

RAIL CANVAZ

A TrainTrackers' Initiative

May 2024



The Fairy Queen

Social media platforms present us a world of opportunities – be it for acquiring knowledge, or for generating employment or for entertainment. The different domains offering various digital contents in the form of photos, videos across varying subjects connect the past with the present and future by a single click – that's how has been the learning experience these days. This holds true for our world of ferroequinology as well. The virtual world provides us with ample scope to witness how railways have evolved over time across States. Reconnoitering through archives, we can discern how major nations with rail transportation as one of their principal pillars of communication are aiming to develop their existing infrastructure while observing a remarkable concomitance in handling their glorious history and heritage with prudence and canniness. Some of the western nations have unveiled the path of upkeeping their heritage in truest sense of the term. But in our 'Rail World', it's quite a distant dream to achieve. Ours is a country where 'Heritage' is yet to become a household word. We, the commons, have a general trait of despising the past (be it for steams or diesels) while displaying fanaticism over the latest publicity stunts. This may be passed over as a general perception of an unaware populace at large but it can't be a message from the national carrier itself. Unfortunately, there exists such instances of detesting. In the recent past, one of the zonal railways while inculcating the doctrine of electrification, came up with a PR where diesel locomotives had been branded as 'harmful' machines and Indian Railways is working overtime to get rid of them. Now, the question that naturally arise as to what took the Indian Railways (IR from here on) to realize this 'noble truth' after over 75 years of Independence and whether the present sources of producing electricity in our country are that greener! One must be wise enough in straining fact from fiction in this world of glaring promotion. It's another issue that the said PR was later taken off but the damage was done as such advertisement shows IR in a very poor light as India's decision to pull down diesels has much to do with the country's equation with the international oil market and other policies rather than anything else. The entire matter is becoming increasingly moot to say the least.

Speaking of the exemplars of puffery, what's more prominent than the invasion of 'Vande' in nearly every precinct of our national transporter. Perhaps, in a bid to sell repackaged ideas at high stakes, IR has been made to go berserk with the 'Vande' factor – Vande Bharat, Vande Bharat Sleeper, Vande Metro and even Vande AC Retiring Room. This use and overuse of 'Vande' term without making appreciable progress on the technological and technical platform on which the Vande Bharat was introduced, some five years back, certainly manifests a sense of smugness that has hit the IR big time. We must remember that the introduction of any appropriate new technology leads us to the path to progress but repackaged ideas simply do not take the nation any further.

Snapping back to the issue of 'Heritage', the approach of IR is no *comme il faut*. The railway authorities' take on this issue is far from being pragmatic and the recent signs are not encouraging either. This can be substantiated from the fact of replacing a plinthed Darjeeling Himalayan Railway Steam Locomotive with a replica of a Vande Bharat (VB) coach at the premises of the Rail Bhavan. Isn't this move testifying the fact as to how IR visualizes 'Heritage' now. Going at this rate, we may soon discover the steam in the IR insignia been replaced by a VB metaphor! While it's worth to showcase your present achievement but doing that at the expense of your glorious past remains a matter of serious debate.

The discourse on this critical theory of heritage as envisaged by IR does not end here. The aspect of non-prioritization of heritage matters takes a backseat here. It is rather leap frogged by practice and promotion of pseudo heritage activities which includes giving diesel and electric locos a 'Steam Makeover'. A dangerous trend which is markedly different from evincing ignorance towards the rich legacy of railways. While the North Western Railway had 'converted' one of its YDMs into an alien looking steam, the Southern Railway also did manage to draw attention with its humble steam engine drawing current from the catenary. IR hasn't relented with these experimentations alone. It has now taken up another ambitious project to 'upgrade' some of the NDM1 locos with Neral Diesel NG Shed, plying in the Matheran Light Railway, with steam aesthetics to give a feel of the steam. There is no greater documentation of IR's fall from grace with this move amounting to an absolute disgrace and mockery of heritage. Entertainment Parks and Shopping Plazas with 'steam looking' toy trains can no longer be labelled as poor replicas as they do bring merry to the kids but for IR to conceptualize such thoughts in mainline services only brings a bag full of disrepute with unwavering ignominy.

With this general air of despondency around, witnessing a Heritage Steam Charter is like a boon to fulfill an unfulfilled dream. One suddenly and certainly feels ecstatic – not everything is lost. A "Fairy Queen Express" Heritage Special Run with the Guinness World Records holder locomotive "Fairy Queen" at the helm sounds more than interesting – it's intriguing! Our Cover Story *A Fairy Tale Run of The Fairy Queen* is based on this enthralling event that took place on the 9th of March this year between the Delhi Cantonment to Rewari stations. It was enthralling and nothing short of



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reliving those days of steam era with the queen leading way which was also bestowed with the honour of the National Tourism Award in 1999. For the tourists too, it was a gainly outcome with a fulfilling escapade. IR didn't return empty handed either – it presented itself with an opportunity to fill its coffers by showcasing its prized possession. M/s Travel & Tours – the organizer of the event pulled off the event with great success for which IR truly deserves kudos for being able to patronize matters without any hiccups. This also corroborates the fact that IR can garner more revenue in future by arranging or collaborating with private parties for such heritage special runs on a regular basis. A more robust and potent mechanism of spreading the words for such steam charters attracting foreign tourists is the way to look ahead. Foreigners, like in this trip, are mostly willing to shell out bucks to witness this piece of history. This is also a subtle way to publicize your legacy and spread awareness among the citizens. This is a path, if treaded, will earn a good trade for all – a win-win situation for every stakeholder.

Having said this, one must keep in mind about the levels of dedication and commitment for upkeeping the steams at the Rewari Steam Shed. The place is full of live exhibits of which many are dying a slow death with their boilers giving way. Thus, to keep those giants rolling, IR must think about something out of the box to keep the steams active and alive. 'Investments' made for promoting VB and the prospect of export of VB to some Latin American nations who have shown keen interest, is a matter of positivity and pride but allocation of resources to prevent the steam horses from becoming 'Shelved Exhibits' has to be on the outlay as well.

Continuing with our saga of steams, **Mick Pope** pens *Steam and Steel* which is about his visit to the Visvesvaraya Steel Authority of India at Bhadravati and the iron ore quarries at Chiria near Kolkata among others to get a measure of the steams used by those private organizations. It is astonishing to discover as to how many foreign nationals paid multiple visits to our country, only to document steams and other heritage which we seldom care to maintain or preserve. These invaluable testaments are archival materials for sure which will continue to educate the younger generations and make them mindful of the treasures once we possessed. We follow this up with another article *Steaming Hot* based on a journey behind one of the steams of the Darjeeling Himalayan Railway by **Anish Banerjee** which emphasizes on the colourful joyride that has now become an integral part of tourism and daily life of the Queen of the Hills.

Airing on heritage and antiquity of IR, how can one forget about the AH Wheeler Stall. It has been the flagship store for laying your hand on the various Zonal Railway Timetables, Trains at a Glance and the mother of them all – the Bradshaw. I clearly remember those days of buying and carrying different zonal timetables from Wheeler's stall of respective zones. For the travellers, office goers and workers, a visit to the stall was an absolute must to pocket their ready reckoner – suburban or non-suburban, whichever suited their needs to find and plan their way to destination. But for persons hailing from our parallel universe, timetables are like bible. Since childhood, Wheeler's Stall meant to be a repository of Railway Timetables for us but how many amongst us have ever enquired about its roots! I am sure that not many of us are aware of its origin. **Dr Santulan Mahanta** traces the history of Wheeler since its formative years & its relevance today in the light of it being merely reduced to just another convenience stall selling newspapers, magazines and literature on railway platforms. Of about 250 ubiquitous Wheeler stalls across the various railway stations in our nation, the one at Howrah station deserves a special mention as it has a riveting story about it which is all inscribed in a brass plate fitted in front of the Wheeler Stall at Howrah station saying – "*Indian Railways Heritage. This Bookstall which has been declared as a Heritage structure by Indian Railways was fabricated in England for A. H. Wheeler & Co. Pvt. Ltd. and shipped to India in the year 1905. The unique feature of the Bookstall is that of inter-locking wooden pieces. It does not have any hinges or nuts & bolts*". So, the essence of the stall is paramount. The one at the Bombay Central station (MMCT now) has similar features as well. The stall also finds mention in Sanjoy Mookerjee's novel 'Howrah Junction'. However, with the passage of time, Wheeler saw sharp vicissitudes of fortune over the last decade or so. Dwindling sales attributed to e-Timetables and e-Books have taken much of its sheen away. It is baffling to note IR's disinterest in shielding the legacy of the stalls from being eradicated and extirpated as the Wheeler enterprise continue to fight the odds. For all valid reasons, Wheeler deserves a fresh lease of life as it has been IR's heirloom for several generations.

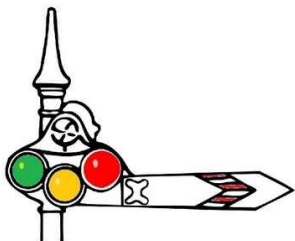
Delving deeper into nostalgia but away from the world of antique steams, **Anamitra Bose** dissects one of the earliest DC electric haulers of IR – the WCG2, in our Technical Insight genre. In his article *WCG2 – Howlers from the City of Dreams*, Mr. Bose analyses and scrutinizes one of the earliest indigenous DC Current loco of the nation which was once equipped with regenerative braking in its early days among other features. This CLW built locomotive which had earned the tag of 'Howler' for the loud signature sound from its blowers was endemic to certain ghat sections of CR only where it had served its heart out with diligence and rigour thereby making it one of the most successful classes of its time. Banking and braking across the sheer Sahyadris with elan and ebullience, the WCG2 was a class that howled and ruled the ghats in its prime.

Looking beyond the limits of huffing and puffing of the vintage steams and the howling of the vintage electrics, our issue has many more interesting reads from **Sanjoy Mookerjee**, **Tapan Pal** and **Rahul Nivascar** covering a rainbow of genres to choose from along with our other regular sections. Barring these, to further add to the diversity of content, we have **JL Singh** reminiscing his days at the *Jamalpur Locomotive Workshop* and **Amit Kumar Chatterjee** looking back on *An Adventure on the Ethiopian Railway* – the French built Meter Gauge Ethiopian Railway, during his stay in the African nation. We hope our presentations are thought provoking enough to enjoy your perpetual support with unswerving encouragement so that we can keep up the work.

Adios!

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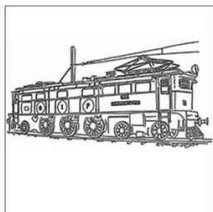
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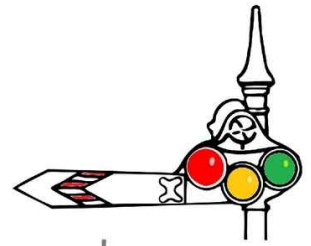
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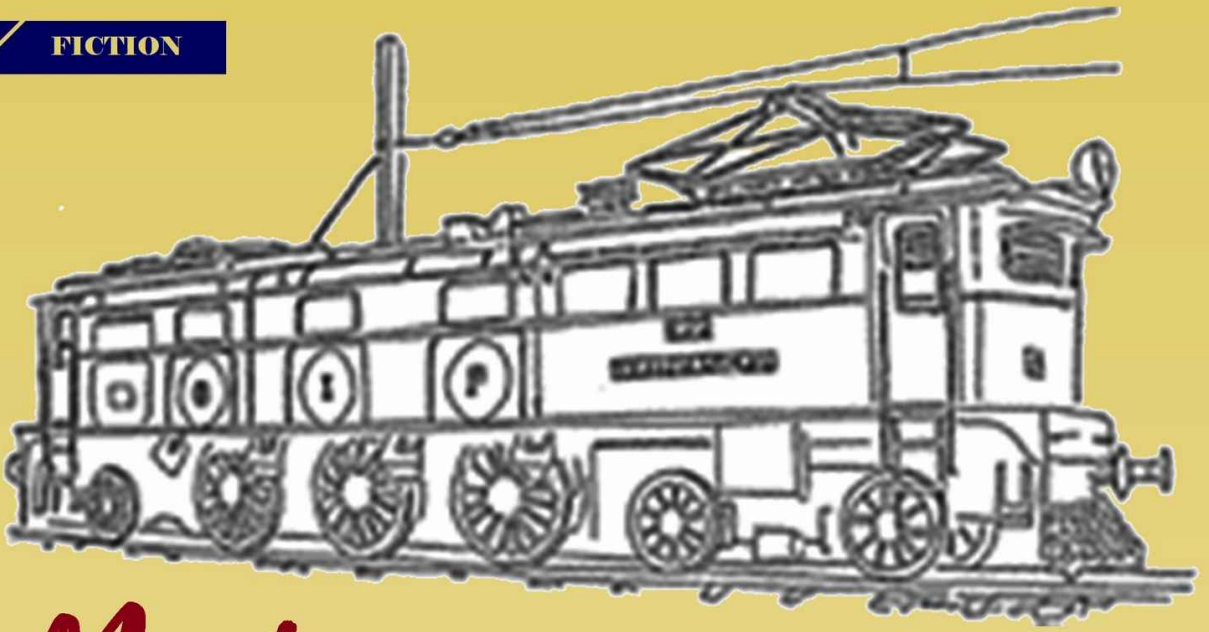


Save Kolkata Trams

Write to WB Govt. to revive this most eco-friendly mode of public transport

JOIN THE MOVEMENT WITH CTUA
Calcutta Tram Users' Association





Maharaja

It was late afternoon on a hot summer's day, in the year 1988. The mercury had touched 43 degrees Celsius. My wife, son and I were waiting anxiously at Allahabad Railway Station for the arrival of the Down Kalka-Delhi-Howrah Mail for our journey to Calcutta. The platform was packed chock-a-block with passengers, especially families with kids returning home after their summer holidays.

With my little boy on my lap sweating profusely, every passing moment increased my unease, since it was uncertain whether we would be able to get confirmed berths on what would obviously be an overcrowded train.

Those days I was working with the Indian Railways in the prestigious project for computerisation of railway passenger reservations, code-named PRS. One of the mission areas that the project team had decided for itself was to relieve the rail traveller from the tedious process of obtaining a confirmed seat or berth for the return journey. The older generation might recall that during the manual ticketing era, the originating station had to send a telegram to the starting station of the return train and wait for days till the confirmation arrived, once again



Sanjoy Mookerjee

a 1978-batch IRAS, former Financial Commissioner (Railways) and ex-officio secretary to Govt. of India. Earlier, he was posted as Director General of National Academy of Indian Railways in Vadodara. His tenure as Financial Commissioner is marked by Railways managing the burden of the VIIth Pay Commission, unprecedented external borrowings for infrastructure works, and economy measures within the organisation. He is now heading the Kolkata chapter of Rail Enthusiasts' Society. He has penned several books which include Train to Darjeeling, Howrah Junction etc.

telegraphically! Very often, inspite of several reminders and visits to the railway booking offices, the hapless rail traveller failed to get any confirmation of the request, till the day of departure.

By 1988, the Indian Railways had computerised the outward railway reserved ticketing facility from the four metro cities; yet the return reservation process remained as painful as before, since inter-city computer networking was yet to be established. Besieged constantly by complaints and litigation from harassed passengers, the railway's project team at Calcutta was determined to find an interim solution to relieve their troubles, which would be free of human intervention.

Several solutions were experimented with; all of them were unsuccessful, till one day one of our smart vendors came out with a concept of an electronic telex software named Automex, through which it became possible for designated computer terminals at the Calcutta booking office to 'handshake' with the database residing at the railway computer at New Delhi. This was indeed the breakthrough we were looking for!

I was authorised to conduct trials and evaluate the potential of this system. Obviously, I was thrilled at being able to see a light at the end of the tunnel of hope for our dear customers! And so, in coordination with our colleagues at Delhi, the trial runs were initiated on 'dummy' reservations. As the trials continued, our faith in the system increased. But our seniors were not yet confident enough to authorise a commercial launch or 'live run'.

At this juncture, I received the news of my grandmother's sudden demise at Allahabad. I needed to be with her during her last journey. But, due to the critical stage of the project, my office was reluctant to grant me leave for more than two days. It was the summer rush season and all trains were full. While I could manage to get a couple of berths for our travel from Howrah, there was absolutely no accommodation available in any train from Allahabad for the return journey. Air travel was not an option, as in those days, there was no air connectivity between the two cities.

I was in a fix!

Suddenly, a crazy thought occurred to me. Why not attempt to obtain our reservations from the Delhi quota through the Automex? Since we were travelling on a railway 'free' travel pass, no payment was involved. So surreptitiously, sitting on my terminal inside the PRS computer centre at

Calcutta, I sent an electronic telex message to the New Delhi computer seeking reservation from Allahabad to Howrah by the Kalka-Delhi-Howrah Mail, two days hence. And lo and behold, within seconds, my terminal blinked back the amnion of two Air-Conditioned berths.

Relief, followed by excitement! I could hardly believe that this was the first successful 'live' transaction performed by the Automex system at Calcutta, no, in the entire county! Yet, I couldn't overcome the feeling of trepidation which began creeping all over me, as I kept wondering how my senior officer would react when they come to know that I had gone 'live' with the system without formal sanction? Will I lose my job, I wondered?

In my desperation however, I convinced myself that 'nothing succeeds like success', and decided to face the consequences of my action upon return. As a proof of the successful booking, I took out a printout and we left for Allahabad the same evening, locking my secret within my heart.

And so, two days later, we were standing on the Allahabad station platform, suffering the mid-summer heat, waiting to see if my 'experiment' had indeed worked. To double check, I scanned the reservation chart of the Allahabad 'quota' for the train, pasted on the platform notice board. As expected, our names were not there. Thus the only hope of success would be if the reservation chart carried by the travelling ticket examiner (TTE) from Delhi bore our names. So, reliantly we awaited our fate as the Kalka-Delhi-Howrah Mail rolled into the station for its ten-minute stoppage.

No sooner had the train screeched to a halt, all hell broke loose on the platform. As the poor TTE stepped out of the train, he was mobbed by dozens of 'wait-listed' passengers, craving for accommodation at all cost. With my son upon my arms and my wife lugging our suitcase, we rushed forward. But the seething humanity prevented us from reaching anywhere near the railway functionary in question.

At that instant, my attention was attracted towards the Air-Conditioned coach at the rear, wherefrom emerged a tall, handsome person, impeccably dressed in a smart railway uniform, carrying a rolled-up sheet of paper in his hand. In sheer desperation, we darted towards him to find that indeed he was the train conductor. Sensing the paper roll to be the passenger chart he was carrying from Delhi, I approached him for his help. But the



Train Conductor

head of the great personage kept rotating right and left, all the while looking afar as if searching for someone on the platform. With dismissive waves of his free hand, he kept repeating, "No room please. All berths are full!"

It took a couple of minutes of intense persuasion for me to impress upon him that I was a railway officer and perhaps our reservations might be listed in the rolled-up computer sheet lying in his firm grasp. For a second, he mellowed, turned his attention to me and then asked in his staccato tenor, "Names?"

"Mr. and Mrs. S. Mookerjee," I replied.

Immediately, his head went back to its rotating posture, and with an avuncular grin, obviously in deference to the railwayman in me, he repeated the announcement in his stentorian voice, "Sorry sir, no room. All berths are full!"

By then five minutes had elapsed and five more minutes were left for the train to depart; and my patience had completely evaporated. I took out my railway travel pass and the computer confirmation slip which I had printed at Calcutta. Handing these over to the conductor, I revealed my identity as the project officer of the railways' computerisation programme and insisted in the most officious tone that I could muster, that he must check my pass and PNR (Passenger Name Record) details with the printout without further delay.

Holding my papers in hand, Mr. Conductor once again

looked around, slightly bewildered. Then, swiftly comparing the two documents, murmured to himself, "Well, the pass and PNR numbers do tally!"

Then, his mood suddenly changed. An incredulous look came into his eyes as he stared at me and asked, this time more politely, "Your names once again, please?"

No sooner had I repeated our names, the uniformed giant burst out laughing like a man possessed, shaking from head to toe. For an instant, his booming laughter silenced all noise around us on the platform, with heads turning to watch the Goliath's uncontrolled mirth. Stunned, my son clasped me tight, shutting his eyes, while we stood there, frozen and bewildered at the Conductor's unfathomable behaviour.

Just then, the guard blew the starting whistle; and with it, Mr. Conductor's laughter ceased as abruptly as it had begun. With a deep bow, taking our suitcase into his custody, he pointed towards the door of the coach and exclaimed in Queen's English, "Welcome on board, Ma'am and Sir. Please step inside. Your reservations are confirmed."

Benumbed by the queer happenings of the last quarter-hour, we clambered onto the train and occupied our allotted berths without a word. As the train eased out of the station, the air-conditioning began to soothe our nerves. At that instant we realised that our suitcase was missing. I was about to embark upon its search, when in came Mr. Conductor, with a plastic pouch of chilled drinking water in his right hand and our suitcase in his left. We gratefully accepted the water to quench our parched throats, while the Conductor Sahab gently placed the suitcase beneath our berth.

With a genial smile, he announced, "Bireswar Das at your service Sir!"

Pointing to the sheaf of papers jutting out the pocket of his tunic, he continued, "Please allow me to apologise for the inconvenience caused, the reason for which I shall presently explain, once you have been able to settle down comfortably."

But we could hardly hold back our curiosity any longer. I requested Mr. Das not to prolong the suspense. With a dramatic gesture, the Conductor fished out the computerised reservation chart which he had collected at Delhi Junction, flattened it on the berth opposite, pointing the text for me to read. At once, the reason for the peculiar behaviour of the Train Conductor became clear to me.

The chart read as follows:

TRAIN: 2302 DLI-HWH CLASS 2A							
Passenger Name	Age	Sex	From	To	Coach	Berth	PNR
S. MAHARAJA	32	M	ALD	HWH	A1	31	xxx xxxxxxxx
S. MAHARAJA	32	F	ALD	HWH	A1	32	yyy yyyyyyy

Seeing the surprise on my face, Mr. Das burst out laughing once again, which even the rattle of the train, as it crossed the Yamuna Bridge, could not drown. This time of course, we also joined in.

As our co-passengers rushed forward to see what the matter was, Mr. Das took his seat across the aisle, and with an enigmatic smile began explaining, almost like Hercule Poirot in an Agatha Christie mystery novel,

"Sir, when I went through the reservation chart at Delhi Junction, I was astonished to observe that in democratic India, we still have persons with Maharaja as a surname! I have never had an opportunity of a Maharaja travelling on my train earlier. So, I was determined to accord this Maharaja the courtesy and honour that his title deserves. Therefore, donning my best uniform, I got down at Allahabad Station to welcome 'Aaj ka Maharaja', today's Emperor and his Empress, in regal style! But alas, just as I was imagining the couple would be dressed in traditional finery as behoves their title, you came along to claim their berths! How was I to know that a computer glitch has fooled us all? This became clear once you gave me your computer slip."

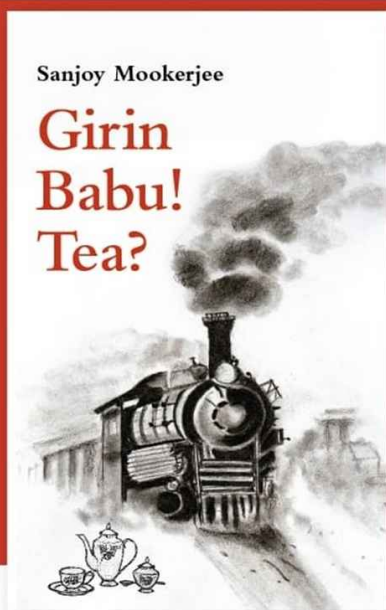
The story amused our co-passengers so much that many of them couldn't stop laughing, almost till the train reached Mughalsarai.

But Mr. Das remained unwavering in his commitment. Stretching up to his full six feet height, he stated, "Sir, since I have promised myself to bestow special care upon you and your royal entourage during this journey, I most humbly request you to please accept my personal hospitality on board."

We felt extremely embarrassed and at the same time touched by Mr. Das's gesture and politely sought to excuse ourselves from accepting his offer. But he remained unmoved, saying, "Sir, I realise I have been rather brusque with you on the platform. Now please allow me to make amends. I have requested the pantry car manager to provide one special item along with your dinner tonight. I do hope that you will relish it as my guest, with my respects."

With these words, our genial Train Conductor fished out a packet of candies from one of his innumerable pockets, and bending before our son Siddhartha, handed it over to him, saying "Enjoy your journey, Rajkumar, my prince!"

All sketches used here were the artwork of author's better half Sudakshina Kundu Mookerjee. Cover sketch artwork courtesy: Shri Mohit Sinha, DG/HR, Railway Board.

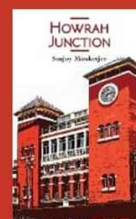
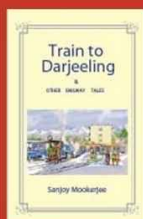


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An Adventure on the Ethiopian Railway



A Civil Engineer by profession, **Amit Kumar Chatterjee** was in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, as a Project Consultant to The Ethiopian Sugar Corporation, for the Expansion & Rehabilitation of their Metahara Sugar Factory (1980-'82).

This is the story of a Railway that once existed, but is no more. The meter gauge Ethiopian Railway, built by the French, had served that country for over a century since 1897. It had connected the Ethiopian capital city of Addis Ababa to the port city of Djibouti on the Red Sea. The railway was mainly used to serve the economic purpose of the land locked country, in transport of their main produce of coffee and sugar to the port, for export. The Meter Gauge Railway slowly faced a natural death due to poor upkeep and shortage of rolling stock. Ultimately, Addis Ababa lost its access to the port city of Djibouti on the Red Sea in 2004. However, I must mention that presently a modern electrified railway system of standard gauge (1435 mm wide) is already in place as a replacement.

It was sometime towards the end of the year 1980. At the time I happened to be in Ethiopia, at a place named Metahara, some 200 km east of Addis Ababa. The township of Metahara was located in the midst of a large sugar plantation area, with a big modern sugar factory in it, a

prized possession of the Ethiopians, presented by the Dutch. The plantation was in the middle of a semi-arid desert, watered by the Awash River, and adjoining the famous Awash National Safari Park. The meter gauge railway line passed by the plantation area, coming from Addis Ababa and going to the last town of the country named Dire-Dawa some 270 km away eastward, before proceeding to Djibouti on the Red Sea.

For adventure, we had chosen to take the train ride to Dire-Dawa, on the Addis Ababa to Djibouti line. We had to board the train at the Metahara rail station. The Metahara station had nothing but a tin shed by the railway line, standing in the middle of nowhere. It was desert all round with Oryx gazelles idling under a tree at a little distance. A group of hungry looking bare bodied tribals, the indigenous Karayyu tribesmen, were waiting in the scorching sun, for the train to arrive from Addis Ababa. In glaring contrast, we stood close to them in our picnic attire, with our colourful caps, hats and sun glasses protecting us from the glare of the sun, but



Addis Ababa Station (present day)

wearing a cautious and apprehensive look towards the tribals. The official car that brought us there stood guard behind us, till the diesel drawn short train arrived with much huff and puff. It gave us time just enough to board the first-class compartment, which had no prior reservation, while the tribal lot struggled with the passengers and the security guards of the ordinary packed compartments, for being allowed in. I could see them clinging to the sides of the train, even as the train picked up motion. Our non-airconditioned chair car compartment was quite clean and had a counter selling water and beer.

Soon after, the train crawled over a rickety steel bridge, 155 meters long, over the awe-inspiring, 700 feet deep Awash gorge, before coming to a halt at the Awash town stop. The place bore no resemblance to a town. It was a scruffy and nondescript place that appeared to have mushroomed around the station. Again, there was a group of tribal people who were making valiant attempts to board the packed train, while we felt insecure even in the comforts of our first-class compartment, which was provided with armed guards. It was somewhere in this region along the Great Ethiopian Rift Valley that just a few years before our visit, in 1974, the four million old remains of a female hominid skeleton, nicknamed 'Lucy', was found. Since it is the earliest find, the region is thought to be the cradle of mankind.

The train rolled through barren and semi desert terrain for long hours. Sometimes, it stopped at unscheduled places for no clear reason to us. It paused probably to allow resting of the locomotive. It gave us fears at the very thought of getting stranded in the middle of the desert, if the engine was to fail; for surely there would be no immediate replacement.

At one such unscheduled stop, we saw a cover of unnatural dust cloud arising at a distance from the track. At first, we could not make out the cause. As the sky became dark, we thought it to be a dust storm. Soon the source came into our view, being the movement of thousands of camels crossing the desert railway, raising sand into the air. It took an hour for the caravan to pass by, before we could resume the journey.

When the train had stopped, the guards in our compartment had got down for a stroll. Hurriedly they climbed back as the

train started moving, but to our exasperation we found there was an influx of half a dozen tribal men and women with children. They were almost naked with matted hair but with docile faces. The women folk were topless. They carried sticks and spears, which frightened us. Soon the compartment got filled up with an unpleasant smell. We came to know that it is customary for the tribal people to apply curded camel milk to their hair for beautification. The nauseating smell was due to that. We gathered that the guards would have made some earning from them, to accommodate their lot in the compartment. We had no alternative but to bear on.

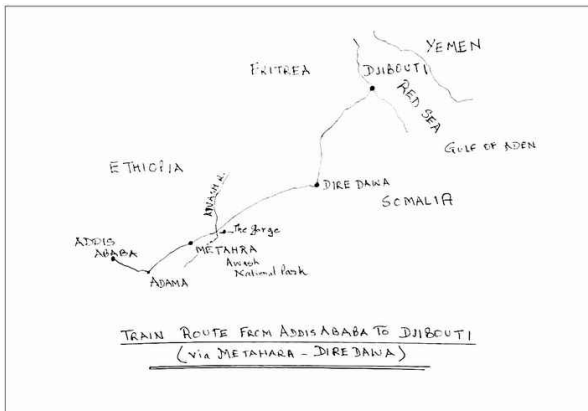
It became dark. The train continued to groan and puff beyond the scheduled arrival time at Dire Dawa. We knew not how far we were from our destination. The train was obviously running late. We came to know that it is customary for the train to stop as soon as it enters the midnight curfew hours, wherever be it, as per the dictat of the prevalent martial law in the country. This compounded our anxiety, as it was already past 10 pm. Most of the other passengers were snoring. It seemed that they were regular travellers on this route and did not mind the delay.

Fortunately enough, in the next half an hour or so we could see the lights of a township. People woke up and scrambled towards the door in readiness to get off. We followed. We had covered 270 km in 13 hours. We had reached Dire-Dawa. We had time just enough to scramble inside a hotel near the railway station and look for a room. Unfortunately, there were none, as all were occupied. But the curfew period had commenced. Therefore, the hotel staff forbade us to go outside, even if it be to search another hotel. They suggested that we squat in the lobby. However, sometime later, having pity on us, they made a staff room available for us by shifting the occupant. We had nothing to eat that night as all the restaurants were closed.

Next morning we set out to see the city of Dire Dawa. It had little to offer except mosques and a few churches. The market place was dusty, selling bare essentials. We preferred to rush back to the railway station and wait, rather than miss the train for our return journey. There was no system of reservation in advance. Hence there was a long queue before the only ticketing window. A sergeant, dressed like a bandmaster with a whip in hand, was striking here and there

Dire Dawa Station (present day)





Ethio-Djibouti MG Railway hand-drawn map by author

in order to discipline the people in the queue. Some announcements kept blabbering on the hand-held loudspeaker which we could not comprehend. None could speak or understand English; neither did we understand their language. Travel exertion, hunger and heat of the day had fatigued us. We stood there, bewildered.

At that point, one tout with unshaven face, teeth glittering and with furrows lined upon his dark features, dressed like another bandmaster but with an army cap, suddenly appeared on the scene. We could only explain to him two words, 'Metahara' and 'First Class ticket' that we were



Djibouti City Station (present day)

looking for. He demanded the ticket amount which we sheepishly handed over to him. He vanished with the money in the rush. We stood there lost for some time, till he suddenly returned, thankfully with the train tickets. Surprisingly, he did not accept any reward or commission for his service. Having been of great service to us, he disappeared into the crowd with a salute, as suddenly as he had arrived. We boarded the train and returned safely to our home at Metahara, late in the evening. This has remained quite a memorable train journey for me.

All photos are sourced from internet unless mentioned otherwise.

Oryx Gazelles Ethiopia. Photo by author.



FEATURE



Steaming Hot!

Anish Banerjee



Anish - passionate educator and a fervid railway enthusiast who always looks forward to sharing enchanting tales of railways through visual storytelling.

In a not so quaint but very pretty hill town of West Bengal, the people sleep and wake up with the Kanchenjunga. Well, they wake up to another thing - that's the noise of the vintage whistles of the century old steam locomotives which fill the town with not only puff and huff but also with their magnificent presence.

Darjeeling, there's something about this name and this city - it draws people like a magnet does and yet it never feels enough. In that maddening crowd, there's a calm unmatched. When the first rays of the Sun paint the white ice of the mighty Kanchenjunga, it gives people a fleeting moment which they can steal from their hustling lives. In that calmness, in that cold warmth, the cherry on the top is the Darjeeling Himalayan Railway.

Certified by UNESCO, running for 145 odd years, DHR is not only a transport system, it is an emotion. The rolling stock, consisting of the 2ft narrow gauge



B Class steam locomotives, the diesel run NDM6(s) and the cute little bus-like blue-white coaches, is a part of live history. Bronco, Himalayan Queen, Mountaineer, Himalayan Bird - can you guess, what these are? Well, they are the machines which charm every soul - they are the B Class Steam Locomotives. Maintained at Darjeeling Steam Locomotive Shed, right in the heart of the city, they are historical mementoes built by Sharp, Stewart and Company and later the North British Locomotive Company between 1889 and 1925. From a little kid holding his father's hand to a grand old man with a walking stick - these little locomotives are a part of fancies, fantasies and emotions which make every heart stir.

On the other side of steam, there are the NDM6 diesel locomotives - which don't look as charming as their steam counterparts but no doubt are a great part of Darjeeling's existence. 6 in number, some of them bring up the passenger trains right from New Jalpaiguri - climbing from 330ft to a staggering 7400ft through innumerable zigzag curves, twists and turns. The other diesel locomotives pull the joy rides around the Batasia Loop, upto Ghoom, Kurseong and back, throughout the day. When you are in Darjeeling, every moment is wrapped up by the railways. The lines run parallel along the road and sometimes the traffic stops for them, at other times, they stop for traffic. There's a peaceful but chaotic co-existence of rail and road, human and machine.

The steam runs are limited. They are grandpas now and aren't as feather-hearted as they used to be.



They are employed for the joyrides in the hills. True to the word, they sure gift joy. Taking a ride behind one of these will make you sympathise with their climb. Their puffs spread coal-dust all over your face, but that's the best face-wash you could wish for, isn't it? Every sound they make and the whistles that they blow transcend us back into time. Lying on bed in a cozy hotel room, wrapped up by warm blankets, one can just close his eyes and listen to the faint whistles coming from the town below, there's no music better than that. Walking past the steam loco shed, with the heat of the burning coal and the hissing of the steam, it is a trip to nostalgia, to a fantasy land where stories come true.

The railway network up in the hills, is called the Toy Train. Sure it looks like a fair, but the work these little creatures do aren't toy-like at all. Specially the firemen, the conductors, the loco pilots and other crew - they make sure there's smile on every tourist's face. I had a chance to ride behind the steam hauled joy ride from Darjeeling to Ghoom and

back. It is a strange feeling sitting inside the first carriage with the intricacies of the locomotive working right in front of you. A turn, a curve, a little climb, a whistle here and a whistle there, with the Kanchenjunga on your shoulders - that's the identity of Darjeeling, right there.

Darjeeling Himalayan Railway is a drama. It is a regular performance on stage and these little locomotives are their actors. Every single day they manage to enthral the audience to a different level of ecstasy, far away from individual rat races. These trains move slowly, time stops for them and in reality, they have stopped time altogether. In the nostalgia fed city, enveloped by the Himalayas, decorated by the Mal bazaar, lightened up by the churches, there's a glimpse of past merging with the present. There's solace in the steaming nozzles, there's euphoria in the DHR. As long as people rush back there to catch breath, these trains will hold their breaths!

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Jamalpur Locomotive Workshop

J L Singh

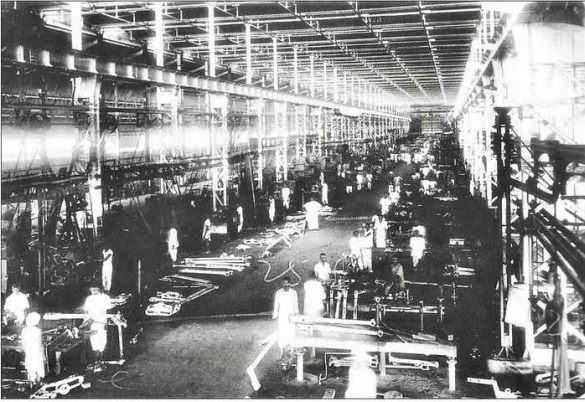
Running of trains on what is now the Indian Railways commenced a little over 171 years back in April 1853. In the Eastern region, the railway made a beginning only a year later in 1854, on August 15th to be precise. Since the most populous areas and those with the maximum development were along the banks of rivers, the Eastern line, starting from Howrah, made its way along the River Ganga towards Allahabad (now Prayagraj). The line thus formed what is now referred to as the Sahibganj Loop. Later, shorter routes towards Mughalsarai (now Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Nagar) were added, so that the Sahibganj loop runs from Khana Jn. to Kiul Jn., via the railway township of Jamalpur.

Jamalpur is not exactly on the banks of the River Ganga but about 8 kms to the South. Very soon after the opening of the line from Howrah, in 1862, the East Indian Railway, who ran the line, decided to open its Locomotive Workshop at this location. Reasons for choosing Jamalpur are many. The climate was good and availability of water from the Ganga was not a problem. In addition, the area was known for the skills of its metal workers, although the items they made – knives, swords, etc. – were not the most peaceful.

Jamalpur, at first, was only an engine changing station. The actual headquarters of the Locomotive Department were at Howrah, but the latter not only possessed great drawbacks, but was too confined to permit extensions. There was, in fact, no room for the workshop of the Locomotive Department as well as the Company's Carriage & Wagon Works, and after long an mature consideration, it was decided to remove the former to Jamalpur. Mr. John Strachan, the then Locomotive Superintendent of the Company, gives the following account for the cause of its removal :

It was not until the early 1860s that the late DW Campbell decided to remove the workshop to Jamalpur, and this was owing to the drivers and fitters giving trouble. They were covenanted men from home who had left their families there, and as hotels and billiards rooms were their only entertainment, it was no uncommon thing for men to leave the shops during working hours and adjourn to a hotel that was then opposite to the railway station...

There were several other places of amusement in Howrah and Calcutta to which men could go and among them was a place known as Wilson's Coffee Room.



Be that as it may, it was on the 8th of February 1862, that the workshop at Jamalpur commenced operations and is continuing to serve the Indian Railways even today. Its primary job was to give Periodic Overhauls to the steam locomotives that worked on the East Indian Railway and later the Eastern Railway zone of the Indian Railways. It would be appreciated that in the mid-19th century, there was little organised industry in the country. Thus, all components, all spare parts, even mundane items like nuts, bolts and rivets had to be manufactured in house. As a result, from the very beginning, the workshop developed into a totally self-sufficient unit, manufacturing all that it needed for its steam locomotives. At its height, it boasted of four foundries – two cast iron, one steel and one white metal – where even the intricate cylinders of the locomotives were cast. To support the foundries, there was a large and well-appointed pattern shop that prepared the patterns that were used to fashion the moulds for the castings. It had a large forge shop and an equally massive smith shop. Here, items like the connecting and coupling rods for the locos were manufactured. In addition, there were other shops like a Die Sinking shop, a Bolt & Nut shop, even a Rolling Mill.

For finishing of the castings and other items, there were machine shops and a separate Wheel shop for machining the wheels. I recall my first visit to one of the machine shops sometime in the 1960s. The shop was so huge that it was difficult to see its other end when one stood at the entrance. Of course, for locomotive overhaul, you had various shops like the Boiler Shop, the Boiler Mountings shop, the Tender shop and the Erecting shop where the final assembly of the locomotive was done.

Electric power being a major issue, the workshop had its own steam driven Power House that produced enough electricity for the workshop. Later, with the advent of diesels, the Power House was refurbished with Diesel-Electric generating sets, the ones manufactured by the Diesel Locomotive Works (now BLW) at Varanasi.

The workshop was about 2 kms from one end to the other. When arriving from the Kiul end by train, just before you

entered Jamalpur station, you went past the workshop wall. On my first trip to the town in 1966, the wall of the workshop continued like what seemed to be for ever. At that time, the staff strength was 14,000. Only large production units like Chittaranjan Locomotive Works, which came up after independence had a larger workforce.

Any large workshop must have its supply of trained manpower if it is to be successful in meeting its goals. This was not neglected and as early as 1988, a Training School was opened at Jamalpur for Trade Apprentices. These apprentices were trained in various trades including fitting, welding, carpentry, painting, machining, smithy, etc. In 1905, the Training School introduced the training of Apprentice Mechanics. Initially, only Anglo-Indians were inducted and were trained to be supervisors. Later, in 1911, other Indians were also taken in. In 1927, a programme in mechanical engineering education was introduced through a scheme that was christened the Special Class Railway Apprentice Scheme. This 4-year programme produced mechanical engineers not just for the East Indian Railway but for all the railways that were then operating in the country. For the record, while the training of Act Apprentices for being trained as artisans is continuing even today, the Apprentice Mechanic stream as well as the Special Class Railway Apprentice scheme have been discontinued: mechanical engineers and supervisors are now recruited from the open market.

As mentioned earlier, the chief activity in the workshop was the Periodic Overhaul of steam locomotives. With the introduction of diesel and electric traction, this activity reduced and finally ceased. The workshop thus kept adding to its repertoire of work that it did. For instance, it added the manufacture, first of steam rail-mounted cranes and is now building the 140-T capacity rail-mounted breakdown crane



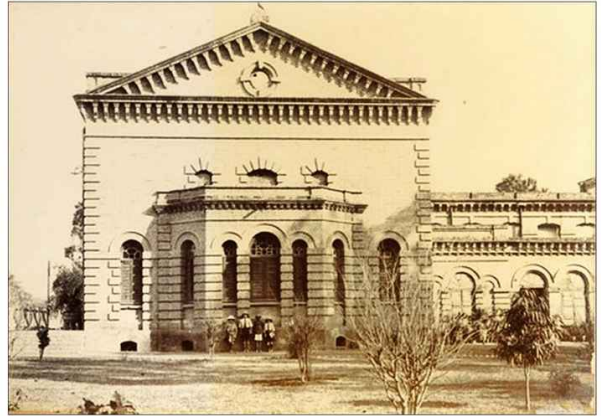


with technology from M/s Gottwald of Germany. It also builds synchronised jacks for lifting locomotives, aptly called Jamalpur Jacks. It is now doing not only maintenance of wagons but is also manufacturing them.

Till independence and the setting up of the Chittaranjan Locomotive Works, almost all steam locomotives were imported from Britain. To support their own manufacturers, Britain did not encourage workshops of the Indian Railways to manufacture locomotive but only assembled them. It was thus a pioneering event when in 1895, the Ajmer Workshop of the Rajputana Malwa Railway manufactured the first steam locomotive in India. The second workshop to manufacture locomotives was Jamalpur when its first locomotive wheeled out in 1898, just a year after the first loco from Ajmer. In all, Jamalpur workshop built 452 locomotives.

Here is a chronology of some of the key events in the history of the workshop:

YEAR	ACTIVITY
8 th February, 1862	Workshop starts operations
1879	Rolling Mill added
1885	First tender manufactured
1888	Trade Apprentices training started
1894	Crossings & Signals manufacturing started
1898	Steel foundry added
1901	Electric Power House set up
1905	Apprentice Mechanics scheme started for Anglo-Indians
1911	Apprentice mechanic scheme for others started
1925	HQ of Mechanical Department shifted from Jamalpur to Calcutta
1927	Special Class Apprentice Scheme started
1950	50 Tonnes anvil block of CLW cast and finished
1961	Electric Arc furnace made
1961	First goods brake van made
1964	First Jamalpur Jack manufactured
1978	First diesel hydraulic loco POHed
1982	First diesel electric loco POHed
1983	First Tower Car manufactured
1986	First 140-T crane assembled
1992	Last steam locomotive POHed
1992	First wagon repaired
1994	First 140-T crane manufactured
2006	First wagon manufactured (BLC)
2012	WDS6 diesel electric locomotive manufactured for RITES



It will not be out of place to mention that the railway colony at Jamalpur was amongst the first to be set up in the country and later, a number of other locations emulated this colony. The colony is totally self-sufficient with excellent facilities like a large hospital, clubs and institutes, sports facilities, hostels, residential quarters, etc. It even has an 18-hole golf course, perhaps the cheapest golf course in the world. Among Clubs and Institutes, there is an Officers' Club for officers, a Central Institute (earlier the European Institute) for supervisors and a National Institute for all other staff. The last named had a cinema hall and ran regular film shows. It even has its own stadium which houses a football field circumvented by a standard 400 meter track for Athletics.

The environment and the ambience of the town in the second half of the 19th century can be best judged from a grave that is located right in the middle of the golf course. The epitaph on the grave reads as follows:

Sacred to the memory of Thomas Quilem Roberts, formerly of the Vulcan Foundry Warrington, and afterwards Foreman of the Erecting Shop Jamalpur, who lost his life from the effects of and encounter with a tiger near this place. This monument is erected by his fellow workmen of the EIRly. "In the midst of (life) we are in death."

In the tranquil serenity of the Golf Course, tigers had roamed in the not-too-distant past. Every word of the epitaph has a story to tell : the Foreman of the Erecting Shop was a young 27-year-old Englishman; and, tigers roamed within the railway colony.

Although nowhere near its past importance and glory, the expertise of its workers has not reduced in Jamalpur Workshop. The skills that produced the insignia of the then Viceroy, Lord Mayo, in 1870 is proof, if any is needed, of the skills that the workshop had, has today and will continue to have.



A Fairy Tale Run of

The Fairy Queen

TRUDGING INTO THE REALM OF TIME

Somsubhra Das

It was an early morning of one fine day when a message popped up in the notification bar of my Facebook account that made my day. The message was from Vikaas Arya, the person behind the Facebook Public Group "Steam Loco Fanclub" about a STEAM EXPRESS RUN in the in the offing. While trying to break the news to my fellow ferroequinologists, I discovered that the news had already gained enough momentum to spread like a wild fire. Now in a country like ours with lesser interests in heritage steams, it was a big deal as we run steam here more out of compulsion rather than enthusiasm! A look at the present scenario will reveal the reality. The oil-fired steams of the Nilgiri Mountain Railway only make their way up and down the hills from Coonoor to Mettupalayam for their solo trips as the steeper

gradients beyond Coonoor do not quite allow them to reach Udagamandalam or Ooty. Except for special purpose or occasion, their run remains limited throughout the year. The Darjeeling Himalayan Railway rarely uses its vintage steams for the entire uphill journey from Siliguri to Darjeeling. Even the joyrides in the Queen of the Hills are more about diesels rather than steams. The story of the other World Heritage Railway, i.e., the Kalka Shimla Railway apart from the two mentioned above is no different either. Its solitary steam power of KC-520 gets into action only during a booked steam charter. The steam that was supposed to haul some Steam Tourist Specials in the Kangra Valley miserably failed to sustain after a solitary voyage and is now languishing in the Rewari Steam Shed. The Matheran Light Railway had

brought a steam from the DHR for attracting revenue and travellers alike but it had been left in the lurch to rot until recently sending it to the Golden Rock Workshop for revival. In 2019, word had spread out for augmenting the Heritage Run with steam in the picturesque Mhow-Patalpani MG stretch in Madhya Pradesh, only to remain a distant dream. The loco that was readied at Rewari for the purpose did not at all ever make her way to Mhow. So, it is obvious from the above developments and state of things that the count of 'Steam Admirers' in our country is significantly negligible and they are either forced to be remain confined to appreciating steams in their plinthed avatars or are glued to the various social media platforms offering photos and videos of steams from the bygone era or from the ones still making headlines in western world to quench their thirst. Thus, being caught in a quagmire of non-enthusiasm for steams, the news of any *Heritage Steam Run* certainly created a lot of noise and curiosity.

I hail from a generation of ferroequinologists when Mobile Phones were still subjects of sci-fi and Digital Cameras were objects of extrapolation. Thus, despite having taken some rides behind the mighty steams in their last days, there was nothing to keep them documented for cherishing in future except for the faint memories as affording a camera or using the one of your father's was a far-fetched dream then. The only instance earlier when I got to archive steam was on the 15th August, 2009 when WP 7200 or 'Azad' was at the helm of a Heritage Run organised by the Eastern Railway from Howrah to Bandel commemorating 155 years of the said zone. Heritage Steam Runs are not so uncommon in the capital though as annual runs almost happen on regular basis. Until a few years back there used to be Garhi Harsaru-Farukh Nagar Steam Runs on Sundays which unfortunately did not find many takers. Apart from these, the Southern Railway often organises heritage runs by EIR 21 Steam locomotive on Republic Day or Independence Day from Chennai Egmore to Kodambakkam. But having missed all these actions all through, I was single-minded about setting the record straight this time.

Coming back to the proposed Heritage Steam Run, the specific date of the event was yet to be on air but what was getting near confirmed with each passing day was the power of the heritage run and it was the ever-youthful, the ever-reliable and the ever-ebullient EIR 22 (East Indian Company) aka the Fairy Queen. This catapulted our interests to greater heights as it is the locomotive that has got the distinction of being the 'Oldest Working Steam Locomotive' of the planet after recognition from the Guinness World Records. Soon the date was announced and 9th March, 2024 was the chosen day for the run from Delhi Cantonment to Rewari under Northern Railway which would be organized by M/s Travel & Tours under the aegis of the Indian Railways. I got all geared up and was ready for "Dilli Chalo"!

Seldom have I experienced the thrill and eagerness to reach Delhi like this time. Excitement was having a free run as the



Steaming up at Delhi Cantonment

day neared. Just a few hours after the sun had broken through for the D-day, I reached the Cantonment station which is usually far quainter than the other principal stations of the capital city and it seemed ready to witness a shrieking morning. Hallelujah, Fairy Queen is here! Approaching closer to the marvel, I found it to be more surrounded by rail enthusiasts and locals rather than it being veiled by its own steam and vapour. Keeness, eagerness and fanaticism had gripped all present on that platform as our Fairy Queen with its puny load of 2 coaches was taking baby steps, both forward and backward, to ensure that it was in good shape. A cast of foreign tourists or the prospective patrons of the Heritage Run had already assembled with their guide to witness the magnificent scenes and record them. The sight of the Queen making movements thereby emitting steam punctuated with frequent hoots was mesmerising to say the least.

The coaches donned the customary Fairy Queen Express livery with train boards displaying 'FAIRY QUEEN EXPRESS' – enough to give goosebumps. The one next to the locomotive had a wide back glass like the one found in an

The train board carrying the iconic name





Rear View Window

observation lounge of a Vistadome Tourist Coach. One can actually relax and watch the loco work through the glass without leaving the comfort of the seats. The interiors of the coach looked luxurious as the 2 X 2 seats of cloth upholstery made them very comfortable with a wide aisle in the middle for free movement. The coach was also decked up with curtains over each large glass window along with photos defining the journey of the State Carrier through ages along with other embellishments which gave it a vintage royal look and feel. The rear end of the coach also accommodated a mini pantry car with an on-board catering service for guests. The arrangements were top notch, as after all, ours is a country practising 'Atithi Devo Bhava', translated into 'Guest is God', for we have a great sense of responsibility towards our guests which is reflected in discharge of our duties towards tourists including the foreign nationals.

I had already taken a closer look at the flawlessly synchronised age-old design of the wonder machine during my previous visits to the Rewati Steam Shed but witnessing it billowing smoke and steam was a head turner and was more like spotting a living fossil. There exists a world of

The coach to ferry tourists



The controls

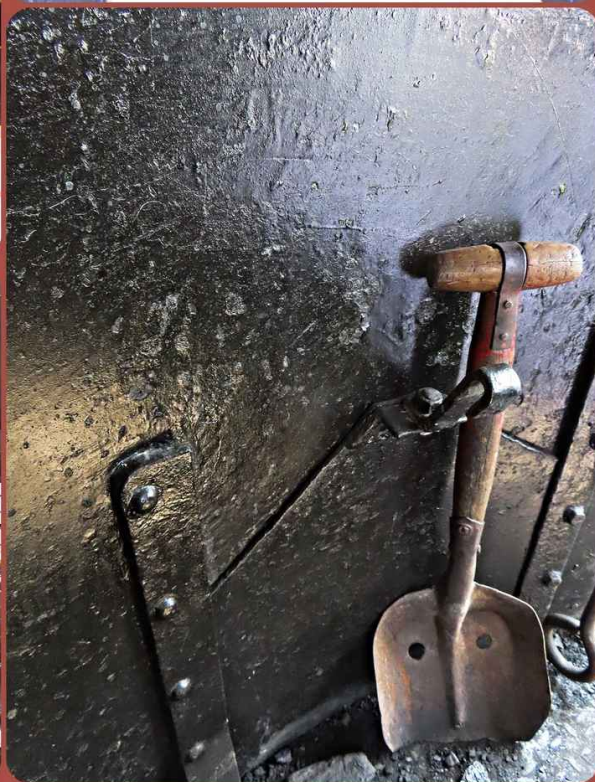
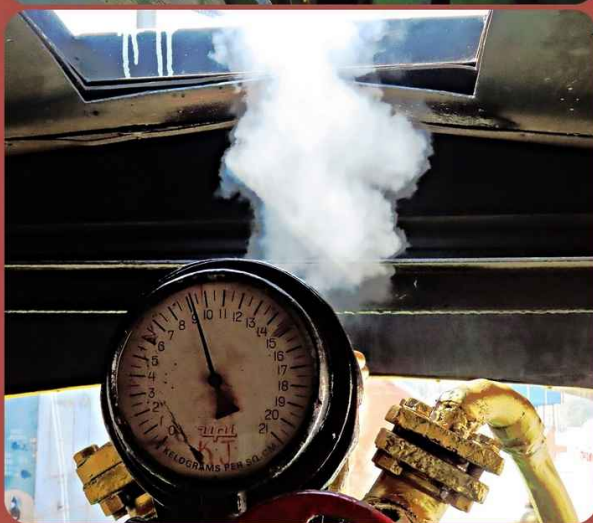
difference in watching the spectacle lying dead inside the shed versus the one alive and kicking. Temptation had got the better of me as I boarded the driving cabin, obscure a bit with steam and smoke. Mr. Ravinder Kumar, the man at the wheel and in-charge of the drive from Delhi Division of Northern Railway (NR) with an experience of serving Indian Railways (IR) for more than 25 years, happened to be a friendly persona who obliged my request of opening the firebox lid to let me watch the fire in the belly of the engine. Mr. Kumar in the customary outfit of IR draped in an elegant blue Nehru Jacket answered every single query thrown at him from the ferroequinologists, however repetitive may be, with calmness, conviction and grace that further fuelled our interests in steams. My joy knew no bounds as I imagined getting myself transported to those catenary-free days when skies were clear but only to be shrouded by the smoke from the chimneys of the steam engines roaming around! I had witnessed those scenes during my childhood days – it seemed like revisiting the nostalgia!

The enthusiasm must have reached its peak during departure which I didn't attend to as I had planned to frame the Queen

The Firebox









The LP Mr. Ravinder Kumar - the Man in-charge of the Queen

from Garhi Harsaru – the first scheduled watering point. One of my accomplices present during egress of the service from DEC recalled, "Everyone was at awe as the Queen crossed over the tracks to proceed further belching steam and smoke in the air with full vigour, often making the jungle of catenaries invisible. Some of the young amused onlookers watched with disbelief about what they were seeing". Meanwhile, I had already reached Garhi Harsaru by a preceding passenger service for obvious reason. Sun shone at the fullest as our Fairy Queen romped her way hooting, gurking and grunting into her first stop – Garhi Harsaru. Soon the passengers present on the platform thronged the Queen out of sheer inquisitiveness. Fairy Queen had truly diverted all the attention upon her. After a brief timeout, we started again and here I am, onboard, this time.

The feeling of the being driven by an over a century old loco is indescribable. It reminded me of my last steam ride from Jasidih Jn. to Baidyanathdham (Deoghar) some three decades ago. The whistle, the soot, the speed - everything ensured that I was not travelling but actually **time travelling** to say the least. As emotions ran high, reminiscing those

A short break at Garhi Harsaru



Customary wavin' flag...

days of yore comes naturally. I clearly remember that every time we went to Deoghar those days, I was treated with this steam ride from Jasidih or vice versa, by my father, regardless of the presence of other means of commute for that 6 km between Jasidih and Deoghar. Even, if there wasn't an opportunity during arrival or departure, my father would surely compensate me later with ride behind a humongous WP or WG during our stay at Deoghar to fulfil my desire. Sometimes, I wonder if my father is a far more ambitious ferroequinologist than me, after all he is the one who singlehandedly sowed the seeds of ferroequinology in me during our numerous family trips and vacations.

Coming back to the captivating presence, the Queen may not hold the muscles of a gargantuan WP but it certainly carries the legacy of the bygone era of steams in our country which no other locomotive can draw parallel with. The Queen's hustle and whistle sounded like sweet musical notes to the ears. Her sheer presence brought smiles on the faces of the LPs of the passing trains and passengers alike – a sight to savour forever. Of the many regular crossings we saw, the most thrilling was the one with a Double Stack consist which

Crossing with a Double-stack load





The ashes and unburnt coal

looked like a behemoth dwarfing us. After ambling past a few stations, we were looped at our second scheduled stop – Pataudi Road. The fervour and enthusiasm had a not died down here as well which seemed to be at par with what we saw at Harsaru. People gathered in numbers to check out the celebrity. The vintage allure of steam locomotive has always drawn enthusiasm from the commons – be it for watering the locomotive or for oiling of its parts or for billowing of smoke of varying hues from white to grey and black. The fireman soon pumped in more victuals in the firebox with his shovel for the journey ahead as burnt coal and ashes lay evacuated on the tracks. Except for the high rise OHEs, all these activities created an overall ambience which brought back the vibes of the bygone era of steam.

After another exhaustive photo shooting session with the belching Queen, time was up to roll on. We started a tad late from Pataudi Road as the backup diesel locos – a unique liveried WDP4D #40110 and a Tricolour WDS6AD # 36260 hailing from the Tughlakabad Diesel Locomotive Shed of NR, following us since morning, arrived next to us. Soon, our Queen gathered fresh steam to proceed further. Meanwhile,

Belching machines posing



JL Singh Sir reflecting on the glorious era of steams

the tea and breakfast have done their job and during the last round of refreshments, the obvious question popped up – how come EIR 22 landed up with the coveted honour of it being the Planet's Oldest Working Locomotive instead of its elder sibling EIR 21. This air of uncertainty about this fact finding was however laid to rest by Mr JL Singh – the Secretary and one of the founder members of the Rail Enthusiasts' Society (RES) whose as many as eight members were also onboard the special service that day amongst a total of 12 native tourists.

Before reflecting on what Mr Singh had to say about this query, it is an absolute must that I introduce this man and his professional front. In his distinguished career with the IR, Mr. JL Singh had worked steams and diesels himself for a considerable period. He resigned from the railways as a Sr. Professor at Indian Railway Institute of Mechanical & Electrical Engineering (IRIMEE) before joining Rail India Technical and Economic Service (RITES) and retiring as an Executive Director. Thus, Mr. Singh is the right person to spill the beans regarding this enigma. Mr. Singh emphasised that a good number of similar locomotives were

Assembly of Railfans to witness history







The Queen at Garhi Harsaru and Patandi Road (below)





At Pataudi Road station

manufactured around the same time as the Fairy Queen by M/s. Kitson, Thompson and Hewitson of Leeds, England. Both the EIR 21 and EIR 22 were built by the said firm in 1855. After their arrival in India in 1855, the East Indian Railway Company commissioned both in the same year while christening them as EIR 21 and EIR 22. EIR 21 had also earned the moniker 'The Express'. Just like their year of birth and commissioning, their year of retirement from service was coincidentally also the same – 1909. But their similitude of fate ended here and there came a twist in the tale. While the Express had been preserved at the Jamalpur Locomotive Workshop in Bihar, our Queen found herself on a pedestal outside Howrah station until 1943 after which she was moved to the Railway Zonal Training School at Chandausi, Uttar Pradesh. Later in 1972, the Indian Government bestowed the Fairy Queen with Heritage Status. The Queen's fortune further shined as she was restored to working order by the Loco Works Perambur, Chennai in 1997. This move won her the tag of 'World's Oldest Working Steam' since 1998 from the Guinness World Records as the Express, the elder sibling of EIR 22, was still lying in abyss



after being shifted to Howrah in 1997, only to be recovered and restored by the Loco Works Perambur in 2011 – a good 14 years later. Thus, the earlier return of EIR 22 to commercial service held the key for the Queen's recognition over Express.

While solving this interesting trivia about Express and Queen, we further got immersed in more anecdotes from Mr. Singh. But our time with the cynosure of the event was drawing to a close as we whistled our way to the destination climbing smaller gradients enroute. After a brief held up at Inchhapuri station, our Queen's grand entry once again attracted attention of the bystanders and alerted the jaywalkers roaming along the tracks. It was time to put curtains on the show but our Queen continued to shine and dazzle under the bright afternoon sun. A final photo session with the Queen had reached zenith by then as everyone scampered to become a part of this illustrious journey. After the group photo, perhaps, every child in us was rushing to tell his father, "Papa, I have seen a working Fairy Queen....". All and sundry present on the platform that day indulged in a selfie with our Queen. And that's exactly the way it should be. We need people to be aware of the treasures we possess, we need people to participate more and more in steam



Unscheduled stop at Ichhapuri station





Arrival at Rewari

enthusiasm and we want mass participation in respect of heritage preservation in our country.

With the departure of the tourists and fanatics for a visit to the Queen's backyard, the noise around our Rani had finally settled a bit. After having hogged all the limelight throughout the day, it was time that she got a well-deserved siesta. She thus slowly lost her steam, though not her charm and elegance while going into slumber. The focus of her appreciators had momentarily shifted to her other 12 celebrity inmates by then as a sumptuous lunch awaited them along with a steamed-up ASHOKA – the WP 7200. But she continued to be the subject of our discussion along with those persons who have upkept her in such a good shape. After the 'Ashoka Show' and thorough examination of the other exhibits of the Shed, it was time to head back behind one of the backup diesel locos as per schedule. The tourists gathered one last time before the Queen to bid adieu while boarding for the return leg headed by WDP4D #40110. With the event culminating, one could easily spot the spark in the eyes of the foreign tourists who had travelled a thousand miles just to be with our Queen for a day! There were 21 of

The back-up power



them – barring the two from Australia and a sole one from Bangladesh, the rest were from Britain. I remember interacting with one of them earlier in the day before the start of journey when he said, "I go around the globe to watch the vintage steams in action and am here from the UK to catch sight of a legacy of 169 years".

As evening descended, our Rani could finally get some time for her own – far away from the glares of the passers-by. As I embarked on a new railway endeavour, I signed off muttering "Long Live the Queen" – not implying the Supremacy or Rule of the Crown but the Rule of our Queen over the hearts of innumerable enthusiasts and admirers. I believe that a majority of the people who saw a working Fairy Queen that day resonated my thoughts. Albeit the World Heritage Day being more than a month away (18th April), I celebrated its cause on the very 9th of March as I experienced something special, a true magnum opus of a living heritage in action. Witnessing and taking ride behind the World's Oldest Working Steam Locomotive was like being caught in a time warp for eternity. I shall continue to relive the day adorn with such glorious and fantastic memories through the years I live....

I culminate the journey with a few lines dedicated to our Queen :

*Trudging into the realm of time
Huffing and puffing in a rhyme
Whistling like a melodious chyme
Our Fairy Queen is still in her prime*

*Born in England in Eighteen Fifty-Five
Golden Rock made her to survive
Here she is ready to thrive
Keeping her over a sesquicentennial legacy alive*

*May the wheels of glory keep rolling on
May she bustle and whistle along
May the Queen see many more dawn
As the Guinness Men said, "She is the only one"*

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:: Fact File of the Fairy Queen ::

- Manufactured by M/s. Kitson, Thompson and Hewitson of Leeds, England in 1855
- Delivered and commissioned in India in 1855
- Weighs 26 tonnes
- Has a power output of 130 HP
- Can achieve an MPS of 40 kmph
- Carries 3,000 litres of water in an underslung water tank
- A coal-fired engine powered by two outside cylinders measuring 12 X 22 inches
- Has a 2-2-2T wheel arrangement with a driving wheel measuring 72.0 inches in diameter
- Essential parts of the locomotive got stolen in 2011 implying a substantial rebuild by the Perambur Loco Workshop. The Workshop had to construct the missing parts themselves before putting the locomotive back to service on 22nd December, 2012
- It has received a National Tourism Award for the most innovative and unique tourism project





A Palpable Phantasm

Tapan Pal

It was past midnight when the train screeched to a halt at some unknown station. Shruti woke up. Surprisingly, the compartment was empty. She peered outside the window.....

What tithi is it? The Moon is yet to rise outside. From the dimly lit compartment, sight does not go beyond the window. It is a passenger train. Its lights have the bizarre habit of dimming while the train stops. They start to brighten up only when the train starts to gain speed.

Shruti was in her formals. In a passenger train that stops at every wayside stations nightlong, some big, some small, some so small that they even lack platforms, you cannot have the luxury of slipping into your nightdress and go to sleep. But where have all the fellow passengers gone!

Shruti rose. Her mobile handset have an inbuilt torch. In its whitish light, she made her way to the door, opened the slotting lock on its top, and opened it. By now, her eyes have somewhat acclimatized to the darkness. It no longer seemed black, but grey.

Holding two yellow hand-rods at door, she extended her neck outside. OMG! The loco is nowhere. She remembers vividly that their coach was second from the loco, a diesel one with bright yellow livery, emitting a lot of smoke and making a lot of noise, something like dhak dhak.....

Now, that is nowhere, and the rake is stranded into a vast field that seems to have extended up to the horizon, with the iron fence of the ground level platform separating it from the

vastness.

This passenger train is non-vestibuled. The only way to reach other people is to get down, through three narrow steps fitted below the door. There is not exactly any need to seek help from total strangers. Still, sitting idle in a deserted compartment of a stationary train gave her an eerie feeling.

Cautiously, she got down on the low, unconcreted platform. It is wet grass beneath the feet, with dew shining in the light of her cellset. Shruti removed her slippers, and rubbed the sole of her feet on that wet grass. Oh! It is so refreshing. She could not remember correctly, but someone once told her that rubbing dew on face makes it wrinkle free.

Shruti walked on grass, going to one compartment after another. All are deserted;

even the customary Guard babu was not in the last coach. The Ticket Counter is closed, and there is not even a stray dog around. She felt a chill down her spine. She is all alone in the train, on a dark night, on an uninhabited terrain, far far away from human civilization.

Shruti was to go back to her coach. Though the entire train is now hers, she has left her sling bag in the coach. Someone told her about the spellbound scenic beauty of some obscure hamlets dotted across the terrain, and shutterbug Shruti decided to be there.

And then the train started, and gained speed gradually, leaving Shruti there.....

*Cover photo courtesy: Somsubhra Das.
Below image collected from Internet open source.*





Railway Sketches



Sambit Chatterjee



Sambit Chatterjee

A vintage steam locomotive, dark in color, is pulling a passenger train through a lush, green landscape. The train is moving from left to right. The background features tall, leafy trees and a clear blue sky. The locomotive has a large smokestack and a prominent front boiler. The passenger train consists of several open-sided cars. The overall scene is bright and sunny, suggesting a clear day.

Steam And Steel

Mick Pope

Most Western visitors of India come to view the historic sites, spectacular mountains or the golden beaches. So, to ordinary Indian citizens it was puzzling to find, in 1980, a group of random white males armed with cameras turning up in some of the less often visited, and frequently rather grubby, parts of the country! This was the visiting tour of the UK Industrial Locomotive Society, a group dedicated to fans of those, often ignored, backwaters of the railway system. While we also visited and photographed centres of BG, MG and NG on the national system we did have permission to visit various sugar plantations, harbour railways, steel and manufacturing sites as well. In this article I will concentrate on the latter progression from iron production to iron and steel-based products.



Visvasvaraya Iron and Steel 2' gauge Kerr Stuart 2-8-2 Bhadravati.

Our first visit was to the Visvesvaraya Steel Authority of India, formerly Mysore Iron and Steel Company, with its plant at Bhadravati. This plant had both metre gauge and 2' narrow gauge lines. The former operated within the works and the latter brought limestone, iron ore and wood from the surrounding countryside. The internal system had some very interesting locomotives, including an ex IR F and FM six-coupled locos plus others from Germany, the US and the UK. Sadly security issues prevented us from entering the plant but we were provided with a steam hauled train on the

Andrew Barclay built 0-4-2 tank engine No 28 on the line to Chiria with a mixed load.



The loco shed at Manoharpur on the line to Chiria.

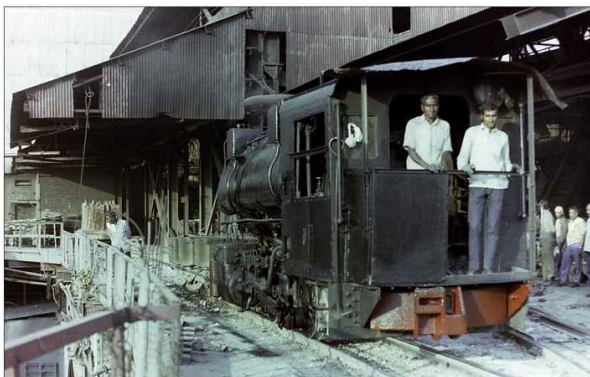
narrow gauge. The line clearly also transported workers as it had some vintage passenger vehicles one of which was a saloon built for the maharajah who founded the company. Our loco was No. 2, a 2-8-2 tender loco built by Kerr Stuart in the UK in 1922. The company had other locos of this type.

After several days visiting non-industrial sites in the south we travelled to Kolkata which would be a base from which to visit several industrial sites. The first was the 2' 6" narrow gauge line that linked the iron ore quarries at Chiria with the national system at Manoharpur. The mines had their own 2' gauge system with steam locos but this had been dismantled by 1970. The steam fleet of the 2' 6" line was composed entirely by nine 0-4-2 tank engines built by Andrew Barclay of Scotland between 1910 and 1928. After visiting the depot at Manoharpur, we had a special train hauled by No 28.

Having seen the source and transport of iron ore and limestone, we moved on to a steel mill that used these products – Tata Steel at Jamshedpur. Greeting us at the entrance was a plinthed 3' narrow gauge tank engine 'C' built by Andrew Barclay of Scotland in 1958. This loco would have worked on the raised gantry system that fed ore into the blast furnaces. It had been replaced by a US built loco from Vulcan Iron Works in 1944 that was operating on our visit. Broad gauge steam had been operating at the mill but had

Preserved Andrew Barclay 3' gauge loco 'C' at Tata Iron and Steel Jamshedpur.





Vulcan Ironworks USA built 3' gauge 0-4-0ST on the furnace loading gantry at Tata. Nearly been replaced by diesels by the time of our visit. Only one loco, No. 35, was in steam with others laying derelict or out of use. It would seem that a US loco salesman had visited in the past as nearly all the locos were from US



US Porter built 0-6-0 at Jamshedpur steelworks.

builders, including the extensive diesel fleet!

As a quick visit we called at the Tinsplate Company of India also in the Jamshedpur area. This had two steam locos and one diesel. Steam loco No 4, named Margarit, was in steam

Tinsplate Company of India Robert Stephenson and Hawthorn 0-6-0 tank locomotive.



with sister, No 5 'Mary' under repair. Both built by Robert Stephenson and Hawthorn in the UK in 1947 and 1958 respectively.

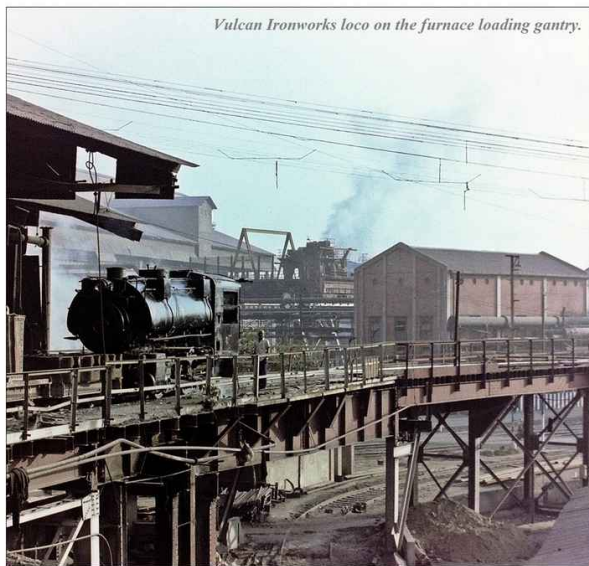


UK built Robert Stephenson and Hawthorn 0-4-0 saddle tank at Kulti pipe factory

Next, we visited another steelworks, the Indian Iron and Steel Company mill at Burnpur and the pipe works at Kulti. In contrast to Jamshedpur the loco stock here was entirely UK built. I had to blink to remind myself that this was India and not the UK as the designs present almost exactly replicated those, I had seen in a UK steelworks!

This covers visits to steel related sites – perhaps in the future I might cover the other industries. This was my first visit to India and in 30+ subsequent visits I did get to see those historic sites, spectacular mountains [and their railways] and those golden beaches, most recently in January 2024. I also managed to travel on and photograph, many steam, diesel and electric locos over those 44 years.

All photographs taken by the author & are copyright protected.



Vulcan Ironworks loco on the furnace loading gantry.



UK built Hawthorn Leslie 0-6-0T No 6H at Kulti pipe factory



UK built Andrew Barclay 0-4-0 saddle tank No7 at Kulti pipe factory



Indian Railways Heritage
 This Bookstall which has been declared as a
 Heritage structure by Indian Railways
 was fabricated in England for
 A. H. Wheeler & Co. Pvt. Ltd.
 and shipped to India in the year 1905.
 The unique feature of the Bookstall is that of
 inter-locking wooden pieces.
 It does not have any hinges or nuts & bolts.

Wheeler's : At Wheel's Stop

Dr. Santulan Mahanta

When we picturise a railway platform, the usual atmosphere that comes to mind is the noisy crowds, the loud noise of vendors, running water taps, the rush following the arrival of trains. In such an atmosphere, the birth of a book would seem illusory. Perhaps a traveling writer or travel-writer will find resources and inspirations for his next work in all these. However, the history of the railway platform is not a straightforward document of railway-centric business; it is an independent complex ecosystem like our familiar world outside the railway. It contains a parallel representation of every part of society outside the railway station. The topic to be discussed here is one that seems to fit the railway-centric environment – the contribution of the railway system to book publishing. It would be somewhat wrong to limit this to books only. Therefore, an overview of the railway system as another mother of all types of print publications is to be given.

Broadly speaking, the seeds of a radical change in literature were sprouting in England alongside the introduction of mechanical system of railways. The seedbed of this change

was the railway station platform. The current luxurious and changing spectacular aspects in Indian Railways may erase the concept of railway stations of nearly five years ago in the next few years, but a reader who has experienced Indian railway platforms so far may be surprised that a smelly railway platform a century ago changed the world of literature. Yes, the development of any kind and any aspect of literature in such an environment would seem abnormal or unimaginable, just as slums along railway lines seem unsuitable for the development of a human child. But since I am talking about this topic, it is necessary to analyze the railway system of England, the early ideal or role model of Indian railways, because this seed was borned from England.

You must be aware that for the first century of the railway's existence, whether in Britain or India, the railway system was not an integrated inland network but a system of fragmented services operated by several railway companies. In Britain, two north-south railways connected London with Scotland and many other feeder railways appeared to

connect to those two mainlines. In India, on the other hand, long distance railway services were introduced along three main routes – Delhi-Calcutta, Delhi-Bombay and Calcutta-Bombay. Tracks and railway services connecting the cities down in the South came into existence in a comparatively slower pace. Over time, other railways and feeder railways to these major lines also appeared. One of the consequences in both countries is the inevitability of journey break during the travel was arising from the necessity of changing from one train service to another. Needless to say, there was no alternative to train journeys for long distance travel, and both breaks and rests were essential. Two other major causes of journey breaks in India were differences in railway gauge and absence of bridges over major rivers in some places – for example, the absence of bridges over the Brahmaputra, similar conditions at ghats like Barauni and Mokama.

Now let's consider a hypothetical example. What would be the route for a person to travel from Dibrugarh to Delhi in 1940s and what would be the points of journey breaks along the way? First, reach at Pandu Ghat by meter gauge train, cross the Brahmaputra by boat to Amingaon port and then take another meter gauge train, Assam Mail (pre-independence Assam Mail) to Parbatipur junction in East Bengal. Secondly, from Parbatipur Junction, get off the Assam Mail Meter Gauge train and board the broad gauge Assam Mail. Thirdly, Calcutta means not only getting off the broad gauge Assam Mail at Sealdah, but also taking a break for a day or two to relieve the fatigue of the journey and moving to Howrah station for the Delhi-bound train. By 1940, the journey from Howrah to Delhi could be completed without changing trains enroute.

If you look deeper into the complexities involved in the example above, you'd realise that one thing was essential in that age without the mobile phones or the internet – a thorough knowledge of train timings and a way to spend the time at or around the railway station if you missed your connecting train. We will find the birth and need of a new kind of publication in this regard – the Railway Time Table, in printed form. Not only does the need for train timetables fit into our example of this travel circumstance but their frequent mention in the story of Sherlock Holmes also gives an idea of their importance as passenger aids in the UK railway system. Not only were these some collection of several time indicating tables, they also served as the initial tourist guidebooks – summarising where to stay and what to see for the travellers when they arrived at a place. From the very beginning, such publications saw the initiatives from both the railway companies and other external publishers. But the knife work is not in the quarries but in the kitchens – accordingly, the place where these time tables were available as a travel companion is the railway station. Of course, these are a new kind of prints that do not fall within the genre of any literature. Would there then be a vendor at the station catering just the train timetable? Several other publications also appeared in the railway

station area riding the back of the timetables. There were various classes of waiting rooms in the railway stations so that large number of people could spend their time with some personal freedom despite the noisy atmosphere of the railway stations during the short journey breaks. And to help passing this waiting time, newspapers, story books, and novels appeared along with bookstores to cater them. Needless to say, most of these were published for the purpose of passing the time. The main purpose of such cheap publications was to make it easier for passengers to spend their time at the railway premises, other than that the publishers had no higher ambitions. But no one can imagine when, where and how that word in the dictionary 'exception' finds its relevance.

Now, before returning to the world of railways, let us take a tour of London in 1821. There we will meet 29-year-old William Henry Smith to get all kinds of news at the earliest. He has opened a new news paper agency in the Strand. He is not satisfied with only just opening the shop here. He has also established a nationwide newspaper supply system with the famous horse-drawn mail carriage system in England. His aim is to ensure that newspapers are made available to everyone in a timely manner. Needless to say, the importance of the messenger system in a nineteenth-century England, whether it was letters or newspapers, was immense.

William's son William Henry Jr was born in 1825. He also started helping his father from 1846 in the newspaper distribution business. If readers remember, it was the height of the 'Railway Mania' in England. William Henry Jr discovered the potential advantages of rail transport more easily than his father. Taking advantage of the commercial competition between the railway companies, he arranged for the newspapers to be shipped by rail. The railway system was more reliable in this regard and extended farther at higher speeds.

This arrangement actually transformed William father-son's business into a national business. Young William understood it pretty well that a train passenger would find it easier to read a newspaper during his journey than a passenger trying to read a newspaper in a horse-drawn carriage. From the 1840s onwards, many vendors (usually retired or disabled railway workers) started selling low quality newspapers, magazines, etc. at railway station premises. In the summer of 1848, young William began negotiations with the London North-Western Railway Company. On November 1 that year, the W. H. Smith Railway Bookstall opened at Euston Station in London. By 1860, Smith's shops had spread to all the stations on the major railway lines and several on the connecting railways. Smith began publishing and selling uncopyrighted books of his Victorian taste instead of the previously prevalent junk publications. To make them available cheaply, they were printed on cheap paper which is why they became known as yellow books.

The novels thus published were sold for 2 shillings. By the end of the 19th Century, Smith's bookstores at railway



Image provided by the author

stations had exceeded the number of 1,000 mark.

One George Routledge made his debut as a bookseller in 1836 and stepped into the publishing business in 1843. George first found some success in this business in England by publishing commentaries on the Bible by an American author named Albert Burns. In 1849, however, George's company decided to use Smith's model of business success in another way. In contemporary Belfast, Ireland, Simms & McIntyre Co. had started to publish the contemporary popular novels cheaply and printed the covers in attractive colours to attract the attention of the public. These novels were published by the company as part of a series called the Parlour Library. George Routledge took this Parlour Library series as a model for his print work and combined it with Smith's book distribution model. In consequence we find a series of publication called the Routledge Railway Library. As the name suggests, Routledge's publication series was aimed at train passengers. If Smith focused primarily on newspaper delivery, Routledge's novels priced at one-shilling complemented that for railroad readers. The popular editions of famous author Jane Austen's novels *Sense and Sensibility*, *Pride and Prejudice* or Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter* or Alexander Duma's *The Three Musketeers* or Victor Hugo's *Notre Dame* thus reached readers through Routledge's railroad publications. By the time Routledge publishing ceased publication of the series in 1898, a total of 1,277 different editions had been published – a huge success in providing railway passengers with bibliographic reading. Today Routledge's reputation as an international publisher is well known, but the railway readership was at the root of this success.

Now let us come to British India. A twenty one year-old European who brought a wave of book culture to Indian railway stations. His name was Émile Moreau. The East India Railway had already connected Delhi and Calcutta, and in 1867 a railway line from Allahabad (now renamed as Prayagraj) to Bombay via Jabalpur was inaugurated. So Allahabad became a point of journey break. In 1877, Émile Moreau opened a bookstore in Allahabad – named A. H. Wheeler. How this shop came into being is also an interesting story. It is said that Moreau's friend, Arthur Henry Wheeler, told Moreau one day that he had many

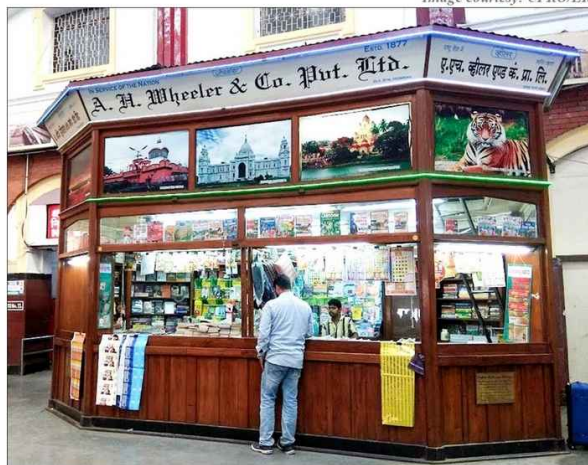


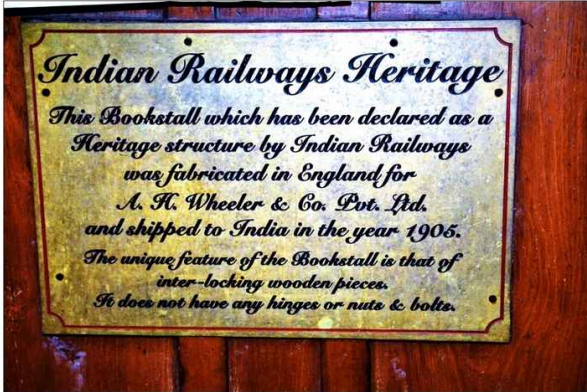
Image courtesy: Sudakshina Kundu Mookerjee

books in his personal library that he was going to sell off. Moreau then came up with idea of selling those books in a wooden cupboard at Allahabad station. He found these books quickly appealing to first-class passengers. Moreau named his bookstore after Arthur Henry Wheeler. Meanwhile, Arthur returned to England, where he established another network of bookstores of the same name. Moreau consequently became the India-based partner of the Arthur Henry Wheeler Company. Other partners of this business venture were Arthur Lisle Wheeler, W.M. Rudge, and Tigran Ratheus David. The Company had its offices in London and at Allahabad.

To maintain the increased popularity and the demand for that popularity, Moreau also had to arrange his own printing press from which it could be easily printed and distributed. By the 1880s, the Wheeler Bookstore had already achieved some degree of fame. This printing press therefore became a necessity. In North India, especially at all major stations, wheeler bookstores became an integral part of the stations. Moreau understood it pretty well that to maintain such a position, supply to the demand would never stop if he had

Image courtesy: CPRO/ER





The plaque....

Image courtesy: Sanjoy Mookerjee

his own publishing system rather than being at the mercy of other publishers all the time.

In 1888, Moreau contacted Rudyard Kipling. Kipling was a regular contributor to the periodicals 'The Pioneer' and the 'Civil and Military Gazette' at the time. By then, Kipling's first novel, 'Plain Tales from the Hills' had been published by a Calcutta-based publishing house. Moreau proposed to publish a collection of Kipling's stories. He also offered to buy the rights to Kipling's future publications in exchange for £1,000 and an additional £5 for every 200 copies sold. It is said that Kipling traveled throughout the Orient and America with the money and when he arrived in London, he found himself more famous than ever. Later, however, Wheeler sold the rights to Kipling again except for his Indian works. Kipling's first six collections, published by Wheeler's printing house, were *Soldiers Three*, *The Story of the Gadsbys*, *In Black and White*, *Under the Deodars*, *The Phantom Rickshaw and Other Eerie Tales*, and *Wee Willie Winkie and Other Stories*. These were part of an edition called the Indian Railway Library Series.

During World War I, Wheeler's importance increased at the government level – as the Propaganda Department of the British Government's Ministry of Defence regarded it as an important tool for propaganda in India in support of British

Image courtesy: Sanjoy Mookerjee



Image courtesy: CPRO/ER

war policy and England's position in the war. The publication of this campaign had already roped in Kipling, G. K. Chesterton, Arthur Conan Doyle and other famous writers. Wheeler did not hesitate to publish such publications, for which Emil Moreau was later conferred the honour of Commander of the British Empire. Wheeler later divided into two separate entities, England and India. From the 1950s, Wheeler was wholly owned by another Indian partner, T. K. Banerjee. In conclusion, we can say that without Wheeler, Rudyard Kipling might not have become such a well-known name among us today. It is no exaggeration to say that it was the reputation that Wheeler brought which led Kipling to find a publisher like Macmillan in 1894 for his *The Junglebook*.

As for the railway passengers till the first two decades of the 21st century, Wheeler's used to be the place for finding the popular fictions, zonal and national time tables, and all kinds of magazines and newspapers. At many places Wheelers used to be the place where you place the order for your copy of a book unavailable in your town. A railway linked distribution system kept it the quickest distribution chain of publications. But recent policies of Indian Railways have changed the very face and nature of Wheeler's business. At present all those stalls which used to allure readership have been reduced to platform vendors selling everything except any printed material. A rich and healthy culture thus met its death.

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ELAAU : THE DANKUNI WING OF CLW

Achieving Milestones All The Way

Somsubhra Das

Chittaranjan Locomotive Works or the CLW has been the flagship locomotive production unit of Indian Railways (IR) since its inception in 1950. There was a time when the CLW used to manufacture locomotives covering all three tractions – Steam, Diesel and Electric. Steams were gradually being phased out by the Railway Board but not before CLW had turned out a staggering 2351 number of them. With the progress of time, need for a separate production unit for the diesel locomotives was felt which gave birth to the DLW (now BLW) at Varanasi in 1956. By that time though, over a good 800 units of diesel locomotives had been turned out.

Gradually, the focus shifted to a 100 percent electrification of the IR network implying a drastic rise in the production of electric locomotives. This was supplemented by the sanction of the Dedicated Freight Corridor further rising the demand for electrics. With the ageing fleet of WAG5s and preference of 3-Phase locos over conventional ones like WAG7, WAG9 emerged as the principal haulers despite the introduction of Alstom made WAG12s. With a spurt in the number of WAG9 production becoming the need of the hour, the total output was split into 5 units – the CLW, the BLW, the PLW (formerly DMW), the BHEL (Bharat Heavy Electricals Limited) and the

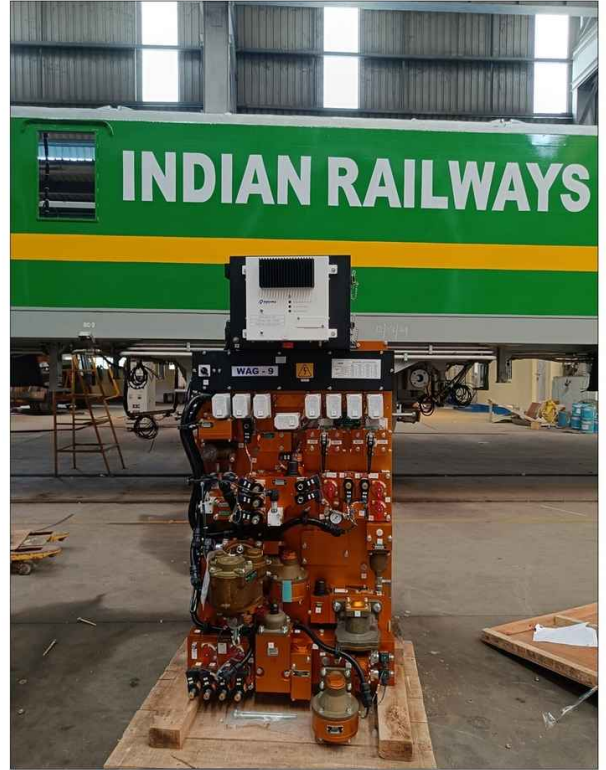
ELAAU or the Electric Loco Assembly & Ancillary Unit of CLW. Though with changing requirements, BLW and PLW started production of the passenger Class WAP7 locomotive from 2017 and 2018 respectively, they started to turn out of WAG9 locomotives along with BHEL much later. So, the load sharing for WAG9 production was optimised much later and was primarily shared by ELAAU only who had turned out its first WAG9 locomotive in 2016. Interestingly, BHEL, BLW and PLW were later allotted a separate series, viz., 34001 (onwards), 41XXX and 41501 (onwards) respectively thus making their road numbers distinct from the ones of CLW but ELAAU being the other wing of CLW wasn't allotted with any such discrete serial. While BLW manufactured its first WAG9 loco (41000) in January 2018, BHEL turned out its first (34001) in September 2018. PLW joined hands with 41500 from March 2021 only.

ELAAU is situated in Dankuni and came into being from 02.06.2014 and was meant to aid CLW in WAG9 production. It rolled out its first WAG9 on the International Women's Day of 2016, i.e., 08.03.2016 bearing road number 31713 which is homed by the Gomoh ELS under the East Central Railway. Despite facing shortage of staff, ELAAU managed to turn out



its 400th locomotive on 31.12.2023. ELAAU got ISO 9001:2015, ISO 14001:2015 & OHSAS 18001:2007 certifications in 2018, 5S certification in 2018 & ISO 50001:2018 certification in 2021. A 500 KWp capacity roof mounted Solar Power Plant with the provision of excess energy feedback to WBSEDCL grid has been undertaken since 2019 as a part of its Green Energy Initiative.

Looking back, the foundation stone for Electric and Diesel component works at Dankuni was laid in 2009. With the stoppage in diesel locomotive production, the adjoining Diesel component works ceased to exist as ELAAU continued to flourish. The entire ELAAU unit looks spick and span and special attention is given to maintain this top-notch cleanliness providing for a great working ambience. ELAAU is also equipped with Rain Testing Facility inside its Testing Shed which aids in a smooth and full proof rain testing of the newly built units before final despatch. This CLW wing at Dankuni has achieved a new feat in the 2023-2024 FY. This feather in the cap of ELAAU attributes to its extraordinary efforts in fulfilling the target of assembling 100 locomotives in the said period. ELAAU has not only achieved the target



but also has done one better by turning out a total of 101 numbers of the 6000 HP locomotives in 2023-24 FY and this is the maiden instance of hitting a 'century' since it started assembling locos as it had turned out 75 engines in its preceding FY. WAG9 with road numbers 38485 and 38486 are the 100th and 101st locomotives respectively for the 2023-2024 FY (429th and 430th overall respectively). ELAAU's landmark of producing 101 locomotives in a FY with a very limited manpower and that too in a single shift





working hour is a commendable accomplishment. This occasion was celebrated at ELAAU on 28.03.2024 where all the officials and workers gathered and flagged off WAG9HC # 38485 which is allotted to MLYD (Moula Ali Diesel Loco Shed) of SCR and as per officials this is the first instance when ELAAU has turned out a locomotive for MLYD.

Future beckons ELAAU as it is set to manufacture toilet equipped WAG9s in times to come. ELAAU also had fitted some of her manufactured WAG9s with Faiveley LX3600 Single Arm Rapid Transit High Rise (HR) Pantograph. WAG9 #38092 allotted to BGKD (Bhagat Ki Kothi Diesel Loco Shed) being the first loco to be fitted with such pantograph from the Dankuni wing of CLW. ELAAU has truly contributed greatly and is taking giant leaps towards achieving greater heights in times to come and will definitely keep complimenting CLW in its endeavour to be 'self-reliant' in the field of electric locomotive production in the country.

All photographs are provided by the author & are copyrighted.





WCG2 - Howlers

FROM THE CITY OF DREAMS

Anamitra Bose

"Aamchi Mumbai" or "Our Mumbai" has earned many epithets over the time which attribute to its uniqueness to a large extent. From being the City of Dreams to being the Commercial Capital of the country along with the seat of Bollywood – Mumbai has truly been a sui generis megalopolis. The idiosyncrasy of Mumbai is not confined to the aforesaid criteria only, Mumbai is also known for her Suburban Train Services that keeps her rolling day in and day out having gone on to become a precedent for other developing towns and cities. Beyond the EMUs, the long-distance trains to/from Mumbai had another distinct factor about them – the AC-DC dual current locomotives or the DC Electric Locomotives in earlier times. Some of the sections in and around Mumbai like the Bombay-Lonavala-Poona (Pune now) and Bombay-Igatpuri sections were amongst the first few sections of railways in India to undergo electrification with 1500 volts DC traction. To start things of, during the Colonial Administration, the then Great Indian Peninsular Railway (GIPR) had ordered 41 WCG1 and 16 WCP1

locomotives from the Vulcan Foundry of Newton-le-Willows, Lancashire, England.

With the passage of time, as the nation got independence from the clutches of the British Raj, the WCG1s and WCP1s had been tirelessly hauling trains through the steep gradients of the Thull and Bhor Ghats through its blind shaft driven wheels. But age gradually was catching up with these vintage electrics. Trains had started losing punctuality in BB Division (Bombay) because of repeated failures. Meanwhile, the other fleet of E-locomotives like WCM1 and WCM2 also had started showing signs of ageing. With only a few number of WCM5s, Central Railway (CR) was suddenly facing an uphill task with a clear shortage of its electric fleet.

Thus, CR repeatedly requisitioned to the Railway Board for some new locomotives fit for DC traction which could haul loads across steep gradients of the ghat sections. Accordingly, the Railway Board entrusted the Chittaranjan Locomotive Works (CLW) to build the second set of pure DC



Image courtesy: Kaushik Dharwadkar

traction locomotives after WCM5. This time, the class was meant to be purely handling freight traffic and banking duties across ghat sections, thereby giving birth to the class of WCG2. It was October 1964, when Railways put orders for 57 WCG2 class Locomotives for CR during the fourth Five-Year Plan period.

MECHANICAL DETAILS :

Initially, RDSO and CLW wanted to opt for twin B-B monomotor bogie design for WCG2, as CLW already had some experience with this design and minor changes in bogies would enable four axled B-B DC traction locomotives. But considering the factor of new prototype trials of changed motor design on monomotor bogies and lower adhesion factor, RDSO wanted to go ahead with Co-Co wheel arrangement.

By then, the ALCo 251C design of WDM2 diesel locomotives were running successfully in India with high reliability and load hauling capacity. One of the secrets behind the success was the robust tri-mount bogies of ALCo origin, which proved

Image courtesy: Arkopal Sarkar



Image courtesy: Kaushik Dharwadkar

to be very reliable for Indian conditions.

RDSO decided to build WCG2 on Alco Trimount bogies platform like its conventional brothers WAM4, WCAM1. The Trimount bogies are rigid bolster swivel type bogies with three individually driven axles. The bogies consist of single piece cast frame which has a conventional bogies pivot (swivel bearing) carried in the cross member between leading and middle axles, whereas two load bearers carried in the cross member between middle and trailer axles. The weight of the locomotive is carried by the bogie at the pivot and two load bearers to form a three-point support. The pivot carries 60% of the loco weight and transmits tractive or braking effort while load bearers carry 40% of the weight and does not transmit any effort, resulting in a very large diameter pivot. This considerably increases the adhesion of the locomotive. Dimensionally, the locomotive is 18.68m long, 3.05m wide and 4.23m tall. The locomotive is around 0.08m taller than WAM4.

ELECTRICAL EQUIPMENT :

The first dedicated DC traction freight locomotive built by the

Image courtesy: Kaushik Dharwadkar



Chittaranjan Locomotive Works was an electrical excellence starting from vernier control of starting resistance, regenerative braking and motor-alternator set for auxiliary equipments. We will go block by block through the anatomy of the WCG2 to find out how the howlers ruled the ghat sections of CR for decades.

Pantographs :

We start things with the pantographs which were Stone India made AM-18B double-pan ones to collect the traction.

Starting Resistance :

The Main Starting Resistance (MSR) is the control knob of the DC locomotive where it controls the amount of voltage flowing into the traction motor directly from the OHE. The traction motors are connected to 1500-volt DC OHE supply through these MSRs. The Loco Pilots control the Master Controller in the driver's desk to regulate the amount of resistance coming into the action, controlling the amount of voltage going into traction motors from the 1500V supply. As a result, through Master Controller, the resultant torque and speed of the traction motors can be easily regulated.

The Main Starting Resistors draw considerable current from the OHE during starting of the DC motors, resulting in much heat. The MSR is cooled off by four MSR blowers which help to dissipate the heat. These four blowers are of type PETA-60 made by SF Product.

Vernier Control :

The most unique feature of the WCG2 locomotive is the presence of Vernier Notch control to minutely control the speed and torque of the traction motors between two main notches of the Master Controller. This Vernier Control feature was present only in WCG2 class locomotives in the history of electric traction in Indian Railways. The Vernier Control used to be co-axially present with the Master Controller. By moving tiny notches on the vernier Control, crew can control minute change in torque in DC motors especially during starting. For Example, a crew can notch



Image courtesy: Kaushik Dharwadkar

from 3.1 to 3.5 during starting at a grade where 3 is the Notch number on Master Controller and .X, X is the Notch number on Vernier Control.

Traction Motors :

The WCG2 is equipped with Axle-hung nose suspended DC series wound traction motors. The six traction motors are connected in two series-three parallel combinations, means three arrays of two traction motors connected in series, are connected in parallel to the Main Starting Resistors. The traction motors are Heavy Engineering (India) Ltd. (now BHEL) made TM4939AZ DC series motors rated at 690 hp, 700 V and 1070 RPM. The resultant power output was 4200 HP continuous at the wheels. The traction motors were cooled by two traction motors blowers made by SF India.

Motor - Alternator Set :

In DC traction supply, Arno converters are of little use. As a result, electrical supply to the auxiliary machineries becomes a big concern. To address this, WCG2 has a unique arrangement called Motor-Alternator Set (MA set). The MA set is basically a DC motor coupled to an AC alternator coupled through mechanical coupling. The DC motor is fed directly from the OHE supply. The AC alternator generates three phase AC supply for the auxiliary machineries. In WCG2, AEI made AY100AZ motor have been used of 2106 hp power. For Alternator, three phase motor from Kirloskar SOA-749 has been used of rating 1500 RPM and 180 KVA.

The AC output supply's frequency depends upon the speed of the running alternator and the voltage gets controlled by the field excitation voltage of the alternator. When the electrical load tends to increase, the speed of the alternator tends to fall. To keep the speed of the alternator at a constant parameter, a frequency regulator has been provided with the MA set to continuously monitor the frequency and as per requirement control the speed of the alternator and the field excitation voltage of the DC motor. In case of defective regulators, the frequency regulator can be isolated.



Image courtesy: Kaushik Dharwadkar



Image courtesy: Kaushik Dharwadkar

Dynamic Braking vs Regenerative Braking :

The WCG2s had three types of locomotive brakes – Air brake, Hand Brake and Electrical Regenerative Braking.

Regenerative braking is a concept where Traction motors act as Generators and the Electrical energy generated by them during braking is supplied back to the 1500V DC OHE supply. The prerequisite of this situation is the presence of a voltage difference between pantograph and wheel contactors to be greater than the voltage difference between OHE contact wire and guiding rails. This results in reverse current flow from high to low potential. This helps in regeneration of consumed power as well as slowing down the locomotive as the traction motors experience negative torque.

But there were many cases where WCG2 electrical equipments tripped and the locomotive failed during Regenerative Braking. Apart from this, the DC substations of CR did not have enough capacity at all times to absorb and redistribute the regenerated energy in a saturated DC network. As a result in mid-1986, Kalyan ELS decided to retrofit the Regenerative Braking mechanism in all her 57 WCG2s with Dynamic Braking.

Dynamic Braking is a similar concept like Regenerative Braking except for the fact that the motors do not feed the power generated back into the OHE. The Power generated during braking is dissipated as heat energy using huge Carbon Pile Resistor Banks. These Resistor Banks are being cooled by dedicated Blower motors called Dynamic Brake Resistor (DBR) Blowers. These DBR blower motors were connected directly to OHE supply and connected in parallel to the resistor banks. To prevent any untoward incident, the DBR blowers were always switched on irrespective the state of the energized locomotive.

After retrofitted DBRs came into action, the reliability of WCG2 increased manifold. But the operations of the locomotive posed to be a hindrance to crew comfort.

The most prominent aspect among the railwaymen as well as the railway enthusiasts was the sound of howl that these locomotives emitted. These howling sounds were nothing but the sounds produced by the four DBR Blowers to cool down the DBR banks. The blowers were made by BHEL of DY-3423M type motor running at 3500 RPM and 532 kW. The howling sounds were so loud that these locomotives earned the name of Howlers by railway enthusiasts of Bombay as well as from other regions.

Transformer Rectifier Bank :

The transformer rectifier set of the WCG2 supplied the power supply needed by the baby compressor. The purpose of the baby compressor is to generate air pressure for pantographs to be pneumatically lifted and taken down.

Compressor and Exhauster :

The three compressors on WCG2 locomotive are supplied by ELGi with rating 12.5 HP and 380V. The Exhausters are Northey 250RE type to build up vacuum brake.

WCG2 AND THE BB DIVISION CREW :

Every locomotive has its own pros and cons. While the Loco Pilots heading steam locomotives had to bear the soot and dust of an open cab, the diesel crew had bear the burnt of the heat, similarly the WCG2 operators had to endure the high noise level in the locomotive cabins. According to Kaushik Sanjiv Dharwadkar, an Electrical Engineer with vast knowledge on the Electric Rolling Stock of Indian Railways, it was this high decibel noise that made life difficult for the crew on regular duty of WCG2 locomotives. While the crew had to, at times, shout to exchange signals during duty but there were experienced ones as well who exchanged signals by leap reading. Mr. Dharwadkar reports of experiencing partial deafness after disembarking from WCG2 footplate. There were many retired pilots in CR who went through permanent hearing issues after their prolonged duties in WCG2s.

These challenging medical conditions and professional hazards though could not deplete the emotional bond

Image courtesy: Kaushik Dharwadkar



between the crew and these robust and compact machines. Mr. Dharwadkar adds that the crew who went to SER for AC locomotive training once said to have badly been missing the WCG2 while undergoing learning in WAG7 as a G7 would instantly trip because of heavy notching down by the crew which the WCG2 never did on type of heavy notching. On the last day of operation of DC traction in the Bhore Ghats, the crew were emotional to bid the farewell to WCG2 which had been the bread-earner of their sections for decades. The crew were in tears as they gave a final goodbye by folded hands to the heroes of the vertiginous ghats.

EPILOGUE :

The catchment area of DC traction gradually was decreasing from early 2000s and by 2010 it was limited to the Thull Ghat (Thal Ghat) on the CSMT-IGP section where WCG2s were still seen in action. Just like their predecessors, WCG2 also had their time up not only due to the DC-AC conversion but also due to their age factor. In the DC arena, WCAM2s and WCAM3s were enough in numbers and were ready to take over the charge from the pure DC Locomotive. 2006 marked the beginning of the end for WCG2 as the class saw

first of its decommission from service. By 2012, most of the remaining fleet did some inferior and minor duties in the BB division. But the unfortunate incident of breaking out of fire in the trailing coupler of the locomotive while bringing a rake from Trombay to Kurla sealed its fate forever. That day itself, decision was taken by the men in power to ground all the WCG2s immediate effect literally meaning a final death knell to coffin to these wonderful machines. Gradually, with AC conversion, WAG7s took over the duties of bankers in both the ghat sections having a clear edge over the WCG2 with their Tap changer control, Microprocessor control system amongst many other advanced features.

The legend of WCG2 will always be etched in the heart of every railwayman and railway enthusiasts who experienced them in action. Howlers will continue to howl in their dreams and thoughts whenever the DC era of Central Railway is discussed.

This article could not have been possible without the whole-hearted support and technical inputs from Mr. Kaushik Sanjiv Dharwadkar who has a specialization in Electronic & Power Engineering field and is a Life Member of the Rail Enthusiasts' Society whose keen interest in the subject stemmed from the countless number of footplating on WCG-2 locomotives. He has also closely witnessed the maintenance activities of WCG-2s inside the Katyan (KYN) ELS. His invaluable inputs have enriched this article to a great extent.

Acknowledgments : IRFCA Forum & RDSO Documents

Image courtesy: Kaushik Dharwadkar





Image courtesy: Somsubhra Das

THE STORY BEHIND

NABADIGANTA

Somsubhra Das



On the occasion of the 75th Republic Day and completion of 25 glorious years of the Santragachi Electric Loco Shed (SRC ELS), thoughts were floated by SER Fanatics, a Railfan Group, about invoking a New Livery on any of the WAP7s homed by SRC.

Image courtesy: SER Fanatics

The initiative was undertaken by the said group who proposed their plans to the officials of SRC ELS way back in November 2023 – about a good 6 months ago. The authorities agreed as the railfan team prepared a basic pattern on which colours were carefully chosen keeping in mind the prerequisites of focussing on the dual theme of ‘Nation’ and ‘Mother Nature’ as envisaged by the group.



Image courtesy: SER Fanatics



After much deliberations and discussions, the results are here to see – a fantastic livery with a soothing charm.

Image courtesy: SER Fanatics

As the Republic Day holds a special significance in the history of our nation which had opened a new horizon for us, hence the proposal of christening the WAP7 Locomotive #30762 as **Nabadiganta**, meaning *New Horizon* in Bengali – a fitting one indeed.

Image courtesy: SER Fanatics





But the path to success was not as smooth since most of the overhauling schedules of SRC are being undertaken by the TATA ELS.

Image courtesy: SER Fanatics

So, coordination and execution of the project from such a long distance would have mired down the entire process. SER Fanatics led by Shankhadeep Maiti and Soham Das among others insisted on executing the project at SRC ELS only for coherent reasons. The authorities also agreed.

Image courtesy: SER Fanatics





So, the wait began for the turn of SRC for overhaul work. The wait got longer as the 75th Republic Day passed with nothing to offer as per initial plans. But as they say – ‘Sweet are the fruits of adversity or patience’, the time finally arrived as WAP7 #30762 underwent overhaul at the SRC ELS.

Image courtesy: SER Fanatics

The shed authorities along with the contractor and SER Fanatics worked in unison to create magic as the loco unveiled with its stellar new looks on 17th May 2024.

Image courtesy: SER Fanatics





Image courtesy: SER Fanatics

A Livery To Savour
A Livery So Soother
A Livery To Stay In Our Hearts
Always And Forever



Image courtesy: SER Fanatics



Thus, SRC ELS came up with this classic embellishment on 30762 that has caught the attention of all.

Image courtesy: SER Fanatics

We congratulate SER Fanatics whose untiring efforts and dedication towards creating and implementing this unique piece of art gave all a reason to cheer in this monotonous world of Uni-Livery.



Image courtesy: SER Fanatics



Side profile stencilling going on at Santragachi ELS.

Image courtesy: SER Fanatics



Front profile stencilling on-going with 'Nabadiganta' markings...

Image courtesy: SER Fanatics



Special SRC markings !!!

Image courtesy: SER Fanatics

25 years of Santragachi
Electric Loco Shed marking
on the side profiles of
#30762

Image courtesy: Somsubhra Das





SER Fanatics members with the dream machine...

Image courtesy: SER Fanatics

Tendering special thanks to the SER authorities for their whole hearted support to the ideas and thoughts of railfans and for being on their side for all the good reasons.

Image courtesy: Somsubhra Das





Locomotive Cab Modification Contest

At PLW, Patiala

Rahul Nivascar

Indian Railways conducted a Locomotive Cab Modification Contest at the Patiala Locomotive Works, formerly Diesel Component Works or the Diesel Loco Modernization Works at Patiala on 22nd March, 2024. A Photo-Story of the event is hereby presented with the list of achievers. Officials from the Railway Board meticulously evaluated each participating locomotive hailing from different zones. The exercise commenced from 3:00 PM and lasted till 6:00 PM with the announcement of results.

The winners of the contest are listed below :

- **1st Prize** : Vatva Diesel Locomotive Shed under WR and Lallaguda Electric Locomotive Shed under SCR.
- **2nd Prize** : Kanpur Electric Locomotive Shed under NCR and AJNI Electric Locomotive Shed under CR..
- **3rd Prize** : Arakkonam Electric Locomotive Shed under SR and Krishnarajapuram Diesel Locomotive Shed under SWR.





These sheds were recognized for their exceptional performance and unique modifications catering to the loco cab modification.

During the Prize distribution, Railway Board distributed Rewards in Cash (20000 INR, 10000 INR and 5000 INR) to the all the three best performing loco sheds for the year 2023-2024 as given below –

- **Kazipet Diesel Locomotive Shed** under SCR followed by Gooty Diesel Locomotive Shed under SCR and Erode Diesel Locomotive Shed under SR secured the **1st, 2nd and 3rd places respectively for best diesel shed homing electric locos.**
- **Rourkela Electric Locomotive Shed** under SER followed by Erode Electric Locomotive Shed under SR and Bilaspur Electric Locomotive Shed under SECR won the **1st, 2nd and 3rd places respectively for best shed homing three-phase locomotives.**
- **Erode Electric Locomotive Shed** under SR followed by Arakkonam Electric Locomotive Shed by SR and Layan Electric Locomotive Shed clinched the **1st, 2nd and 3rd places respectively for best shed homing conventional locomotives.**
- **Gonda Diesel Locomotive Shed** under NER followed by Kharagpur Diesel Locomotive Shed under SER and Itarsi Electric Locomotive Shed under WCR got the **1st, 2nd and 3rd places respectively in the category of unscheduled lifting of locos on ownership basis.**
- **Patratu Diesel Locomotive Shed** under ECR followed by Rourkela Electric Locomotive Shed under SER and Royapuram Electric Locomotive Shed under SR were recognized for holding the **1st, 2nd and 3rd places respectively on account of having the least number (in percentage) of major overdue locomotives.**

In addition to the aforementioned event, another celebration took place during Republic Day when three electric locomotive sheds of Southern Railway came together to celebrate the 75th Republic Day in a grand way. Three passenger locomotives, one from each shed, were adorned with beautiful new liveries to match the occasion. The Indian tricolor, along with other designs, was presented excellently. It looked truly awesome!



All photos were provided by author & are copyright protected.

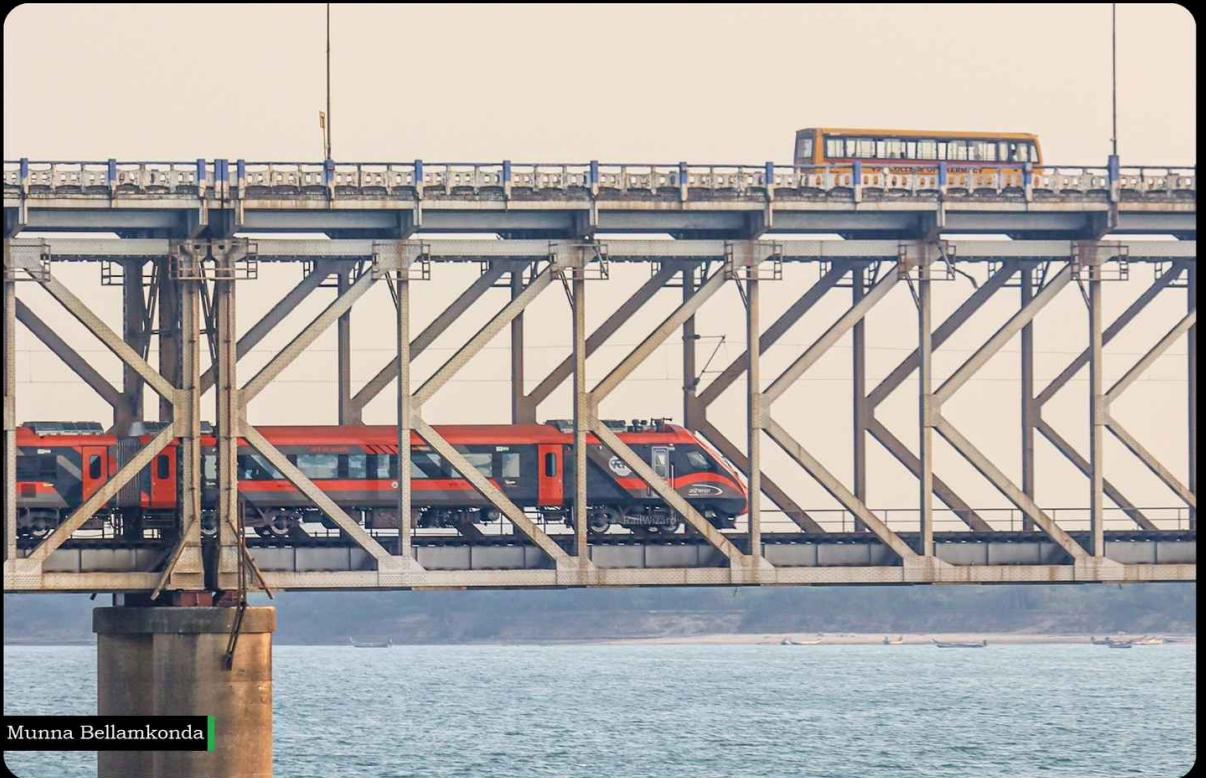


Saurabh Kumar Yadav

Photo Junction



Jay Dhabaliya



Munna Bellamkonda



Saurabh Kumar Yadav



Saurabh Kumar Yadav



Darshan Boishya



Darshan Boishya



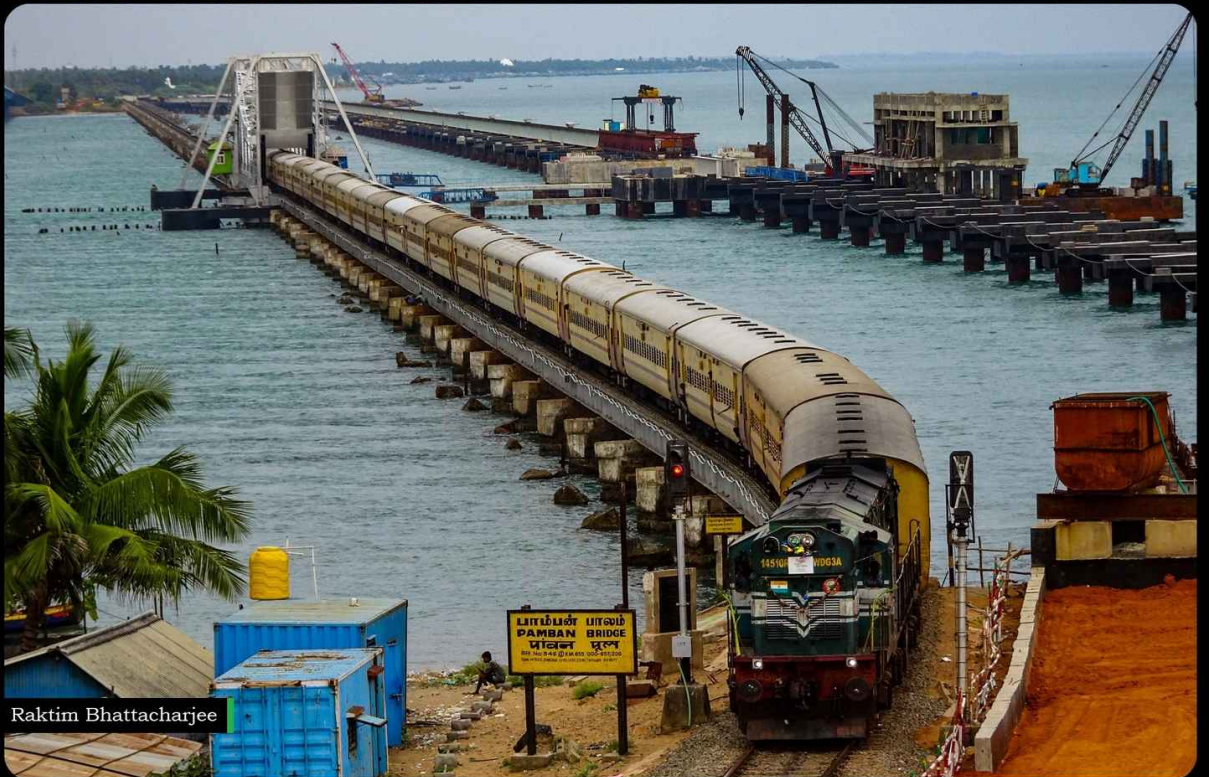
Raktim Bhattacharjee



Munna Bellamkonda



Jay Dhabaliya



Raktim Bhattacharjee



Aishik Chanda



Aishik Chanda

NEWS STATION

Vande Metro Trainsets Rolled Out From ICF And RCF

Vande Metro is a concept unveiled by the Indian Railways to enhance short distance intercity travel experience. It is basically a trainset based upon the concept of MEMU trains with features of Vande Bharat Express. Recently, Integral Coach Factory, Chennai and Rail Coach Factory, Kapurthala rolled out two prototypes of basic units (4 coaches) of Vande Metro trainsets. The trainsets would have air-conditioned coaches with multiples of 4-coach composition. The train would facilitate 100 seating and 200 standing capacity for passengers. Also, the trainsets would have sealed gangways, wide large windows and bio-vacuum fitted toilets as an adaption from the Vande Bharat trainsets. The target routes of the trains are 150-200 km radius from an urban centre or mega city.

Eastern Railways Deploys AI-Driven Methods To Ensure Safety

Artificial intelligence plays an important role in occupational and industrial safety. Eastern Railway becomes a leader in Railway safety by implementing methods like Eddy current testing in wheels, biometric authentication and the AI driven wheel protection software in locomotives. The software boasts of following features –

- a. Portable and User-friendly software which is built on Google Sheets platform where staff can update the data from the mobile devices on the go.
- b. Proactive prediction when wear and tear on wheels will exceed limits, needing maintenance.
- c. Prolonged wheel life and identification of maintenance needs through analysis of wheel data and predictive trends.
- d. Condemnation list forecasting and derivation of average wheel life.

Kolkata Metro Orange Line Starts Trial Run Upto Belehata

On Orange Line of Kolkata Metro, authorities started a regular trial run upto Belehata from Hemanta Mukhopadhyay (Ruby) station. The 4.39 km from Ruby to Belehata stretch has 4 stations enroute, viz., VIP Bazaar, Ritwik Ghatak (Panchanna gram), Barun Sengupta (Science City) and Belehata (Dhapa Mathpukur). Commissioner of Railway Safety inspected the stretch in March 2024 who expressed dissatisfaction over the preparation before inspection and instructed RVNL to build the foot over bridge over EM Bypass at Belehata and an extended viaduct to facilitate reversal of trains for getting nod for further operations.

Howrah Station To Reclaim Platform # 16

After the commissioning of the East-West Metro corridor's Esplanade – Howrah Maidan stretch, Eastern Railway decided to bring back its long lost Platform no. 16 which was demolished in order to make way for the underground Howrah station of Green Line of Kolkata Metro. With the completion of major construction works and commencement of metro operations, Eastern Railway has taken up the work of extension of Platform no. 15 to accommodate 22-24 coach rake and rebuilding Platform #16 for suburban services. Along with this, there will be a VIP siding at Platform #16 for parking of Inspection/Officer special trains. The Eastern Railway and KMRCL are also eyeing to complete subway work for connection of old and new complexes directly to underground Howrah Metro station by the end of this quarter. It may be noted that during its earlier period of existence Platform #16 was never used for public purpose, in fact, it was used by the Army and later for stabling of rakes.

MY TRAIN 18 STORY

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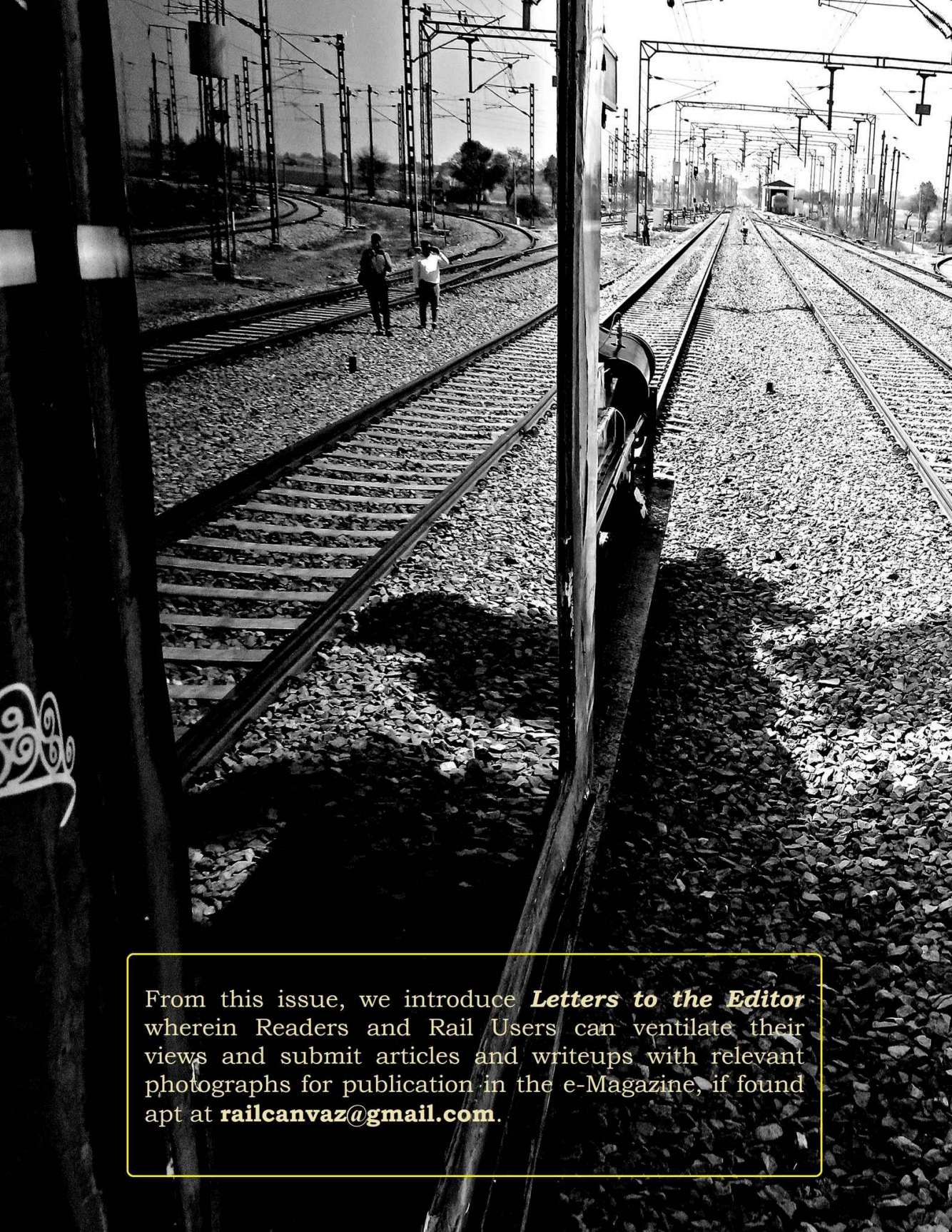


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Padma Vibhushan, Metro Man, Dr. E. Sreedharan, is credited with changing the face of public transport in India, with his leadership in building the Konkan Railway and Delhi Metro.

What's new? Epilogue added!

Sudhanshu Mani has added an exhaustive epilogue in this edition, recounting the aftermath since 2019, when the first service Vande Bharat was launched, till date. It caps the story of the first indigenous semi-high-speed train of India, which has transformed the face of passenger travel in India.



From this issue, we introduce ***Letters to the Editor*** wherein Readers and Rail Users can ventilate their views and submit articles and writeups with relevant photographs for publication in the e-Magazine, if found apt at **railcanvaz@gmail.com**.