

Introduction

1. Introduction:

From the beginning, undoubtedly, this is proven that the science and technology have been taking a significant role in the evolution of human civilization. They both are being the actual carrier of civilization, and have the power to change the dimension of society. The invention of the Steam Engine by James Watt and its valuable implication through the invention of locomotive by Richard Trevithick and George Stephenson were the imperative discovery of science and technology, which change the stipulation of Medieval European society and assist to enter in the Modern European civilization.

In 1825, the first railway line opened in England from Stockton to Darlington. In Indian context, the initial proposal for the construction of the railway line made in 1832. In 1844-1845, the necessary survey was being made for the construction of railway lines in Eastern and South- Western India. Lord Dalhousie suggested the recommendation on the construction of the railway line in his famous Railway Minute on 4th July 1850. The Company's authorities in England accepted the recommendation of Dalhousie. Accordingly, the Great Peninsular Railway opened the first railway line (33. 81km) on 16th April 1853 between Bombay (present Mumbai) and Than (present Thane), which started a new era in the socio-economic and political field of Modern India.

The British annexation and supremacy in the North-East India (control over Bhutan, Coochbehar, Assam, Bengal Duars, Darjeeling and Sikkim), the expansion of the plantation industry (Tea) and the high probability of the trade and commerce in the Nineteenth century apparently, accelerated the requirement of Railway construction in North Bengal. Therefore, the colonial polity and economy might be the main factors behind the foundation of railway in the backward region of the Northern Bengal.

In 1854, the East India Railway (EIR) connected Howrah and Hooghly, thus the railway entered in Bengal. In 1855, the Railway progressed westward up to Raniganj. In 1862, the next phase of railway expansion commenced on the left side of the Hooghly River with the expansion of Eastern Bengal Railway (EBR) spanning the 45 miles between Calcutta and Ranaghat in Nadia's district. The Eastern Bengal railways came into existence in 1850, to construct the 110-mile route from Calcutta to Kushtia. In 1871, Eastern Bengal railway reached the western bank of the Padma and established railheads at Kushtia (Nadia) and Goalando (Faridpur).

In 1870, the primary construction work of the Meter gauge line started from Siliguri to Poradaha, and thus the Northern Bengal State Railway opened to traffic up to Jalpaiguri in 1878. The first railway line in Siliguri opened on 10th June 1878. In 1879, the Darjeeling Steam Tramway Company was registered. After that they started the construction work and

finished the construction of the railway line up to Darjeeling on 4th July 1881. In 1876, the North Bengal Railway opened a line at Haldibari, which later turned to being the main line of the Eastern Bengal Railway connecting Calcutta with Siliguri and Darjeeling. However, the Coochbehar State Railway came into existence in 1892. The line functioned for transport of goods from 1893, and it opened for passengers in 1894. On 15th January 1893, the first Bengal Duars Railway line in Jalpaiguri opened between *Barnes Ghat* (East bank of Teesta) to *Domohani* and *Domohani* to *Dam Dim*. Thus, the Bengal Duars Railway (BDR) started its voyage in Jalpaiguri District. On 15th February 1888, the Old Bengal and North Western Railway also entered in North Bengal, and the line extended Katihar to Parbatipur. The Brahmaputra–Santahar (Sultanpur) Branch Railway from Santahar via Bogra to Phulchari completed in the year 1900-01, ran for 34.69 miles through the Bogra district from west to east. Another line established on 1st January 1909, and extended Katihar to Godagari Ghat on the left bank of the Ganges in the Rajshahi district via Malda. Thus, the railways started in North Bengal.

Scholars have already done a good number of research works on Indian railways. Few scholars have also tried to explore the grounds behind the foundation and the socio-economic and political effects of the railway on Indian society and economy. The findings of these scholarly attempts indicate that the railways took a significant and indispensable changes in the medieval social structure, and that helped the early society to elevate into modern Indian social structure. The early Indian scholars argued that the foundation of railway in India initiated by the colonial interest where the interest to the subjects was secondary. In relation to some scholar, the railway was a British chariot to accelerate the colonial exploitation, drainage, and de-industrialization and to concrete, the root of imperialism. Later on few revisionist scholars proved that it had a remarkable impact on the Indian economy. Conversely, along with some findings, the railway took uniformity in Indian market, decreased the carrying cost and develops the internal and external trade. It helped to improve the agriculture and industrial sector of India's economy. The area under cultivation has generally increased by the advent of railways. However, India has failed to achieve the actual test of the Industrial Revolution, but the foundation of Indian railway has sown the real seed of further industrial development. It was about the first time that a large number of workers were under one industry (railway); they became a social unit under a common working environment and exploitation. The expansion of railways as well accelerated the growth of western education, which flourished Indian middle-class culture. The cultural interaction and its reaction nourished Indian nationalism, the unique child of the 19th century in the Indian socio-political context.

As India, diversity is the unique character of North Bengal; here we find a variety in culture, cast, creed, language, religion, and also in politics, economy and in geographical condition. We also can follow these diversities in the research area of North Bengal. Before independence, North Bengal was more or less an undiscovered research area, the scholars