

THE ADMINISTRATION OF INDIAN RAILWAYS: HOW DOES IT BENEFIT THE ECONOMICALLY BACKWARD SECTIONS OF THE SOCIETY?

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ABSTRACT

In India, a large proportion of the population belongs to economically backward sections of the society. Their financial condition is not good. They compare different transportation modes on the basis of convenience of travelling and the cost effectiveness. The railways network of India is entirely managed by Government of India and they always try to make the quality of service better and to help the people from economically backward sections of society. A number of steps have been taken by Government for this such as introduction of special trains, introduction of various schemes etc. to benefit this section of society. This paper analyzes the administration of Indian Railways and how does it benefit the economically backward sections of the society.

Index Terms: Privatisation, advantages, Public administration, Indian Railways.

I. INTRODUCTION

Railways are considered as the most important infrastructure development in India from 1850 to till date. The railways in India have a relation with all aspects of the society today. In terms of economy, Railways play a major role in increasing trade and integrating markets. International and domestic economic trends shaped the pace of the construction of railway routes and the demand for the important traffic flows to the major destinations. In political aspects, Railways shaped the finances of colonial government and the princely states [1]. The various political institutions of India influenced the policy and ownership of Indian railways and it also influenced performance of Indian railways. In twentieth century, Indian railways became a force for independence and democracy [2].

This paper discusses the development and organization of the Indian railways network and how it is administered today, the effect of ownership and regulatory policies and the impact of railways on Indian economy and how it benefits the economically backward sections of the society. There are some points that have been made to make the analysis clear. First, the government of India has a strong influence on railways from the very beginning and the role of government has been increased with time. Government of India is responsible for taking all decisions regarding the fare and other things in railways. The Ministry of Railways always tries to keep the railways under reach of all the people. There are a huge number of people who are from economically backward society and they cannot afford to travel in other

transportation modes such as flight due to the high fare. The ministry of railways always helps them by providing better service at very reasonable fares. The railway network is also widespread and that is the reason why people can easily reach any place within India by trains.

II. AIM OF THE PAPER

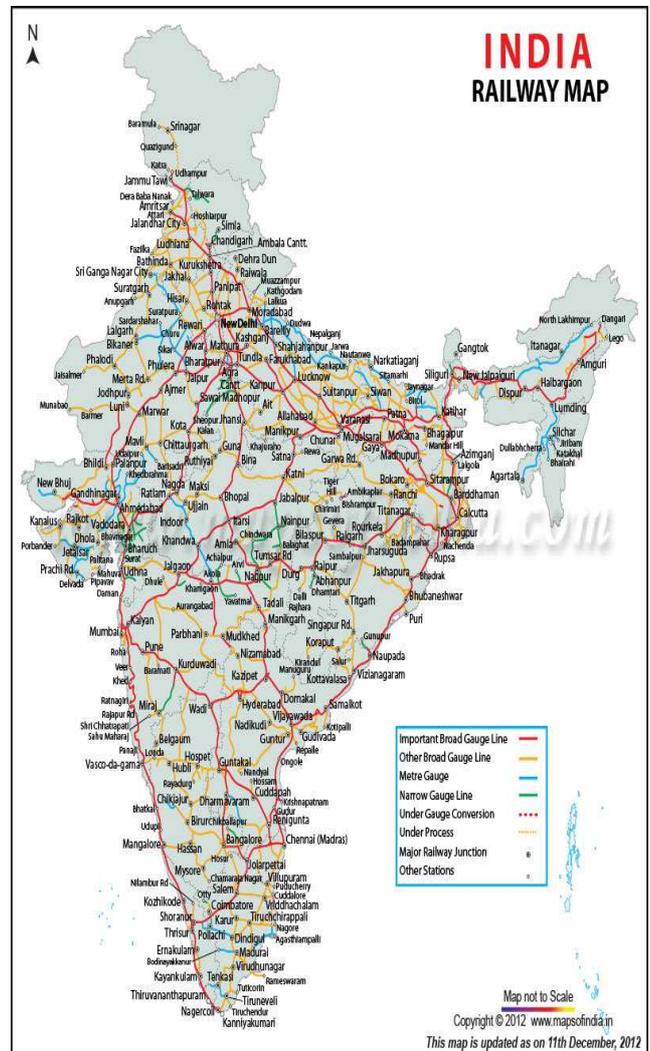
This paper aims to analyze the administration of Indian Railways and how does it benefit the economically backward sections of the society. This study will help the common people to understand how Indian railways are administered and how it helps people from economically backward sections of society in India.

III. DEVELOPMENT OF INDIAN RAILWAYS NETWORK

Before the construction of railways network, the Indian transportation system was quite poor. People used to travel through road transportation modes and water transports. There were very few roads and they were poorly constructed. Many of them were inaccessible during rainy seasons. Water transportation was also limited to the coast, the Ganga and Indus river systems [4]. So, the transport costs were quite higher apart from the river transportation. People had to face lot of problems due to this. There were very few people who could afford to travel in private vehicles but for poor people, the transportation was quite limited. Grand Trunk Road was the main road of transportation that connects Calcutta to Peshawar. The high transportation costs affected the trade in country. The markets for bulky goods were regional and small and high value to weight luxury goods were transported outside of India like cotton printed textiles etc [5]. It was not possible to carry huge amount of goods through water transportation modes. So, the export and import was affected a lot in India.

The development of railways in India was initiated by mercantile firms of London and Manchester with the trading concerns of India. The main aim to develop railways network in India was to reduce the transportation costs and to allow English

merchants to access to raw cotton easily from India. Along with that, the Indian market could also be utilized to sell British manufactured products. The main focus was on goods transportation. The East India Company and railways promoters, both, did not focus much on the passenger traffic during that time. This was a short-sighted view because the passenger traffic could be a major source of revenue [6]. The pace of developing the railways network in India was slow by the process undertaken by East India Company but the pace was increased when the British Crown took the control of it in the year 1858 [7].



Source: Huddleston, G. (2012). History of the East Indian Railway, Volume 1. Calcutta: Thacker, Spink, and Co

The first passenger line of Railways network was established in the year 1953 between Bombay and Thane. Other connections were also made between the major cities like Calcutta and Madras to the interiors of the cities and they were opened during 1854 and 1856 [8]. The network of Indian railways increased in nineteenth century between 1880s and 1890s. The route mileage increased from 9,308 in 1880 to 24,752 in the year 1900 [8]. The average annual growth of railways network was about 7.5%. The rapid pace of development slowed at the end of twentieth century. The Indian Government largely determined the route placement even when the private companies developed the lines [9].

IV. ORGANIZATION OF RAILWAYS NETWORK IN INDIA

The construction and management of Indian railways network initially involved private British Companies, Government of India and Princely states of India. The organization of the railways network in India can be broken down into four different phases. In first phase, the private British companies developed the line and managed the trunk lines under a public guarantee. In second phase, government of India entered into the construction and management of the railways in India [10]. The third phase began in early 1880s when a hybrid partnership has been formed between government of India as the major owner and the private companies who were formerly involved in developing the network. In final phase, Government of India took over the railways operations in India starting from 1924 [10].

V. ADMINISTRATION OF INDIAN RAILWAYS

Railways in India are administered by the Railway Ministry of Central Government. There are eleven public undertakings under the administrative body of Railways Ministry of India.

A. Bharat Wagon and Engineering:

Bharat Wagon and Engineering is the first one. This is a public sector undertaking by GOI and this is a subsidiary of Bharat Bhari Udyog Nigam. It was established in the year 1978 and this is the largest rail wagon manufacturer in India. The company has

three manufacturing plants in Bihar and they made total revenue of 1,544 lakh in 2010 [13].

B. The Centre for Railway Information Systems:

The second undertaking is The Centre for Railway Information Systems or CRIS. This is located in New Delhi and it was established as a registered society of Indian Railways in 1986 (House of Commons, 1999). This is considered as the umbrella organization for all the computer related activities of Indian Railways. All the important information systems are designed and developed by CRIS. In addition to this, they also implement, maintain the information systems for Andaman and Nicobar Administration [14]. There are some significant IT projects developed by CRIS such as computerization of the Freight Operation Information System under Indian Railways, passenger reservation system, generation of freight invoices, the internet based ticket reservation system and national online train enquiry system.

C. Container Corporation of India Ltd:

Container Corporation of India Ltd is a public sector undertaking under the Indian Railways. It was incorporated in the year 1988 and they commenced their operations in 1989 by taking over seven inland container depots from the Indian Railways [14]. The business of Concor is based on three divisions and they are cargo carrier, terminal operator and warehouse operator.

D. Freight Corridor Corporation of India:

The Dedicated Freight Corridor Corporation of India is another undertaking run by Indian Government and they are designed for the planning and development, mobilization of financial resources, and operation of freight corridors.

E. Indian Railway Catering and Tourism Corporation:

Indian Railway Catering and Tourism Corporation is a subsidiary of Indian Railways and their main businesses is to manage the tourism, catering and online ticketing operations of Indian Railways [15]. IRCTC is well known for the changing the face of railways ticketing in India. IRCTC pioneered the

online ticketing facility of Indian Railways through their website. Earlier, people had to stand in a long queue to book their tickets for longer journeys but IRCTC developed their website where customers can book their railways tickets by sitting in the comfort of their home [16]. IRCTC is also in charge for the catering services of trains such as Rajdhani Express, Duronto Express, Maitree exp.

F. Indian Railway Construction (IRCON)

International Limited:

Ircon International Limited is engineering and Construction Company who are specialized in transport infrastructure. Ircon was registered first as Indian Railway Construction Company Limited and they were entirely owned subsidiary of Indian Railways.

G. Konkan Railways:

Konkan Railway is a division of Indian Railways and the railway network that runs along the Konkan coast in India. The route is quite popular from the day they started their operation. It connects Thokur, near Mangalore to Roha in Maharashtra via Goa.

H. Rail Vikas Nigam Limited (RVNL):

Rail Vikas Nigam Limited is another subsidiary of Indian Railways and their main task is to build engineering works that are required by Indian Railways [17].

I. Rail India Technical and Economic Services Limited (RITES):

RITES is an engineering consultancy firm and they are specialized in transport infrastructure. The company was established in the year 1974 by Indian Government and their initial aim was providing consultancy services in rail transport in India. They are now involved in planning and consulting services with Indian Railways.

J. Mumbai Railway Vikas Corporation (MRVC):

This is a subsidiary of Indian Railways and they are responsible for the improvement of railways infrastructure of Mumbai Suburban Railway system.

K. Indian Railway Finance Corporation Limited:

This is also a dedicated financing arm of Indian railways and their main role is to raise money from market to plan the betterment of Indian Railways.

VI. BENEFITS OF INDIAN RAILWAYS FOR THE ECONOMICALLY BACKWARD SECTIONS OF THE SOCIETY:

India is a country consisting of 1.2 billion people and almost 80% of the entire population lives in the rural areas and their economic condition is poor [13]. A huge number of people in India reside below poverty lines. Most of the poor people in India live in rural areas where road transport is poorly developed and it is not possible for the economically backward people to avail the long distance bus service as it is quite costly. The railway network is quite broad and people can go from one place to other through railways, even in rural areas too. Travelling in railway is cost effective too. The local trains in various cities in India are the most popular transportation mode [13]. People prefer local trains in cities like Mumbai, Kolkata, and Chennai because of the heavy traffic on roads. The fare of the trains is quite cheaper than the other transportation modes. Apart from that, the trains allow people to travel comfortably and safely. There is no pollution in traveling in trains compared to the road transportation ways. The government of India is also quite conscious about the railways service and they always try to provide best service at the cheapest possible rate [14]. The fare has not been hiked for many years but the government had to increase the fare a bit last year in order to provide the better service to the passengers.

Some of the steps taken by government to help the economically backward people are:

A. Introduction of special trains:

Many new trains have been started to help the economically backward people such as GaribRath and many other express trains. The fares of these trains are lower than the ordinary fare and they can have all sorts of comfort in these trains. The trains

are fully air conditioned and all facilities are provided the ministry of railways to the passengers. So, the economically backward peoples can travel comfortably in these trains [14]. Apart from that, there are many Duronto Express trains that have been started by Indian Railways and these trains do not stop at any stations between the origin station and destination station. The travel time of these trains are quite less than other trains. There are AC coaches as well as non-AC coaches where economically backward people can travel comfortably.

B. Introduction of various schemes:

The Indian Government has designed various schemes for the economically backward people [13]. With such schemes, the people can travel at very cheap rate. Weekly, monthly and quarterly tickets are also provided to the passengers and through these, the passengers can travel at much lesser cost compared to the normal fare. This facility is given to the passengers who travel in government bus in very few cities but everyone in India can opt for this scheme. This is really helpful for the daily passengers who travel in train to go to their office and colleges. The school students and college students also get various types of discounts in their train fare and it helps them to save huge amount of money. So, the Indian Railways administrative body has helped a lot to everybody who travels in trains, especially the economically backward sections of the society.

C. Provision of Different classes:

For long distance express trains, there are five different classes of accommodation. Second class and sleeper class are the most preferred accommodation types of economically backward sections of the society. This is because the fares of second class and sleeper class are quite nominal compared to the AC fares and anybody from the economically backward section can afford the fares.

D. Better connectivity compared to flights:

There are a number of companies who operate domestic flight service in India but due to the high passenger tax and other taxes, the flight fares have become quite high and it is not possible for the middle and lower income people to avail the flights. So, people prefer travelling on trains [13]. Another benefit of trains is that the railway network connects almost all the cities as well as the rural areas of India whereas flights connect only the major cities.

VII. CONCLUSION:

Railways in India are considered as the most important infrastructure development. The railways network in India is widespread and almost all the cities, towns and villages are covered by the railways network of India. The railway network is administered entirely by Government of India and eleven public undertakings under the administrative body of Railways Ministry of India. The ministry of railways always tries hard to provide better services to the people. Millions of people prefer to travel in trains in India due to various reasons. The first reason is that the road transport is poorly developed and the condition of roads in many areas, especially rural areas, is poor. Another major reason is the cost effectiveness. Most of the people living in India are from economically backward society. The train fares are quite cheaper than other public transportation options and the network has been developed quite well. A huge number of people in cities like New Delhi, Mumbai, and Kolkata prefer to travel in local trains due to the convenience and the cheap cost of travelling. Various types of schemes have also been developed by Government of India to help them passengers to travel at lower cost. The passengers are provided weekly, monthly and quarterly tickets through which the passengers can travel at less than half of the actual fare. Some discounts in tickets are also given to people from economically backward sections of the society. Some special trains have also been started by the Indian railways such as GaribRath and other trains in which people can

travel long distance comfortably by paying less fare. So, from the study it can be concluded that the administrative body of Indian railways has helped the people from economically backward class a lot and a number of policies have been implemented too which will also help them to travel safely and comfortably at pocket friendly costs.

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