

## INTRODUCTION

আরবার সেই শূন্যতলে

আসিয়াছে দলে দলে

লৌহবাঁধা পথে

অনলনিশ্বাসী রথে

প্রবল ইংরেজ,

বিকীর্ণ করেছে তার তেজা

----- *রবীন্দ্রনাথ ঠাকুর*

In that void again

Came the mighty English in groups

With iron-framed path

In the chariot breathing fire

The mighty English

Radiated their power.

(Translation Mine)

Transportation has performed a crucial role in human civilization from time immemorial. A good network of roads leads to prosperity and well being of the state and its people. In pre-railway Bengal, boats and palanquins were the primary modes of travel and transport. As roads were constructed, pack bullocks were used for carrying goods; whereas vehicles like *Gorur gaadi* and *Ekka gaadi* gained popularity for the purpose of travel. These conveyances have been vividly depicted in Bengal's literary traditions. Rabindranath Tagore's poem "Haat" illustrates bullock carts as carriers of goods: "*Kumor Parar Gorur Gari/ Bojhai Kora kolshi hadi*"<sup>1</sup> (Bullock cart of Kumor para/ is loaded with potteries). Similarly, Sunirmal Basu's "*Gorur Gaadir Gaan*" portrays bullock carts with slow pace and the animals' physical strain: "*Oi choleche gorur gaadi mather pashe/ Kather chakay kyachor shabdo ashe..Shirno-roga shranto kator balad duti/ marer chote urdhha mukhe palay chuti*"<sup>2</sup> (The bullock carts run by the side of the field/ making a screeching sound/... .the two weak, feeble, tired bullocks/in fear of being bitten ran breathlessly). Kaliprshanna Singh, in his novel "*Hutum Penchar Naksha*," vividly describes overloaded bullock carts unable to move: "*Shalar goru cholena*"<sup>3</sup> (the damn bullock won't move!). Sangbad Bhaskar newspaper also highlighted the scarcity of traditional transports like bullock carts.<sup>4</sup> These literary representations depict the transportation challenges faced by Bengalis in the pre-colonial era. In the late eighteenth century, a few horse carts ploughed the stress of Calcutta, but by the 1820s, it witnessed a plethora of local and foreign hired horse carts being used for business and trading.<sup>5</sup> The portraiture of horse carts also has been found through Bengali rhymes - *Tokbog togbog ghodar gaadi, chutche dekho taratari./ khoka jabe swashur bari, songe niye mishtir hadi* (With making 'tokbok tokbok' sound/ look at- the cart is running fast/ the little boy will go to his father-in-law's house/ with a sweet-pot).<sup>6</sup> The British on their arrival in Bengal availed the above means of transport, but they organised and regulated the system of carts under municipal administration. A procedure of registration and taxation of public carts (Tikka gaadi) was implemented.<sup>7</sup> The next

<sup>1</sup> Tagore, R. (1930). 'Haat', *Sahaj Path*. Kolkata: Visva Bharati Granthan Bibhag, pp. 9-10

<sup>2</sup> Basu, S. (1927). 'Gorur Gaadir Gaan', *Sunirmal Basur Shreshtha Kabita*. Kolkata: Mitra & Ghosh, pp. 34-35

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> *Sangbad Bhaskar*, June 26, 1849

<sup>5</sup> Samanta, S. (2012). *Cruelty Contested: The British, Bengalis and Animals in Colonial Bengal, 1850-1920*. Ph.D. thesis, Florida State University, pp. 156-58

<sup>6</sup> Note: This is a folk rhyme but has been modified in some cases

<sup>7</sup> Ray, J. (2005). *Kalkarkhana O Karigari Bidhyar Itihas*. Kolkata: Dey's Publishing, p.30; Municipal Department, Municipal Branch, Proceeding No., B 127 to 129, File M 12/A19, Oct 1905. West Bengal State Archives, Kolkata

important phase in the transport history of Bengal was the introduction of railways, which revolutionised the economy and society in unimaginable ways. This transformation has been captured in multiple genres of Bengali literature.

The socio-cultural dynamics related to travel altered considerably with the arrival of the British on the political scene of Bengal. The transformations were accelerated with the establishment of railways. The first railway line was opened to the public in Bengal on 14th August, 1854 and by the end of the nineteenth century, Bengal was interwoven into an intricate network of railway lines that influenced and modified the region's economy; transforming its sociocultural patterns and disturbing the ecological balance. (Details regarding the construction of railways in Bengal have been provided in Appendix)

The theme of the present thesis is 'Representation of Railways' through 'Literary Traditions of Bengal'. The term 'tradition' has different meanings and connotations. For the purposes of this thesis, it is to mean beliefs of the past which were both passed by word of mouth or were written down and offered symbolic cultural unity in societal attitudes of the Bengal region. The word 'literary' indicates literature pertaining to railways in the form of both fictional and non-fictional writings of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. It includes newspaper articles, government reports, poems, rhymes, novels, folklore of various regions of Bengal. The term 'representation' in the thesis is to mean literary representation' which marks the process of presenting many aspects of a literary work, such as themes, ideas, characters, and places. It entails expressing a certain facet of the world or the human experience via language and narrative devices.

Joseph Carroll in his article, '*The Deep Structure of literary Representations*' stated that in literature, themes of individual agency and successful representation are strongly associated with social interactions as well as cognitive processes. According to him, literature has always been the main source of insightful knowledge about human nature.<sup>8</sup> However, the topic of how accurate a literary portrayal is in terms of empirical information, especially when used as a historical source, is one that comes up frequently. Michael O'Corner's book '*Cultural History: Theory and History*'

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<sup>8</sup> Carroll, J. (1999). The Deep Structure of Literary Structure. *Evolution and Human Behaviour*, May 1999, pp.103-116

further explains that the value of literary representations lies not in their being "true," but rather in the way they provide creative viewpoints, unique personal perceptions of life, and new ways of perceiving.<sup>9</sup> According to Anna Green, it is best to understand historical data and the historian's own narrative of the past as representations rather than reconstructions of reality.<sup>10</sup> Both memory and lived experiences, as significant forms of representation, share an intimate relationship with the capacity to transform the present and the future.<sup>11</sup> According to Ian J. Kerr, representations entice the reader or viewer to enhance their reading, resulting in a variety of disintegrated understandings. A focus on representation, however, opens the door to the identification of a plausible albeit evolving main narrative- the presence of interesting and multiple subordinate narratives. His work especially becomes relevant for understanding the term representation in the context of railways.<sup>12</sup>

The portrayal of railways through the literary traditions of colonial Bengal is multifaceted, offering profound insights into the cultural, social, and historical dynamics of the era. The literature/s used in this thesis has served as a cultural mirror, reflecting the values, aspirations, and anxieties of a society. The way railways are portrayed in the literary traditions of Bengal has served as a prism through which one can understand how the introduction of this technology was grasped and ingrained into the cultural fabric of colonial Bengal. In Bengali literary traditions, railways have a deeper metaphorical meaning than merely being a means of transportation. The parabolic implications ascribed to this transformational power reveal the layers of symbolism and imagery connected to railways. It is also clear that they shared a symbiotic relationship, as the development of railways had an influence on narrative structures and literary forms and changes were introduced in the railways as a result of people's responses reflected in the literary traditions at the time. Thus,

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<sup>9</sup> O' Connor, M. (1985). *Representation, Truth and Belief in Literature*. McMaster University, Hamilton, Ontario, p. 216

<sup>10</sup> Green, A. (2008). *Cultural History: Theory and History*. London: Palgrave Macmillan Pub. p. 9

<sup>11</sup> Rodrigues, Ada (...), Cultural History: A Theoretical Perspective. Retrieved from [https://www.academia.edu/33740304/Chapter\\_2\\_CULTURAL\\_HISTORY\\_A\\_THEORETICAL\\_PERSPECTIV](https://www.academia.edu/33740304/Chapter_2_CULTURAL_HISTORY_A_THEORETICAL_PERSPECTIV) dated 28.1.24

<sup>12</sup> Kerr, I. J. (2003). Representation and Representations of Railways of Colonial and Post Colonial South Asia. *Modern Asian Studies*, vol. 37(2), pp. 287-326

developing a complex picture of how this technical development influenced the literary environment of Bengal and how the literary environment of Bengal accepted the railways.

Bengal as well as India, being linguistically and culturally diverse, witnessed the impact of railways on cultural hybridity and language dynamics. The literary traditions of Bengal provide an excellent opportunity to explore how linguistic choices and cultural expressions evolved in response to changing socio-political notions.

This research aims to elucidate the many ways in which trains are portrayed as topics in literary traditions such as poetry, prose, narratives, print media, travelogues, and folklore, and how these literary forms altogether render railways. These representations will take readers to previous periods in order to comprehend the transformations brought about by railways and the extent to which those transformations contributed to the development of modern civilization.

### **Hypothesis:**

The representations of railways, as illustrated in the literary traditions of Bengal, served as a dynamic and diverse prism that reflects cultural transitions, socioeconomic transformations, and the interaction between tradition and modernity.

### **Aims and Objectives of the Study:**

The purpose of this study is to contribute to an understanding of the impacts on socio-cultural life and representations in literary traditions in Bengal during the colonial period as a result of the introduction of railways. The main objectives are:

1. To study the attitude, views, and reactions of the Bengalese towards railway transport through poetic response.
2. To know the general and diverse reaction of the society in Bengal and the process of their adaptation to a new transport system, and how it brought about socio-cultural changes in Bengal through novels, prose, and other narratives.

3. To explore the reflection of railway issues in newspapers, magazines, journals, etc. in many respects.
4. To look into travelogue to know the Bengalis reacted to long distance train travel.
5. To analyse Bengali songs, rhymes, folklore, etc. to ascertain the grass-root level societal assimilations of railways.

### **Review of Literature**

The railways, which were hailed as the engines of development, had a profound impact on colonial Bengal's sociocultural fabric. During the investigation of how trains are portrayed in literature within this historical setting, it was found that the iron rails weaving through the countryside and the steady chugging of locomotives were more than just marvels of modern technology. Rather, they evolved into potent allegories that were well-integrated within Bengal's literary body. By exploring how this revolutionary force was reflected in the writings of both Bengali and English authors, this literature study aims to reveal the complex ways in which writers of the colonial era dealt with the arrival of railways.

To explore the complex impacts of railways, a large body of literature has been delved into during the course of this study. Indian Railways have mainly been studied from the perspective of economic growth and technical development, sometimes from a historical and cultural point of view. Not much attention has been paid to the representation of the railway system in literary traditions in Bengal.

The Indian Railways: Their Historical, Economical, and Administrative Aspects' (1921) by Chandrika Prasad Tiwari is a ground breaking study on Indian railways. The documentation and analysis of Chandrika Prasad Tiwari, a retired assistant traffic superintendent of the Bombay Baroda and Central Indian Railway, sheds light on a multitude of topics, including the development of railway lines, the chronological sequence of their openings, the significance of railways, their operation and management, the salaries of state railway officials, their profit and loss, and many other related elements. His views on management, the status of state railway officers, their working circumstances, and the working conditions of Indian employees are corroborated by this research.

In this research, his views on a wide range of railway-related subjects have been incorporated as those of a railway official. However, the book does not address the goals of the present study.<sup>13</sup>

*Development of Indian Railways*, a thesis presented to the University of London, by Nalinaksha Shanyal, is a highly significant work. Later, the thesis was published as a book by the University of Calcutta in 1930. It provides a comprehensive overview of the emergence and growth of Indian railways. It covered the many demands that the railroads had to meet in the pre-industrial era as well as the ownership and management structures that allowed Indian railways to grow quickly. Critical discussion has been held regarding railway policy, issues faced by the companies, financial management, tension between the Secretary for State for India and the Government Director of Railway Company over control of the railways, policy, management, railway laws, gauge, rail traffic details, fare, etc. up until 1924–1925. It includes a discussion of Indian Railways' technical and financial viewpoints.<sup>14</sup>

*History of Indian Railway Constructed and in Progress, Corrected up to 31st March, 1937* by Indian Railway Board is an important informative book. This book is invaluable for providing precise information about the establishment and growth of railways under practically every company up to 1937. Since the book is a Railway Board publication, it may be trusted to provide information on the development of railways in Bengal, section by section, under each company.<sup>15</sup>

Socio-economic impacts of railway in Bengal have been reflected by Brajendranath Bandopadhyay in his *'Sangbadpatre Sekaler kotha'* (Contemporary Topics in Newspapers) 1949, Vol. I and II to a little extent. He analyses the changes in education, society, economy, religion, etc. brought about by the railways, along with varieties of news related to rail as represented in the colonial bilingual newspapers.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Tiwari Rai Saheb, C. P. (1921). *The Indian Railways: Their Historical, Economical and Administrative Aspects*. Ajmer: B. Mathura Prasad Shivhare, Manager, Vedic Yantralaya

<sup>14</sup> Shanyal, N. (1930). *Development of Indian Railways*. Calcutta: University of Calcutta

<sup>15</sup> *History of Indian Railway Constructed and in Progress, Corrected up to 31st March, 1937* by Indian Railway Board. Simla: The Manager, Government of India Press

<sup>16</sup> Bandopadhyay, B. (1949). *Sangbadpatre Sekaler Katha*, vol. I & II. Kolkata: Bangiya Sahitya Parishad Pustakalaya

J.N. Sahni's *Indian Railways, One Hundred Years, 1853-1953* is an important informative book describing the background of the building of railways in Bombay, Madras and Kolkata, introduction of railways in England; the opposition and prejudice faced in England, the growth of Railway networks under so many companies, history of the construction of Rail companies, building of coaches, bridges, wagons, locomotives, workshops, etc. and how the railways in India facilitated tourists and traders transporting passengers and goods respectively have been discussed in this book. How railway development helped the industrial developments in India has been narrated here. The most important feature of this book is the addition of rare collection photographs related to railways.<sup>17</sup>

Sri Bibhuti Bhushan Mukhopadhyay's (1956), '*Rail Rango*' (*Rail as an arena*) consists of six short stories describing how i) the number of passengers were increasing, different types of people travelled together ii) trains became the cultural milieu of the different societies, religion and languages iii) accident happened and woeful condition of passengers iv) psychology of different types of passengers and their inhuman humours v) the British people thought that they have right to rule over India because they gave Indians a developed transport system, and vi) people were demolishing the train lines and robbing during quit India movement.<sup>18</sup>

'*The Early History of the East Indian Railway, 1845-1879*', by Heena Mukherji, published in 1960, is a very informative book about the beginnings and development of the East Indian Railway (EIR), as well as its financial history, capital recruitment, profitability, challenges it faced, land acquisition and provision, and other topics up until 1870. Here, it has been mentioned how EIR contributed significantly to the growth of trade both overseas and in the hinterland, etc. Nevertheless, it hasn't covered socio-cultural effects.<sup>19</sup>

Jagjit Singh's '*The Story of Our Railway*' is a captivating book that explores the reasons behind the introduction of railways and their technical aspects, enhanced by numerous cartoon

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<sup>17</sup> Sahni, J. N. (1953). *Indian Railways, One Hundred Years, 1853-1953*. New Delhi: Ministry of Railway (Railway Board)

<sup>18</sup> Mukhopadhyay, B. (1956). *Rail Rango*. Kolkata: Gyan-Bharati

<sup>19</sup> Mukherjee, H. (1960). *The Early History of the East Indian Railway, 1845-1879*. Calcutta: Firma K.L.M. Pvt. Ltd.

illustrations that bring the subjects to life.<sup>20</sup> However, it does not delve into the railways of Bengal and their impacts.

Sukumar Sen, the famous Bengali linguist and historian, highlighted the chronological growth of railways in Bengal in the book, '*Reler Paa Chali*'/The Doggerel of Rail (1990). He also described how trains became a running market for various commodities and crime at the same time.<sup>21</sup>

The book '*Railway Administration and Management*' (1990) by J. M. Ovasdi thoroughly examines the administrative and technical facets of Indian Railways. However, the specific aspects discussed in this thesis are not addressed in the book.

Siddharth Ghosh's '*Koler Shahar Kolkata*' (1991) is another important work written in Bengali describing the various types of machines, such as tube wells, press machines to print money, gas lights, electric lights, printing machines, and other electric machines. Along with such types of Machines, growth and many unknown facts related to rail in Bengal have been discussed in the book.<sup>22</sup>

'*Indian Railways*' (1999) by Rao, M. A. is another one which brings out in a graphic and picturesque manner of the development of railways in India. He discussed the technical aspects of the development of Indian railways, which does not reflect the aspects the present thesis deals with.

Ramen Kumar Sar's (2006) *Unish Shatake Bangali Jeeban O sahitye Rail* is very relevant for this research. This is originally a M.Phil. thesis by Sar, later published as a book. It sheds light on the impacts of railways on Bengal as represented through selective poems, prose, and newspapers, but has not elaborated or made historical connections.<sup>23</sup>

Ian J Kerr's works on Indian Railways: i) '*Building the Railways of the Raj 1850-1900*', ii) '*27 Down: New Departures in Indian Railways Studies*', iii) '*Railways in modern India*', iv) '*The*

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<sup>20</sup> Singh, J. (1971). *The Story of Our Railways*. New Delhi: National Book Trust

<sup>21</sup> Sen, S. (1990). *Railer Paa Chali*. Kolkata: Ananda Publishers

<sup>22</sup> Ghosh, S. (1991). "Bashpiya Rath O Railway Charit", in *Koler Shahar Kolkata*. Kolkata: Ananda Publishers

<sup>23</sup> Sar, R. (2006). *Unish Shatake Bangali Jeeban O Sahitye Rail*. Kolkata: Kamalini Prakashan

railroads that Maelaborated on discusses the social, political, historical and many other aspects of railways, but discussions on Bengal are very brief.<sup>24</sup> He explained the meaning of representation as singular form and representations of railways in a plural form.<sup>25</sup>

Peter Burke's "What is Cultural History?" explores the socio-cultural changes brought about by railways. It also carries out discussions on historiography, socio-cultural history, theories on cultural history, representation and construction of history from culture, its problems, etc.<sup>26</sup>

Ritika Prasad's *'Tracks of Change, Railways and Everyday Life in Colonial India'* (2015) explores how colonial society negotiated the wide range of transformations wrought by railway technology, how millions adapted to its structural power even as they refashioned it to accommodate their own needs, and how this process shaped the history of colonial India.<sup>27</sup> Thus providing fresher insights into the socio-cultural history of railways.

Arup K. Chatterjee's *'The Purveyors of Destiny: A Cultural Biography of the Indian Railways'*, (2017), traces the 156 years of history of the Indian Railways from the perspective of how the railways influenced the cultural milieu of India through not only literature, films and songs but also catalysed revolutionary changes in the country's political and social canvas.<sup>28</sup>

Another contemporary publication titled '*Indian Railways: the weaving of a National Tapestry*' (2017), authored by Bibek Debroy, Sanjay Sahani, and Vidya Krishnamurty, explores the significant role of railways in shaping the nation. It delves into how railways facilitated the connection of historically and geographically diverse regions and communities, thereby

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<sup>24</sup> i).Kerr. I. J. (1995). *Building the Railways of the Raj 1850-1900*. Delhi: Oxford University Press; ii) Kerr. I. J. (2002). *27 Down: New Departures in Indian Railways Studies (New Perspectives in South Asian History)*. Delhi: Orient Black Swan; iii) Kerr, I. J. (2001). *Railways in Modern India'*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press; iv) '*The Railroads that Made India*'. London: Westport, Connecticut

<sup>25</sup> Kerr. I. J. (2003). "Representation and Representations of the Railways of Colonial and Post-Colonial South East Asia. *Modern Asian Studies*, 37(2)

<sup>26</sup> Burke, P. (2008). *What is Cultural History?*. (2nd edition), Cambridge: Polity

<sup>27</sup> Prasad, R. (2015). *Tracks of Change, Railways and Everyday Life in Colonial India*. New delhi: cambridge University Press

<sup>28</sup> Chatterjee, A. K. (2018). *The Purveyors of Destiny: A Cultural Biography of the Indian Railways*. New Delhi: Bloomsbury pub

revolutionising the lifestyle and mindset of Indians and ultimately contributing to the formation of a national identity. However, there is limited discussion about Bengal in this context.<sup>29</sup>

Imperial Technology and 'Native' Agency: A Social History of Railways in Colonial India, 1850–1920 (2018) by Aparajita Mukhopadhyay is an important source to draw from, when analysing railways as a catalyst for social changes in India as a whole. However, there hasn't been a detailed discussion of the complex sociocultural effects that railways had on Bengal.<sup>30</sup>

Another fascinating and informative book is '*The Railways in Colonial South Asia, Economy, Ecology and Culture*,' (2021) edited by Ganeshkar Nayek. It has several chapters that provide light on the railways of different regions in the Indian subcontinent. The following chapters from the book have provided useful insights into the effects of railways on South Asian societies, cultures, economies, and ecosystems: 'Imperial Railway in Nineteenth Century South Asia' by Laxman D. Satya; 'The Impact of Railway Expansion on Himalayan Forests' by D.D. Dangwal; 'Rails and Forests: History of Railways and Their Impact on Forest Policies of South India, 1850-1900' by V. M. Ravikumar; and 'Socio-Cultural History: Railways in Gujarati Literature and Tradition.' by Maitree Vaidya.<sup>31</sup>

Many articles have been published in prominent journals or edited books which discuss important aspects of railways. The article '*The Colonial Context Of The Bengal Renaissance: A Note On Early Railway-Thinking In Bengal*' by Dipesh Chakrabarty in '*Our Indian Railway, Themes in Indian Railway History*' edited by Roopa Srinivasan, Manish Tiwari and Sandeep Sailas, shows how railways may be attributed to usher 'renaissance' in Bengal due to the efforts of Prince Dwarkanath Tagore, Mutti Lal Seal, Ram Komul Sen and Ram Gopal Ghosh.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Debroy, B., Sahani, S., and Krishnamurti, V. (2017). *Indian Railways: the weaving of a National Tapestry*. Gurugram: Penguin Random house Pvt. Ltd

<sup>30</sup> Mukhopadhyay, A. (2018). *Imperial Technology and 'Native' Agency: A Social History of Railways in Colonial India*. London and New York: Routledge

<sup>31</sup> Nayek, G. (Ed.). (2021). *The Railways in Colonial South Asia, Economy, Ecology and Culture*. New Delhi: Manohar Publishers

<sup>32</sup> Chakrabarty, D. (1971). The Colonial Context of the Bengal Renaissance: A Note on the Early Railway Thinking in Bengal. *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress*, vol. 33

Dan Bogart and Latika Chaudhury's articles, such as '*Regulation, Ownership, and Costs: A Historical Perspective from Indian Railways*' (2010), '*Railways in Colonial India: An Economic Achievement?*' (2012), and '*The Growth Contribution of Colonial Indian Railways in Comparative Perspective*' (2015), offer valuable insights into the economic, administrative, and technical dimensions of railways during colonial India.<sup>33</sup> However, these articles do not delve into the socio-cultural perspective or economic aspects specific to Bengal.

Dr. Aruna Awasthi's article, '*Railways And Cultural History: A Study of Poetic Representations*', (IHC, 2011), is an important study of the interaction of society with railways in India through poems.<sup>34</sup> Awasthi's another significant work, '*Case Study of Railways and Deforestation in India in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*' provides an insight into the impact of railways on ecological degradation in colonial India.<sup>35</sup>

Another article that focuses on how railways were responsible for spreading communicable diseases is, '*Revisiting Health in Colonial Bengal: A Literary Overview (1880 -1930)*' by Tinni Goswami.<sup>36</sup>

### **Methodology:**

The present thesis used a qualitative method of historical research based on critical analysis of traditional primary sources such as Government reports, census, manuals, and yearbooks. Newspaper articles of the relevant period and travelogues have been critically evaluated to discern people's response to railways. Major attention has been paid to alternative historical sources such

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<sup>33</sup> Bogart, D. & Caudhury, L. (2010/2012/2015). Regulation, Ownership, and Costs: A Historical Perspective from Indian Railways. *American Economic Journal: Economic Policy*, Vol. 4, No. 1, Feb, 2012,(pp. 28-57); Railways in Colonial India: An economic Achievement? in *A New Economic History of Colonial India*, India: Routledge '*The Growth Contribution of Colonial Indian railways in Comparative Perspective*', retrieved from <https://ideas.repec.org/p/auu/hpaper/033.html> dated 23.04. 2020

<sup>34</sup> Awasthi, A. (2011). Railways and Cultural History: A Study of Poetic Representations. *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress*, Vol. 72, PART-I (2011)

<sup>35</sup> Awasthi, A. (1999). Case Study of Railways and Deforestation in India in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries. *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress*, vol. 60, pp. 572-581

<sup>36</sup> Goswami Bhattacharya, T. (2022). Revisiting Health in Colonial Bengal: A Literary Overview (1880 -1930). *Journal of Social and Development Sciences*, vol. 3(11), pp 374-377

as poems, fiction and folklore, especially to gauge the reactions of both the literate and non-literate societies of Bengal.

The thesis has been divided into following chapters:

### **Chapter-1: Poetic Response to Railways**

The chapter examines how Bengali poetry portray the interaction of railways with Bengali society. The chapter also explores the rhythmic clatter of wheels and the eerie cry of steam engines, captured in lines by the poets, which became symbols for shifting socio-economic and cultural dynamics. In addition to capturing the actual voyage, the lyrical canvas also captures the tension between tradition and modernity, and the eventual embracement of change. Hence, the poetic responses to railways attempt to explore a variety of themes, including jaw-dropping reactions to new and marvellous inventions, the poet's personal reactions, reactions of society, and revolutionary socio-cultural and economic transformations.

### **Chapter 2: Portrayal of Railways in Prose and other Bengali Narratives**

The chapter discusses the history of Railways as chronicled in Bengali narratives. It throws light on Bengali Provincial Railways; Light railways; and Tramways, etc. Significant attention has been paid to the wonderment and antagonism about railways as reflected in Bengali prose and Literature. The chapter also focuses on how the advent of railways provided scope of employment. Unfortunately, in that process the working was oppressed by the railway authorities. The chapter at the same time also deals with train travel & social transformation through Bengali Prose and Narratives. For instance, a discussion centres around how travelling in the train compartment created an atmosphere of cultural synergy and linguistic convergence. A special attention has been paid to the train travel experiences of women. Throughout the thesis, considerable attention has been paid to the concerns reflected in the literary tradition of Bengal due to railways. This chapter also looks at prose that mentions these concerns. The relationship between railways and nationalism has also been touched upon in this chapter.

### **Chapter 3: Adumbration of Railways in Print Media**

This chapter deals with the first impression of railways in print media of Bengal; It deals with reporting of accidents, hardship faced by the third class passengers; the dilemma of female travellers. Lot of attention has been paid to how the railway's employees responded to racial discrimination and other problems. The chapter also brings to light the adverse results on the economy of Bengal. Lastly, it touches upon the environmental impact as reflected in the newspapers of the time.

### **Chapter 4: Depiction of Railways in Travelogues**

The chapter concentrates on reflections of travellers through Bengali travelogues. These writings touch upon varied subjects which caught the attention of the travellers, such as technological marvels, expanding views and interactions with different cultures and practices. The chapter also focuses on how the Bengali travellers were enamoured by the new geographical landscapes. This chapter also focuses on the accounts of women travellers which reflect shifting gender equations.

### **Chapter 5: Acceptance of Railways in Folklore Tradition**

To understand the intricate level of the influence of railways, this chapter covers *Loko chodas* (folk rhymes), *dhandhans* (riddles), *Sanotali Gaan* (Tribal Song), *Sanotali Bibaheer Gaan* (tribal marriage songs), *anchalik loko sangeet* (regional folk music), and *adhyatmik Gaan* (spiritual songs). In the arena of literary representation during colonial Bengal, the acceptance and integration of railways into folkloric traditions stand as a fascinating investigation of how modernity melds with age-old cultural narratives. This investigation explores the fascinating junction where the rich tapestry of folklore and the iron rails of development meet. The investigation goes beyond the mere existence of trains; rather, it aims to comprehend how these mechanical marvels came to be ingrained in rural people's minds and reverberated over time in the local folklore and cultural memory.

## **Chapter 6: Comparative Study of Representations in Bengali and English Narratives**

This chapter delves into diverse views, attitudes, and purposes behind the introduction of railways, as well as its socio-cultural and economic impacts, as illustrated in both Bengali and English narrations. These narrations showcase that the railways emerged as a transformative force. From the evocative verses penned by Bengali poets to the prose and narratives crafted by both Bengali and English authors, the comparative analysis sheds light on the divergent yet interconnected ways in which writers grappled with the impact of railways on society, culture and economy.