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CHAPTER NO. IV

A
CASE
FOR
CONVERSION TO BROAD GAUGE

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The case for your perusal and consideration may be very simply stated: the case for conversion of 'BLR' to Broad gauge has been and continues to be neglected to the injury of Solapur-Sangli-Damanabad Sub-region of Maharashtra State in general, and the Railways of India in particular. Hence a serious and sustained attempt is needed to take this decision of conversion firmly and implement the same expeditiously.

The arguments in favour of the case are :-

(i) It is not the gauge which causes difficulty but the meeting of gauges which results in troubles.

This "interruption" or "break" is experienced at terminals viz. Kurduwadi, Miraj and Latur. But once converted, it will ensure an uninterrupted flow of traffic inside Maharashtra State.

(ii) The delay in conversion has made it a focus of attention and involvement. Moreover there is a possibility, that irritating public may make it a "people's movement". The factors that add fuel to the fire are :-

(i) discomforts faced by the passengers, more especially, pilgrims during the fair periods viz.: being carried or brought in Pilgrim Thirds which neither have fans nor lavatories.

Sometimes the condition of travel is equated with that of slaves and serfs.

(ii) The speed <sup>likened to</sup> and class & buffaloes ~~is~~ is slow.

The benches are narrow. The people travel short and medium distances. It is on account of relative isolation. It has a limited accessibility, it

poor.

(III) The Railway Board had sanctioned Engineering cum Traffic Survey for conversion of Miraj Latur to Broad Gauge and an extension of Broad Gauge from Latur to Latur Road in the Vaikharebad-Parli-Vaijnath Section vide their letter No.B/W4/COML/SC/3 dated 6/4/73. The project report\* and abstract estimated have been submitted.

(iv) Evidences have been piled up to affirm that Socio-economic as well as politico-administrative development follows rather than precedes transport. Undoubtedly it has a positive effect. The conversion will be an innovation whose spatial diffusion will influence many Social, economic and political forces.

(v) 'BLR' had been a remunerative enterprise. It was earning profits but is running into loss.† Primarily it may be attributed to lack of "technical change" with the changes that have occurred in the modern period. These may be mentioned as :-

- 1) the extension of agriculture on account of irrigation projects-major, minor, medium.

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\* A preliminary Engineering-cum-location Survey has been conducted by the Central Railways in 1956-57 for conversion of Kurduwadi-Miraj Section.

† It is due to high operating cost & inflation.

- ii) the development of industries ,
- iii) the growth of services
- iv) the improvement in educational achievements  
and
- v) adoption of democratic institutions.

(vi) A wise policy of "Co-ordination through competition" will save losses that are likely to occur with further delays. Time has come when all policies have to be adjusted to national goals. This will, therefore, close conflicts among the decision-makers. The regional resources appearing scarce will expand and diversify. Spatial changes will occur and develop as an integral part of a system which the Indian Railways are. It is here that its dual personality as a Commercial enterprise and public utility service will happily blend !

(vii) Lastly it will be a positive step forward, progressive elimination of narrow and meter gauges from the diverse railway net of India.

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