

CHAPTER - I

DISTINCTIVENESS AND EVOLUTION

(I) SPATIAL DIMENSIONS OF 'BLR'

(II) STAGES IN DEVELOPMENT,

AND

(III) GEOGRAPHIC RELATIONSHIPS.

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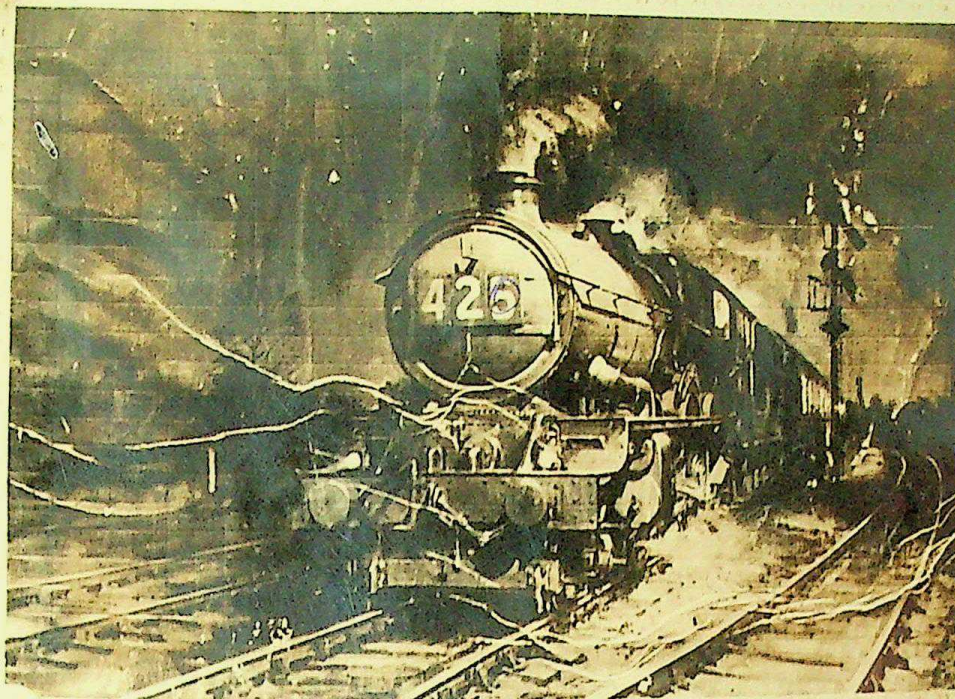
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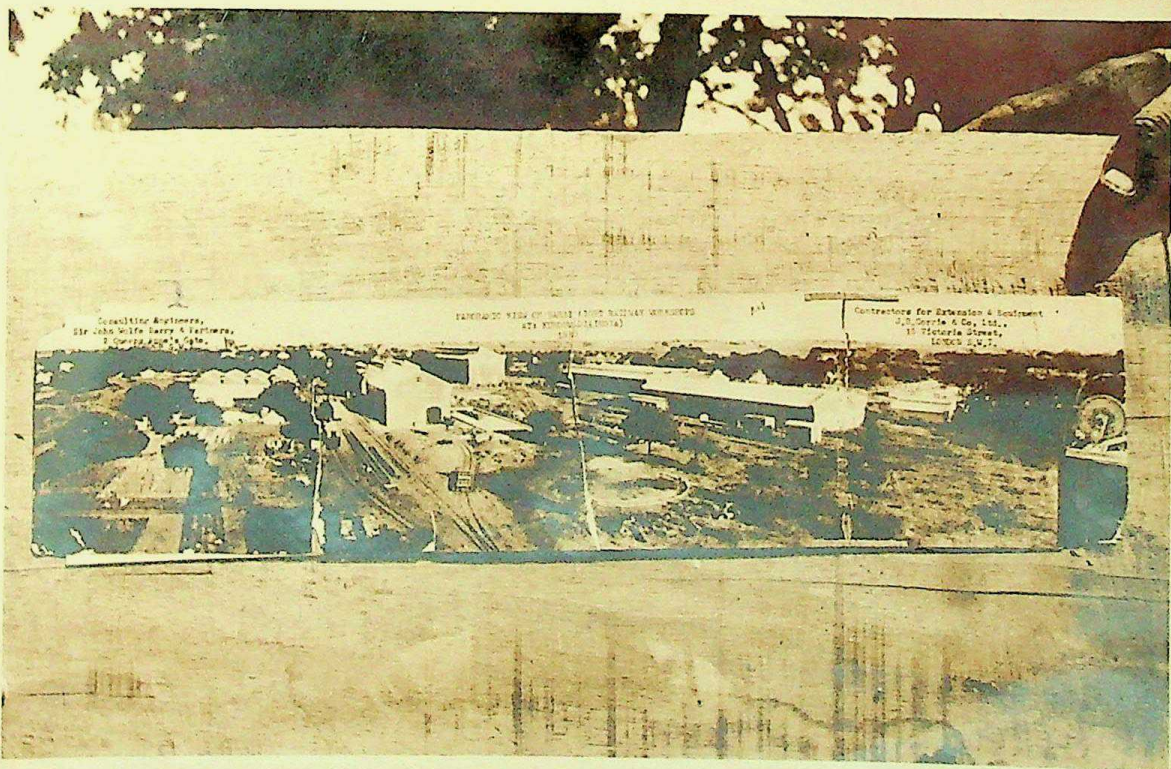
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" CENTRAL RAILWAY : BARSI LIGHT RAILWAY SECTION, 'G' CLASS,
4-6-0 RAILWAY ENGINE NO.425 AT KURUMAJI.



A PANORAMIC VIEW OF KURUMAJI WORKSHOP, (1930)

S P A T I A L D I M E N S I O N S

Both Systematic and Regional Geography as well as Theoretical Geography search, find and build their premises on the spatial dimensions. These may be studied as they are , or , may be even transformed in terms of "New Geography" as point and line patterns. Nevertheless they remain frameworks for measuring distances and areas. Above all, they present a stage upon which processes evolve and develop patterns. These points and lines are spoken as sub-systems, systems and hierarchies. In fact, their nature and character, magnitude and intensity provides raw material to sub-fields in the geographic studies.

Spatial dimensions, therefore, are basic to study of Transportation Geography. French Geographers speak of it as " The Geography of Circulation ". It deals with spatial interactions, movements and connections. An important element in this study is the Railroad which caters to the bulk of passengers and goods.

It was the general dissatisfaction with existing inland facilities that led to the first proposals for railways in India. Lord Dalhousie- father and architect of the Indian Railway System wrote in his lengthy memorandum in his own handwriting on 4th July, 1850 at Chini (112 Kms North east of Sialk on the Sutlej river....)..

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"The object of that experiment is to prove not only that it is practicable to construct Railways in India as Engineering works, but that such Railways when constructed will as commercial undertakings afford a fair remunerative return on the money which has been expended in their construction; so that the public may thereby be encouraged to invest their capital in the construction of similar works in other parts of India."

Of the vast, changing and complex railway net-work of India "BLR" stands unique or a distinctive railroad in Maharashtra due to a variety of reasons. Among the reasons, three are worthy of mention.-

- 1) "BLR" was floated as a Private Business Company. Its character was altogether different from other Railway Companies operating in India under a system of Government guarantee. It was a monopoly that was jealously guarded & preserved. It was designated as a Class-II Railway. *
- 2) The Railway lay-out took its birth from an unimportant Railway Junction-Kurduwadi. From here, it went to Barol Town. Hence "BLR", at first was known as "Barol Town Railway". It consisted of two sections, namely, Latur-Dhoki & section and Dhoki-Niraj Section.†

* Class-II includes Railways having gross earnings exceeding Rs.10 lakhs and less than Rs.50 lakhs in a year.

† It was a part of Nizam's Dominion. The company was paying a special royalty and rent to His Highness The Nizam.

+ It was a part of the Indian Union.

Table No.I gives the particulars of the different Sections and the dates on which they were opened for traffic.

TABLE - I

Section of the Railway	Date of Opening	Mns.	Total	Grand Total
<u>A.*</u>				
1. Kurduwadi to Barsi Town	1-3-1897	34.74	34.74	-
2. Extension in British Territory Barsi Town to Kuslamb.	15-6-1905	10.20.	42.97	-
3. Kuslamb to Tadualo ? (Kalan Road)	1-5-1906	32.77		
4. Tadualo to Hyderabad Frontier.	1-5-1911	1.61	1.61	-
5. Extension to Nizam's Territory Hyderabad Frontier to Latur.	1-5-1911	57.73	57.33	137.05
<u>B.</u>				
1. Kurduwadi to a point 1.78 miles from Pandharpur town	2-12-1906	49.42		
2. A point 1.78 miles from Pandharpur town to Pandharpur town.	16-7-1915	2.86	52.28	
3. Pandharpur to Nijraj	3-11-1927	136.67	136.67	188.95
		326.00		326.00
			326.00	
A started and completed earlier. 26 years + 27 years.				

3) "BLR" is a single-line railroad connecting a set of 44 geographic locations i.e. stations & differing in size & functions. These Railway Stations lie at unequal distances from each other; average distance being 6.7 Kms. Table II & Table III has classified these from the operational and from the commercial criteria.

TABLE - I I
(ACCORDING OPERATIONAL CRITERIA.)

A.	B	C	D	Special
	*1. Latur	14. Laul	1. Narangal	1. Ranling.
	2. Ausa Rd.	15. Madnin	2. Naoli	13. Arag
	3. Paisap	16. Ashti	3. Murad	14. Bodager
	4. Dhoki	17. Babulgaon	4. Thair	15. Solwad.
	5. Kallan Rd.	*18. Pandharpur	5. Chink Hill	
	6. Vedai	19. Buhali	6. Padasal	Adhib
• None.	*7. Pangri	20. Masud	7. Damani	(Opened at
	8. Kuslamb	20a. Sangola.	8. Javale	fair time
	9. Baroi Town	21. Jath Rd.	9. Gulvanchi	only)
	10. Uplai	22. Dhalgaon	10. Lengarpotti	
	11. Shondri	23. Kavatha	11. Agram	
	12. Mallogaon.	Mahankal	Dhulgaon	
	*13. Kurduwadi	24. Salgare	12. Solanki	
		*25. Miraj.		

TABLE - I I I
(ACCORDING TO COMMERCIAL CRITERIA)

i.e.
MONTHLY GROSS INCOME (EARNINGS)

A class - 10 lakhs & above

B Class - 5 lakhs - 10 lakhs

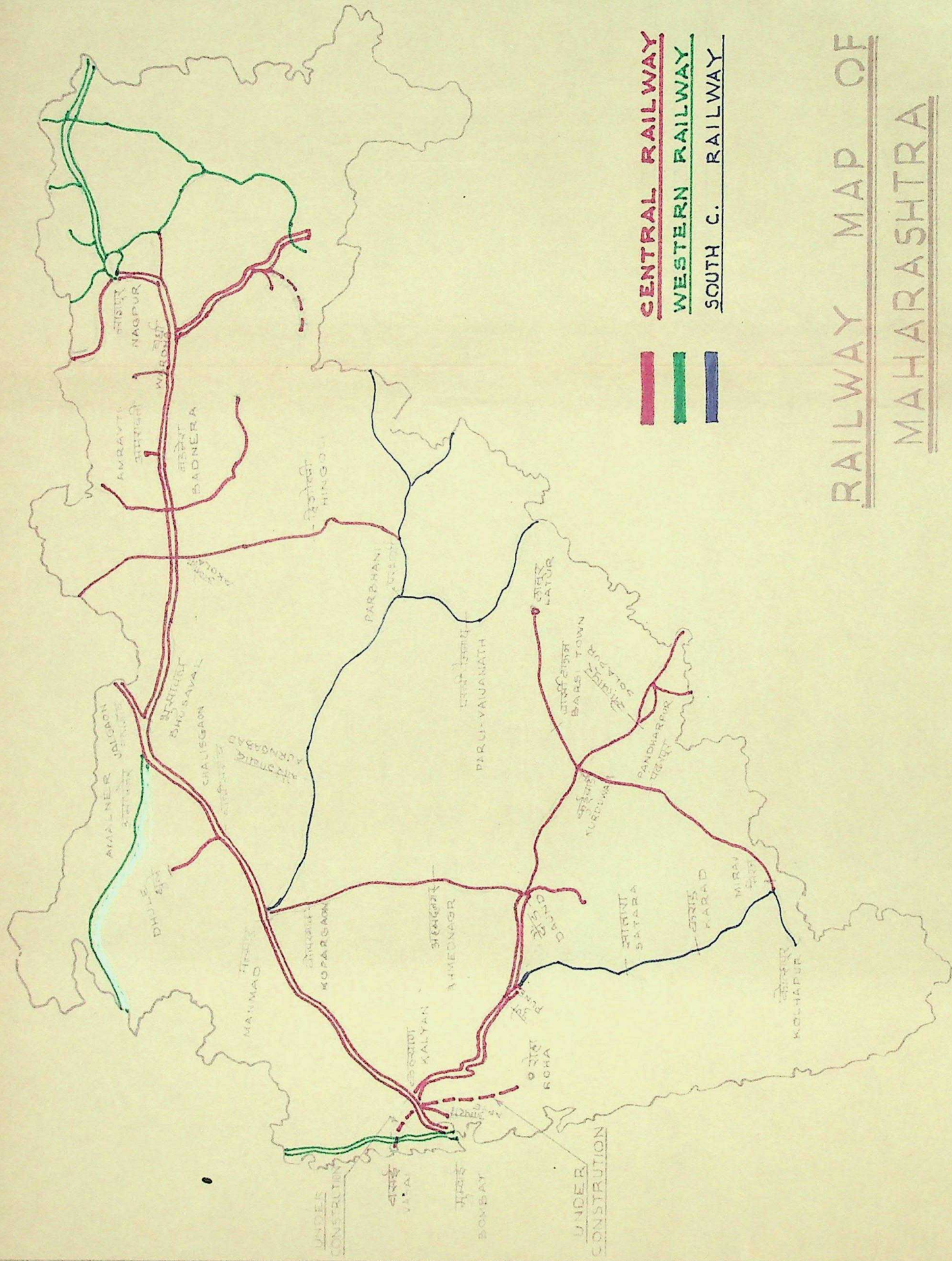
C Class - 1 lakh - 5 lakhs (Latur, Baroi Town and Pandharpur only)

D Class - All others.

* 'Station' means any place on a line of railway at which traffic is dealt with, or at which an authority to proceed is given under the system of working.

* Loco shed.

© STAGS IN CONSTRUCTION ©



It is connected with Broad Gauge Main line running from Bombay V.T. to Madras Central at Kurduvadi Junction and with Meter-gauge-Broad Gauge Railway lines through Niraaj junction connecting it with Pune, Kolhapur and Solgaum. Thus it links the people of Osmanabad, Solapur and Sangli region with other regions near and far off.

The details of its constructions, in brief, are:-

1) Permanent-way.:-The permanent-way consists of 35-lb.

flat-footed steel rails on steel sleepers.

2) Ballast.:-The line is ballasted with stone and moorum.

3) Fencing.:-The line is unfenced, except at station yards

and for a short distance on either side of

level crossings and at a few bridges.

4) Curves.:-The sharpest curve is of 425 feet radius.

5) Gradients.:-The ruling gradient is 1 to 100. There are

however, two steeper gradients on the original

line (from Kurduvadi junction to Barsi Town)-

one of 1 in 89 and one of 1 in 90; and two

on the Tadvala Extension - one of 1 in 50

and the other of 1 in 70.

Map No. 1 and 2 have been prepared to show the location of "BLR" on the Map of Maharashtra, and its lay-out indicating relative position of stations thereupon.

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" STAGES IN DEVELOPMENT "

Although the past is only a key to the present and future yet its importance in understanding the contemporary scene can be hardly minimised. In brief, it demands analysis of decisions and the decision-makers. A search or exploration into these make the field of study vast and vaster. Hence the resultant in-depth studies become unique and distinctive in their values.

Of the decisions and the decision-makers, the decision-makers are more significant to a Human Geographer for he is sometimes slave of nature and at other time a master. He has a choice, but his decisions very much depend on his information field, preferences and motivations. Most often, he is conditioned by the traditions to which he is a heir. It is here that one may find "chaos in an order" or "Unity in diversity"^{si} Hartshorne says it as "Areal differentiation" whereas E.L. Ullman puts it as "Spatial interactions".

On my part, I have started from a self-evident fact "BLR", and my approach to understand her has been, to a large extent, rational and scientific. On sorting out the stray available material, I propose to arrange its development into three stages, namely, (i) innovation and diffusion of narrow gauge idea, (ii) origin and development of 'BLR' and (iii) merger with the Indian Railways.

1) INNOVATION AND DIFFUSION OF NARROW GAUGE IDEA.

Although the 'Iron horses' blazed its smoky trail on 16 April, 1853 in India amidst the loud applause of "21 guns" yet this event took place 23 years after the first train in the world made its successful run in England. In fact, these railways were the seeds of revolutions socio-economic as well as politico-administrative. This "Cultural Shock" was primarily a result of following interactions in India:-

- (i) Slow and unreliable delivery of mails from England, more especially, to Madras and Calcutta.
- (ii) Railway mania at 1845 in England.
- (iii) Protective, commercial and strategic purposes.
- (iv) General dissatisfaction with inland transport facilities in India, and
- (v) Appointment of Marquis of Dalhousie as Governor General of India in 1848, who is well known as the father and architect of Indian Railway System.

The Railways were built by Private Companies in India under the unique framework of three authorities:-

- (i) East India Company,
- (ii) British Parliament, and
- (iii) The Government of India.

Thus the railways have different dates of inauguration and distinctive phases in their management set-up. During this particular period, came about the "battle of gauges" leading to huge fabulous profits.

This battle was a problem for few but an opportunity of many. Historically speaking it was initiated by Mr. F. W. Simmons-Consulting Engineer to the Government of India. He argued for acceptance of 5 feet 6 inches gauge for the trunk lines of India.

The introduction of Metergauge emanated from the policy of Sir John Lawrence. His argument was that India was a poor country & economic is one of the most important consideration to be considered. The Railway could now penetrate into modestly populated & economically backward areas.

The occurrence of Great Durga Devi famine in Sangli-Solepur and Dahanabad districts of Maharashtra demonstrated the need--- absolute necessity of constructing cheap lines of transport which did not justify large outlays of capital and could be constructed rapidly. "Duke of Argyll- the Secretary of State advocated that the gauge should not only be narrow but the narrowest compatible with convenience of transport with reasonable speed, economy and safety of working. Perhaps, he was associated with or influenced by Robert M. Fairlie-an Engineer in England. He had a commercial motive i.e. selling of his rolling stock in narrow gauge. Being a well-known Railway propagandist, he successfully raised a slogan "More Miles for Less money ". Being clever, he captured the support of London Times. He also wrote a book "Railways or no Railways" which he dedicated to His Grace the Duke of Southerland. It may be suggested

that the pursuit of this particular aspect can be of vital importance in the historical geography of Railways! This innovator accomplished a double success- (i) Innovation (ii) diffusion of his ideas to private & individuals & public organisations. The study also leads us to more points in this regard. These are - 1) the principles in laying the permanent way or track were never acted upon consistently, and 2) The principles laid down in India varied from time to time as well as from place to place.

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(2) ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT OF 'BLR'

The available records tell us that 'BLR' was sanctioned as a "Steam Railway Project" in 1892 but was registered, on 'July 1895'. What happened during this time span of 3 years, is neither known to me nor perhaps to anyone in India. But no one can deny that it was a cent-percent British Company. History of Indian Railways corrected upto 1945 mentions the address of the company as under:-

Chairman:-Sir Ernest A.S.Bell, C.I.E.

Secretaries:-W.A.BROWNE & CO.

Offices:-307 Winchester House, Old Broad Street,
London, E.C.2.

Date of registration of the Company.-11th July 1895.

The promoters were in England & their enterprise was located in the drought prone area of Maharashtra. They work through a series of contracts & agreements, like:-

- 1) Contract, dated the 1st August 1895.
- 2) Contract, dated the 26th August 1902.

- 3) Contract, dated 28th May 1903.
- 4) Contract, dated 4th December 1905
- 5) Contract, dated 31st March 1909
- 6) Agreement, dated 21st April 1909.
- 7) Agreement, dated the 4th March 1909
- 8) Contract, dated 7th October 1913
- 9) Contract dated the 24th February 1914
- 10) Contract, dated 8 th August 1916
- 11) Contract, dated 19th September 1917
- 12) Contract, dated 16th October 1917
- 13) Contract, dated 24th May 1921
- 14) Contract, dated 2nd July 1924
- 15) Contract, dated 8th December 1932.

Main provisions of contracts and agreements are as below:-

- 1) Land:- In the case of the main line the Company are allowed the use of part of the road between Barsi Town and Kurduvadi Junction station, any land required outside the road being acquired at the expense of the Company. For the extensions, land in British territory has been provided by the British Government, that in the Hyderabad State by the Government of His Exalted Highness the Nizam, free of cost to the Company.
- 2) Government aid:- Nil.
- 3) Distribution of profits:- The whole to go to the Company.
- 4) Rates and fares:- (a) Are such as are within the maximum and minimum fixed by the Secretary of state who shall prescribe the classification and description; (b) Secretary of State shall give not less than 3 months' notice in writing prior to any change being made in the rates, except

in the case of a public emergency, when shorter notice may be given; (c) no rebate or reduction shall be granted by the Company which will have the effect of bringing the rate actually paid below the minimum without the sanction of the Secretary of State; and (d) postage charges abolished from 1st October 1923.

5) Special obligations as to the conveyance of-

(a) Mails, troops, police, high Government officials and Government stores.--

(b) Government bullion and coin, and the persons in charge thereof.--

6) Power of the Government to determine contract.:-

The Government may, on giving to the Company in England not less than 12 calendar months' notice in writing, purchase the undertaking of the Company on the 1st January 1949 or on the 1st January 1954 or at the expiration of any subsequent of ten years.

7) Power of the Company to surrender contract:- Nil

8) Term of contract (if not determined under (vi)).- Not specified.

All the officers of the Company were of British Origin. They chose to stay at Chink-Hill. The selection of this place was determined on account of its favourable climate and easy access to their operational area. The administration was vested in India to the Agent and General Manager who have been all British except the last one Shri J.D.Shete. He has chosen to spend his remaining life in Pune- the cultural capital of Maharashtra. The Company made astonishing gains and earned fabulous profits

during this period. It may be named as the Golden Period of the Company.

(3) MERGER WITH SOLAPUR DIVISION.

'BLR' continued working independently upto 31st December 1953 albeit the fact that the contract between the 'Barsi Light Railway' and 'The Government of India Railway Board' actually ended on 1-1-1949. Curiously enough her direct management and control was taken up on 1-1-54. Thereafter the whole Section became a part of the Solapur Division which came under the Central Railway from 2nd October 1977. But this loss of identity neither raised any controversy nor became an issue for consideration. On the other hand, it has opened three different problems or situations for consideration, reflection & decision. These are/were -

- i) The company received Rs.2 Crores as take over money from the Government of India. Their balance sheet at that time showed that they have with them an undistributed profits of Rs.72 lakhs. The Barsi Light Railwaymen very much felt about these top handsome gains to the Company.
- ii) The Barsi Light Railwaymen had long-standing disputes with the Company, more especially, regarding service conditions etc. These remained unsettled. Their dispute came, therefore, to the legacy of the Government of India.
- iii) Conversion of its narrow gauge to Broad gauge so that there is an interrupted flow of people and goods to and from the region.

" GEOGRAPHIC CONTROLS "

"There were difficulties from end to end; from high and steep mountains; from snows; from deserts where there was a scarcity of water, and from gorges and flats where there was an excess; difficulties from cold and heat; from a scarcity of timber and from obstructions of rock; difficulties in keeping a large force on a long line; from Indians; and from want of labour." Many of these conditions were due to the geographic(condition) environment. They play a vital role in the construction & maintenance of operations in Railways. But the interesting part is that the facts of geography are difficult to visualise. In a similar way the labour and work of Surveyors, Engineers and Contractors also demands a mention. Admittedly their role in the evolution and stabilisation of the rail-net is fascinating and praiseworthy. They are all the practical men who attracted labour, planned the lay-out, constructed the rail-road and commissioned operations that made the entrepreneur earn fabulous profits.

When a railway is being laid down on the map two main considerations prevail-to join important places in the shortest rail distance and to avoid undue expenditure on engineering works. The balance between these two dictates the route which is selected. For the proper comprehension of 'BLR' the author has chosen to describe following geographical controls:-

- | | |
|----------------------|-----------------|
| 1) Gradients, | 2) Curves, |
| 3) Bridges, | 4) Droughts and |
| 5) Regional poverty. | |

- : GRADIENTS :-

It was argued by great railway engineers, such as the Stephansons, that a railway should be as level as possible whereas others thought that an undulating profile would be as cheap to operate with impetus on the descents making up for increased fuel-consumption on the ascents. Nevertheless all Transport and Engineering undertakings require exact measurement of the slopes i.e. the vertical rise of the land in relation to horizontal equivalent. (V.I : H.E). This amount of steepness of slope is called Gradients. It is produced by an interaction of geological structure with the climate—past & present. The landforms thus produce are modified by man to suit his needs & requirements.

Table IV gives approximate gradient limit for Working.

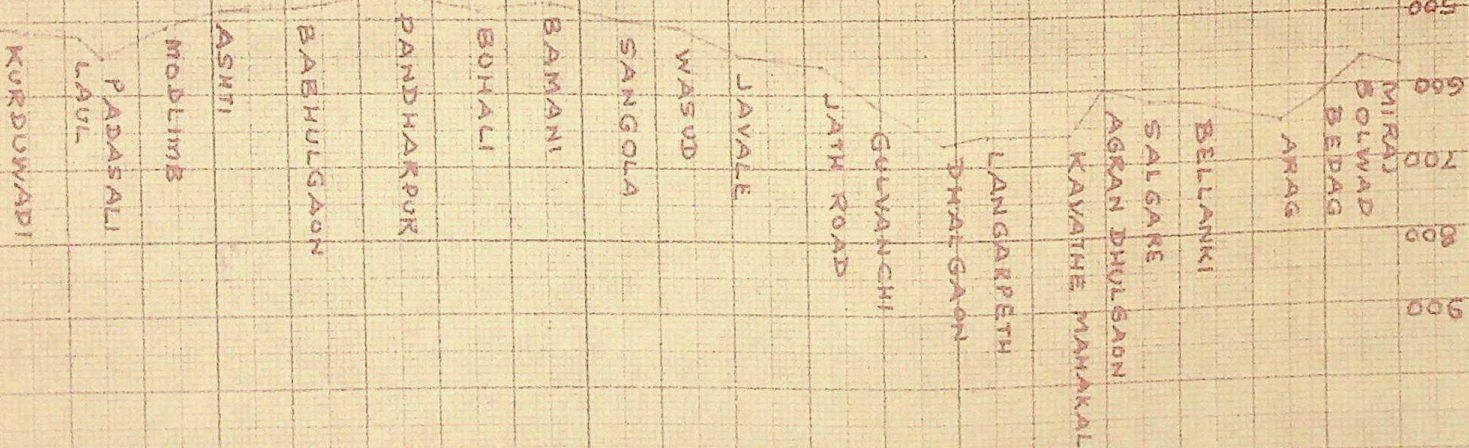
TABLE - IV

1 in $1\frac{1}{8}$	...	...	Telpher
1 in 2	...	...	Funicular-cable
1 in 8	...	...	Rack, single coach
1 in 14	...	...	Limit of adhesion working
1 in 70	...	...	Limit for express working

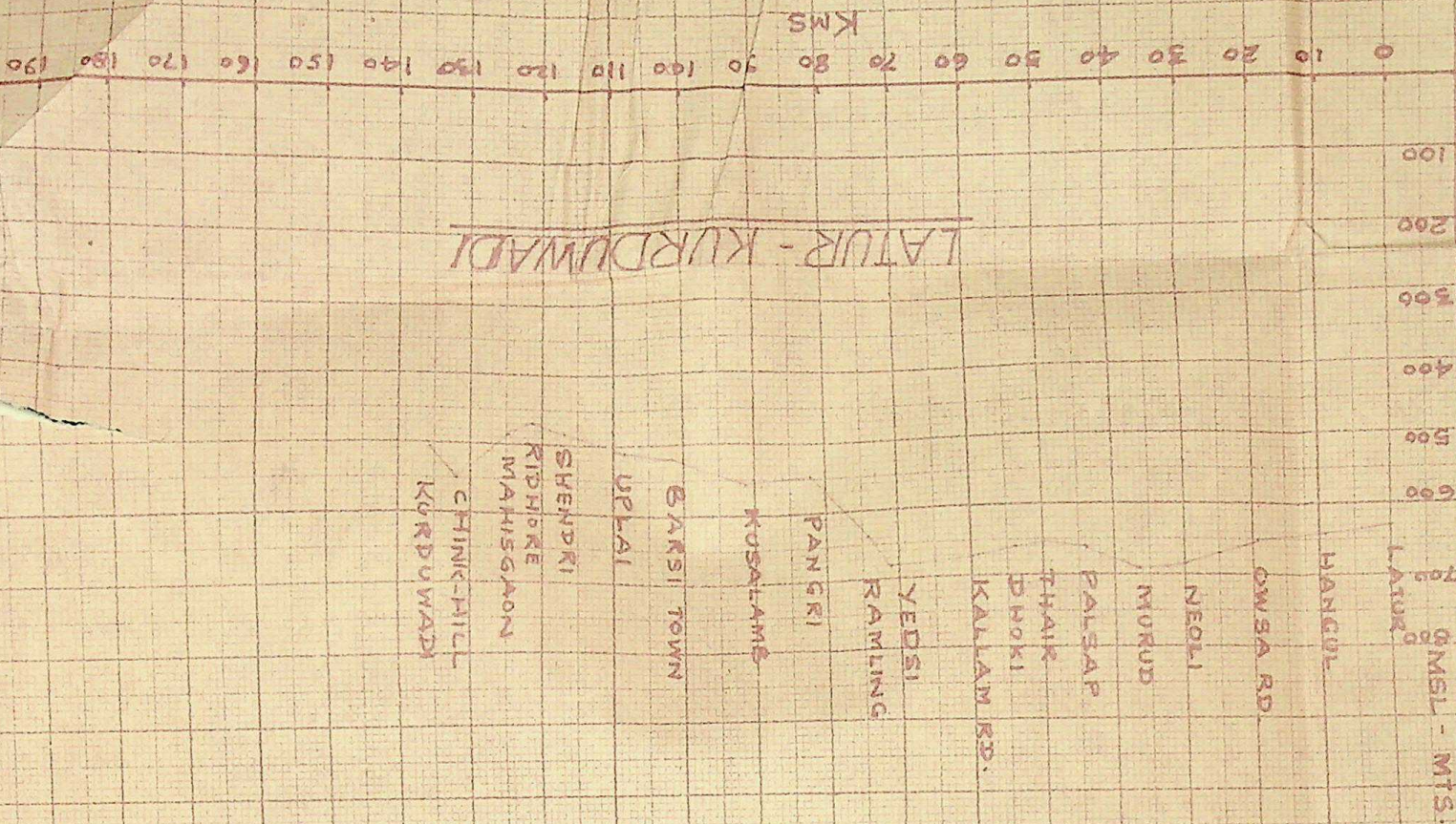
The ruling gradient both on Kurduvadi-Miraj Section as well as on Kurduvadi-Latur Section is 1:100 uncompensated in both directions; except in the case of Pangri and Ramling Section where it ranges between 1:55 to 1:60. This is on account of crossing the Ghats ~~of~~ belonging to Osmanabad plateau. It may be worthwhile suggesting that slope analysis of this area will be useful in understanding and measurement of ~~the~~

BARSI LIGHT RAILWAY - A PROFILE

MIRAJ KURDUWADI



LATUR - KURDUWADI



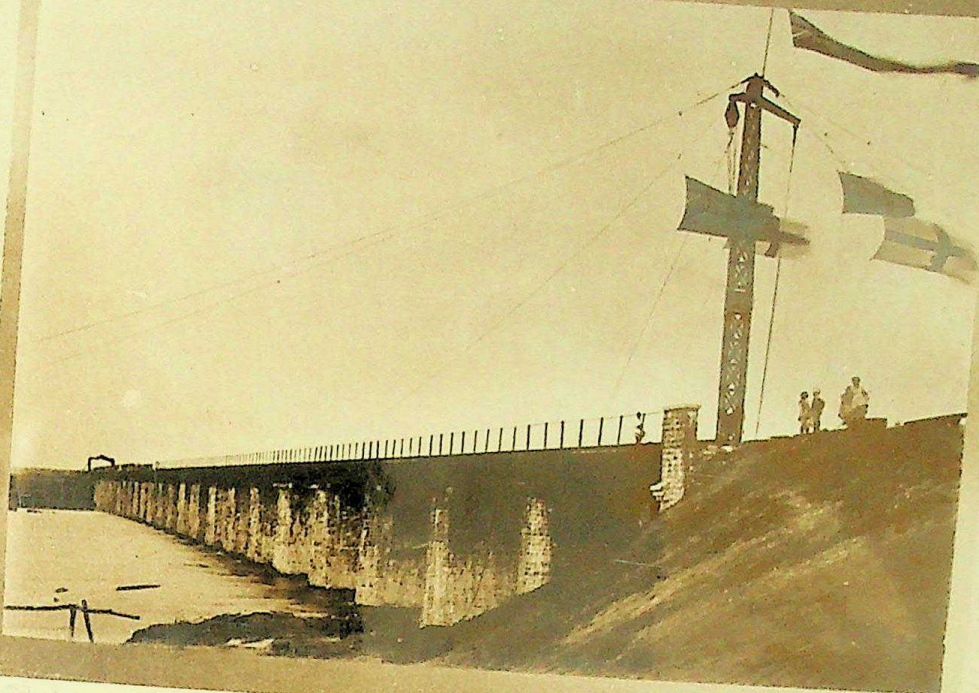
differential erosion, water budgeting and land use. But it will need survey of India's topographic maps !

Map No. 3 has been prepared by plotting distance of all the railway stations on horizontal axis and their heights above M.S.L. in metres on the vertical axis. These are taken from the Miraj-Kurduwadi-Latur Section(Narrow Gauge). Index Sections and Plans prepared by the Solapur Division. The emerging profile, among other things show :-

- 1) The track (2' 6") is laid on an undulating topography; $\frac{1}{4}$ highest and lowest railway stations being at Murud on Kurduwadi-Latur Section and Pandharpur on Kurduwadi-Miraj Section.
- 2) Pengri-Ramling and Yedshi present the steepest slope on this permanent way. It, therefore, needs a second engine for taking the train over the "Ghat" i.e. Osmanabad Plateau.
- 3) There are two major depressions on either side of the padasali station and two minor depressions at Thair and at Arag Dhulgaon.

- : C U R V E S : -

These adjustments to the physical relief are produced by morphogenesis of basaltic lava poured out in the Cretaceous period. The main advantages of these curves are:-
(i) They give flexibility to the train and (ii) they act as an indirect check on the $\frac{1}{2}$ speed of the train. Thus a journey over the 'BLR' will make believe that the entire track is formed of continuous curves. One may even say that the curves follow in quick succession. Amusingly the speed is so much reduced that it was being compared to the speed of a buffalo !



" WELLINGTON BRIDGE " ON RIVER BHIMA
(INAUGURAL CEREMONY)



A REAR END OF THE KUNDUSADI JUNCTION.

Table No. V gives length of curves and sharpness of curvature of 7 curves into which the entire track may be distributed.

TABLE - V

SECTION	LENGTH	SHARPEST CURVATURE.
1) Miraj-Gulvanchi.	71.14 Kms.	8°
2) Gulvanchi-Jath Rd.	8.63 Kms.	10°
3) Jath Rd.- Sangola.	37.32 Kms.	6°
4) Sangola-Kurduwadi	82.10 Kms.	6°
5) Kurduwadi-Pongri	53.88 Kms.	12° 75°
6) <u>Pongri-Ranling.</u> (Ghat Section).	8.72 Kms.	13° 50°
7) Ranling-Latur.	74.12 Kms.	6°
Total:-	335.91 Kms.	

- : BRIDGES : -

Bridge building is no easy job. It demands a sound knowledge of various disciplines like regional geomorphology, characteristics of Climate & behaviour pattern of the people. Similarly one ought to know (i) the character of sub-soil under river beds, (ii) materials used in bridge building as well as (iii) the methods employed in bridge building.

Besides building many culverts, viaducts and bridges the most significant challenge in this region was posed by River Bhima, on the banks of which lie the Kashi of Maharashtra-Pandharpur. It is known after "Lord Wellington" the Governor of Bombay Presidency, as "Wellington Bridge". It is a masterpiece of engineering skill and expertise. It has been built by Seth Malchand Hirachand - a pioneer in the industrial development of India. River Bhima would now be crossed without any interruption whatsoever. It established the bonds of regional unity in the cultural life of Maharashtra. Some of the salient features of this bridge are as under:-

- (i) The bridge is a pair of curved, elliptical iron tubes from which the floor is suspended;
- (ii) The highest/most severe floor hardly comes 2-3 feet near it;
- (iii) It can even withstand the weight of a standard locomotive engine.

It may be mentioned that its construction involved many difficulties like (i) sinking of cylinders into her sandy bed for the bed is prone to shrink during dry period and expand during flood beyond her normal banks. Once this was done the trains could be carried now above waters throughout the year.

- : D R O U G H T S : -

Climatically the region comprising these three districts of Southern Maharashtra-Sangli, Solapur and Osmanabad have a long history of droughts. They come.

Nobody knows when, how, why and how long they remain !
Droughts are identified as situations when water losses due to evapotranspiration ~~at~~ exceed the effective rainfall. Blair rightly expressed it as a "relative condition".

Ordinarily speaking it is due to the vagaries of rainfall brought by the Monsoon winds. The rainfall is uncertain and precarious both spatially and temporally. We require, in fact, more parameters to predict their arrival and departure as well as their intensity and breaks. But the common man is more concerned with her effects - scarcities and famines.

This region has suffered from famine since time immemorial. Though connected and complete account of all the famines that occurred in the pre-British period of Regional history is lacking, the available evidence suggests that in the earlier times a major famine occurred once in every 3/5/7 years. In fact, this railway came to the region after occurrence of "the Great Durga Devi famine in Southern Maharashtra". Therefore 'BLR' may be designated as a famine-relief project.

- REGIONAL POVERTY -

The three districts joined by 'BLR' have developed into a sub-system. Hence one may unhesitatingly designate it as a sub-region of Maharashtra. Geographically it is delimited by $16^{\circ}45'N$ and $18^{\circ}35'N$ and $74^{\circ}30'E$ and $77^{\circ}0'E$. The basaltic outflows of lava during the Cretaceous period gave it a geologic stability. Morphogenesis of the region by climatic elements viz. rain, temperature and wind have produced

undulating topography with semiarid appearance. The cropping pattern, therefore, is poor.

Regional poverty is both an absolute and a relative concept. Relative poverty is known to exist even in affluent societies, for example, in the USA. The greater the inequality in level of living, the greater is the incidence of relative poverty. We are, however, concerned with the elimination of poverty in the absolute sense, defined in objective ways in terms of a minimum necessary level of consumption. Broadly speaking its two cheap characteristics are (i) the social basket has neither very much changed in type nor in degree and (ii) unemployment and underemployment are found in the sub-region. Table No.VI gives some of the salient features of the regional picture as below:-

TABLE - VI
(Indicators of Poverty)

	Sangli	Solapur	Dahanu	Maharashtra
I. Area in Km ²	8,572	15,017	14,210	307,690
II. Density of Population/ /Kms.	213	174	157	204
III. % of population to total Urban Population.	34.9 18.53	27.36	12.49	31.7
IV. % of workers to total Population.	34.0	37.72	38.73	38.71
V. Index of Development	93	99	49	130
VI. Children with second/Third degree malnutrition.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.