

TIME TABLE AND FARES : EIR EARLY DAYS

P.K.MISHRA

In 1856, only three trains would run in EIR route, first train would go up to Hooghly, second up to Pandooah and third would run up to Raneegunge. The solitary coaching UP train to Raneegunge would leave Howrah at 9.00 AM , reach Burdwan at 12.40 P.M and depart at 1.50 P.M, reaching Raneegunge at 4.42 P.M on same day. The down train would leave Raneegunge at 9.10 AM and reach Howrah at 4.45 P.M on same day inclusive of a long halt of almost one hour at Burdwan from 12.02 P.M to 1.05 P.M. – *EIR time table, rates and regulations 1856*

System of Train numbering had not made entry in earlier time tables and trains would be simply called as first train, second rain and third train!

Surprisingly EIR was pioneer in running time tabled goods train, which even now, IR is finding difficult to emulate and unable to juggle the fixed schedule of goods trains in time tables of coaching trains in routes highly saturated with regular introduction of new coaching trains.

One mixed train, consisting of goods wagons and one first class carriage, would leave Howrah 8.30 P.M. every night and would reach Raneegunge in morning next day at 6.35 A.M , the first incidence of running time tabled goods train in the world. Similarly in down direction the goods train along with first class carriage would start from Raneegunge at 8.30 P.M. every night and would reach Howrah in morning next day at 7.40 A.M.

EIR could not introduce more trains in earlier days as only limited numbers of steam locomotives were available, defining the number of trains that could be run.

“The reports from Calcutta concerning the progress of the railway are considerably at variance with the report of the East India Railway Company, which will be found in another column. The home report contains one or two statements which would have been astounding in the mouths of any but Indian railway officials. Fifty locomotives are said to have been sent out, but there are only ten on the line, which, when opened, has not the means of running a train daily backwards and forwards to Raneegunge, a distance of 120 miles. It has, therefore, been determined to run a train one day, and back to Calcutta on the next”.- The Indian news and chronicle of Eastern Affairs 3rd March 1855.

Steam Locomotive Fairy queen was used to haul light mail trains between Howrah and Raneegunge ,The locomotive was constructed by Kitson, Thompson and Hewitson at Leeds, in England, in 1855, On arrival, it was given fleet number "22" by the East Indian Railway Company; it was named 1895. The loco subsequently had a distinction of being oldest working steam loco in the world.

Coaches of first, second and third class, catering to different passenger segments, were attached in the train.

First class fare between Howrah to Raneegunge was 11 rupees, 5 annas and six paisa, a princely sum in those days; Second class fare was five rupees ,ten annas and nine paisa ,while third class fare was one rupee,14 anna and 3 paisa.

Fares were virtually unchanged from 1855 to 1861 , only marginal rise of one anna for first class ,nine paisa for second class and 3 paisa for third class between Howrah and Raneegunge.

First class fare , between Raneegunge to Burdwan, was 5 Rs,4 anna ;and second class fare was 2 Rs and 10 anna ; while third class fare was 14 annas .

Even foreigners were feeling the pinch of high fare of EIR, a letter to the editor appearing in the newspaper star states *“Sir,-Having been in India, lately, I find myself possessed of a Bradshaw's Guide to India, published in 1860, from which I beg to hand you the following extracts, bearing on railway fares: From Calcutta to Burdwan, the whole extent of the line-67 miles.*

1st Class...6 rupees, 1 anna, 6 pice, 12s 2Jd

2nd " ...3 " -9 "6s 1d

3rd " ...1 " 3 "2s 1/4d

Now, on this railway all the engineers, drivers, and leading stokers are Europeans, and are paid at a higher rate than the corresponding class in this colony.

Any comment on this I leave to you and the Commissioner of Railways.

I am.&c,

A. G.

EIR was also operating ferry services to and fro from Calcutta with matching timings for all trains services starting from Howrah, except for mid night trains, for the benefit of passengers, one of the early pioneers of intermodal service in the world. Ferry services were not featuring in first time table, but in subsequent time tables, timings from Calcutta would also be shown apart from timing from rail terminus Howrah.:

“We hope the statement in our local columns, that the railway company's steamers to ply between Howrah and Calcutta may shortly be expected to arrive is correct, for they are evidently much required.- Hurkaru, May 12, 1855.

“The Railway Company's steam ferry boat is to be launched from the Howrah Docking Company's Yard on Monday”.- January 15,1856 Indian news and chronicle of eastern affairs

EIR in its time table would state, to ward off unnecessary litigations, that the Railway Company do not guarantee the arrival of the trains at the hours named in the table ,but they will endeavor ,by every means in their power , to ensure punctuality.

No person was permitted in station or offices after the departure of the train. Passengers were supposed to be at ten minutes before the time stated in table as bookings offices would be closed after the first bell had rung.

Return or double journey ticket facility was available to first and second class passengers, at a reduction of one third of fare for two single journeys.

Smoking was strictly prohibited in any of company's carriages or stations and penalty not exceeding 20 Rupees could be imposed.

Ice wrapped in blankets could be carried in special railway boxes at a nominal charge : 20 seers of ice could be sent up to 50 miles after paying four annas.

Charge for booking one horse was at the rate of 2 annas per mile ,if two horses are booked together by same sender, charge would be only 3 annas per mile for both horses ,and for three horses, rate would be 4 annas per mile for the whole. A perfect example, of incentives and telescopic rates in practice.

EIR had introduced a system of stiff fines to ensure compliance of company rules and regulations. Theft or vandalism of any property of Railway Company would result in a fine up to fifty Rupees. Any person entering Lady's waiting hall or carriage could be fined up to Rs. 100.

Riding on engine, by unauthorized persons, would invite fine up to 20 Rs. Trespassing on Railway premises would also result in fine up to 20 Rs.

Intoxication during duty, for Railway servants, would invite fine up to 50 Rs and person could also be imprisoned up to one year.

in 1861, Five trains used to ply between Howrah and Burdwan , One train would go up to Rajmahal stopping en-route at Bulpoor, Synthea , RamporeHaut, Morraroee, Pakour, Bahawa, etc and Only two trains used to run during 1861 between Burdwan and Raneegunge. The first train would leave Burdwan at 2.10 P.M. and reach Raneegunge at 4.20 P.M with stoppage at Mankoor at 3.5 and Panaghur at 3.22. This train used to originate from Howrah at 11A.M.. – EIR time table and rates 1861 page 46.

The other train would leave Burdwan at 11.40P.M. and pass Mankoor at 12.25, stop at Panaghur at 12.40 and terminate at Raneegunge at 1.20A.M. On Sunday, there was only one service leaving Howrah at 8.45 P.M. reaching Burdwan at 11.10 P.M and starting from Burdwan at 11.40 P.M. for Raneegunge. --- EIR time table and rates 1861 page 47.

In 1855, after opening of the Raneegunge section, there was major outbreak of Santhal insurrection and troops were transported by Railways to Raneegunge, the first ever use of Railways in India from military point of view. It was reported that military specials ran at 112 kmph between Howrah and Raneegunge, an amazing feat achieved 164 years ago, even now we do not get any section cleared at 110 kmph by CRS in first year of commissioning!

"The Express Trains which recently conveyed troops to Raneegunge travelled at the rate of seventy miles an hour."— Allen's Indian Mail 1855

Unpunctuality of the train had a direct bearing on the revenue and passengers opted for other means of transport. Cecil Stephenson, Deputy Agent of EIRC admitted that 'native' passengers chose the railway for speed and time; if the railway service failed to offer either, they found other means of transit. This observation was prompted by a serious deficit of the passenger traffic between Burdwan and Calcutta, which Stephenson attributed to the unpunctuality of the local and the through trains.

A major factor contributing to inconvenient timetables was the speed of the trains. Those trains which ran at a slower speed, followed more inconvenient timing than the faster ones; and the bulk of 'native' passengers were forced travel in slow trains because the faster ones did not have third or fourth class carriages. Most often, they travelled in the 'mixed' trains which were a combination of lower class carriages and goods wagons. Meant to carry only 'native' passengers, these trains usually comprised only third and fourth class carriages.

On an average a 'mixed' train ran at a speed of 16-18 kilometres per hour, while the mail or the express trains ran at a speed of 20-25 kilometres per hour. Further, the 'mixed' trains had long halts built in their schedule which made journeys longer. Passengers travelling by these trains had to pass several days in the trains before they reached their destinations. Also, the timing of these trains was not always well-coordinated with the connecting trains for onward journeys.

Newspaper report complained that no trains ran from Burdwan to Calcutta between 8.30 a.m. to 8.30 p.m. The report added that it would not be difficult to accelerate or slow down these trains to reach the day-break stations as nearly as possible at the proper times, and to reach the bathing and food stations at any time between nine and twelve. These recommendations were accepted by the EIRC's Board of Directors and it was resolved that the slow passenger trains be timed to arrive at some principal station between 5 and 6.30 a.m. each day, stopping three quarters of an hour for the convenience of the passengers. Even the Lieutenant Governors of Bengal and NWP thought the experiment was 'well worth trying', as the expenses incurred was small.

But the 'native' passengers resented slow speed and long halts, because it contributed to inconvenient timetables. Accounting for decline in passenger traffic in 1871, the agent of the EIRC noted that as soon as third class passengers were allowed to travel by all trains, the fast mail trains became crowded with third class passengers, so much so that occasionally at roadside stations they have been left behind for want of rooms. He thought probably the third class passengers would not have been so eager to travel by the fast mail, had it not been for the long stoppages of the slow trains at certain stations, made expressly with a view to the convenience of 'native' travellers.

For Indians, the advantage of choosing railways primarily lay in its speed. A newspaper report captured the 'native' response to the slow speed of the trains in the following words: 'while in 1865-1866 the Grand Trunk Road was almost deserted and bullock trains were no longer used, they have now again come into fashion and no few passengers content themselves with travelling on foot and all this for no other reason than because they have to suffer serious losses and inconvenience in journeying by rail.'

This gap in understanding the nature of the requirements of Indian passengers is ironic as the railway companies were rather eager to fulfill 'native needs' to attract more traffic.

In his auto biography, JeevanSmriti, Rabindranath Tagore recollected an instance of ill-treatment at the hands of the ticket inspector on his maiden railway journey. On this occasion, the ticket inspector was suspicious of the poet's actual age, and wanted his father to pay full fare for him. Indignant at the allegation of trying to save the difference between the full fare and the half-ticket, Debendranath paid the full fare. So incensed was he at the behaviour of a 'lowly half-caste Eurasian' that he even declined to receive the change offered and flung it across the platform instead.

EIR introduced an 'intermediate class', though here the target was to attract 'respectable, middleclass Indians who despised to travel with lower class passengers in the third class carriages. This calculation paid off, and the intermediate class of EIRC became extremely popular

On his first railway journey Rabindranath Tagore felt 'cheated' by not experiencing any jolt, or physical sensation when the train began to move.

As early as 1859, complaints against the EIRC's practice of packing third class carriages became so frequent as to prompt the Lieutenant Governor of Bengal to ask the company to redress the matter. The ensuing investigation revealed a width of 15 ½ inch was allowed as 'sitting room' per passenger, and the company admitted that the space was 'certainly much too scanty for passenger of any class.' The Government increased it to 20 inches per person, and the number of passengers was fixed at five per bench. These measures did little to alleviate the sufferings of passengers because lower class carriages were filled to maximise revenue. Station masters and the railway police would push the waiting passengers in third class carriages.

Office and officers

Earlier, EIR office was at no.29, Theatre Road and not at Fairlee place which was the headquarter of another trading house. The office was shifted to East Indian Railway House, Writer's buildings, Dulhousie square in 1867.

Chief Engineer's office was at 9, Russel Street and George Turnbull was the Chief Engineer of Bengal. Principal contractors were Burn & Co. F.B,Norris and Co.,and Hunt and Emsley.

Kuruhurbalee colliery was also run by EIR and H.Mabert was the colliery superintendent.

D.M.Roche was Traffic Manager at Howrah during 1856,.C. Batchelor became later head of traffic department during 1861 and traffic head quarter was shifted to Jamaplur.

Locomotive, Carraige and Steam boat Department was also earlier based at Howrah headed by Chief Superintendent C.Lingard Stokes and assisted by Assistant Locomotive Superintendent P.D.Nicol and Assistant Carriage Superintendent R.W. Pearce. Eight steam boats of EIR stationed at Howrah, Calcutta, Monghyr, Kasheejee,etc were headed by Commanders.

The entire stretch between Burdwan and Raneegunge, which falls within territorial boundary of present Asansol division, had only two stations Mankoor and Panaghur and it continued till 1861. B.Mookerjee was first station manager Mancoor, later on Huroonauth Chatterjee was posted as Station Master Mankoor.

Nobinchunder Mookerjee was first station Master Paneghur, later on Nubichunder Mullick became Station Master of Panaghur .

R.E.Telford was first station master Raneegunge , subsequently A. Willis took over as station master at Raneegunge. Only people of European descent or Eurasians were posted in major stations or stations having higher revenue earnings potential.

Between 1861 to 1867 , four more stations(Asansole, Sitarampore, Burrakur and undall) were opened in Asaansole area.

Heerumbo C. Mookherjee was first station master Undall; OkhoyCoomarSircar was first Station Master Asansole, Sitarampore was manned by Station Master RamnarayanGhoshe, and Gunno-putty Gangly was first station master at Burrakur.

There was change of guard at Paneeghurh ,where new station master was GreesChunder Roy. A. Morrison also became new station master at Ranneegunge.

A locomotive workshop was constructed at Raneegunge to maintain and overhaul steam locomotives. T.Sankey was first foreman of running engines at Locomotive workshop at Raneegunge, subsequently Foremen E.Brotherhood took charge from him. Other steam loco workshops in EIR were at Howrah, Burdwan, Rampore Haut and Rajmahal.

R.M.Young was Foremen of Raneegunge loco workshop in 1867and it had, one inspector, 11 drivers , one shunter, two shuntmen and 16 firemen in its roll.

H.D.Shouldham was posted as train examiner at Panneghur and F. Fisher was posted as train examiner at Raneegunge. Out of 20 train examiners of EIR, none were native. Similarly all posts of foremen were reserved for Europeans only.

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