since trains passed both up and down the line, the time-table laid down very distinctly the stations at which trains were to stop and pass each other and no trains except those so identified the time table were allowed to be in motion, nor were likely to be run beyond the meeting and passing stations.

The new technology thus came to impose its own regime. It dictated the time when passengers could begin their journeys and when they would end them; it also ensured a relative certainty, compared to earlier modes of transport, and enabled planning of time. In fact, using the railway required that passengers plan their journeys ahead of time, to reach the station on time, and to plan their schedule in order to be able to make a forward or return journey. All important stations displayed the time in large sized clocks on platforms. A society that was not prepared by anything in its past experience now needed to come to terms with this new regime. This encounter was complex and, in many ways, symbiotic. Railway time was modified by as was the time-sense of the Indian travellers. This needs elaboration.

The temporal dimensions of the new technology, in terms of perceptions of duration, rate of recurrence, planning, synchronization, sequential structure,

and temporal perspective, contrasted those of socio-cultural time. However, the railways were not able to always maintain the precision that was thought to be a necessary component of mechanical time. The use of a single line meant that

[i]f one train going East is late half an hour or an hour, most probably four trains going West will be detained the same time at the passing stations, and then in turn these trains going Westward detain trains running Eastward, and the whole of the passing appointments become deranged. The time-table then becomes a dead letter, and some trains have to be canceled and not run, until the late trains get to the end of the line, so that a fresh and clear beginning may be made the next day according to the time-table.¹⁶

In the face of frequent disruptions of the traffic, the effort of the traffic officers was always to check delays. Several accounts, including those by British travellers, suggest that trains were routinely unpunctual.

Moreover, the Indian traveller's apparent inability to come to terms with mechanical time is revealed in a petition of the British Indian Association of the North Western Provinces to the Viceroy and the Governor General in Council in October 1866. The petition asked for provision of shelter and accommodation at station for third class passengers who

have always to wait in crowds of hundreds for several hours at a time in an open and unsheltered plain to purchase their tickets. It cannot be expected from them that they should come in only at the proper time. Most of them have an indefinite idea of time, knowing little beyond pruhurs of 3 hours each. A large number

¹⁶ E.B. Ivatts, "Indian Railways", in Times of India, 18 September 1866.

too, come in from surrounding villages and rural districts where no time is kept. Beside, the Timetable of the Railway Company constitutes a study by itself.¹⁷

Granted that there is usually an element of exaggeration in such petitions, it still provides a rich insight. For most villagers, Railway time was their first encounter with a 24 hour notation or uniform clocktime. The petition also indicate that in the rural areas along the railway line (where no time is kept), the approximate time measurement was in Puhurs of three hours each depending on the position of the sun. This problem was compounded by a time table which was incomprehensible to most.

It was not surprising then that descriptions of crowds waiting at stations are frequent in British accounts of the time. British writings often commented on the remarkable patience that these crowds displayed.¹⁸ The urgency associated with mechanical time had quite obviously not affected most, who still operated according to their natural time. Even in 1871, some British officials were convinced that nothing could replace solar time in India:

Whatever the government may order natives will still regulate their calculations by the apparent attitude of the sun and European's domestic arrangements and to some extent his

¹⁷NAI, Railway Branch, PWD proceedings, November 1866. Petition by the British Indian Association of North West Provinces to the Viceroy and Governor General of India, 6 October 1866.

¹⁸See, for instance, Horace Bell, Railway Policy in India, London, Rivington, Percival and Co., 1894.

official duties depend on native practices. If natives for example go to their midday meal they will go to it at apparent noon though that by Madras time may be 11 A.M. in Assam and 1 P.M. at Karachee. And if they are wanted for noontday work - it will be necessary to make it twelve at these hours - whatever the clock might show to be according to 'Madras' time.¹⁹

Train speeds, slow in themselves (25 miles an hour), were made slower by the frequent number of spots they had to make because of the 'native's' apparent resistance to the imposition of mechanical time. Horace Bell wrote in 1894:

They prefer, for many reasons (among others the absence, owing to sundry objections of the provision of conveniences in the carriages) to find long halts every few hours, where they can "spread themselves out", buy and eat such food as they allow themselves on such journeys... discuss the incidents of travel, the prospects of crops, or the chances of some everlasting law-suit.²⁰

He adds further that

the discomfort...and the many worries incidental to the discipline of railway arrangements, are accepted by them with a patience, and even good-humor, which is really surprising and which is, or at least should be standing evidence of the possibilities of development of this traffic.²¹

One reason for the frequent delay of trains was that scheduled stoppages were nearly always extended.

¹⁹ NAI, Public branch, Home proceedings, Part B, 15-8. Noting, 19 August 1871.

²⁰ Bell, Railway Policy in India, p. 201.

²¹ *Ibid.*

Solar time, and the pace of everyday life seem to have persisted in the early years despite the advent of rail travel. Travel at night was not popular and this was highlighted in the final report of the Special Commissioner, Railway Department, to the Secretary, Government of India:

I find, from an inspection of the weekly returns, that most of the reported accidents occur at night. Signals are mistaken; Pointsmen are run over sleeping at their posts etc. while as regards passengers, chiefly of the third class (I speak with special reference to the North western section) not one quarter of the number travel by night that might be expected to make use of the rail if the opportunity were afforded to them of travelling by day.²²

On the Madras railways, lower fares were introduced for night travel.²³

In any case, rail travel, despite its popularity, seemed to be viewed with some suspicion. Surely a mode of transport that could run rough shod over nature and natural rhythms was bound to have an adverse affect on the human body itself, or so ran the logic. The Bengal Hurkaru of 23 August 1854 refers to the reactions of a Bengal scholar, who had planned to make a trip on the Calcutta line. He

duly consulted the stars with the help of the Almanac and fixed upon Thursday for the journey as a "lucky" day. He fortified himself for the expedition by bathing 3 times in the river and repeating the name of his tutelar god 937 times... He went as far as Hooghly, but declined to undertake the return journey, because, said he, too much travelling in the car of fire is calculated to shorten life, *for seeing that it annihilates time and*

²²NAI, Railway branch, PWD proceedings, July 1864.

²³NAI, Railway branch, PWD proceedings, December 1866.

*space and curtails the length of every other journey, shall it not also shorten the journey of human life?*²⁴

Perhaps Sorokin was right in his description of a hypothetical clash of time perceptions. He wrote:

Time becomes devitalized. It loses its reality and we find ourselves in an exceedingly difficult position in our efforts to orient ourselves in the time process, to find out "where we are" and where are the other social phenomena on the "bridge of time".²⁵

But what is interesting about the Bengali scholar is not just his fear of rail travel, but also the ease which he seemed to blend astrological calculations with rail travel - a practice not uncommon even today.

Yet another persistent feature of the 'time war' was the apparent inability of Railway officials to understand the pattern of Indian travel. The outcome was overcrowding. Officials dismissed this as a problem occurring only at certain times of the year. It is interesting that the traffic arrangements did not take into consideration these periodic but predictable increases in traffic towards particular destinations at certain times of the year caused by annual

²⁴ Cited in Michael Satow and Ray Desmond, Railways of the Raj, New York and London, New York University Press, 1980, p. 69. Emphasis added.

²⁵ Cited in Schivelbusch, The Railway Journey: the industrialization of time and space in the 19th century, p. 37.

pilgrimages or festivals. Indeed, there was a long-standing tradition of *Panchanks*, which listed these festivals and pilgrimages according to the lunar calendar, and would have been accessible to any educated railway official.

Later, S.C. Ghose, in his *Lecture on Railway Economics*, suggested the following:

No advertisement is needed in India to inform the people of places where there are religious shrines... and every Hindu villager, literate and illiterate, makes it a point to know the exact dates of the various important melas and fairs, no advertisement is needed to tell them of the dates of happenings of these melas and fairs, but what they really want is cheap fares and accommodation in trains so as to be able to reach the places of pilgrimage in time for bathing in holy waters or to visit temples and worship on exact dates. If reduced fares are granted, or extra trains are given it would certainly pay the railways to advertise the same in every village of importance. The notices should be printed in the vernacular of the district in which they are circulated and should be distributed through the help of District Civil Authorities, who would assist the railways in securing the assistance of Union Boards, village Panchaayats and of police thanas. Pandas or the priests of various shrines who visit all parts of India to bring pilgrims would also be useful canvassers and advertisers.²⁶

Train speeds continued to be slow throughout this period, specially problematic for long distance travel, third class carriages were not carried through continuously up to destinations, but were detached and added to various trains finally reaching their destination. Although various complaints of 3rd class passengers were taken up-specially regarding arrangements for food

²⁶Ghose, Lectures on Indian Railway Economics, Part II, p. 85.

and water and passenger amenities, slow train speeds were never an issue. In fact, it was suggested that to improve punctuality, train speeds could be reduced. When doubling of sections was contemplated, it was to remove bottlenecks in the movement of goods traffic that were created at certain times of the year. There were obviously technological constraints in signalling and track arrangements, and in the number of engines available, but there was certainly no attempt either to aim at higher train speeds. As Horace Bell wrote in 1894:

to those who are conversant with the habits and character of the oriental, it will be readily understood that no difficulty has at any time arisen on the question of the speed or accommodation in trains in dealing with native passenger traffic. To the vast majority of native travellers, a distance of 200 miles in the 24 hour is fully as much as they expect...²⁷

A slightly different picture emerges in the writing of G. Huddleston in his history of the East Indian Railway. He wrote:

Prolonged experience has shown that the Indian likes to travel as fast as he can be carried, and at the present time there is no better proof of this than the preference given to the recently introduced 3rd class express trains over the slow passenger trains, but it took many years to recognize this, and it was not until 1897 that 3rd class passengers were first admitted to the mail trains below Allahabad on the East Indian Railway, and not until 1905 that express trains were first run for lower class passengers.²⁸

²⁷Bell, Railway Policy in India, p. 201.

²⁸ Cited in *ibid.*, p.190.

The 24 hour Clock and Standard time:

Though till 1886, railway timetables used A.M. and P.M. to state the time, it was not the most prudent method as a simple misprint or oversight could cause much confusion. However, when in 1891, there was a worldwide movement to introduce the 24 hour notation, counting the number of hours from midnight to midnight numbered from 0 to 24, it was found that "the Madras Railway is the only Railway in India or Burma which has not already adopted the 24 hour notation" and that the Madras Railway had already planned to introduce this system. This system was to be a first step in the establishment of universal time and the universal day as the date of the world.

The next step was the instituting of a standard time for India. The idea of instituting a uniform time has its origins earlier in the 19th century. Railways in a sense, created the need for such a standard. During the 1860s, the issue of time for railways was debated and discussed in a correspondence between the Agent of the East Indian Railway, the Governor General and the Consulting Engineer. The debate reflected the conflicting interests and conception of local elites and the Government of India, and between the interests of general administration and the requirements of railway working. Consequently, the transition from a system of keeping local time to a uniform standard for all of India occurred haltingly through stages which are traced in the discussion that follows.

During the middle of 19th century, local time comprised solar time maintained at most stations in the country, and true mean time that was kept at the major ports.²⁹ Till the time that the speed of transport was slower and the changes in local time over the area covered, there was no problem. The first length of line completed in a East to West direction was the line up to Benaras in 1862. Since the time at Benaras was behind that which was shown by clocks carried on the train, it was anticipated by the Agent that there could be confusion in the minds of both railway staff and passengers about train timings. Indeed, the working out of the time bill would require a clarification of this issue. The Agent of the East Indian Railway consequently wrote to the Secretary to the government of India in the PWD:

You will perceive that these differences are likely to lead to confusion, when trains have to work in conjunction, unless some Standard Time is fixed for all India. I would therefore suggest that Jubbulpore or Cawnpore time be fixed as standard. I beg that I may be authorized to arrange for the time at either of those places to be telegraphed throughout the line daily, by which all Railway Station clocks may be regulated from the 15th October next.³⁰

The Governor-General, however, felt that Calcutta time could be maintained up to Benaras, and that would solve the problem. The general question could

²⁹ NAI, Railway Branch, PWD proceedings, August 1872, No. G-8662. Letter from Agent, East Indian Railway Company to Secretary, Government of India, PWD, 4 August 1862.

³⁰ NAI, Railway Branch, PWD proceedings, August 1872, No. G-8662. Letter from Agent, East Indian Railway Company to Secretary, Government of India, PWD, 4 August 1862.

be considered when the main lines were completed.³¹

In March 1864, on the eve of the opening of the line up to Delhi, the Agent broached the question again.³² It is significant that despite the precedent of the Railways in Great Britain, where during the 1840s, Railway Companies had proceeded to standardize time individually for their own convenience, and finally after the establishment of the Railway clearing House and the concept of a national railroad network, Greenwich time was introduced as the standard time, the Agent's initial proposals did not convince the Governor General of the need to give up Local time, at least not in the all important Presidency towns.

The Governor General believed that the differences of local time (between Calcutta and Delhi of about 45 minutes and between Calcutta and Bombay of about 63 minutes) were

too great to admit of the same time being adopted for all India, even if there were no other objections to such a course and some system of change in the time kept at various parts of the Railway seems essential.³³

³¹Governor General's noting on *ibid*.

³² NAI, Railway Branch, PWD proceedings, April 1864, No. 2076 G. Letter from Agent, East Indian Railway Company to Consulting engineer, Government of Bengal, 12 March 1864.

³³ NAI, Railway Branch, PWD proceedings, April 1864, No. 101R/1814. Letter from Under Secretary, Government of India, PWD to Joint Secretary, government o Bengal, PWD, 16 April 1864.

With its three seats of government and vast distances, the British Empire in India did not comprise one spatial entity even to the Governor General.

The Governor General's second objection was on the grounds that true local mean time was required for shipping and therefore maintained by community generally at the great port cities. It could not be abandoned for the sake of convenience of the Railway, nor would it be convenient to have a "double system of reckoning time", for the community generally and separately for the Railway.³⁴ As a solution, the Governor General went on to suggest his own system of Dual Time for the Railway staff, whereby Calcutta time would be carried up the line to the North West as far as the limits of the local Bengal supervision (or where the staff changed) and Allahabad time would likewise be carried up to Delhi and down the line up to the limit of supervision of the North West provinces. This would ensure the minimum amount of difference between Railway Time and local time which would be acceptable, in the same way as the error of solar time from true mean time. As the Deputy Agent pointed out, on the time bill of the railways, however, this would show trains taking either much more or much less time, than in fact they did.³⁵

³⁴*Ibid.*

³⁵NAI, Railway Branch, PWD proceedings, July 1865, No, 792G. Letter from Deputy Agent, East Indian Railway to Consulting Engineer, Government of Bengal, PWD, 1 June 1865.

When the issue was broached for the third time in April 1867, on the completion of the Jubbulpore line, the Delhi Railway and the Indian Branch Railway, the Consulting Engineer intervened to state that the change of Railway time was, besides an inconvenience in working the line, a source of risk for the public that had to travel in trains run on a single line.³⁶ The government had already adopted Madras time as the standard for its electric telegraph. The Governor General conceded finally, but only to the extent of adoption of a uniform time by East Indian Railways for its own lines, as an experimental measure, to be reviewed later. He believed that there was no early prospect of communication across India. It would be necessary only then to have a uniform "standard of time throughout India for Railways." (as opposed to a Standard Time for India generally).³⁷

When this system was introduced train timetables showed both Railway time and local time for the arrival and departure of trains. The East India Railway adopted Jubbulpore time which approximated closely that of Madras. In 1871, it was recorded that though the East Indian Railway had been using Jubbulpore time, there were no instances of

³⁶ NAI, Railway Branch, PWD proceedings, June 1867, No. 766G. Note by Deputy Consulting Engineer, Government of Bengal, 22 April 1867.

³⁷ NAI, Railway Branch, PWD proceedings, June 1867, No. 513R. Letter on behalf of Governor General, 21 June 1867.

any inconvenience arising by the ordinary transactions of Calcutta life being regulated by its own local time. Every person knows from the Railway timetable at what hour local time train starts and they act accordingly as far as railway travel is concerned, while in all other matters they are guided by nature, taking the sun for their guide.³⁸

By 1871 a majority of Railway Companies had adopted Madras time as the standard for their time tables. The East India Railway, of course, used Jubbulpore time which was close to Madras time, however, this step had not been taken consciously or formally and several railways used other standards. For instance, Eastern Bengal Railway, State Railway to Port Canning, BCCI Railway, Kurrachee line and also the Great Southern of India Railway. The PWD wrote at the behest of the Railway Companies to the Home Department that since Madras time was adopted by the Telegraph department and was also observed as the standard railway time, the use of "one system of time" all over India would be convenient and its adoption to the exclusion of local time would not be difficult. The Superintendent of the Geological Survey of India, in his note on the subject, contrasted the use of local time corresponding with the sun's altitude and what he believed would be "an imaginary and theoretical symmetry which could not be maintained." He believed that the case of England where Greenwich time was used along all the English railways, and widely even otherwise was not comparable to India which had a much greater

³⁸ NAI, Public Branch, Home proceedings, Part B, Nos.15-8, 1871. Note by Col. H.L. Thuillier, Surveyor General of India, 1871

longitudinal extent. The officiating Superintendent of the Trigonometrical Survey of India pointed out that the transmission of Madras time itself over all of India could become inaccurate if transmitted only from one centre and, therefore, observatories at Calcutta and Bombay and the Trigonometrical office at Dehra should supply Madras time. Where there were no railway clocks tables could be used which could show the correction for Madras time from Local time. However, he recommended that only "all large places on or within a radius of 100 miles of the various railway lines in actual connection with Calcutta, Madras and Bombay be directed to keep Madras time..."³⁹

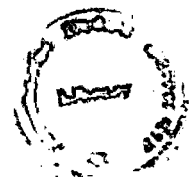
The Home Department discussions concluded with the opinion that

...most of the objections are eminently futile and seem to forget altogether that we have a railway system which enters largely into the affairs of everyday life and must affect the different reckoning of time which cannot be avoided as it works on a uniform system.⁴⁰

The convenience of this system was emphasized as there could be no difficulty in replacing any pre-existing system. It was observed that "governments of at least ten stations in India have no means whatever of ascertaining the time"⁴¹

Most of the objections were answered and the local governments and

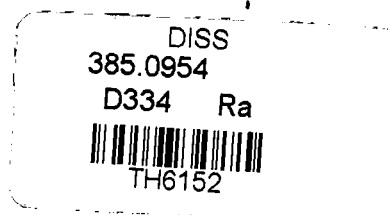
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³⁹NAI, Public Branch, Home proceedings, Part B, Nos.15-8, 1871. Note by Superintendent, Geological survey of India.

⁴⁰ NAI, Public Branch, Home proceedings, Part B, Nos.15-8, 1871.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*



administrations actually carried out the order with the exception of Bombay and Calcutta.

When in 1891, the issue of the adoption of Standard Time for India based on the adoption of an assumed meridian at a longitude exactly 150 or a multiple of 15 degrees from Greenwich, it was reported that India was

already familiar with the principle underlying the proposed standard time, and it will really gain nothing by the proposed standard time except for purposes of telegraphic communication with foreign countries and perhaps in a small degree in matters of navigation, as it will perhaps make it easier for ships to at once adjust their chronometers to Greenwich time at every port of call.⁴²

The matter was thus to be further discussed in the Telegraph and Marine Departments. As far as the Railway Branch is concerned, all Railways kept Madras time, except in Burma. And for ordinary civil purposes the Railway time was used throughout India excepting only the two presidency towns of Calcutta and Bombay where local time was still kept much to the inconvenience of intending railway travellers.

It was anticipated that the introduction of Madras or any other standard time in Calcutta and Bombay would not be acceptable. As one official noted:

Minds are much prejudiced on this subject, and it would be long before the general adoption of such a timing could be applied to Calcutta. An instructive instance of this prejudice occurred in

⁴²NAI, Public, Home, May 1891, Part B, No. 58.

Bombay a few years ago when the Governor desired that Madras or Railway time should be kept there, and the clocks under government control were put to this time, while independent institutions and commercial firms made it a point of honour to adhere to local time. The result was considerable confusion, and in the end the popular feeling carried the day.⁴³

Keeping in mind the large East-West extent of India, it was suggested that

to apply the proposed system to India, it would be necessary to have only one time for railways, which might have its zero to correspond with the mean solar passage on the anti-meridian of the 75 degrees, and if popular prejudice could be sufficiently got over, to have two civil times - one for the Western portion of the country, corresponding with Railway time and one for the Eastern portion, one hour in advance of railway time.⁴⁴

This suggestion was, of course, never implemented. The instituting of one standard time for all India was not achieved till the last decade of the 19th century. It is significant that Calcutta and Bombay, both centres of commerce, fiercely resisted the imposition of Madras time despite government pressure. This may have been because merchants were resistant to change, especially of a kind which was closely connected with their traditional business practices.

Time and Space:

Till the early years of the 20th century, most passengers were short-distance travellers. A 1923 study of the railways, when the network had expanded

⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

much beyond what it had in the 19th century, noted:

The one feature to be noted is that in spite of it being possible to travel hundreds of miles continuously by rail in India, which is a country of long distances, the average distance travelled by 3rd class passengers, taking all the railways together was not more than 33 miles/passenger.⁴⁵

This indicates perhaps that socio-economic relationships had not expanded outward to a significant extent with the introduction of the railways.

A similar inference can be drawn from the research on railways, prices and cropping pattern. Even in the first few decades after the introduction of the railways in India, there was no evidence of a radical transformation of the rural economic structure in terms of price equalization, market expansion or changes in cropping patterns. Large scale changes in the pattern of the economy were to become significant only after the end of the 19th century. As one important study has concluded, the transport capacity "sufficient to free farmers from the need to store grain against bad years was not developed until a decade or more after transport sufficient to permit merchants to equalize urban prices for grain was available."⁴⁶ Quite clearly, the creation of larger market networks incorporating rural areas would expand the villagers' view of the world: from a village or a rural market to a larger spatial entity. This,

⁴⁵Ghose, Lectures on Indian Railway Economics Part II, p.82.

⁴⁶Michelle McAlpin, "Railroads, Prices and Peasant Rationality: India, 1860-1900". Also see John Hurd, "Railways and the expansion of markets in India, 181-1921", Explorations in Economic History, 12, 1975 pp. 263-288

however, did not happen in the first decades of the railways. It was the annual pattern of rainfall which made it necessary for the cultivator to store grain and to continue the traditional mix of food and cash crop. This seems to indicate a differentiated notion of space for the peasant and the merchant.

To conclude, this chapter has focussed principally on the encounter between Indian socio-culture time and mechanical time introduced by the British. The Railway was for many their first experience with mechanical time. In 1871, an official in the Home Department had noted that no civil time was kept at a lot of stations in the country. This had changed by 1891. In this year, an official observed, that railway time was used as civil time in most parts of the country with the exception of Bombay and Calcutta. This relates clearly to the expansion of the railway network and the standard practice of mounting large clocks at railway stations, which displayed the railway time. It is significant that the popular awareness of mechanical time (when Madras time began to be generally used as civil time) was accompanied by the awareness of a larger spatial entity. But was this awareness of mechanical time differentiated across space and between social groups? This question needs further exploration.

Chapter Two

The Experience of Rail travel

By causing all classes of society to travel together and thus juxtaposing them into a kind of living mosaic of all the fortunes, positions, characters, manners, customs, and modes of dress that each and every nation has to offer, the railroads quite prodigiously advance the reign of truly fraternal social relations and do more for the sentiments of equality than the most exalted sermons of democracy.- Constantin Pecqueur, 1839.

In Europe, during the first decades of the 19th century, the railroad was regarded by the 'progressive' thinkers, especially the followers of the 'utopian' socialist Saint-Simon, as "the material force that would realise the equality and fraternity of 1789 more effectively than any merely formal political emancipation."¹ Constantin Pecqueur's Economie sociale, (from which one excerpt has been reproduced above) articulated this belief most vividly: "It is the same convoy, the same power that carries the great and the small, the rich and the poor..."²

But as Wolfgang Schivelbusch in his account of the industrialization of time and space in the 19th century put it, "the continuing history of the railroad...exploded the notion that social equality would result from the technically equal situation of the travellers."³ This became starkly obvious in

¹Wolfgang Schivelbusch, The Railway Journey: The Industrialization of Time and Space in the 19th Century, Leamington Spa, Berg, 1986, p. 70.

²Constantin Pecqueur, Economie sociale, Paris, 1839, vol. 1, pp. 356. Cited in *Ibid.*, p.72.

³Schivelbusch, The Railway Journey, p. 71.

the hierarchical form that railway travel adopted. In England and Belgium, unlike France - where goods services began before passenger services - various classes of travel had been instituted from the start. While third and fourth class passengers, up to the 1840s, were carried in open boxes on freight trains, the more privileged classes travelled in carriages that looked like couches mounted on rails. In Schivelbusch's words: "[n]ot only was this design forgetful of the industrial origin and nature of the railroad, it was a literal attempt to repress awareness of them."⁴

Classes of Rail Travel:

Rail travel in India was introduced with three classes for passengers and four for goods.⁵ In 1861, the Great Indian Peninsular Railway added a fourth class for passengers and this was subsequently introduced by the Eastern Bengal, Oudh and Rohilkhand, Madras, Sind and Punjab railways as well.⁶ State Railways adopted this practice in 1872-73. Where the fourth class was provided, the fares varied between two and four pies per mile per passenger. Intermediate ('Inter') class was introduced by East Indian Railways in 1870.⁷ 'Inter' was intended to be a class between second and third; in reality, 'Inter'

⁴*Ibid.*

⁵N. Sanyal, Development of Indian Railways, Calcutta, University of Calcutta Press, 1930, p.102.

⁶*Ibid.*, p. 102.

⁷*Ibid.*

merely replaced the third class and the fourth class was thereupon called third class. The official discussion that led to the introduction of four classes on the East Indian Railway is summarized later in this section.

The experience of travel in first and third class contrasted sharply.

Travelogues and other descriptions by Europeans travelling on Indian trains in the first or second class, in the 1860s, suggest that the comfort on these classes compared favourably with trains in Europe. For instance, Louis Rousselet - who travelled in India between 1864 and 1870 - recorded:

Thanks to the sleeping carriages, I had been able to travel over this immense distance with little fatigue - sleeping at night on a comfortable little bed, and walking up and down in my carriage during the day; and at stations, unprovided with buffets, I found a servant who, when he had taken the orders for my meals, telegraphed onto the next station, where my breakfast or dinner awaited my arrival.⁸

Even in the 1860s there were elaborate arrangements made to cool first class compartments during the summer.

Although third class traffic contributed to over 87 percent of the earnings by the end of the 19th century, there was no corresponding investment made to improve conditions of travel in this class.⁹ Two reasons were often provided

⁸ Cited in Michael Satow and Ray Desmond, Railways of the Raj, New York and London, New York University Press, 1980, p. 34.

⁹ See S.C. Ghose, Lectures on Indian Railway Economics, Part I, Calcutta, University of Calcutta Press, 1927.

for the lack of facilities in the third class. First, it was argued that since the fares were so low it was not possible to give better accommodation to this class. Second, it was believed that the people who travelled in third class did not require improved facilities. The Lieutenant Governor of Bengal, in his Minute of May 1863, even suggested that existing conditions on the third class were too comfortable:

The real fact is, that the third class carriages on all the lines are a great deal too comfortable for the class of men for whom they are intended, and that if they were mere open trucks unprotected from the weather they would then be used by persons who in this climate are accustomed to exposure to sun and rain and who endure it on all other occasions as a matter of course, without sense of hardship; while those who habitually shelter themselves from the weather would be compelled as they ought by such means to be compelled, since they can well afford it, to travel in covered carriages and pay second class fare. ¹⁰

The third class carriages were not only bare and without lavatories, but often overcrowded. Images of third class carriages, with passengers packed like cattle, are frequent in British travelogues of this period. Initially, each passenger was provided a seating space of only fifteen inches, which was increased to a "liberal" twenty inches in 1859.¹¹ To the official mind, the frequent overcrowding in third class carriages was due, in part, to the Indians "ingrained habit of travelling in family parties, which sometimes number

¹⁰NAI, Railway Branch, PWD proceedings, Part A, August 1863, No 9. Minute by Lieutenant Governor of Bengal, 13 May 1863.

¹¹NAI, Railway branch, PWD proceedings, March 1860, No. 986. Secretary of State's dispatch to Government of India, 28 October 1859.

scores." It was suggested that the 'natives' "try to obtain accommodation in the same vehicle, irrespective entirely of the degree of discomfort to which they subject themselves and others."¹² In addition, it was also felt that 'native' traffic fluctuated, and was unpredictable in its movement. The Government Inspection Report of May 1865 noted that "fluctuations of native passenger traffic at any given station defies the possibility of making timely and adequate provision for special local wants."¹³ As pointed out in Chapter one, 'native' traffic was probably not as unpredictable as it was made out to be. Instead, it may have been official insensitivity to the increase in traffic during seasonal festivals or annual pilgrimages that may have been a cause for overcrowding.

In May 1865, the Inspection Report suggested that the three class division was based too rigidly on the English pattern whereas the social classes in India were far greater in number.¹⁴ The Report pointed out that East Indian Railway trains ran "immense distances", and besides benefiting the agricultural population, could serve the mercantile and trading community as

¹² Railway Gazette, 11 November 1929, p.6.

¹³ NAI, Railway Branch, PWD proceedings, Part A, May 1865, Letter No 3576, 21 March 1865.

¹⁴ NAI, Railway Branch, PWD proceedings, Part A, May 1865, No. 357G. First Inspection Report of government inspector on the travelling arrangements of Bengal Railways, 21 March 1865.

well.¹⁵ This potential for passenger traffic had been even recognized earlier. In 1863, when the rail line was opened from Calcutta to Benaras, it was anticipated that completing the last link between the "metropolis of India" and the "heart of the upper trading-districts" would lead to a substantial increase in the revenue.¹⁶ This hope does not seem to have entirely been realised as far as passenger traffic was concerned. The Inspection Report suggested that the apparent lack of enthusiasm for rail travel among the mercantile and trading community may have been because they require "a certain standard of comfort in excess of that afforded by country conveyances on the great lines of road" or the third class.¹⁷ Consequently, the report recommended four classes of vehicles and four scales of fare to be introduced on the East Indian Railway.¹⁸

Some changes were made in the design of vehicles when the four classes were introduced. In the case of the third class carriage, five compartments of twelve seats each, without shutters or venetians, were fitted for 60 passengers. The

¹⁵*Ibid.*

¹⁶NAI, Railway Branch, PWD proceedings, Part A, August 1863, No. 24. Note by Assistant Consulting Engineer to government of Bengal, Railway Department, on the subject of first fruits of the opening of the East Indian Railways to Patna and Benaras.

¹⁷ NAI, Railway Branch, PWD proceedings, Part A, May 1865, No. 357G. First Inspection Report of government inspector on the travelling arrangements of Bengal Railways, 21 March 1865.

¹⁸*Ibid.*

compartments were fixed in the carriages to avoid overcrowding.¹⁹ This class was to be, in the Lieutenant Governor's opinion, the fourth class. The intermediate class, which was started on an experimental basis between Howrah and Ranigunge, was recommended by the Lieutenant Governor to be introduced over the entire line: each vehicle would accommodate 50 passengers in five compartments of ten seats each and would be provided with venetians or shutters. The second class carriages would now have cushioned seats and, in the first class already fitted with berths, special family accommodation was to be provided.²⁰

There were problems other than overcrowding, associated with third class travel, including the absence of lavatories and the lack of access to drinking water, which the Governor General had addressed earlier in 1864. He had issued a circular, which sought to direct the attention of the Lieutenant Governor, to these problems. He suggested measures for improvement of accommodation for 'native' passengers such as the provision of lavatories and "urinaries" at all stations though not on the trains. The Governor General also suggested measures for supply of food and water "in a manner suitable to the habits of the natives of the country" and for cleanliness of the carriages. In addition, he directed that lights be provided on the carriages and on the

¹⁹*Ibid.*

²⁰*Ibid.*

platform at night; and *serias* be constructed at all important stations.²¹

Race and Gender

The British pattern of hierarchical travel, though not always the three class division, was found to be useful for conditions in India. Indeed, the separation of classes not only applied to the travelling accommodation, but soon also to separate waiting rooms and separate booking facilities for third class passengers who were mostly Indians. While passengers on the third class, usually short-distance travellers, were provided spartan accommodation, they contributed - as indicated earlier - significantly to the profits of the railways. In contrast, first and second class travel, which was restricted by the high fares to European and a small section of the 'native' population, contributed insignificantly to total profits.²² A senior manager of the East Indian Railways had even suggested that it would be more profitable to the railway to pay the first class passengers to stay away.²³ But this was an isolated view for even while the removal of the 'Inter' class was often contemplated, the first and second classes - which carried less than three percent of the total

²¹ NAI, Railway Branch, PWD proceedings, Part A, October 1864, No. 7. Circular No 13 R, 27 August 1864.

²² See: Horace Bell, Railway Policy in India, London, Rivington, Percival and Co., 1894.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 190.

passenger traffic - were regarded as essential.²⁴

Although never explicitly stated, the first class was obviously created with the upper class European traveller in mind. This was implicit in the official discussion on railway fares. For instance, when the question of lowering of first and second class fares was discussed in 1868, it was suggested that before a decision was made, it needed to be demonstrated that a reduction of the fares would be followed by a corresponding increase of the traffic to at least compensate for the loss in earnings:

Therefore, if it be held, as has been remarked sometimes, that these two classes in the main serve only the requirements of the European and Eurasian portions of the community there seems little reason to anticipate very material increase to the traffic from lowering the fares.²⁵

It was pointed out that in the Bengal Presidency, large section of the European community travelled second class because of the wide difference in the fares of the first and second class, and if this difference were less this class of passenger traffic would be transferred to the first class.²⁶ However, the loss in the number of second class passengers would not be made up even with a reduction in second class fares as few 'natives' travelled on this class even at

²⁴Ghose, Lectures on Indian Railway Economics, Part III, p. 109.

²⁵NAI, Railway Branch, PWD proceedings, Part A, February 1868. Note by Lieutenant Colonel C.J. Hodgson, officiating Under-Secretary to the Government of India, PWD, 4 July 1867.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

six pies a mile (the rate on Eastern Bengal Railway for second class) when the third class fare, at three pies per mile, was so much lower.²⁷ As far as the East Indian Railway was concerned, it was believed that there was a larger number of native passengers in the second class than other railways. As one official put it,

there is usually a sprinkling of native travellers to be found in the second class, and I have not a doubt myself that the majority of the passengers in it are Native. On this line, then, it would seem very probable that a reduction in this rate of fare to 6 pies would add to the traffic materially.²⁸

One instance which seems to indicate that the fares of the first class were fixed to exclude most 'native' travellers is provided by the official discussion about the introduction of special slow trains with a two-pie rate. One official noted: "I do not think any other rate necessary for such trains, for there can be but a very small number of Europeans or East Indians who require special consideration in such a matter."²⁹

Racism on the railway was neither subtle nor infrequent and both railway officials and European passengers seem to have been the perpetrators. An 1866 Petition of the British Indian Association of North West Provinces described the "unfailing bad treatment of Native passengers of all classes and grades, no

²⁷*Ibid.*

²⁸*Ibid.*

²⁹*Ibid.*

distinctions being made."³⁰ The petition stated that 'native' passengers had to "suffer the greatest insolence, impudence, hard language, contempt and even, sometimes, ill usage, from the menials of the Railway Police and other officials." To check these excesses, the Government seemed to have already passed "clear and distinct orders".³¹ But these orders do not seem to have had much impact. The petitioners' seem to have been particularly piqued that lower class European officials were insulting upper class Indians:

Indiscriminate abuse, often on their superiors in the social scale, is lavished freely, without let or stint, or a regard to it's quality. Passengers have been struck and otherwise treated with great indignity. Those like the intending second class passengers are not allowed to get in even to the platform, but made to herd with the mass outside.³²

This perception of superiority in the social hierarchy, of upper class Indians, over a section of the ruling race was an important element of race relations during this period.³³ Another interesting aspect of this perception is revealed in the petition; the petitioners seem to have been willing to suffer the overcrowded third class carriages rather than continue to face racial slurs in the second class compartment. The petition concluded that "scores of Native gentlemen have been dishonoured and have determined rather to suffer all the

³⁰ NAI, Railway Branch, PWD proceedings, Part A, November 1866, No. 17. Petition of the British India Association, North West Provinces, 16 October 1866.

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² *Ibid.*

³³ See, for instance, Kenneth Ballhatchet, Race, Sex and Class under the Raj, New Delhi, Vikas, 1979.

inconvenience of the third class, or not travel at all, than enter a second class carriage."³⁴

Consider also this excerpt from the petition:

This evil [of racism] is of such magnitude that we would humbly beg the most serious attention to be given it. Native gentlemen of birth and respectability, in striving to avoid the crowd and pressure and company to be found in the third class carriages, find themselves even worse off in a second class seat. In a variety of ways, attempts are incessantly made to degrade and insult the Native second class passengers. These attempts are chiefly made by a low class of Europeans who are either on the tramp or are permitted by the Railway Company, as being their servants, to travel free second class. We would beg to suggest that such low Europeans who create such a bad impression on the minds of the Natives, not less inconvenience to their own more respectable portion be placed in some carriage specially set apart for them, to be called by some special name as the "Railway" or "Unreserved" Carriage.³⁵

The Government of India seemed to have been aware of this problem. In response to a letter of 25 March 1865, in which misconduct towards a 'native gentleman by officials of the East India Railway had been alleged, the Governor General had urged on the Lieutenant Governor the "importance of doing all that can be done towards removing such a blot upon the administration of the railways within his jurisdiction." He had added:

It is intolerable that the inhabitants of the country should be subject to insult or ill usage when travelling by railway, and I am to desire that it may be impressed upon the Consulting Engineer and his deputies that the Governor General in council

³⁴NAI, Railway Branch, PWD proceedings, Part A, November 1866, No. 17. Petition of the British India Association, North West Provinces, 16 October 1866.

³⁵*Ibid.*

looks to them to ensure the removal of these causes of complaint which are alike injurious to the railway company and discreditable to its officers and, indeed, to the British character generally.³⁶

One solution suggested to prevent causes for complaint by second class 'native' passengers is found in the Inspection Report of 1867. The Report recognised that the railway had special difficulties to overcome in dealing with passengers in this country "for few Europeans, even officers and gentleman, recognise any difference of social grade among natives of India" and so the only certain remedy was to give separate accommodation to Indians at second class fares. The Report pointed out that a compartment of a third class carriage is already set apart in every train for 'native' women; and another compartment of the same carriage might be partitioned off for 'native' gentlemen the space of two ordinary seats being given for second class fare. There is no evidence that this suggestion was implemented until 1870.

In 19th century India, the attitude to women varied with status in social hierarchy. While the need to improve facilities for middle or upper class 'native' women was often voiced in petitions to the Government, there is evidence only of harassment of women who travelled in the third class. The British India Association's petition, in its reference to the problems of "Native

³⁶NAI, Railway Branch, PWD proceedings, Part A, February 1865, No. 108.

ladies of respectable birth and breeding", reveals not only how conditions of rail travel seem to have contrasted with the expected norms of upper class behaviour in 19th century India, but also the expectations of preferential treatment by upper class Indians. The petitioners believed that

the mode of allotting a separate carriage for females, as in the Punjab, does not meet the want we complain of. Respectable Native gentlemen will not tolerate a separation from their wives, nor will their wives themselves allow it, specially in such a public place as the Railway line, and so full often of incidents as a Railway journey... The lower classes hardly require any special provision to meet their case, as they are always visible to every one. But some special provision is very urgently required for *purdahnasheen* ladies.³⁷

It was suggested by the petitioners that, as a remedial measure, each train may have a special separate carriage, which should be divided into portions to contain six seats each. These compartments, the petition suggested, could be made available to only those who paid for an entire one i.e. six seats and the price could be fixed at six times the third class fare. In addition, the petition brought to the Governor General's attention the need for "a proper retiring-room for such of the *purdahnasheen* ladies as have to wait for trains." These ladies had, according to the petition, been allowed "to mount carriages from their palanquins", but it was only as a favour, and the petitioners' wanted that "a rule might be advantageously made for it." Indeed, the petitioners believed "if special provision is made for [ladies], ... the result will be not only be

³⁷NAI, Railway Branch, PWD proceedings, Part A, November 1866, No. 17. Petition of the British India Association, North West Provinces, 16 October 1866.

financially good, but morally beneficial."³⁸

A separation of European and Native trains in the third class was started in an attempt to make travelling for native women more secure. This separation seems to have been provoked, not by petitions like the one above, but by an incident in May 1868 in a carriage of the East Indian Railway, described as "a gross outrage committed in a carriage" by a European named Samuel Horn, "on the person of a native woman, who, in consequence, jumped out of the train while in motion and came by her death."³⁹ There is no evidence that any petition was submitted by the British India or any other association after this incident. But again the Governor General, undoubtedly aware of the explosive potential of such an incident, directed his subordinates to take remedial measures. He also noted that while

much ha[d] been done for the convenience and protection of Native females of all classes resorting to the Railway as a means of conveyance, and that separate carriages have been set apart for female passengers of the third class on the East India Railway Company's line, and on most, if not all, of the lines throughout India. But probably there are difficulties in getting family parties of the lower classes to divide so as to avail themselves of this convenience, and the occurrence of this outrage notwithstanding that there were other passengers in the same carriage (two Europeans, besides an aged male relative of the deceased and two children) makes it most desirable that some further steps should be taken by the Railway Companies in the interest of the mass of the travelling public in India, to

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ NAI, Railway Branch, PWD proceedings, July 1868, No 71. Circular No 11R, 2 July 1868.

prevent females being subjected either to insult or outrage under the helpless circumstances attendant on trains in motion.⁴⁰

Acting on the Governor General's recommendations, a complete separation of Europeans from Natives in the third class was introduced.⁴¹ Working orders were passed specifying that in order to avoid "annoyance" to "native" passengers and especially female passengers, all European and East Indian passengers travelling third class - by the through main line passenger trains - were in future to be placed in a compartment to be set apart for them, as near the Rear Break Van as possible, and not allowed to travel in any other carriage.⁴² Arrangements would be made for a carriage marked "For Europeans and East Indians only", being attached to each through train, but meanwhile these working orders were to be carried out. The special attention of guards was drawn to this new arrangement, and they would be held responsible, if on arrival, at a changing station, Europeans or East Indians were found in any compartment other than those allotted. The Working Order specified that the Compartment set apart for Europeans and East Indians must always be in a carriage fitted with perpendicular bars, dividing the compartments from one another.⁴³

⁴⁰*Ibid.*

⁴¹*Ibid.*

⁴² NAI, Railway Branch, PWD proceedings, Part A September 1868, No. 5. Circular No 1632G, 17 August 1868.

⁴³*Ibid.*

Later, it was common to attribute the presence of special third class carriages for the Europeans to a policy of racial discrimination against Indians. The third class carriages for Europeans generally ran half-empty while Indian carriages were often overcrowded and this must have provoked anger and resentment. For instance, in 1921, C.P. Tiwari, a retired railway official, wrote:

The waiting halls, used exclusively by third class Indians, are far from comfortable, while on some railways first and second class waiting rooms were provided on racial distinction. Some railways reserved a third class compartment for Europeans, in which sometimes a single person travelled alone while compartments occupied by Indians were crowded.⁴⁴

Quite clearly by the 1920s, even the institutional memory of the 'outrage' of 1868 had faded.

Caste and Community

Like the 'promoters' of Railways during the 'great' railway debate, Edward Davidson's history of Indian Railways, published fifteen years after the opening of the first railway line, predicted that the railways would have a revolutionary impact on Indian society:

The steam engine...with its advance was overturning prejudices, uprooting habits and changing customs as tenaciously held and dearly loved as life itself. A sacred brahmin now sits in a Third

⁴⁴ C.P. Tiwari, The Indian Railways: Their Historical, Economical and Administrative Aspects, Ajmer, Yedic Yantralaya, 1921, p. 89.

class carriage in contact with a Dome and, preferring a saving in money to his caste exclusiveness, drops his prejudice.⁴⁵

What might have resulted from the exigencies of rail travel, was certainly not the disintegration of the caste system or caste and religion based ritualistic notions of pollution and purity. While caste prejudices might have been temporarily suspended to avail of third class fares, caste considerations seem to have remained intact in many other respects. Similarly, the Hindus and the Muslims may have had a common destination as they embarked on a railway journey, but they probably remained conscious of their separateness even while travelling together. Even till 1874, there was some resentment by upper caste passengers that the railways seated "the sweepers, the *chamars*, and the like classes of people in the same carriage along with the Hindustanis of high order."⁴⁶ But, as the Chief Engineer of the Madras railway made clear in his directive of the same year, it was not the responsibility of the railway to recognize the "distinctions of creed and caste, so as to provide one carriage for a Brahmin and another for a Pariah."⁴⁷ The only distinction the Chief Engineer recommended was one "which can be purchased with money."⁴⁸

⁴⁵ Edward Davidson, The Railways of India, London, E and F.N. Spon, 1868, p.1.

⁴⁶Cited in Michael Satow and Ray Desmond, Railways of the Raj, New York & London, New York University Press, 1980, p. 37.

⁴⁷*Ibid.*

⁴⁸*Ibid.*

Restrictions on feeding, and the "minute rules" as to what sort of food and drink can be accepted by a person and from what castes⁴⁹ including the distinctions between *kachcha* and *pakka* food, form an integral part of the caste system. The evidence available suggests that rail travel does not seem to have done much to erode these rules. This is evident in the petition of 1866.⁵⁰ The petition described the problem of the lack of proper restaurants on stations for third class passengers and termed the railway journey as "an enforced starvation to thousands" . It suggested that the remedy was simple and inexpensive:

One large room at one end of the sheds for the Hindoo and a small room at the other end for the Mahomedan portion of the travellers, specially devoted to supplying food of all sorts, cooked and otherwise, will be amply sufficient.⁵¹

Further, the petition pointed out "these restaurants could be placed in the hands of Mahomedan and high caste Hindoo cooks, bakers and confectioners, who would supply the needful." The petition also sought special facilities for drinking water

since Hindoos of the better castes have either to drink water out of a receptacle handled by a *kahar*, or what is generally used by all classes alike, or go without the refreshing element so requisite to life and comfort in an Indian climate and railway

⁴⁹ See, for instance, G.S. Ghurye, "Features of the Caste System", in Dipankar Gupta, (ed.), Social Stratification, Delhi, Oxford University Press, 1991, 39.

⁵⁰ NAI, Railway Branch, PWD proceedings, Part A, November 1866, No. 17. Petition of the British India Association, North West Provinces, 16 October 1866.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

travelling. A small water room, say adjoining to the restaurants, kept by Brahmins, would be a sufficient remedy.⁵²

In 1903, the Robertson Report stated that because of caste difficulties, it has not been the practice to provide refreshment rooms for 'natives', where regular sit-down meals can be obtained. But in response to a strong demands "expressed by the Mahomedan and Hindoo community", native refreshment rooms had been opened at a few stations as an experiment, and "their extension should be determined by results".⁵³

The experiment does not seem to have been successful, and in 1921, one Indian critic, C.P. Tiwari, a former railway official, argued that little effort had been made to provide refreshment rooms for the large majority of Indian passengers who did not eat European food. He suggested that the "few Indian Refreshments Rooms which have been latterly opened, suffer from mismanagement and hardly meet the requirements." And recommended that railways in India needed to make arrangements under two main heads: "for Hindoos" and "for others". According to him,

Hindoos, who form a very large majority, are at present the greatest sufferers, owing to their caste prejudices. To them travelling by rail is a serious discomfort when it takes more than 12 hours in a train. Many of them make long journeys at a time,

⁵²*Ibid.*

⁵³ Thomas Robertson, Report on the Administration and Working of the Indian Railways, London, HMSO, 1903, pp. 62-63.

and the wonder is that they quietly bear all the discomforts. While travelling by rail, a Hindoo has to eat either stale food taken from his home or to buy on the journey articles like puries, sweets, parched grain, fruit, milk etc, which alone are to be had from the vendors allowed by the railways to sell at the stations. Articles of daily food like rice, bread, dal, curry, vegetables etc prepared by a proper cook, are not to be had at the stations either for love or for money. Mohamedan and poorer classes of Christians do get articles of the latter kind at some stations but they are of very low quality and hardly meet the requirements of respectable members even of these communities.⁵⁴

Tiwari believed that with "orthodox arrangements" which would include Brahmin cooks and vegetarian meals - both *kachcha* and *pakka* - "it is more than probable that all classes of Hindus will gladly use them."⁵⁵

The Robertson report of 1903 had recognised that the time that it took to use refreshment rooms on stations in serving the "numerous" meals usual in India, "tends seriously to pull down the average speed of trains."⁵⁶ Dining cars, attached to the carriages, had only been introduced on a few railways including the East India Railway. Robertson believed that dining cars for native passengers were unnecessary because Indians, with their caste and religious differences, would never use them. The Report concluded that it would "be a waste of money to provide dining cars on railways where the

⁵⁴Tiwari, The Indian Railways: p. 85.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 87.

⁵⁶Thomas Robertson, Report on the Administration and Working of the Indian Railways, London, HMSO, 1903, pp. 65.

European passenger traffic is light and very variable."⁵⁷ However, Tiwari, writing in 1921, believed that the experiments made, in the first decade of the century, to introduce Indian Dining cars on the East Indian Railways and Bengal-Nagpur Railways had failed - not due to caste prejudices to which their failure had been attributed - but because they "did not provide for what was wanted and as such they were bound to fail."⁵⁸ The Native Dining Car, introduced on the Rajputana-Malwa Railway, was described by Tiwari, as a bogie carriage fitted up into three compartments each measuring four feet and six inches long and eight feet and three inches broad, one for Hindus and one for Muslims. The middle compartment was used as a common kitchen for both with four *sigrees*, two almirahs, two serving shelves and two sinks. Each of the side compartments was provided with two basins, one at each end corner, for washing, with one shelf in the center and four clothes pegs. According to Tiwari, the cost of fitting each set of three compartments was only Rupees 500, but these being too small both for cooking food and for serving passengers, they did not meet the requirements of the passengers.⁵⁹

The British view of 'native' demands for better facilities was presented by the Railway Gazette of December 1929, which described the contrast in travelling

⁵⁷*Ibid.*

⁵⁸Tiwari, The Indian Railways, p. 88.

⁵⁹*Ibid.*

between East and West:

First and foremost there are the difficulties arising out of caste prejudices and hoary superstitions. These lead to many curious arrangements. They compel the railway administrations, in pursuance of their obligations to the travelling public, to provide three classes of refreshment room facilities at the principal stations, different booking offices and separate accommodation in other ways.⁶⁰

The constraints of rail travel brought into sharp focus prevailing social prejudices, belief in ideas of caste and community, commonly held views of norms of behaviour - especially for women - and perceptions of social distance. Travel by rail also brought into contact the 'native' and the European, bringing to the fore the issue of racism.

While the attitudes of Indians show that there were no basic "ideological" change brought about by the railway, what is revealed is a gradual adaptation of the ritualistic aspects of caste to the conditions of railway travel. Railway policy, in turn, sought to placate Indian social conservatism and accommodated Indian notions of pollution and purity as far as they did not directly interfere with the running of the railway. After the revolt of 1857, the British officials were aware of the adverse consequences of interfering with 'native' belief systems. Despite the general policy in this regard, it is significant that what was resisted and resented by the upper class Indian traveller was the European

⁶⁰Railway Gazette, London, HMSO, 1929, p. 12.

traveller and the train staff's disregard for Indian sensibilities about status and social hierarchy. The government sought to finally eliminate the problem by virtually insulating the two 'races' for the duration of the journey. This only served to further alienate the Indian traveller.

Chapter Three

Working for the Railways

It is hard for those accustomed only to the settled conditions of Great Britain and similar countries to realise the extent to which the Railway administrations of India and the East have had to provide for the needs of their employees. So much has been done, however both in regard to necessities and in connection with recreation facilities, that the individual railways in many cases carry on all the functions of an Urban district council, landlord, general stores, athletic club and similar bodies. - The Railway Gazette, 1929.

Those were the days when the D.I.R. decided that it would be cheaper to employ native drivers as much as possible, and the "sheds", as they called the Repair Department, felt the change acutely; for a native driver could misuse his engine, they said, more curiously than any six monkeys. - Rudyard Kipling

By 1870 the railways were the largest employers of the Europeans in India after the army. The army was largely confined to the cantonments while the other important British presence in India, the Imperial Civil Service, was composed of an exclusive elite group of policy makers who had socially insulated themselves from Indian society. With the coming of the railways, however, arrived a new class of Europeans who were neither a part of the elite nor confined to the barracks. Concern that an unrestricted entry of a lower order of Europeans would undermine the moral basis of British rule in India had been expressed even earlier.¹ The growth of the railways heightening this concern, and there was a coincidence of interests on this issue between the government (with its interest in maintaining the moral order of British rule) and the railway companies (with their interest in securing a responsible and disciplined labour force). This concern translated over time in the appointment of clergymen, construction of schools and recreational institutes and, finally,

¹See Kenneth Ballhatchet, Race, Sex and Class under the Raj: Imperial Attitudes and Policies and their Critics, 1793-1905, New Delhi, Vikas, 1980, pp. 96-97.

in the creation of special railway colonies. While most of the staff needed to run the railways in India was initially recruited in England, the expansion of the railway network soon created an increased demand for locomotives and men to run and maintain them. Consequently, the possibility of recruiting more railway men from within India began to be discussed. The policy of recruitment, the official deliberations on it, and the stereotyping of the 'native' worker provide valuable insights into the imperial mindset as well as into the interaction of the railways with Indian society.

Preserving the moral order

The earliest concern for the moral well being of its employees - stationed at places distant from the larger towns and metropolitan centers - was voiced by the Chief Engineer of the East Indian Railway in June 1860. He wrote to the Agent about the "desirableness of having a clergyman at Rajmahal."²

According to the Chief Engineer, a clergy man was most needed,

[f]or the good order, better morality and improved discipline of the European employees of the Railway, as an inducement for them to settle and as a means of creating more of a home-life around them, as affording also the means of instruction and training for their families.³

The Agent and the Public Works Department acceded to the Chief Engineer's

²NAI, Railway Branch, PWD proceedings, Part A, August 1860, No. 7. Cited in letter from Joint Secretary, Government of Bengal, to Officiating Secretary, Government of India, Public Works Department, 6 June 1860.

³*Ibid.*

request, and agreed also to bear the expenses that would be incurred to provide a house for the Minister. In addition, they also agreed to contribute Rupees 100 towards the clergyman's monthly salary; pay a gratuity of Rupees 750 on his appointment; contribute Rupees 1500 towards the cost of his passage and outfit; and pay a monthly subscription of Rupees 200 to the Additional Clergy Society that had undertaken to provide a clergyman.⁴

Two years later, in 1862, a proposal was put forward by the Consulting Engineer to permanently establish a school for Christian children at Howrah.⁵ The proposal had its roots in the wish expressed by the Home Authorities that European "subordinates" should be encouraged to continue "in their employ" in India in place of returning home at the expiry of their agreements. Their return necessitated not only a constant stream of reinforcements, but also "put the Railway Company to the double expense of paying the passages of the men going back after serving their time and of the men sent out to replace them."⁶ The proposal pointed out that "one of the greatest wants" experienced by Europeans of the class of artisans, is the difficulty of obtaining proper training

⁴*Ibid.*

⁵NAI, Railway branch, PWD proceedings, Part A, August 1862, No. 30. Note by Captain F.S. Taylor, Officiating Consulting Engineer, Government of Bengal, on proposed contribution from East Indian Railway Company's funds towards establishment of a school for Christian children at Howrah, 14 June 1862.

⁶*Ibid.*

for their children."⁷ And it suggested that a school would fulfil this need. In fact, there was already a make-shift school, St Thomas's School, which had been opened in October 1861 at the request of many parents at Howrah. The School was part of the Bishop of Calcutta's educational scheme, which was supported by the government, and was run on the lines of the Calcutta Boys' school and the Simla school.⁸ But the school had neither its own building nor any grounds. As a result of the proposal, a grant was given to St Thomas's school and this helped establish it on a permanent basis. The Consulting Engineer believed that the establishment of the school could serve as a precedent for all railway settlements.

Apart from an obvious interest in inducing employees to remain in India on the expiry of their contracts, concern for their "better morality and improved discipline" was a recurring theme in discussions about staff matters. The company was now interested in the welfare outside of the work place and beyond working hours. Even the control over leisure was seen as essential to the maintenance and improvement of moral standards. Part of this concern stemmed from obvious problems like alcoholism, which had apparently assumed serious proportions. In the railways, alcoholism was related as much

⁷*Ibid.*

⁸NAI, Railway Branch, PWD proceedings, Part A, August 1862. Letter from Reverend Spencer, Chaplain and Honorary Secretary and Treasurer, St. Thomas's School, to Agent of East Indian Railway Company, 26 July 1862.

to questions of safety as to the issue of morality. The third and final report of July 1864 by the Special Commissioner Railways to the Government of India made it clear that a "large proportion of accidents is caused either by the drunkenness, the carelessness or the inattention of the drivers and guards."⁹

The Report recommended that it should be a paramount objective of the Heads of Department "to foster steadiness and sobriety in this class of men by every possible means."¹⁰ It suggested also that a prudent policy would be to treat the engine drivers and guards "with consideration and liberality from the period of their first arrival in the country; but to visit with the utmost severity and with instant dismissal in aggravated cases, all neglect of duty arising from intemperance and excess."¹¹ Besides questions of safety and morality, the Company's concern about "intemperance" and "excess" was also related to the belief that

exposures, excesses and carelessness, which in a temperate climate might be harmless, become under a tropical sun either fatal or induce such serious illness as to render a return to Europe on sick leave imperative. In either case, the Railway Company suffers a heavy loss.¹²

In the report of July 1864, it was suggested that steps needed to be taken for

⁹NAI, Railway branch, PWD proceedings, Part A, October 1864.

¹⁰*Ibid.*

¹¹*Ibid.*

¹²Edward Davidson, Railways of India, London, E. and F.N. Spon, 1868, p.99.

"rational amusement" at large stations like Allahabad, where there were 100 to 150 Europeans. The report recommended that swimming baths be accordingly constructed:

Nothing is more conducive to health in this climate, or affords more desirable recreation, than the exercise of swimming; the cost of the construction of a few large and suitable baths would be very moderate, and I am persuaded that the benefit would be great, and highly appreciated. ¹³

A Railway Club, also known as the Railway Institute, the first of its kind, had been started at Lahore in September 1861, following acrimonious disputes on the Punjab and Sind railways in the previous year. The Government of India, in its despatch to the Secretary of State, stated that the club had been a great success, and even suggested that "the good conduct of the subordinates of the European staff of the Punjab Railway, during the second half of the year 1864, [was], in a great measure, attributed to the Institute at Lahore."¹⁴ The Government recommended that the Boards of Directors of Indian Railway be encouraged to support the establishment of similar Institutions. ¹⁵

The benefits from the club were also highlighted in a note from Under

¹³NAI, Railway branch, PWD proceedings, Part A, October 1864. Special Commissioner's Report, July 1864.

¹⁴NAI, Railway branch, PWD proceedings, Part A, August 1865, No. 22. Letter from the Government of India to Secretary of State for India, 10 August 1865.

¹⁵*Ibid.*

Secretary, Government of Punjab, to the Government of India. The note pointed out that the Company did not receive rent for the club's use, but,

in its benefits (daily becoming more appreciated) in keeping the subordinates of the staff in health and amusement, and weaning them from these habits of idleness, intemperance and self indulgence, which seemed before the Institute was thought of to deaden and debase, as soon as they were off duty, a large proportion of a class of men whose general good conduct and intelligence when employed on duty have certainly vied favourably with those of the same class on any other Indian Railway, this Institution is more productive in the Company's interest than the receipt of any rent could possibly make it.¹⁶

The Club was equipped with a Reading Room supplied with the latest editions of newspapers and periodicals "furnished for instruction and amusement of the members", and a "bath" to which only enrolled members paying a subscription were admitted.¹⁷ The bye-laws stated clearly that while "soda water lemonade would be available at cost price, ... wine, spirits, or intoxicating liquors of any kind [are] strictly prohibited within the building."¹⁸ The bye-laws also stressed that a member guilty of "using violent language, quarreling, or other improprieties within the building", would be reported to the committee, who have the power to remove his name from the list of

¹⁶NAI, Railway branch, PWD proceedings, August 1865, No. 18. Letter from Under Secretary, Government of Punjab, to Secretary, Government of India, PWD, 4 July 1865.

¹⁷NAI, Railway Branch, PWD proceedings, Part A, August 1865, No. 19. Punjab Railway Institute Bye-Laws.

¹⁸*Ibid.*

subscribers."¹⁹ The Railway Institute was also conceived as a centre for cultural activities and the bye-laws stated that "the Institute may from time to time, be made available for lectures, concerts, and other amusements."²⁰

Following this example, sanction was obtained in 1865 for a similar institute at Dinapoor for the European employees of the East Indian Railway Company. The Board of Directors of the Company wrote to the Agent urging him to provide swimming baths and other means of encouraging healthy recreation for the use of their employees at all the principal stations.

The question of class was important in the organization of leisure. In 1865 itself, the Agent submitted a proposal to set up a Mechanics Institute at Jumalpoor, with a bath, a reading room and a library. The cost of the institute was estimated at around Rupees Thirty two thousand, a relatively large amount when compared to the cost of the Lahore Institute, which cost only a little more than Rupees Twelve thousand. But as the forwarding note pointed out, "[i]t must be remembered that Jumalpoor is the largest Railway Settlement in India and this accounts for the large cost of the building."²¹ The design, if

¹⁹*Ibid.*

²⁰*Ibid.*

²¹NAI, Railway Branch, PWD proceedings, Part A, December 1865, No. 37. Letter from Jt. Secretary, Government of Bengal, PWD to Secretary, Government of India, PWD, 11 November 1865.

approved, was to be used as a model to construct Institutes at all the large and important stations on the line.²² The Public Works Department, in its reply, while agreeing to the plan in principle emphasised the need for economy.²³ It observed that the dimensions of the bath (50'x24'x8') appeared excessive. It pointed out that for a wing of a European Regiment, the dimensions were 46'x14' X 5'-6''.²⁴ In response, the Chief Engineer wrote to the Agent that "it must be borne in mind that the class of men we intend to accommodate are superior to the general run of European private soldiers, and we must provide a comfortable bath to induce them to make use of it"²⁵

Housing the Railway Men:

Jumalpoor was the first "railway settlement". It grew from an engine changing station to a major railway settlement after the locomotive workshops were set up in 1862. These workshops made use of the labour in the area that was skilled in traditional Iron-Working. The town itself was laid out in or just before 1857. According to Rudyard Kipling, who wrote at some length about the town, Jumalpoor's designers seem to have allowed room for growth and

²²*Ibid.*

²³NAI, Railway Branch, PWD proceedings, Part A, December 1865, No. 39. Letter from Secretary, Government of India, PWD to Secretary, Government of Bengal, 8 December 1865.

²⁴*Ibid.*

²⁵NAI, Railway branch, PWD proceedings, February 1866, No 52. Letter from Chief Engineer to Agent East Indian railways Company, 2 January 1866.

made the houses of one general design - some of brick and some of stone, some three, four and six-roomed, some single mens barracks and some two storey - all for the use of employees.²⁶ The closure of the workshops at Howrah and their transfer to Jumalpoor led the Agent, in 1866, to propose expansion of housing at Jumalpoor.²⁷ Apparently, housing for the existing employees was also inadequate. Nearly 1,500 persons (including women and children) were stationed at Jumalpoor whereas the Railway Company had only 300 rooms. According to the Chief Engineer,

more than half of the company's servants are crowded in a manner, detrimental to their health and morals, and injurious to both the public and the Railway Company, who cannot be properly served by men so situated.²⁸

Describing the conditions, the Chief Engineer wrote that

even if all considerations of humanity are disregarded the lowest pecuniary value which can be affixed to the life of a trained European mechanic is £ 500 and it is deplorable to think how many such lines have been lost by want of proper shelter and comfort.²⁹

The Chief Engineer criticised the practice of refusing to allow accommodation

²⁶Rudyard Kipling, "City of the Dreadful Night" in The Works of Rudyard Kipling, Edition De Luxe, Boston, The Jefferson Press, n.d. (1897?), p. 253.

²⁷NAI, Railway Branch, PWD proceedings, June 1866, No. 147. Letter from Agent, East Indian Railway Company to Consulting Engineer, Government of Bengal, 14 May 1866.

²⁸NAI, Railway Branch, PWD proceedings, June 1866, No. 148. Letter from Chief Engineer, East Indian Railways to Chairman, Board of Agency, East Indian Railway Company, 9 May 1866.

²⁹*Ibid.*

to be provided until the men requiring it were actually at the station. The District Surgeon, Jumalpoor, also wrote of instances where four and even five Europeans were living in one small room. According to the Surgeon, among East Indian families overcrowding was the rule and many of these families lived in bazaars or in mud huts because of which "there was a great deal of sickness amongst them as may have been expected."³⁰

Provision of housing for workmen varied over the East Indian Railways. The rent of rupees ten per room was thought to be excessive and unfair as the rooms varied very much in size and comfort. There was no fenced area around the quarters; rooms on the ground floor were damp and unhealthy; there was no one in charge of petty repairs; and no authority to compel attention on the part of the entire community to "necessary conservency regulations", except at Jumalpoor which was a municipality. Most living quarters seemed to be barrack accommodation.³¹

By the last decades of the 19th century the headquarters of the East Indian Railways had shifted to Jumalpoor and it seems to have been dramatically transformed into an idyllic town. Kipling described the town, different from

³⁰NAI, Railway Branch, PWD proceedings, Part A, June 1866, No. 157. Note from District Surgeon, 5 May 1866.

³¹NAI, Railway branch, PWD proceedings, Part A, August 1866, No 16. Memo on rent of workmen's houses, East Indian Railways.

other railway towns like Toondla, Assensole, Howrah, Ajmir, Allahabad, Lahore and Pindi because it was unadulteratedly "Railway".

Crotons, palms, mangoes, *mellingtonias*, teak and bamboos adorn it, and the *poinsettia* and *bougainvillea*, the railway creeper and the *bignoniavenusta* make it gay with many colours. It is laid out with military precision on the right hand side of the line going down to Calcutta - to each house its just share of garden and green *jilmil*; its red *surki* path, its growth of trees, and its neat little wicket gate. Its general aspect, in spite of the Dutch formality, is that of an English village, such a thing as enterprising stage managers put on the theaters at home.³²

Descriptions of the unsanitary, crowded conditions in the Chief Engineer's report of 1866 (referred to earlier in this chapter) contrast sharply with Kipling's description of 1897: "everything has the air of having been cleaned up at ten that very morning and put under a glass case."³³

In the quiet life of this Railway town, for there was little wheeled traffic, the day's activities revolved around the Locomotive and Traffic offices opening in the morning, the 11 A.M. to 12 O'clock lunch break, and tennis at the Institute at 4 P.M. The East Indian Railways Volunteer Corps was also head quartered here. It was an essential condition of service, for all Europeans and Anglo Indians in the Company's service, to join the Volunteer Corps and a parade was held every Tuesday and Friday. The Institute's central role is evident in Kipling's following account:

³²Kipling, "City of the Dreadful Night", p. 253.

³³*Ibid.*, p. 255.

Best and prettiest of the many good and pretty things in Jumalpoor is the Institute of a Saturday, when the Volunteer Band is playing and the tennis courts are full and the babydom of Jumalpoor - fat, sturdy children - frolic round the bandstand. The people dance - but big as the institute is, it is getting too small for their dances - they act, they play billiards, they study their newspapers, they play cards and everything else, and they flirt in a sumptuous building, and in the hot weather the gallant apprentice ducks his friend in the big swimming-bath. Decidedly the Railway folk make their lives pleasant.³⁴

This railway town conformed in some ways to the pattern of urban development observed elsewhere in colonial India. For instance, one study has explained the changes in Lucknow, following the annexation of Oudh and the building of the "new city", with its "spacious complex of the cantonment, the civil, police, and railway lines", in the following words:

The British created, as the nawabs had done, an alien and exclusive cosmos that was based on the culture and value system of the metropolitan society. Members of the ruling elite were temporary sojourners, transferred frequently within the empire, and therefore not many stayed long enough to impress the city with an individual stamp. They managed to stay aloof since they did not participate as consumers of local manufacture nor as patrons of the culture.³⁵

Much of the above held true for Jumalpoor as well, though the railway town was also very different from other non-railway towns.

Stereotyping work and workers

³⁴*Ibid.*, p. 287.

³⁵Veena Talwar Oldenburg, The Making of Colonial Lucknow, Delhi, Oxford University Press, 1989, p. 263.

While the need for economy indicated the necessity of recruiting Indians, till the end of the 19th century employment in the higher grades and in "responsible" positions remained a preserve of the Europeans. The first Report of the Special Commissioner, in 1863, to the Railway Department noted, for instance, that employment of natives would contribute to economy, "except in situations where the greater coolness, decision and physical energy of the European are essentially required, as in the case of Engine Drivers."³⁶ On the one hand, the majority of Indians were employed in the Accounts and Traffic departments because it was believed that the "capabilities of the natives of India for methodological computation and check are very great."³⁷ On the other hand, Davidson's history of Indian Railways, written in 1868, described 'natives' as

wanting in the presence of mind, courage to deal with emergencies, forethought and caution, qualities which a good driver of engines must have before he can be competent to manage an engine and train....[though] natives of India possess a fineness of touch and quickness of apprehension, which soon enables them to handle the lathes or any steam driven machinery and to acquire the mechanical skill needed to manage a steam engine or drive a locomotive, but then they are wanting the nerve, the punctuality and the constant attention to cleanliness which such a charge requires.³⁸

³⁶NAI, Railway Branch, PWD proceedings, Part A, September 1863.

³⁷NAI, Railway branch, PWD proceedings, Part A, May 1864, No. 151. Minutes of a special meeting held at the Agent, East Indian Company's Office, 15 September 1864.

³⁸ Edward Davidson, The Railways of India, London, E. and F.N. Spon, 1868, p. 58.

This stereotype can be traced back to a discussion about training young men in India as engine drivers. The East Indian Railway Company wrote to the Bengal Government about the difficulty in recruiting and maintaining a staff of European Engine Drivers.³⁹ The Lieutenant Governor observed that a solution could lie in the establishment of a school for training Eurasians as engine drivers in India itself. In December 1859, the Government of India forwarded this correspondence to the other governments and invited their suggestions on the issue of training men in India.⁴⁰ The response of the various railways included their views on, first, the ideal type of training in workshops or on the job and second, on the issue of setting up a school for young Eurasian men. In these responses were also included views about the competence of trainees then under training. These views provide an interesting insight into the origin of the stereotype of 'native' abilities.

On the question of training, the Madras, Great Southern of India⁴¹ and Great

³⁹NAI, Railway branch, PWD proceedings, Part A, No. 11, December 1860. Letter from Secretary, Government of India to Secretaries, Government of Fort St. George, Bombay, North Western Provinces and Punjab, 24 December 1859.

⁴⁰*Ibid.*

⁴¹NAI, Railway Branch, PWD proceedings, Part A, February 1861, No. 34. Observations by Consulting Engineer, Madras Railways, Fort. St George, 31 January 1861.

Indian Peninsular railways⁴² believed that the workshop itself was the best school for the training of engine drivers. The North Western Provinces report suggested that the most prudent course to follow would be to introduce on-the-job training i.e. recruiting trainees as firemen or stokers who would gradually learn the skills needed to drive an engine.⁴³

The reports of the various railways referred to their European, Eurasian and 'native' trainees. On the Madras Railway, there were several 'natives' employed as trainees in the Locomotive workshops. The Locomotive Superintendent describing the abilities of one such 'native' trainee, Gunnagha Row, wrote that his "own want of self-reliance precludes him from being entrusted with the charge of one [locomotive]." The Superintendent further stated that he had many other 'natives' who were competent to drive a Loco-Engine, as far as the mechanical working is concerned, but he would "hesitate to trust any of them with the responsibility attaching to the duties of Drivers", as he did not consider them to "possess those qualities which are frequently called for, in cases of emergency where judgement and presence of

⁴²NAI, Railway branch, PWD proceedings, Part A, No. 3, December 1861. Letter from Secretary, Government of Bombay to Secretary, Government of India, 2 October 1860.

⁴³NAI, Railway branch, PWD proceedings, Part A, December 1861, No. 5. Note by Consulting Engineer to Government of North Western provinces, 30 August 1860.

mind are specially requisite qualifications".⁴⁴

In his detailed report, the Locomotive Superintendent also brought out other important aspects of the problem. For instance, he explained that the number of men presently under training represented

only a portion of the men we have been under training, a large proportion of the men we have had on trial become disgusted with the laborious and dirty nature of the work (it being of a character so much against the prejudices of men born in this country and East Indians generally) and they leave the service, whilst others are discharged for incompetency, irregular habits, or other faults, which would preclude them from attaining posts of responsibility or trust, whilst other really good and useful men trained in our shops get better appointments elsewhere and quit this service to take them up.⁴⁵

The Superintendent also highlighted that 'native' labour was employed in every branch of locomotive work and there were two 'native' engine men for stationary engines on Madras railway. Despite his apprehension that the present 'native' trainees were not yet competent to handle the responsibility attached to being engine drivers, he did not attribute this to any natural deficiency of the 'native' character and believed that in the future India must be the "nursery" for all future demands.⁴⁶ The Agent, while forwarding this report, was also optimistic that in future all demands of labour could be met in

⁴⁴NAI, Railway branch, PWD proceedings, Part A, February 1861, No. 34. Observations by Consulting Engineer, Madras Railways, Fort St. George, 31 January 1861.

⁴⁵*Ibid.*

⁴⁶*Ibid.*

India itself.

Similarly, the Agent of the Great Southern of India Railway did not make any distinction between European, Eurasian or 'native' trainees, who, he argued, could be trained "alike" in the workshops. On the Great Indian Peninsular Railway, it was believed, "that the difficulty hitherto has been not in training natives, but in obtaining lads possessing the few qualifications requisite to make competent drivers."⁴⁷ The Locomotive Superintendent of the East Indian Railways, North West Provinces, addressing the same issue, wrote: "there is a great difference in the feeling here in this respect and at Howrah, here there is a much greater inclination to employ natives than there."⁴⁸ On the Punjab Railway too it was held that "[n]atives and Chinamen could be easily trained in the workshop schools, endurance and not excessive manual strength being essentially necessary in the Engine Drivers."⁴⁹

This detailed exchange of views of 1860-61 brought before the government a

⁴⁷NAI, Railway branch, PWD proceedings, Part A, No. 3, December 1861. Letter from Secretary, Government of Bombay to Secretary, Government of India, 2 October 1860.

⁴⁸NAI, Railway branch, PWD proceedings, Part A, December 1861, No. 5. Note by Consulting Engineer to Government of North Western provinces, 30 August 1860.

⁴⁹NAI, Railway branch, PWD proceedings, Part A, October 1860, No. 6. Letter from Secretary, Government of Punjab to Secretary, Government of India, 19 September 1860.

variety of opinions dealing with the problem of recruitment and organization of training. It is surprising then that the report to the Secretary of State for India in 1865, from the Government Director of the Railway Companies, Juland Danvers, summarily concluded that

such situations as accountants, clerks and station masters can be filled by natives but Europeans are required for high positions of responsibility, and for places where professional knowledge and skill or (as in the case of engine drivers, pointsmen etc.) where nerve and presence of mind are needed.⁵⁰

This was the first official expression of the popular stereotype of the 'natives' inherently incapable of being engine drivers. Even in 1866, the Agent of the Great Indian Peninsular Railway spoke out against the generally-held view by saying that

I see no reason for believing that the Natives, if properly taught, are incompetent to fill the posts of Engine Drivers. I suspect, if the truth was known, that the Native firemen do now often drive our engines, whilst the European sleeps, and their sobriety, care, and watchfulness may be allowed to counter balance any deficiency in nerve or courage.⁵¹

The crucial problem, according to him, was to be able to attract suitable 'natives' through adequate remuneration and chances of promotion.

Despite instances of views to the contrary, by 1867, the dominant view - at

⁵⁰NAI, Report to the Secretary of State in Council from Government Director for Railways in India, 1865.

⁵¹NAI, Railway Branch, PWD proceedings, Part A, September 1866, No. 68. Remarks by the Agent, Great Indian Peninsular Railway, 15 May 1865.

least in Bengal - strongly believed in the stereotype. For instance, the Locomotive Superintendent and the Agent of the East Indian Railway reported on the proposal of 1860-61 for training men in India in the following words:

I do not believe...that an attempt to carry the experiment beyond Eurasians could result in any thing but failure. In any case of emergency or danger the native would, it seems almost certain, be entirely in want of that coolness and presence of mind by which so many serious accidents to life and property are averted, even at the last moment of imminent peril.

The class of men at command, too, must have great weight in a question of the kind. The Bombay Government contemplates the employment of students from the Poona Civil Engineering College as Apprentice Drivers while in Bengal the only men available are khallassees - a class I need hardly point out at the very opposite extremity of the native social scale. The apprentices in the one case would come to their work with a fair amount of intelligence and previous education while the others would in practically every instance, be so altogether illiterate as to be unable to read and write their own vernacular. With the latter too, the time consumed in acquiring a knowledge of the machinery of which they would be placed in charge would be much greater than with the former, while with both it would be so considerable as to form a serious bar to the adoption of any such system of training.⁵²

The Locomotive Superintendent was willing, however, to make an exception in the case of Sikhs, who, he believed, would have all "the requisite nerve" and would be "physically qualified" for a driver's work.⁵³ But Sikhs were unwilling to take up such a job. The above correspondence was forwarded to

⁵²NAI, Railway branch, PWD proceedings, Part A, January 1867, No. 61. Letter from Locomotive Superintendent to Chief Engineer, East Indian Railways, 30 November 1866.

⁵³*Ibid.*

the Agent of the Great Indian Peninsular Railway, with reference to his remarks on training of engine drivers in India.

The government and railway companies worked together to create in India the material and moral conditions for ordering and regulating the lives of European employees, who lived and worked in isolated enclaves of Western culture and values. Government policy was also rooted in the belief of a natural European superiority over the 'native'. On the question of recruiting labour from within India, the stereotype of the 'native' worker, who lacked nerve and presence of mind, emerged by the late 1860s and was used to exclude Indians from all responsible posts on the railway.

Chapter Four

Crime, Law and Order

Now that India has fallen under the curse of railroads, and life and property will soon become as insecure there, as they are here, the splendour of a Governor General's progress is at an end - Emily Eden, May 1866.

The first serious concern, within the Government of India, about crime on the railway was provoked by a murder in a third class carriage of the East Indian Railway on 10 December 1864.¹ This was the first time that a murder had occurred on a railway carriage in India. The perpetrators of the crime were convicted, but it was the apparent indifference of Railway officials to the crime which caused consternation to the British authorities, including the Lieutenant Governor of Bengal.²

There does not seem to have been any difference of opinion between the East Indian Railway and the Government in Bengal over the details of the crime itself. The victim, Deokee Ram, a trader, was travelling from Burdwan to Zamaneah, the station nearest to his final destination. Ghazeepoor. Robbery

¹ National Archives of India (NAI), Railway Branch, Public Works Department (PWD) proceedings, Part A, February 1866, No 1298, Letter from J. Munro, Officiating Magistrate of Police, to Agent, East Indian Railways, 13 December 1864.

² NAI, Railway Branch, PWD proceedings, Part A, February 1866, No. 5544. Letter from S.C. Bayley, Junior Secretary, Government of Bengal, to Assistant Secretary, Govt of Bengal, PWD, 11 October 1865.

was the obvious motive for the murder since the "bag of money amounting to Rupees 1,300", that Ram had been carrying with him, had been taken away.³ A Jemadar of the Railway, Chonee Lal, apparently conspired with four others and murdered Ram between Futwah and Buktiarpour, two stations fifteen miles apart. The "murderers" left the train at Patna and dispersed in different directions, but one of them was arrested at the city itself "under very suspicious circumstances"; he confessed to the crime. Soon enough, the other four were arrested and all were subsequently convicted: one was sentenced to "transportation for life" while four others, including Chonee Lal, were sentenced to "transportation for fourteen years."⁴

The fact that a Jemadar of the Railways was involved in the crime does not seem to have caused much concern to the investigating authorities. It was the reaction of the Railway officials to the crime that generated most discussion. According to the note of Lieutenant C.H. Luard, Officiating Deputy Consulting Engineer to the Government of Bengal:

[t]he body of the murdered man was first noticed at Bankipour, and the fact that there was a man either dead or very sick in one of the carriages was reported to the Guard, who reported it to the Station Master (upon which point there is doubt) just before or just after the train moved off. The Station Master made no investigation, but he contented himself with cautioning the

³NAI, Railway Branch, PWD proceedings, Part A, February 1866, No 1537, Letter from J. Monro, Officiating Magistrate, to Commissioner Patna, 23 December 1864.

⁴*Ibid.*

Guard to make the matter known at the next station of Dinapoor. This he did, and the Station Master at that place removed the body, carefully washed out the blood stains from the carriage, and allowed it to proceed with the trains without even questioning the passengers in the adjoining carriages. He then (after some delay, the Head Constable asserts) informed the local Police, and sent a telegram to Mr. Monro, the Magistrate of Patna, which reached him at 10 A.M. or three and a half hours after the train reached Dinapoor.⁵

Monro was outraged by the conduct of the Railway Officials. And after completing the investigation, he wrote to the Agent of the Railway:

The conduct of both these Station Masters has been culpable in the extreme. They have most effectually in every way obliterated any clue which the state of the carriage and the presence of any passengers in adjoining compartments might have afforded. It was the bounden duty of the Bankipoor Station Master, when he received the information, to have investigated the matter on the spot, and it says little for his common sense or humanity that he thought a matter of life and death could in such a summary way be made over to the Station Master at Dinapoor.⁶

The Police Superintendent had been even more emphatic in his indictment of the officials. In his report, he had said that it looked like the officials at Dinapoor and Bankipoor "wanted people to believe that the Railway Company were aiding and abetting the crime."⁷ Monro's version of events became the generally accepted version within the civil service hierarchy. In note after

⁵ NAI, Railway Branch, PWD proceedings, Part A, February 1866, No 1072, Note by Lieutenant C.H. Luard, Officiating Deputy Consulting Engineer, to Govt. of Bengal, Railway Department, on the murder on the East Indian Railway.

⁶ NAI, Railway Branch, PWD Proceedings, Part A, February 1866, No 1298. Letter from J. Monro to Agent, East Indian Railways, 13 December 1864.

⁷ Cited in Monro, *ibid.*

note, the incompetence of railway officials was emphasised.⁸ Interestingly, between 13 December 1864 - when Monro wrote his report to the Commissioner at Patna - and 11 October 1865 - when S.C. Bayley, Junior Secretary, wrote a letter, on behalf of the Lieutenant Governor of Bengal, to the Assistant Secretary in the Railway branch - the official narrative had been modified a little to become even more critical of Railway officials. For instance, Monro did not believe that the Guard of the train had been particularly negligent, but in Bayley's communique: "the guard of the train ...failed, for several stages, to discover that a man was lying murdered in the train..."⁹

Contrast this version with the one provided by the Traffic Manager of the East Indian Railway Company:

About the middle of the night of 10th, 11th December 1864, a Jemadar, on platform duty at Bankipoor, just as the 10 P.M.

⁸See, for instance, NAI, Railway Branch, PWD proceedings, Part A, February 1866, No. 6466. Letter from J. Geoghegan, Under Secretary, Government of Bengal, to Joint Secretary, Government of Bengal, PWD, Railway Branch, 20 December, 1864. In this letter Geoghegan writes:

I am to request that you will be so good as to communicate at once with the Agent, East Indian Railway, with a view to proper notice being taken of the extremely disgraceful conduct of the two Station Masters. Such utter indifference, apathy and neglect on the part of responsible officials is altogether inconceivable, and that men should dare to behave as these men have done, indicates very great laxity of supervision and control.

⁹NAI, Railway Branch, PWD proceedings, Part A, February 1866, No. 5544. Letter from S.C. Bayley, Junior Secretary, Government of Bengal, to Assistant Secretary, Govt of Bengal, PWD, 11 October 1865.

Up-passenger train from Jumalpoor was starting, saw a man lying on the floor of the carriage with no other person in the same compartment; he believed this passenger to be very sick or perhaps dead.

He at once advised the Guard, who, with the train in motion, informed the Station Master, who desired him to report at Dinapoor Road Station, the fact, which was done.

On arrival at Dinapoor it was found on examination that the passenger had been murdered, there being a small wound inflicted with some sharp instrument at the back of the head. The body was taken out and the Local Police advised; but the Station Master did not think it necessary to detain the train, and as there was no other person in the compartment with the deceased, there was no ground for detaining any particular passengers.¹⁰

The Traffic Manager went on to respond to the specific allegations against officials of the Railway Company:

The arguments brought forward in accusation of the different Company's servants concerned are, first, as to the Guard -- That when the Jemadar told him that a man was lying apparently sick, or dying, in a carriage, he should have made some effort to stop the train.

Now, in reply, I beg to say that I do not see how a man could be expected to do this: the passenger might have been merely asleep; if he were even dead there would not necessarily be any suspicion of foul play; our records show how frequent are the cases in which Natives in almost the last stage of disease manage to get into the train hoping, as it would seem, to reach their houses; and if he were only sick, the very best course open was certainly to go on to Dinapoor, only 15 miles' run, and where a Company's medical man would be at once available.

I do not mean, of course, that the Guard weighed all the pros and cons of the case in his mind so completely, but I do think that, if he had come to the conclusion pointed out, he would

¹⁰NAI, Railway Branch, PWD proceedings, Part A, February 1866, No 5777, P. Letter from J.C. Batchelor, Traffic Manager, to Agent, East Indian Railway Company, 20 November 1865.

certainly have shown an amount of intuitive knowledge of the circumstances almost super-human.

As to the allegations against the Guard that he was in fault in not discovering the murder earlier, I beg to say that our time-bills are not constructed with a view to the Guard of the train personally inspecting every carriage at road-side stations; to do so would involve 10 minutes delay at each, or at least 12 hours from Howrah to Delhi, in addition to which it would be a great source of annoyance to all passengers.

I come to the charge against Station Master, Bankipoor, to whom precisely the same remarks seem to apply as the Guard; it is in fact easy, after the facts of a case have been arrived at, to imagine a different line of conduct which might have been pursued, and to assume that line would have produced better results.

As regards the Station Master of Dinapoor, he certainly showed great want of judgement in not cutting off the carriage, and for this he was reduced from the position of Station Master to that of Guard. His fault was hardly more than an error of judgement, and the loss of his position and prospects certainly appeared a sufficiently heavy punishment for his error. It did not, and does not, appear that any steps he could have taken would have facilitated the discovery of the murderers, who, doubtless, left the train long before; while the only apparent clue that presented itself in the carriage was the blood of the murdered man.¹¹

At first glance, the Traffic Manager's response seems like an effort to protect officials of the Company, and as basically a damage-limitation exercise. That was probably partly true. But the incident seems to also reflect a deep divergence of opinion, between the Government and the Company, about crime on the railway and its prevention. On the one hand, for the Company, the cost of detaining a train or cutting off the carriage were probably greater

¹¹*Ibid.*

than any benefits that could accrue from a speedy police investigation of the murder. Admittedly, a murder could be harmful for the image of the company and could damage its commercial interests dependent largely in the 1860s on passenger traffic, but the inevitable commotion that would result from detaining the train would probably bring far worse publicity as well as annoy the other passengers on train, who must surely have been eager to reach their destination. On the other hand, for the government, a murder was a very serious crime and the apparently cavalier attitude that the Company's officials had adopted could serve as a bad precedent, and, in the long-term, even undermine the authority of the British rule of law. Moreover, the differences themselves revealed a fundamental conflict over authority. The Company's officials obviously saw themselves as largely autonomous of British government authority, and involved the local police only as a final measure. In part, this was also because the East India Company had its own police (hereafter, referred to as the Company Police) although it does not seem to have played any role in investigating the murder. But also because the Company viewed the Government as an instrument created to protect, among other things, the Company's interests and not *vice versa*. For the British government, the Company's standards on law and order issues were clearly unacceptable. Government monopoly over "maintenance of Law and order" was the cornerstone of colonial rule and the Government in Bengal could not let this authority be eroded even if it was by a company run by British

officials.¹² It was in the Government's interest, therefore, to even exaggerate the incompetence of the Company's officials. Indeed, the reason for reproducing these lengthy details about the murder is precisely to provide a background to the context in which the British authorities adopted a more interventionist policy towards crime, law and order on the railway.

The government's concern about crime on the railway must also be viewed within the context of its efforts to establish a uniform system to maintain law and order in the provinces.¹³ In 1860, the Government of India had appointed a commission to examine administration of the police, which had so far been organised differently in each province. It was on the basis of the Commission's recommendations that the office of the Inspector General of Police was instituted for each presidency. It was in the same year that the Indian Penal Code too came into force on the basis of the recommendations of a Commission, which had as its first president Edward Macaulay. The writings of Fitzjames Stephen, Macaulay's successor, provide a valuable insight into the prevailing British attitude towards crime, law and order in India:

In order to appreciate the importance of the Indian Penal Code, it must be borne in mind what crime in India is. Here, in England, order is so thoroughly well established that crime of the country is hardly more

¹²See: Anand Yang (ed.), Crime and Criminality in British India, Arizona, University of Arizona Press, 1985, p.9.

¹³ Edward C. Cox, Police and Crime in India, London, Stanley Paul and Co, n.d. 1895?, p. 112.

than an annoyance. In India, if crime is allowed to go to a head, it is capable of destroying the peace and prosperity of whole tracts of the country. The mass of the people in their common moods are gentle, submissive, and disposed to be innocent; but for that very reason bold and successful criminals are dangerous in the extreme. In old days, when they joined in group or organised bodies, they soon acquired political importance. Now, in many parts of India, crime is quite as uncommon as in the least criminal parts of England, and the old high-handed systematized crime has almost entirely disappeared. This great reformation (for it is nothing less) in the state of society of a whole continent has been brought about by the regular administration of a rational body of criminal law.¹⁴

Clearly, the British believed that while the "mass of the people" were "gentle" and "submissive", organised crime was capable of destroying "the peace and prosperity" of the country. To the imperial mind, it was part of the British civilising mission to maintain order through the "regular administration of a rational body of criminal law."

Incidence of crime on the railway:

The problem of law and order on the railway seems to have been on the official agenda even before the murder. A few months before the murder, in August 1864, the government had directed the Inspector General of Police (IGP) and the Consulting Engineer of the East Indian Railway Company to

¹⁴ Cited in Cox, *ibid*, p. 125.

submit a joint report on the policing of the railway. The differences between the views of the IGP and the Consulting Engineer seemed to have been so irreconcilable that no joint report was prepared. There is no record of what exactly these differences were, but in his note the IGP, Colonel Pughe, suggested that the Consulting Engineer was not eager to prepare a joint report.¹⁵

In his note, Pughe, commented on the ineffectiveness and inefficiency of the Company Police and other officials. Apart from reiterating the incompetence demonstrated by Railway officials during the murder, he also gave other examples. According to him, at Howrah a treasury-safe had been forced open with a crow bar despite the presence over one hundred men of the Company Police on the premises. Pughe also pointed out that not only were cases of theft on the trains common, but that the railway was also being used for "the speedy transmission and concealment of plundered property" stolen from places along the line. "Professional gangs of poisoners and robbers are constantly passing up and down the line, carrying with them large quantities of

¹⁵ NAI, Railway Branch, PWD proceedings, Part A, No. 5787, August 1866. Letter and Note by Major J.R Pughe, Inspector General of Police Lower Provinces, on Railway Police, 1 December 1865. In the note, Pughe commented:

It is now more than a year since the Government directed the Inspector General and Consulting Engineer to submit a joint report, but up to the present time nothing has been done. I think it right, therefore to submit my views on the subject without further delay.

stolen goods¹⁶", he added. Pughe's note also suggested that the involvement of railway "subordinates" or "coolies" in criminal acts could not be ruled out.¹⁷ This charge was repeated in 1869 by C.G. Baker, deputy IGP. He believed organised gangs under experienced leadership were composed of "first, professional dacoits and second, railway coolies."¹⁸ In several cases of theft and other petty crimes in Howrah, Hooghly and Bhagalpur, railway coolies were alleged to have been involved. In two dacoities in Bhagalpur in August 1866, and six dacoities between 1866 and 1872 in Hooghly, the involvement of railway coolies was believed to have been proven beyond doubt.¹⁹

Official descriptions, even other than Pughe's, ascribed to crime on the railways a high degree of organisation and sophistication. The groups responsible for crime were thought to be held together by strong caste and kinship bonds.²⁰ This organised network of crime was perceived as a potential threat to the norms of expected behaviour and social order which the

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ Cited in Dipesh Chakraborty, "Early Railwaymen in India: 'Dacoity' and 'Train Wrecking' (c.1860-1900)" in Essays in Honour of Sushobhan Sarkar, p. 525.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p.534-535.

²⁰ See, for, instance former IGP Edward C. Cox's, Police and Crime in India, London, Stanley Paul and Co, n.d. 1895?

British had begun to gradually codify into laws. In fact there was a fear that those on the margins of society were on the verge of subverting the rule of British law. For instance, Pughe's account suggested that "the failure of the crops in Behar ha[d] driven the badly-disposed of the Province to seek a living by crime. They are already attempting by the Railway what was formerly practiced by the route of the Ganges..."²¹

In fact, these attitudes reflected not only the perceived need to extend the territorial law and order machinery to the railways, but, in a larger sense, elite attitudes to crime in England (as reflected in the Habitual Criminals Act of 1869) and the prevailing discourse about crime and punishment. The view of a distinct social class that was dangerous, which - unless kept in check - could threaten peace and order in society, reflected the dominant thinking of the period. By attributing to particular social groups inherently depraved instincts and behavior, the governing class quite clearly absolved itself of all responsibility for either the prevalence of crime, or the social and economic conditions of those who committed it.²² This view was neatly transposed to India and complemented existing notions of caste as fixed social units that

²¹NAI, Railway Branch, PWD proceedings, Part A, August 1866, No. 5787. Letter and Note by Major J.R Pughe, Inspector General of Police Lower Provinces, on Railway Police, 1 December 1865.

²²See: Anand A. Yang, "Dangerous castes and tribes: the criminals tribe and the Maghiya doms of north-east India", in Anand A. Yang, (ed.), Crime and Criminality in British India, Arizona, University of Arizona Press, 1985.

functionally segregated Indian society. Following from this view was the belief that the social locus of crime was rooted in particular castes and found legislative shape in the Criminal Tribes Act of 1871.²³ Not surprisingly, given the lack of a sophisticated understanding of Indian society, the term tribes and castes were used interchangeably.

British officials believed that these "criminal tribes", had quickly adapted their "profession" to the railways, and that this modern mode of transport had become very much a part of the criminal milieu. Specific "criminal tribes" were identified as taking particular advantage of the railways. Describing the *Pathans*, Sir Edmund C. Cox, former head of the Great Indian Peninsular Railway Police, wrote: "They will travel hundreds of miles by rail on the their errands of crime. When challenged, they are always ready with a false account of their movements and they will give any names and addresses which happen to come into their heads."²⁴ One other "tribe" which received voluminous attention was the *Bhamptas*, described by Cox as the "tribe [which] gave an infinity of trouble". He wrote: "Their home is in the Deccan, but there is no limit to their field of operations. They work all over India, travelling even to

²³*Ibid.*

²⁴Edward C. Cox, Police and Crime in India, London, Stanley Paul and Co, n.d. 1895?, p. 234.

Assam; and no railway is immune from the *Bhampta* pest."²⁵ The railway station and the trains, with the commotion and the crowds, were seen as ideal locales for the *Bhamptas'* operations: "The *Bhampta* is a marvelously skilful pickpocket and railway thief. He frequents fairs, loading-places bazaars, temples - any place, in fact, where there is a crowd."²⁶ Cox's graphic description of the *Bhamptas'* *modus operandi* on the railway is worth citing in detail, if only to illustrate how completely the myth of the *Bhamptas* had captured the British imagination:

It is on the railway that the *Bhampta* delights in exercising his wits. Two or more of them will enter a third-class compartment, and as their fellow passengers begin to drop off to sleep and settle down for the night, their work begins. Various bags have been deposited beneath the seat. One of the *Bhamptas* lies down on the floor and covers himself with a cloth over his legs, thus concealing the man lying down. When all is quiet, the man on the floor takes from his mouth the tiny curved knife which all *Bhamptas* carry concealed between the gum and the upper lip, and ripping the seams of the bags, extracts any valuables that they may contain. If time and opportunity permit, he deftly sews up the seams again. He passes up what he had stolen to his accomplice. At the next station, both move into another carriage and very likely find fresh victims there. If the least alarm is raised, they throw the property out of the window. They count the number of telegraph poles to the next station and pick up their spoil.²⁷

The mythical prowess of *Bhamptas* seem to have been proven by an incident in

²⁵*Ibid.*, p. 237.

²⁶*Ibid.*

²⁷*Ibid.*

1898, when a *Bhampta* is believed to have actually stolen a valuable travelling bag belonging to the Governor of Bombay from his saloon on the Southern Mahratta railway.

One crime not attributed to specific tribes was of train-wrecking. In a note in 1866, the Government of Bengal had directed the IGP to pay adequate attention "to the systematic pilfering and the attempts to upset a train, which were now so frequently made."²⁸ Incidents of train-wrecking, although apparently frequent, did not seem to have warranted much discussion or adoption of special measures at this time. While several such instances have been briefly referred to in the records, officials seem to have little agreement over the reasons for their occurrence, but they were not viewed, in the 1860s, as having any broader political or social significance. In 1866, in Bhagalpur District, it was indeed recorded:

These attempts have been numerous of late, and are I think, connected sometimes with the present high price of food which the people generally attribute to the exportation of grain from the district by rail...[1866 was a famine year]²⁹

But even these instances do not seem to have warranted any serious discussion within the civil service. Another incident in 1878 in Dacca was described as

²⁸NAI, Railway Branch, PWD proceedings, Part A, August 1866, No. 900 T. Note from Secretary to Government of Bengal to IGP Lower Provinces, 6 June 1866.

²⁹*Ibid.*, p. 530

"probably the work of idle boys tending cattle."³⁰ In 1869, the motive for another instance, at the Doomraon station in Bhagalpore, was described as theft. Attempts at upsetting trains, were also traced to railway coolies, as in the case of the First Mail near Assensole in 1878 on the chord line of the East Indian Railway. It was believed that even though this was the fourth attempt in two years, since the mail train was the only train selected, the motive was probably robbery.³¹

Dipesh Chakravarty has drawn a distinction between the incidence of train-wrecking as a crime and as a form of protest by railway employees. According to him, official thinking on the matter seemed to have changed from "vague speculations to emphatic statements of their observations as we move from 1870s into the 1890s, by which time 'train wrecking' attempts were definitely being made for registering grievances." ³²

One instance provided by Chakravarty is of train-wrecking at Nadia in 1876. The magistrate wrote in his judgement: "Beyond all doubts this was a case of malice. In my opinion, however, the circumstances pointed so much not to the

³⁰Cited in Dipesh Chakraborty, "Early Railwaymen in India: 'Dacoity' and 'Train Wrecking' (c.1860-1900)" in Essays in Honour of Professor S.C. Sarkar, New Delhi, People's Publishing House, 1976, p. 529.

³¹*Ibid.*, p. 531.

³²*Ibid.*

inhabitants of the neighbouring village as to skilled labourers of whom several were discharged at the time."³³ An attempt to dislodge the mail train at Assensole in 1876 was also believed to have been the work of dismissed employees. Consequently, by the mid-1890s the military, home and public works department were all "discussing the advisability of enacting special legislation to prevent the crime of train wrecking".³⁴ However, in the 1860s, the decade studied here, there is no evidence, from official records, that there was any recognition that train wrecking and protest by railway employees were related.

Policing the railway:

Interestingly, the context for the very first discussion of the need to police the railway, in 1863, was with a "view to the efficient protection of the Railway Company's property and the prevention of attempts to throw carriages off the line."³⁵ It was suggested that there should be an organised force, at the rate of one constable for every one and a half mile of line, under the control of a travelling European inspector and *sowars* to patrol every seven miles of line.

³⁶ This was not acted on at that time, and Pughe's note (referred to earlier)

³³*Ibid.*

³⁴*Ibid.*

³⁵NAI, Police Branch, Home Deptt. proceedings, Part A, June 48-56, Report of Commission on Railway Police, 1872.

³⁶*Ibid.*

must, therefore, be regarded as the first effort which resulted in concrete action.

The conflict over authority between the Railway Company and the Government, which was recorded earlier in this chapter, was at the center of discussion about law and order on the railway. Pughe - and many others in the government - believed that in a large measure the occurrence of major crime either on the railway, or along places on the line, could be prevented by more organised policing arrangements on the railway. The East India Railway Company did not, however, see it this way. The Company Police was considered sufficient by the Agent to guard the company's interests and, in fact, the question of deployment of the regular police at stations often seemed to have created a confrontational situation between the police department and the railway company. Describing one instance, Pughe wrote:

After the railway murder [of 1864], the District Superintendent ordered a policeman to be present on the arrival and departure of the trains, not to interfere with any one unless called upon by the station master to do so, but simply to notice what occurred and report to his inspector. One might have supposed that the company would have been glad to avail themselves of this co-operation; on the contrary, the man was peremptorily turned off the Company's premises.³⁷

³⁷NAI, Railway Branch, PWD proceedings, Part A, August 1866, No. 5787. Letter and Note by Major J.R Pughe, Inspector General of police Lower Provinces, on Railway Police, 1 December 1865.

Elsewhere in his note, Pughe pointed out that the Agent had declined the assistance of the regular police "as he has a police of his own". Further, the Agent had insisted that he could not use the regular police "unless the government would hold itself responsible for all loss", and that "objection would be made to any police being stationed within the limits of a railway except at the request of a railway officer."³⁸

Contractual provisions had, however, not provided for policing arrangements. It is not surprising since passenger traffic itself had not been anticipated at the time that the contracts had been signed. The railway police in fact had no power to arrest for offenses other than those contravening the bye-laws of the company, and the Railway Act made no mention of a railway police. Section 2 of Act V of 1861, on the other hand, laid down that "the entire police establishment under a local government shall for the purposes of this Act, be deemed to be one Police Force, and shall be formally enrolled." In short, the Company Police, in its existing form was, to use Pughe's words, "illegal".³⁹

As indicated earlier, the British authorities believed that the record of the Company Police in the prevention and detection of crime was poor. It was believed not to have been constituted carefully and was thought to be

³⁸Cited in *ibid.*

³⁹*Ibid.*

principally composed of "a large number of up-country" dilettantes posing as policemen.⁴⁰ But the Company Police was, as was demonstrated by the Agent's response to Pughe, very sensitive about its turf. Even in the cases of theft, the first investigation was made by the Company Police. The cases were reported to the regular police only after the failure of the Company Police; according to the government, this delay reduced the chances of recovery of the stolen goods or money. Further, in the view of the government, this delay was particularly unfortunate because of the ease with which stolen property could be transmitted along the railway.

It is significant that government suspicion of a collusion between the lower levels of railway employees and criminals, extended also to Company policemen. Pughe, for instance, was of the opinion that "as a rule, these men were known to the railway police, who for a consideration, afford them aid and protection."⁴¹

Besides the apparently poor record of the railway police, the major imperative for improving existing arrangements was the perceived need to combat organised crime on the railways. The Government felt that this could only be combatted by a police network that was in turn organised and whose efforts

⁴⁰*Ibid.*

⁴¹*Ibid.*

over a large spatial extent would be coordinated. A role for the police was also envisaged as a protector of passengers of the third and fourth class.

Describing the treatment of these passengers (at the hands of the railway staff) Pughe wrote "the treatment to which third and fourth class travellers are subjected is well known. They are frequently insulted, robbed, and cheated on the stations and have no one to whom they can apply for redress."⁴² He gave the example of a sick sepoy who asked for assistance from a Company Policeman, to hand him his bundle from a train as it was moving off, but instead the train door was slammed shut by him and the sepoy's property was taken away.⁴³

The above discussion, particularly Pughe's note, reveals the perceived need within the British government to provide greater security to life and property on the railways through improved policing. This, of course, stemmed from a larger British need to maintain order in a colonial society. In contrast, the railway company viewed these as attempts at encroaching on the company's turf. Moreover, the Company, (as will become clear shortly), did not think that government's concern for the travelling and trading classes warranted the additional expenditure on extra policing on the Company's part. And, if the Company had to pay for the extra-police, it should be able to retain control

⁴²*Ibid.*

⁴³*Ibid.*

over it.

Functions of the Railway Police:

In his note, Pughe emphasized that the only remedy for the "unsatisfactory state of affairs" was to maintain a police force at the stations, not only to save the company from loss, but to protect the lives and property of passengers.

Pughe also wanted the Company Police to be demobilized; to "strip the present men of all pretence to exercise police functions". Instead, as earlier stated, he wanted to "have a certain number of the regular police constantly on duty at every railway station, to which they should, at all times have free access, and under proper restriction, to the line generally."⁴⁴

Pughe did not at this stage propose a separate railway police, but only an increase to the regular force of district police a portion of which was to be deployed at railway stations. He laid down the specific duties of the police force (deputed to the railways). These included: protection of persons and property of the passengers; prevention of overcrowding of carriages; keeping the platforms clear; carrying out the orders of the station master with reference to the safety and convenience of public; and preventing breaches of the peace.⁴⁵

⁴⁴NAI, Railway Branch, PWD proceedings, Part A, August 1866, No. 5787. Letter and Note by Major J.R Pughe, Inspector General of police Lower Provinces, on Railway Police, 1 December 1865.

⁴⁵*Ibid.*

Pughe was convinced that the existing police organization with reinforcements could easily be capable of handling this additional responsibility, since in most cases the railway stations and police stations were located mostly between three to six miles of each other.⁴⁶

The Lieutenant Governor urged the Company to accept these proposals, but the Agent, in his reply, insisted that the proposals were acceptable "on condition that the entire body should be under the control of the company only". The Agent also suggested that an officer of the rank of District Superintendent should command the force. He added that, if his amendments were acceptable, the Company, subject to the approval of the London Board, was prepared to meet the whole of the expense, in consideration of benefits likely to be derived from the arrangement."⁴⁷

The Lieutenant Governor agreed to the condition that the police would be at the disposal of the Agent, but that "general control" would be exercised by the IGP as over other police forces. The proposals to integrate the railway police with the larger police organization of the country was spelt out in a letter to the IGP by the Lieutenant Governor:

⁴⁶*Ibid.*

⁴⁷NAI, Railway Branch, PWD proceedings, Part A, August 1866, No. 213. Letter from E. Palmer, Chairman Board of Agency, EIR to Consulting Engineer, Government of Bengal, Railway Department, 10 May 1866.

1. The superintendent must send in to you returns of crime to be incorporated with the general criminal statistics of the country.
2. It must be borne in mind that the authority of the magistrate and the police in the districts through which the railway passes cannot legally be suspended. All accidents will, therefore, as here to fore, be taken up by the district authority, the Superintendent of railway police attending on behalf of the railway company, and assisting at the inquiry and prosecution.
3. The Superintendent will at once report to the Agent all offenses committed on the railway, and the action taken by the police in consequence. When the offence is punishable under the general laws of the country, the railway police will at once take measures to have the offender brought before a magistrate, and the regular district police should be instructed to give them every assistance. The railway Superintendent will be responsible for the prosecution of offenders apprehended under his orders and will see that the necessary witnesses are sent before the magistrate. In offenses against the railway act, the Superintendent will proceed in accordance with such instructions as he may receive from time to time from the Agent, who is responsible to government for the due prosecution of the company's servants and others found guilty of offenses against the Act.
4. All accidents, however, endangering the safety of any person travelling or being upon the railway will be immediately reported as at present by the nearest officer of the railway to the magistrate of the district in which it occurs, as well as to the higher railway authorities, and the district Superintendent should proceed, when possible, to the spot himself and commence an inquiry in view to the case being taken up by the district police. The railway police Superintendent will ensure the attendance at the inquiry of witnesses in the company's service and at the trial the railway Superintendent will, if possible, himself attend or if cannot do so depute some intelligent subordinate officer on his behalf.
5. Th

Governor is of the opinion that the railway company should receive credit for the amount so saved and that it should be paid by government as a contribution towards the railway police.

7. The railway Superintendent should be told to do everything in his power to maintain a good understanding with the railway agency under which he is now placed. In case of dispute the question is to be settled by the IGP in communication with the Consulting Engineer or a reference to the government in the judicial department.⁴⁸

Although the company was made responsible for its policing arrangements, what was now established was a virtual integration with the law and order machinery for the country as a whole. This arrangement made it clear that the company and its servants were subject to the general laws of the government of India. In particular, since all accidents were now to be taken up by the district police, this ensured that the government was able to have a decisive role in the railway department. The change in priorities which the special railway police represented is also obvious in the fact that though the police took over duty in January 1867, it first confined itself to protecting passengers and platforms and detective duties generally. It was only in May 1867 that the police took over duty of watching goods sheds, wagons, and other railway property. This arrangement was changed in 1871. The change was prompted by the Agent's letter to the Railway branch with proposals to apportion charges as well as to ensure the permanent maintenance of the special police. Consequently, later that year, there was an attempt to separate the proportion

⁴⁸NAI, Railway Branch, PWD proceedings, Part A, August 1866, No. 909T. Letter from Lt Governor of Bengal, 6 June 1866.

of different types of duties - that of stations and railway property and general protection of the public while travelling. This was necessary to work out a fixed contribution by the government for the fixed police for the interest of the state, protection of the public and for the keeping the peace along the line of the railway.⁴⁹

To conclude, by the 1870s the colonial government had succeeded in virtually homogenizing the law and order machinery on the railway with that operating on the provinces. Despite the Company's initial reluctance, it was in no position to resist government pressure. This conflict reflected in some measure the clash between the broader interests of British colonial rule and the narrower interests of a commercial company.

The conflict of interests also represented the conflict between centralised uniform control and segregated power. The Imperial government was concerned with the centralization of executive, legislative and judicial authority. To achieve this, it was important to have uniform and homogenous laws throughout the country. Within this centralised frame there was segregation on the basis of territorial boundaries. The railways threatened this structure, moving as it did from one province to another and from one police zone to another. Unlike the inhabitants of a province, the railways could not

⁴⁹ NAI, Police Branch, Home Deptt proceedings, Part B, No 48-56, June 1872.

be under the charge of any one authority. Government officials felt that this lack of continuous and permanent responsibility would lead to disorder. They thus sought to integrate the railway police with the existing police system. The murder of 1864 produced not only a discourse on colonial order but opened up a space in which issues of colonial power and authority were debated and negotiated.

Conclusion

[This study has focussed on aspects of the interaction between the railways and Indian society in the 1860s. The term "modernization" does not represent the complex processes] that were generated because of the introduction of the railways. [This is evident in all the aspects of the interaction railways with Indian society that were studied.]

[The introduction and use of mechanical time did not preclude the use of astrological time and natural time] A large part of India was poorly connected to the railway and maintained civil time distinct from railway time, basing it on local or solar time. Two notable exceptions that continued to use their respective local times despite the presence of the railways were the two presidencies of Calcutta and Bombay. [The running of the trains itself did not follow the strict regimen of mechanical time: trains allowed for frequent stoppages] for meals and catered to the predominantly short distance passenger, and did not find it necessary to improve their speeds.

However, [rail travellers did overcome their initial diffidence and took to rail travel in a way that surprised many.] Rail travel for most was their first encounter with mechanical time as separate from socio-cultural time. The concept of uniform time gave the illusion of proximity to places far apart in

terms of distances even though there was imperfect market integration till the end of the century.

Issues of caste, community, race and gender were brought into focus by the experience of rail travel. [Rail travel necessitated a modification in the practice of caste.] For the first and second classes were created for the European passenger and third class travel could not accommodate notions of purity and pollution. [Yet there are indications that people continued to be concerned about these issues.] For instance, native travellers always preferred to travel in kin groups, which was the bane of the station staff instructed to prevent overcrowding. Most clearly, however, the nations regarding acceptance of food and water reveal that caste had survived the exigencies of rail travel. Separate classes of refreshment Rooms for first, second and third class passengers as well separate refreshment rooms for Hindus and Muslims became the norm.

The position of women varied with caste, and few high caste women travelled by train. [The Governor-General desired the Railway Companies to make suitable provisions for inducing them to travel by train since the matter was of great "social and political significance".] To enable women in the third class to travel safely, a separation of European and Indian passengers was introduced, which isolated the two communities during rail travel. Even second class travel

for Indians had become so full of incidents of sexual and racial harassment, that many considered it preferable to travel in the third class.

The evidence of the early efforts to recruit Indians on railway shows that Indians were considered fit to work only in some areas and in some capacities. The assumed superiority of the white man over the 'native' was reflected in the stereotype about natives lack of presence of mind, judgement and a sense of responsibility which meant that India's could be excluded in some areas, where Eurasians and others could be accommodated. These views about Indian labour, however, also reflected the particular social conditions in India where manual labour was looked down upon, and where a job in an office was considered superior to one in a workshop or on an engine. British policy did not attempt to address these issues through the organization of training or altered pay scales, but simply used Eurasians to fill these gaps in supply.

[The European and Eurasian railway employee was meanwhile insulated from Indian society at large, in the confines of the railway colony with its Institute, school and regulated socialization.] The western way of life was confined to these enclaves of urban life.

The problem of crime and the maintenance of law and order show how British notions of crime as a way of life for some groups and as an endemic feature of

Indian society contributed to the setting up of the law and order machinery for the railway. [There was a conflict of interests between the railway company and the government and ultimately a conflict over authority]. While the Railway Companies wanted to operate independently in terms of their contractual provisions, the government was determined that the ultimate authority to establish and maintain the rule of law over the entire geographical expanse of the country was the government of India. Government policy finally dominated the working and administration of the railways.

Assuming [therefore, that the motive force of changes in India was not "modernization" or "westernization", the changes in Indian society in the 20th century] still have to be viewed in terms of the long term processes of the structural continuities in India. [The role of the railway has to be seen with reference to how it helped to bring about the realignments and new unifying elements in India society. The picture of the 1860s, indicates the direction of these changes.]

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