

# Train to Rajmahal

---- P. K. Mishra

A contract was signed between the East India Company and the East Indian Railway Company on 17 August 1849, entitling the latter to construct and operate an "experimental" line between Calcutta-the existing seat of power of British India and Rajmahal- the old capital of Bengal.

"The expenditure of £1,000,000 was sanctioned for the first section: from Hourah(Howrah), opposite Calcutta, to Raneegunge, via Pandooah and Bardwan. The line is to be continued from Burdwan, in a northerly direction, to Rajmahal, and thence probably along the right bank of the Ganges to Patna, Mirzapore and Allahabad. A further sum of £1,000,000 has been sanctioned, for the purpose of continuing the extended line to Rajmahal, the whole expense not having yet been estimated. The East India Company guaranteed interest on the capital advanced for this purpose, at the rate of five per cent per annum for the first million, and four and a-half per cent for the

SECOND. --- Railways in Bengal: (being the Substance of a Report Addressed to the chairman of East India Company)

Rajmahal, formerly known as Agmahal , was selected by Raja Man Singh, famous General of Akbar, as capital of Bengal on account of its central position with respect to that province and to Behar and from its commanding the Ganges and the strategic pass of Teliagarhi. *Statistical Account of Bengal*, vol. xiv. pp. 325. 326.

Later on, Sultan Sujah the son of Jehangir also made his residence in Rajmahal,the capital of Behar & Bengal,for which it was more suited than Murshidabad. .

Importance of Teliagarhi was beautifully captured in one of the despatch of Illustrated London News:"Next is the Gate of Teleaghurry Fort, through which passes the line of railway. Teleaghurry is a place of some, note. From its strong natural position it was the last scene of Siraj-u-dowlah's struggle for supremacy. On one side bounded by the Ganges, whose current washed its walls, it had on the other an impassable range of hills the jungle on which resisted any attempt at advance. The citadel was on a rock, going sheer down to the river; and the east and west sides, which were not naturally protected, were hemmed in by walls built of strong brickwork faced with stone, Siraj-u-dowlah thought the place impregnable, and ordered it to be held against Meer Jaffir's". But, the plan failed due to treachery of his Generals and Bengal fell into hands of East India Company.

Rajmahal was the point from which Ganges was continuously navigable at all seasons of the year for steamers upwards for a distance of five hundred miles. The river traffic was estimated at more than two million tons, while that by the road was estimated only 33,370 tons.

It was expected that Rail connectivity between Calcutta and Rajmahal would avoid the five hundred and twenty eight miles of a long circuitous route of rapid & ever tortuous

Bhaugerrutte, long labyrinth of Soonderbunds, which would be navigable only eight months of the year. The river traffic was extremely dangerous due to frequent ship wrecks and total loss of large amounts of property.

*"The Railway train would, with certainty, perform in ten or twelve hours what now takes the steam vessel, on the average, as many days, and what is only precariously accomplished by the heavily-laden country boat in a month."*- Indian Railways as Connected with British Empire in the East-By Sir William Patrick Andrew

Lord Canning , the Governor General , after the inaugural train journey ,delivered a historic speech at Rajmahal :---"*We began our journey at the chief seat of Western trade and civilization on this side of the globe, the head quarters of England's power in Asia ; and we have closed it almost under the walls of the ancient capital of Bengal and Behar—the city of Gour—which, little more than two centuries ago, was not surpassed by any in India for its busy population and magnificence, but which now lies a mass of tangled ruins and rank forest, tenanted by wild beasts, reeking with fever, and void not only of human industry, but of human life. In travelling between these two points,—points of such striking contrast—we have passed through a country teeming with population and covered thick with all that is necessary to the sustenance of man.*"

George Turnbull, the chief engineer of EIR, conducted the survey in December, from Burdwan to Rajmahal, identified the route and determined the gradient after taking levels. The whole difference of level between Calcutta and Mirzapur was stated to be only 240 feet and this rise was almost uniformly spread over a distance of nearly 600 miles and consequently gradient available (in this line averaged about 1 in 12, 000). In 1851, Turnbull went to the extent of stating "*although it would be almost premature and rash to state so positively before regular sets of longitudinal sections are made, yet I have strong hopes, amounting almost to conviction, that a gradient not much, if at all, greater than 1 in 2000 may be obtained all the way from Howrah via Rajmahal to the river Soane on the west of the city of Patna,*"

**- Turnbull's Report, 26 Feb. 1851, Sel. Govt, of India, No. 1,**

Lord Dalhousie, the Governor General remarked "*Tried by these tests, I apprehend that the entire line from Calcutta by the Valley of the Ganges to the North West Provinces, will stand the first in order of importance and value, and ought to command the earliest and best attention of the Government of India.*"- Dalhousie's Minute, 20 April 1853, Pari. Pap., (H.C.), 1852-53, LXXVI, (787), p. 117.

The work of constructing Railway lines between Burdwan to Rajmahal was awarded to Nelson and Co, Railway contractor in India, who built 121 miles in Rajmahal and then went bankrupt.

The tapping of Ganges by Railways was a momentous feat as henceforth neither passengers nor costly goods would be subject to the freaks of Nuddea rivers and would profoundly change the life and activities of the region for ever.

It was a construction against all odds under most challenging circumstances and railway engineers and their team had to constantly battle with wild animals, deadly diseases, epidemics, and onslaughts of nature.

*“The Rajmahal Railway has been driven through a land of tigers & cholera, the labourers have had to battle with the deadly miasma of jungle, the growth of centuries and in some instances have been carried off in broad daylight by wild beasts whose lands, undisturbed for ages have been intruded by the stranger with his iron road”.-*  
**“Rajmahal ,its Railway & historical association by John Brunton”**

On the 4th July 1860, the first train ran through from Calcutta to Rajmahal, and this section of the Railway was planned for opening to the public from 15th October. The intervals of the rains were employed in putting the line into efficient order, and allowing the earthwork to settle and consolidate.

Before the official inspection of Governor General, an inspection special was run on 22nd July, between Howrah and Rajmahal allowing the entire top brass of EIR to thoroughly inspect the new line before officially declaring the section open.

The following notes of a trip on the East India Railway from Howrah to Rajmahal and back appeared in the **Calcutta Englishman,10 September 1860 edition:**

*“A special train left Howrah at 6.15 a.m. on the 22nd July, for Rajmahal, which place after several stoppages, it reached at 4.30 p.m. Thus the road from Calcutta to Rajmahal is practicality open, for the occasion of this special train was not that of an experiment, or a trial trip, but it was for a special purpose, and one that the Managers, and indeed all who are connected with the Railway may well be proud of - it was to convey the first lady of the land from Rajmahal to Calcutta.”*

The train left Howrah at the exhilarating pace of forty-five miles an hour, and kept up this running to Burdwan, where breakfast was partaken of. After a short rest a fresh start was made, the junction soon reached, and as speed was no object, stoppages were made at places wherever any order had to be given, telegram to be despatched, engineers to be taken up, or work to be inspected.

The party consisted of G. Turnbull, Esq., engineer-in-chief; E. Palmer, Esq., agent; Lingard Stokes, Esq., locomotive superintendent; T. Batchelor, Esq., traffic manager; C. L. Adley, Esq., Superintendent electric telegraphs; Captain Stanton, consulting engineer to the Government of India; Captain the Hon. C. I. Stanley, A.D.C. to the Governor-General; Major W. S. Sherwill; and J. Wilson, Esq., barrister.

The party were kindly housed by T. Vigors, Esq., district engineer at Rajmahal, whose house, built over the “Sungee Dullan,” or Stone Hall, an ancient building, commanding a beautiful view of the river Ganges, its numerous populated islands, and the bold projecting Rajmahal hills that dip down to the water's edge.

Illustrated London news reported that Railway now under construction, from Calcutta and the valley of the Ganges to Delhi, is rich in fine scenery, and old forts and palaces, which are hedged with historic and romantic associations.

The report was filed by Mr. Edward Braddon, Assistant Engineer of the East Indian Railway. "The early history of the Singh-i-dulan, or palace of lion, like all Hindoo histories, is very confused, and strongly tinged with mythological fable. It is said to have been built by Bolaram, brother of Krishna, after his war with Banasur, but its origin is more modern and it was constructed by Raja Man Singh, General of Akbar for his residence and now it is being used as residence of District engineer."-- **Illustrated London news, April 18, 1857**

The paper, London Daily, describes the difficulties faced in field, challenges in removing rocks in cuttings, bridging the treacherous rivers and how the indomitable English perseverance and talent could overcome all these obstacles.

*"The state of the line from the junction near Burdwan to Rajmahal is most creditable to all concerned. Great must have been the difficulties overcome, bad black cotton soil in some places that melts away under the influence of homoeopathic doses of water, and becomes converted into black mud, heavy and deep cuttings in others, cuttings that make a non-professional man shudder to his heels when he thinks of the masses of ponderous rock blasted and removed, rivers with almost uncontrollable streams that think lightly of rising to fabulous heights in a few hours, and that have beds broad enough for artillery practice-grounds ; then again every conceivable article, whether for Railway purposes or for food, have had to be brought from great distances, some of which can only be measured by thousands of miles."*

*"But by the indomitable English perseverance, talent and kindness, all these difficulties, and many others besides, have been overcome; and lastly, the constructors of this great work have had to contend against an enemy more powerful and more to be dreaded than any of those yet mentioned; but by patience, care, and kindness, even this great difficulty has been overcome; and this was sickness amongst the workmen along the line, for the engineers, whose time and patience are so thoroughly occupied and tried whilst carrying out their great design, could still find time to administer to the wants of their humbler workmen, amongst whom cholera has lately created foul havoc."*  
--**London daily news, Monday 10 September 1860**

Immense bridge over the More River at Synthia was one of the greatest engineering works of India with large number of elegantly turned arches and its breathtaking brickworks.

*"I was content to know that I was approaching and then crossing one of the greatest engineering works of India. The waters of the river, for the first time since the Creations now flow under the arches of a railway bridge, and that as quietly as if perfectly accustomed to such bridges. The water of this river, however, at times can and does perform feats of such boisterousness, that when the time does come for it to exert its*

*force, the masonry will be sorely tried and, doubtless, will prove to be made of sterling stuff."*

The next great work is the bridge over the Adjye, a magnificent piece of engineering of twenty-four arches; and equally excellent are the bridges over all the minor streams too numerous to mention. The extensive cutting at Surrool, two miles in length, is as neat a piece of work as can be found in any part of England

En-route, Pakour is first station in the Santal country; where a Martello tower, thirty feet high and twenty feet diameter, loop holed for musketry with space on the top for one or two light guns, was constructed. It was built in 1856 for protection of Railway officers & Railway bungalows when the latter were rebuilt after Santal resurrection of 1856. This tower afforded protection against a company of mutinous Sepoys in 1858.- **"Rajmahal ,its Railway & historical association by John Brunton"**

*The approach to the Rajmahal hills, from the very pretty scenery, is peculiarly pleasing, and as the train dashes through the cutting at the Seeta Pahar, you first of all marvel that such an undertaking should ever have been thought of, and then you wonder that it should ever have been accomplished. Not content with proclaiming their power to cut through hills, and with a cool contempt for anything like an obstruction, the engineers of the railway, upon forcing their way through the obstinately tough basaltic hill, quietly run their line right through the Jola Jheer, a huge lake, extending for miles in every direction.*

The Sita Pahar cutting was a work of immense labour through solid Basalt; three to four thousand men were employed on the mining and cutting work. The first contractors abandoned it in despair, as the stone proved to be as hard as iron.

The beautiful natural scenery of Rajmahal hills was a treat to the dust choked, wearied, and hot inhabitants of Calcutta. A view of the hills, with the heavy clouds hanging over the summits, mighty Ganges with its wide expanse, glimpse of Himalayas, which are sometimes visible, enchanted the travellers

*A stroll amongst the Sonthal villages in the neighbourhood; a visit to the ancient ruins at Peer Pahar, to one or more of the hill villages at an elevation of 2,000 feet above the sea; a trip to the Motee Ghirna water-fall near Sikree Gullee, about fifteen miles from the station, where a small hill stream is precipitated over basaltic columns into a prettily wooded valley, or a visit to the ruins of the ancient city of Gour, form some of the many sights and enjoyments that present themselves at Rajmahal, to see and to enjoy which I would strongly recommend the inhabitants of Calcutta to put themselves into the train during the approaching Doorga Pooja holidays, by which time it is likely that the line will be open for passenger traffic. **London daily news, Monday 10 September 1860***

One can see the ruins of house of great Jagat Seth, one of the richest person of his time and famous Banker, Rothschild of India; at whose door, East India company, French and Nawabs of Bengal, would come frequently for loans.

One can also see the grave of Surgeon Boughton, the man who, having gone from Surat to Agra in 1636, and cured the daughter of Shah Jehan, as his fee obtained a patent for his countrymen to trade free of customs duties facilitating the growth of East India Company in India, and destiny would allow him to play the same role of facilitating British trade in Rajmahal.

*“He went with this view to Rajmahal and there cured one of the lights of Sultan Suja’s ‘harem.’ He remained in his service enjoying a splendid stipend and secured for his countrymen the privilege of free trade. In consequence of this the East India Company sent ten ships from England to Bengal, the agents of which were introduced to Sultan Suja at Rajmahal. They were kindly received, and their views of extending English trade were promoted; for the Sultan, like the great Akbar, was a friend to trade.”-Calcutta Review- volume 36*

The region was teeming with wild life including rhinoceros and tigers, which are now sadly extinct: *“For sports- men there is abundant occupation; the islands in the river not a hundred yards from the station will yield a goodly bag of hog, deer, frankolin, partridges, wild hog and tigers; whilst nearer the hills rhinoceros, tigers, jungle-fowl, pea-fowl, and other game, are met with.”*

It was fervently hoped that this successful opening up of the line from Calcutta to Rajmahal is but the prelude to a good road to Darjeeling being constructed, and inhabitants of Calcutta would be able to spend their holidays on the slopes of the Himalaya, and gaze upon the snowy peaks and blue glaciers in not so distant future: *“where, instead of being half smothered in dust, nearly worried to death by mosquitoes, and tempers quite destroyed by the heat, the inhabitants of Calcutta may be enabled to try what mountain air is like, and sharp, crisp, and bracing will they find it, totally free from dust and mosquitoes, and from the villainous smell of Calcutta; but they will find plenty of blackbirds, robins thrushes, and nightingales instead, to remind them of dear old England, and the nearest approach to a mosquito bite that they can hope to attain to, will be a thumping good sting from a stinging nettle, or a rasping tear across the leg by a blackberry bush; and instead of knocking your head against punkahs, you may expect your hat to be dented in by falling acorns or walnuts.”*

The train left Rajmahal at 6.15 a.m., on the 25th, on its return towards Calcutta, arriving safe at Howrah at 4 p.m. The whole country for forty miles south of Rajmahal was under water from the three previous days' heavy rain.

*The rivers were in all cases very full; some had left their beds, and were spreading over the country, putting the embankments to a severe test, but they had stood firmly; and along the whole line, with the exception of the usual moderate subsidence of new earth,*

*not an impediment was met with, though thousands of workmen are still engaged trimming and turfing the slopes, filling up holes, digging tanks, erecting telegraphs and water tanks, building houses and stations; and although the line is a single one, and engines are engaged daily in running up and down the line, not an approach to an accident occurred.*

The saloon carriage attached to the special train is a beautiful piece of coach-building; the greatest liberality having been exercised in its construction, ornaments, and furniture".---**London daily news Monday 10 September 1860**

Board had grand expectations of the large traffic shifting from rivers to Railway after opening of the section. *"Great expectations," the Board said, "have been formed of the large traffic which will come upon this portion of the line, but the Board think it right to guard the shareholders against too sanguine an expectation that this traffic will appear simultaneously with its opening. It will certainly take time to draw it from its accustomed channels, and whilst no doubt there will at once be a very considerable apparent tonnage conveyed, it will principally be in the Company's own materials, the real trade of the country coming gradually, and until the advantages of railway transit are better understood in India, probably in the first instance somewhat slowly."*-**History of the East Indian Railway by George Huddleston**

Governor-General of India in his speech after opening of the Railway to Rajmahal also raised the issue of financial viability of the project, reiterating the remunerative employment of capital to facilitate investments:—

*"Though the Government were most anxious to give encouragement to the investment of English Capital in India, and however sincere their desire, that encouragement would fail, unless they could prove by the establishment that there is scope for remunerative employment of such capital in India, particularly in Bengal. Without such assurance, capitalists will not be induced to aid in such enterprises, however useful in their ultimate results."*

-**A Sketch of Eastern Bengal with reference to its railways, and government , Thacker Spink & Co.1861...**

To commemorate the opening of the line as far as Rajmahal, the Government of India struck a large silver medal which was distributed to the principal officers engaged on the work. The distribution of a symbol of the kind would, it was thought, be acceptable to the engineers and others, whose services in connexion with the work it was proper to acknowledge, and it will doubtless tend much to the promotion of good feeling on their part.

The following is a copy of the communication sent to one of the District Engineers employed on the work:—

From the Secretary to Govt. of India. Public Works Department.

To GRAHAM PEDDIE, Esq., DISTRICT ENGINEER, East Indian Railway.

Sir,

*I commanded by His Excellency the Viceroy and Governor-General of India to transmit, for your acceptance, the medal struck by order of Government on the occasion of opening the East Indian Railway to the Ganges at Rajmahal, as being a memorable point attained in the construction of that great work, on which you have been employed.*

*I have the honour to be*

*Sir, Your most obedient servant,*

*H. Yule, Lieut.-Col., Secretary to the Govt. of India.*---- **The History of the East Indian Railway by George Huddleston. Published 1906 by Thacker, Spink and Co**

The East Indian Railway line to Rajmahal was opened on the 15th October 1860 with much splendour. A train, containing the Lieutenant Governor of Bengal and other distinguished guests invited by Mr. Palmer, the agent, East Indian railway company, started from Howrah at a past 8 o'clock in the morning, and took up the Right Honourable the Governor General and his Excellency the Commander—in chief at Serampoor at 9 o'clock.

*The train entered upon the new line at Synthia at about past 12, and after stopping for the refreshment of the passengers for nearly an hour at Rampoor Haut, reached Rajmahal before 5 o'clock in the evening. The distance of Rajmahal from Howrah is 202 miles, of which 83 are newly opened. The party returned without any untoward occurrence to Calcutta on the following day. It was no small achievement to open 83 miles of railway in one day, and to run successfully a train consisting entirely of new carriages built in the railway company's own workshops, conveying upwards of 200 1st-class passengers over 200 miles of railway at an average speed of 25 miles an hour, returning the same distance with equal success the next day.*

The line had, as was to be expected, suffered much from slips and settlement of the new embankment during the rains, then hardly over, and the ballasting was incomplete; but the engineers had exerted themselves to get ready for an opening before the Doorgah Poojah holidays, and succeeded so well that the train passed up without difficulty or delay, except for five or six minutes to replace a Rail near the commencement of the Rajmahal branch.

His Excellency the Governor General of India, Lord Canning gave a historic speech at Rajmahal :

*“ We began this day's journey at a spot washed by the tides of the Bay of Bengal, and within a stone's throw of the anchorage of some of the noblest ships which, to the furtherance of commerce and all its attendant blessings, the skill and enter prise of our fellow-countrymen have launched upon the ocean. We have ended it in an inland district 200 miles off, where not only are the uses of the great highway of nations uncared for and unknown, but where the very name of the ' black water ' is a word of mystery and terror.*

We have skirted a district abounding in mineral wealth, and already eagerly seizing the opportunity, as yet imperfectly afforded to it, of pouring this wealth into the great centre of activity in Calcutta. We have been carried through the wild country of the Sonthals, one of the rudest and wildest races of India, but a race not insensible to kindly government, and who, if their hills and jungles had been as accessible five years ago as they are now, would have been at once checked in a purposeless rebellion.

Lastly, we find ourselves standing on the bank of the great Ganges, at that point at which it is in the interests of commerce that the tedious and uncertain navigation of its lower waters should be exchanged for a short and secure land carriage.

“ If, then, Gentlemen, it be destined, as without presumption we may believe it to be, that to British science and British enterprise shall be committed in India the noble task of bringing security, comfort, and comparative wealth within the reach of races as yet ignorant of these; of extending the field of profitable industry to them; of supplying the wants of some by the superfluities of others ; of enhancing prosperity where it exists, and of reviving it where it has drooped and decayed ; of promoting fellow ship between men, and of bringing light into dark places ;—if these, I say, be the functions allotted to the science and enterprise of our fellow country men in India, then I declare that I do not know where in the map, not of India only, but of the world, a spot could be found presenting, within the short compass of one day’s journey, so complete an epitome of all the opportunities for usefulness and good which attend on well directed enterprise, as does the country through which we have this day passed.”

I have said that I would not trouble you with figures; but that you should know that the old portion of the line(Howrah to Burdwan) over which you have this day travelled is the one in India, the proceeds of which already more than cover the Government’s guarantee ” of five per cent. And though this may appear an unimportant vulgar fact to those who are not concerned by it, it is one full of hope for the future.

It is by tempting the capital as well as the skill and experience of England into India, by showing that there is remunerative employment for it, that India must be advanced. This can be done only by showing an example of the practical success of such undertakings as this; and that the East India Railway, to do honour to which we are met, is not only full of future promise, but actually in great part remunerative, and that of its well-working there need be no apprehension, we may now safely assert.

I am sure, gentlemen that many of you must have been struck, as certainly I was, by the sight of a train such as we saw to-day, carrying 200 first class passengers, all in brand new carriages of Indian make, and with new engines, issuing from its starting place, so perfect in all its parts, and so well appointed, that Paddington station itself might have been proud of it, accomplishing within nine hours a journey of more than 200 miles, 85 of which have only this day been opened, and arriving at its journey’s end, not only easily, smoothly, and without an accident, but without a screw loosened.

I have known something of similar ceremonies in England, but never have I heard of any that was more thoroughly successful than that which we have this day witnessed.

“I believe, gentlemen, that if it had been prophesied to any one of you a few years ago on getting into the comfortable carriage of an express train at Euston square, that you would one day be carried in a like conveyance and very nearly at a like speed through such a country as this, you would have treated it as a joke. Yet the thing has come to pass this day;—and, let me say that the extravagant contrasts which have thus been presented to our eyes are not merely a subject for idle wonderment, but a solid ground of hope for the future of British India.”—**Bengal Hurkaru.**

- **The East Indian and other Government guarantees on Railways.** ... WM. H. ALLEN & Co., 7, LEADENHALL STREET. London 1861.

His Excellency the Governor General, in proceeding up the Ganges, took the opportunity of visiting three of the principal works on the East Indian railway, viz., the Monghyr tunnel, and the Soane and Kurrumnassa bridges.

East Indian Railway Half yearly Report to the Chairman and Board of Directors of the East Indian Railway in 1861 , mentions the opening of section up to Rajmahal:

“Gentlemen,—

*In my last Half-yearly Report I stated that, although an engine and train had passed through to Rajmahal on the 4th July last, yet I could not recommend that an earlier day than the 15<sup>th</sup> October should be named for opening the line to that place for public traffic: my expectations, as you already are aware, have been so far realized, that, on the day alluded to, an Express Train conveyed the Governor-General and a large party of gentlemen, from Howrah to Rajmahal, 202miles, returning on the following day, and that the Line was opened for public traffic on the 18th October.*

*I have the satisfaction of adding that the traffic has been carried on regularly and uninterruptedly since that time. The completion of the Line to Rajmahal, within the specified time, was not effected without great difficulty, and I cannot bestow too great praise on the Engineers and other servants of the Company for their energetic and unwearied exertions in pushing on the works. "Without these exertions, continued as they were in some places night and day, for many weeks, the desired end could not have been accomplished. I embrace this opportunity of recommending them to your most favourable notice".—**Engineer's journal 1861***

Turnbull reported that in Rajmahal Station much remains to be done; but he has not been very urgent in pushing on the works there, until experience has proved how much accommodation will be required.

*“Above 3miles of Permanent Way are laid down already for station purposes; three additional brick bungalows, and a barrack for guards and engine drivers, are completed.*

*The following temporary structures have been set up :—a booking office and platform, a goods shed, with export and import platforms, and an engine shed for six locomotives, with watering apparatus. The permanent buildings for booking office and carriage sheds are in hand, and will be carried on to completion as fast as materials can be provided.*

*The continual changes in the bed of the River Ganges are well known ; the tendency of the river of late years has been to deposit large "chirrs" or sand banks opposite to station frontage, and the deep water is now at some distance south of the station. To connect the Railway with the unloading places frequented by the boats and steamers, it was found necessary to laydown about a mile and a half of Permanent Way. Some unavoidable delay took place in obtaining permission to lay down this temporary road, which is absolutely necessary for the traffic, but the work is now in hand, and will soon be finished. A building of considerable size, part of the old palace ruins, was roofed in and adapted for a hotel, and has been of great convenience for the accommodation of passengers. It is found, however, to be much too small, and a proposition for enlarging it is prepared.*

The hall of black marbles which once formed Sultan Suja's Boitakaana now makes a comfortable sitting room for the Railway Engineer.

George Turnbull, in his half yearly report ending 30th June to the Chairman and Board of Directors of the East Indian Railway dated 9th August 1861, wrote that The works and way have been maintained in good working order, and the traffic has been carried on without intermission during the half-year. Ahmoddpoor Station is nearly finished. At Mullarpoor and Nulhatty the second or " up " platform walls are finished, and the goods and passenger sheds are well advanced. Rampore Haut engine changing station has the pumping engine house and tank finished ; the other buildings are in progress. Moradoi and Pakour stations are nearly finished.

Rajmahal in those days was a major distributing centre for cotton goods, and also a seat of export trade in grain, tasar silk, small-sized timber, hill bamboos, oil-seeds, etc., however it frequently suffered the meandering ways of the river.

In 1860, when the loop-line of the East Indian Railway was opened to this town, an arm of the Ganges ran immediately under the station, forming a navigable channel for steamers and boats of all sizes. In 1863-64 the river abandoned this channel, leaving an alluvial bank in its place. Rajmahal was, till 1879, three miles distant from the main stream of the Ganges, and could only be approached by large boats during the rains. A tram way was constructed to connect River Ghat with station. In 1879 the Ganges returned to its old bed, but in 1882 it showed indications of again deserting it. --***The Imperial Gazetteer of India, Volume 11 by Sir William Wilson Hunter***

All permanent way, rolling-stock and other stores were transported from England in sailing ships via the Cape of Good Hope (the Suez Canal did not then exist). By 1859,

before opening of Rajmahal section, there were 77 engines, 228 coaches and 848 freight wagons with EIR.

The construction of line to Rajmahal was initially much impeded by Sonthal insurrection necessitating importation of labourer's from Nagpur and other distant parts, unhealthiness of climate, difficulties in constructing large bridges & extensive via ducts but it was pioneering leadership of Turnbull that the line could be finally constructed.

It was expected that Railways would play a big role in civilizing the natives and imbibing the importance of punctuality in them.

*“As the stream of the Ganges , like that of Nile, and other great River, has been the diffuser of civilization among its banks, so is the Railway likely to prove a line of light through Mofussil darkness enabling the merchants, the educator and the missionary to give access to the highways and hedges of the Santal and other districts.*

*Punctuality so wanting in our native friends will be taught more effectively than the school master- the train waits for no one.”*

—The Calcutta Review, Volume 36

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