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## RAIL ROAD CONSTRUCTION AS AN EMPOWERING AND COHESIVE INSTRUMENT IN FRAGMENTED FEDERALISM WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO ARUNACHAL PRADESH

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**HOWRAH**

### ABSTRACT

*The paper offers a significant thought on the introduction of Railway in Arunachal Pradesh Bordering China and Bhutan. The Central Idea is the construction of the Rail Road traffic in the High Himalayan terrain for safety security and strategic defense in the Sino- Indian Border to save our country from massive invasion of the opposite side of the Mc Mohan line as the Chinese has made-up massive preparation with a heavy Military build-up with Road and Rail traffic on the opposite side of the Sino Indian Border and can reach to this North Eastern zone of Arunachal Pradesh within a very short span of time with the help of quick communication by Rail and Road connectivity in the Border area and can capture parts of Arunachal Pradesh Corridor in order to reach to the capital port of Yaungon through Burma for their economic and commercial interest and expansion of trade in the South East Asian region which is often reflected in the Chinese policy. On the other hand, this zone of Sino Indian Border is a place where we are seriously lacking Rail connectivity which will be a great hindrance to massive Military movement in this significant strategic location that may cause national disaster and Military blood bath in the unequal battle, much more fatal than the Bomdila fall in 1962. Keeping in view, of the menacing danger we should give are serious thought on this significant national question because the security and safety of the nation is the first and foremost issue for strategic defense, survival of the people of the country and therefore construction of the Railway and massive Rail connectivity in the High Himalayan Zone no matter a gigantic up- hill task but should be given highest priority and to be completed with all Military might and war footing in this significant location which is still a neglected hamlet in the Northeast border. Secondly we also must give a serious thought on the question of 1. Armed forces special power Act 1958. 2. Forest Area Restriction Act. and 3. Tribal Area Restriction Act which are colonial legacies segregating people from the national mainstream and putting hindrance to socio economic development of region by breeding the fatal wounds up extremism, parochialism, anti-national activities and insurgency in the region and weakening the bonds of national federalism which should be done away with as these factors will also be a blockade towards growth and development of the great Indian Railway in this high Himalayan zone. Lastly It can be concluded that the re -generations of the Northeast particularly Arunachal Pradesh depends on the construction of the Railway communication and its ramification in a massive scale which will bring a new socio- economic renaissance in the Northeast as well in Indians Subcontinent and will remove mis -Governance and corruption. Railway connectivity and Rail ramifications in the border zone connecting the towns and villages and hither to desolated hamlets in the region will begin are new chapter of strength and development in the region and strengthen the bonds of federalism and federal structure in the country.*

### KEYWORDS

desolated hamlets, uneven-terrain, grinding halt, replica, strategic location, transcontinental railway.

### INTRODUCTION

Arunachal Pradesh, the gate way of the Northeast is situated in the extreme Northeast of the Indian Sub-continent consisting of 16 district and lies in an important strategic location. It is a state, consisting of tribal people and various races with multi-lingual and multi-racial cultures. The state has a density of population approx 13 people per square Kilometer and is deeply infested with forest, rivers and uneven terrains. The mighty Himalayas with all its ramifications is extended throughout the state cutting across streams, rivers, valleys and deeply infested deciduous forests. Truly speaking, it is a tribal state consisting of different dialects languages, beliefs, manners & customs and thoughts& ideas. It is a state, touching the borders of Tibetan, China and Bhutan in the entire Northeast and western part. Assam and Nagaland are the two neighboring states touching Arunachal Pradesh in the south. River Brahmaputra and its tributaries separated this state into different valleys and regional entities.

The main constrains faced by the state is the lack of communication link and connectivity. Though this Himalayan state has got 336 Km of National Highways but most of the Highways are centered at the southern parts of the territory. Therefore, construction of Railway line in Arunachal Pradesh is the vital need of the hour to link up the entire state.

Since the inception of Railway line and constructions of communication links like roadways and Air Traffic in the Northeastern states from the sixties and seventies onward there was hardly any massive constructions of Railway lines as well as Road links in the state for which this particular state is hidden from the outside world for a long time except a few tourist spots like Itanagar, Zero Tawang and Aloetc and this state bears a neglected entity in the recent days in the Indian map. But keeping in view of the geographical and strategic location bordering the world's most powerful nation the people's Republic of China, Arunachal Pradesh has got significant importance.

It is a fact that construction of Railway of Rail Road traffic in the uneven terrain of the Northeastern state like Arunachal Pradesh is an uphill task and involves heavy amount of expenditure. But keeping in view of the massive buildup of infrastructure and communication link by the Chinese Government on the other side of the Sino-Indian border touching Mac Mohan Line in the eastern segment of Indian Sub-continent who are contemplating a deliberate plan to build up transcontinental Railway through Arunachal Pradesh corridor linking the Port City of Yangon, capital of Myanmar. The Railway Line in this region is no doubt an urgent need of the hour for defending the country and protection and survival of the people of the nation.

### HISTORY OF THE CONSTRUCTION OF RAILWAY IN ASSAM

From the historical point of view, the construction of the Railway started in Assam and its nearby periphery from 1870's where we find that the Britisher build these Railway line in the uneven terrain of Assam connecting different segmented clusters either be in the hilly forest land or in the river valleys with a great deal of efforts by utilizing this manpower particularly prisoners of war and facilitate the communication and transportation route at different isolated areas which were hither to unknown to the people of the world.

These connectivity of rail routes made easier in carriage of goods, freight traffic, movement of consignment and above of people's movement from one place to another and linked-up different tribal districts and regions in a common national hook up. For a long time since than from 1870 onwards, Railway had been the only mode of transport of passengers and freight trafficking in the isolated hamlets of Assam and its nearby states communicating different people of the districts

with the main stream of Indian Sub-continent. It is a fact that the Britishers used these Railway for industrial and commercial exploitation of the huge natural resources like oil and natural gas (In Digboi and Tinsukia Oil Field), lignite coal (Margherita), Huge numbers of wooden materials (teak woods) stones and minerals etc but later on the railway link was found to be a vital sources of Indian Nationalism during freedom struggle. It is a significant fact that the British entrepreneurs and engineers by dint of their excellent engineering and technological skill with accurate survey operation had succeeded in establishing a massive Gigantic infrastructure by laying the first foundation of Railway line in the uneven hilly terrain of Assam covering its hills and valleys which is still existing with some new renovation. The sacrifice and heroic deeds of British Engineers and their associates is a remarkable lesson in the history of Indian railway which is still to be researched and excavated properly. It is a great uphill task which they did with enthusiastic zeal and dedication. The services, rendered by them are still unforgettable. So many British engineers and Indian working force sacrificed their lives and died in Malaria, Diarrhea and in various other unknown diseases and by natural disaster and buried silently in the hills of Assam. Nobody cares for their noble sacrifice rendered to the nation.

Another significant historical fact on record is that the Britishers used their highest engineering skill and technology with war footing in this great Asian nation during the time of construction of Indian Railway challenging the risk of their life to build up this massive construction network in the high Himalayan domains which is stated to be one of the rarest single incident of achievement in the Indian sub-continent in such a high altitude of Himalayan terrain where connectivity with the hills, valleys, gorges, rivers, forest was extremely difficult in absence of modern technology. It is a hidden lesson of history of the brave British engineers and Indian Working Forces. In fact, in the true sense of the term, it was a significant silent revolution in the railway history of communication and extension of rail movement in the northeast. Further, socio-economic resurgence of the country by the rail movement and communication silently and awfully upgraded and uplifted the desolated hamlets of Assam and its peripheral areas into the threshold of national main stream of India which is no doubt a great leap forward in the achievement of Railway movement and communication not only in India but also throughout Asia. It is perhaps the single episode of the history of Rail movement that the Britisher had undertaken on war-footing in building that massive infrastructure due to urgent requirement of natural resources and ramification of industrial needs of England in the colonial countries. But this economic and commercial needs for which the Railway were used by English business houses directly and indirectly helped in connecting people of different regions of colonial territories into a common thread of unity and significantly contributed towards growth and developments of nationalism in the country. During the freedom movement it helped a lot for lodging united struggle against the British Govt. So the Railway in the true sense of the term is a blessing in disguise as with the building and development of Railway infrastructure the unity and the integrity of the country were strengthened on a solid base.

The Assam episode of the colonial Era was a very significant lesson of Railway history and also a lesson towards the development of Northeast including Arunachal Pradesh. But nowhere the example of Assam episode and its significant achievement of Railway movement and communication is reflected in any chapter of history. So, this significant silent revolution of Railway movement and communications was left to die in the hills and no such exposure of its marvelous achievement in the British era was implemented in the northeast and particularly in Arunachal Pradesh either in the policy making process of the Govt. of India or in public and private sector under takings or by any industrial houses. The five years plans after independence though gave emphasis on communication but did not realize the significant importance of Railway infrastructure particularly in the northeast which the Britisher thought and planned hundred years ago and put them into operation.

The history of the northeast would have been different and the condition of Arunachal Pradesh particularly might have taken a different turn if the example of the Assam movement and achievement of Railway would have been repeated in Arunachal Pradesh or any other Northeastern states of India. NEFFA was formed in 1956 now Arunachal was unknown for many a years from the memory of common people's consciousness. The Indian Mandarins and business houses did not give a serious thought on the issue after 1870 and also after the achievement of Indian Independence in 1947 about the importance of building up of Railways in the northeast. NEFFA became a paper tiger throughout the decades. Though, it was upgraded from time to time for political game as the name came to be known as Arunachal as union territory and later on Arunachal Pradesh as a state in 1987 but no socio economic development in the true sense had been implemented either by extension of roadways or Rail traffic for mass communication movement in the region and due to this long apathy and neglect by the authority the overall development of the railways in the northeast came to a grinding halt.

Guwahati –Lumding-Silchar rail line (MG) built in 1870 in the hilly terrain of Assam is the first glaring example of British attempt of building railway line with excellent skill and innovation. This line in the true sense is a replica of national heritage line of the country. With the successful construction of this line barely 146years ago with 37 great tunnels and many bridges including two heritage bridges namely "Dayang" and "Dhanuk" Bridges still bears a superb example of British engineering skill and marvelous achievement in the history of Indian Railway in Asia. The entire extension of Railway is in fact a great achievement of Railway where hard labor, sincerity of services and supreme sacrifice and above all noble deeds of British engineering skill are reflected. It is perhaps the first Asian Railway line built on such high terrain and thickly forested area and no doubt the entire lay out of the Railway is a national heritage and it should be open to the international world to show that how this tedious task of building the railway in the high Himalayan zones of the northeast have been built for passenger and freight trafficking where there was no technological development of recent days. Even it is a rare occasion in Europe where such massive buildup like Assam Himalayan railways has been attempted at that time.

## RESULTS OF THE CONSTRUCTION OF RAILWAY

With the constructions of Railway in Assam, Railway towns grew up on both sides of Railway stations, socio-economic development got accelerated, travelling and tourism, tea industries became a brisk business in the region and the population started increasing. Apart from these, the carriage of raw materials like oil and natural gas, coal, teak wood and various others forest goods medicinal herbs stated to be transported day after day and the entire state of Assam barring a few tribal hamlets was connected to the national main streams of the country. These factors directly and indirectly contributed towards the growth and developments of national integration.

## OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

Among the seven sister states Arunachal Pradesh is the most important not only because of its economical and natural resources but also of its military and strategic location. It is a vast Museum of ethnicity with deep forest having Flora and Fauna which is stated to be unique in the world. But this tribal state remained hidden from the public gaze and attention for a long time because there was no communication link to approach to this place easily. But this state came into lime light in the international scenario in October/ 1962 when massive Chinese aggression in infiltrating in the NEFA Boarder took place. But due to absence of communication link in the region there has been massive setbacks resulting the defeat of the Indian army though they fought vehemently with true patriotic spirit and zeal. This set back was a learning lesson to our strength and weaknesses and we truly realized the important of a viable communication link with other means of transport needed for combating internal disturbances and external aggression.

## WHY RAILWAY IS URGENTLY NEEDED FOR ARUNACHAL AND WHY AMONG THE SEVEN SISTER STATES PREFERENTIAL TREATMENT IS TO BE GIVEN FOR THE CONSTRUCTION OF RAILWAY LINE PARTICULARLY IN ARUNACHAL PRADESH.

It is to be emphasized that Chinese expansion policy in the northeast is a very dangerous move where they have already prepared with massive Railway construction in the high Himalayan zones of Tibet on the opposite side of the Sino Indian Border connecting Lassa and Beijing with high speed Rail and road ways and it is very easy for the Chinese to carry heavy artilleries and make military and strategic movement within a very short span of time in the Indian Border Line wherein we are lacking far behind in communication. Secondly, it is also a matter of concern that the land locked zone of southern China is practically looking for a head way of Arunachal Pradesh corridor in order to reach to the port of Yangun through Burma for economic and commercial interest.

Anxious thought to the construction of a railway line had never been given before the seventies in the hilly areas of Himalayas as it involves heavy financial expenditure from national exchequer. Secondly, construction of a railway line in the uneven rugged hilly terrain of the Himalayas is an uphill tusk. Moreover, treacherous rivers, river valleys and gorges and deep tropical forest and mountainous reason constitute a permanent barrier to the construction of railways in the area. Therefore, except Assam the entire Northeast remained alienated from the main stream of Indian life and society since independence. Due to this, the region

is suffering from under development, corruption mis-governance, simmering discontent, illegal migrant settlement from other parts of the country and neighboring nations and tribal discontent (6<sup>th</sup> Scheduled of the constitution did not work well) but the menacing problem that the entire northeast and Arunachal Pradesh is particularly facing is the challenges of insurgencies, terrorism, secessionism and extremism both at the Sino-Indian Border as well as from the neighboring states. This has come into extreme posture in the recent days involving massive deployment of Para-military in the region which awfully takes away the huge chunks of expenditure from the national exchequer for their maintenance. The crisis is deepened day after day and it is a challenge on the part of the Govt. to combat the violence in the northeast.

In order to combat the menacing problem, the Government has taken certain remedial measures like construction of Roadway traffic by border road organization (BRO) Defense organization some local organization and by some NGOs. But these significant efforts contributed by the organization hardly suffice the need of the people. Therefore, a serious thought must have to be given to get a secure environment in the state to combat the menacing task of insurgency and terrorism. Construction of Railway line is a well thought out plan which will serve as a means of mass transport and communication system in the region of Arunachal and this is the only way out to resolve the challenges. The Britishers built the Railway line massively on north Indian plains for quick military movement to quell the rebellion and insurgencies in north India which became later on a significant antidote to revolution. As Railway forms the lifeline of there is no viable alternative to railway for insurgency and extremism. The Britishers brought the Railway in the country for carriage of huge numbers of natural resources through freight traffic and later on passenger's movement. This construction of Railway line had played a great role in the national economy and financial help of the country. This apart in the later years it became a harbinger of national integration in the country. So Railway played a vital role for the unity and integrity of country. National integration would not have been possible if the network of railway was not build up throughout the length and breadth of the country. For example, the Britishers brought the entire Assam under the national main-stream by laying the foundations of national network 140 years ago in the hilly terrain of Assam with great effort by courage and sacrifice involving huge labor and engineering skill during that time which is not yet been done by us. But the Railway Line in Arunachal is the fundamental need of the hour and significantly concerned with the safety and security and survival of the country as Arunachal is the gate way of the northeast and lies at a very strategic important location. Any apathy and lack of concern of this vital issue will directly bring disaster to the country.

### **ARMED FORCES SPECIAL POWER ACT 1958, INNER LINE PERMIT (ILP), HOW IT RELATES WITH THE CONSTRUCTION OF RAILWAY LINE IN ARUNACHAL**

Armed forces enjoy some special power as a public servant in Arunachal Pradesh and other Northeastern states in terms of Armed Forces Special Power Act 1958 which gives them judicial immunity. This is applicable in the disturbed area of Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Tripura and Jammu & Kashmir. This act separated and segregated the people to come to the national main stream as they cannot come in contact freely with the people of other regions to interact and feel the differences between them and others. Lack of interface contributed towards the segregation and especially tribal of the area are leaving in a secluded place by dint of this Act and therefore they are completely ignorant about the socio-economic development and their rights and privileges. Ignorance and illiteracy in the modern world is another feature of death. Again these tribal peoples are separated by Inner Line Permit (ILP) and forest area restriction Act and many other rules and regulations which awfully which hindered them to get in touch to the main stream of the nation and therefore in order to build the Railway these act especially Arms force special Power act with other acts clash with the construction of the Railways. So it should be adjusted and coordinated or if needed should be done away with for the time being for national interest and for the benefits of the common people of the region. For an example Arms Forces Special Power Act, Tribal Area Restriction Act, Inner Line Permit which are British colonial legacies are still separating the tribal from the national main stream resulting which interaction with people cannot be possible. Similarly, the restricted zones of tribal area cannot be easily reached because of Inner Line Permit and Tribal restrictions. Equally this act is applicable where Armed forces special Power act is pre-dominant. Due to this restriction and compartmentalization interaction with the people cannot be possible, which is very much needed for the survival and socio-economic development of the region at present. Similarly, if the Railway penetrates in the region due to these legal bindings it cannot go unhindered in the restricted zones resulting which the progress of the nation will suffer a lot. Therefore, keeping in view of hurdles and hindrances of the act which restricts with legal bindings these act should be put on hold for the greater interest of the country otherwise the overall development will be a great sad back.

As Railway is needed in the area which is much more greater in demand than these respective acts for the sake of communication, transportation, carriage of heavy goods quick military movement with artillery and arsenal for defense and commercial interest. So these narrow barriers should have to be withdrawn temporarily till life line of the nation is build up in Arunachal for the overall development and security and safety of the nation.

In conclusion it can be said that the progress and resurgence of the nation directly depends upon the resurgence of Arunachal Pradesh. In fact, the socio-economic progress of this state will bring a new renaissance in the country and for this, massive construction of railway and its ramification in the state is of significant importance.

Hence, preferential treatment should have to be given to this gateway Himalayan state other than seven sister states as the strategic location and massive military build-up of China the other side of Sino-Indian Border is a great concern for the safety and security of the whole nation.

There should not be any alternative thought that in the near future rivalry between the two nations will center upon the capture of Arunachal and massive military movement and blood bath will take place which will even be fatal than the disaster of Bomdila 1962 if such precautions are not taken seriously at this stage. Honestly speaking, it is too late but better late than never if we are now conscious with this significant national problem. We have to make this place an impregnable fort as it lies on a vital strategic location of Himalayan zone of Indian sub-continent. The safety and security of the entire nation depends upon the safety and security of Arunachal which is at present is an Achilles hill of the country. Massive Railway construction with the help of armed forces with Indian Railway engineers on war footing in the region is the prime need of the hour by concentrating utilization of national economic resources, instead of scattering it to other sister states as it is the immediate need of the hour for the survival and safety of the nation.

### **CONCLUSION**

The study concludes that the Central Idea is the construction of the Rail Road traffic in the High Himalayan terrain for safety security and strategic defense in the Sino-Indian Border to save our country from massive invasion of the opposite side of the Mc Mohan line as the Chinese has made-up massive preparation with a heavy Military build-up with Road and Rail traffic on the opposite side of the Sino Indian Border and can reach to this North Eastern zone of Arunachal Pradesh within a very short span of time with the help of quick communication by Rail and Road connectivity in the Border area and can capture parts of Arunachal Pradesh Corridor in order to reach to the capital port of Yaungon through Burma for their economic and commercial interest and expansion of trade in the South East Asian region which is often reflected in the Chinese policy. On the other hand, this zone of Sino Indian Border is a place where we are seriously lacking Rail connectivity which will be a great hindrance to massive Military movement in this significant strategic location that may cause national disaster and Military blood bath in the unequal battle, much more fatal than the Bomdila fall in 1962. Keeping in view, of the menacing danger we should give a serious thought on this significant national question because the security and safety of the nation is the first and foremost issue for strategic defense, survival of the people of the country and therefore construction of the Railway and massive Rail connectivity in the High Himalayan Zone no matter a gigantic up-hill task but should be given highest priority and to be completed with all Military might and war footing in this significant location which is still a neglected hamlet in the Northeast border. Secondly we also must give a serious thought on the question of 1. Armed forces special power Act 1958. 2. Forest Area Restriction Act. and 3. Tribal Area Restriction Act which are colonial legacies segregating people from the national mainstream and putting hindrance to socio economic development of region by breeding the fatal wounds up extremism, parochialism, anti-national activities and insurgency in the region and weakening the bonds of national federalism which should be done away with as these factors will also be a blockade towards growth and development of the great Indian Railway in this high Himalayan zone. Lastly It can be concluded that the re-generations of the Northeast particularly Arunachal Pradesh depends on the construction of the Railway communication and its ramification in a massive scale which will bring a new socio-economic renaissance in the Northeast as well in Indians Subcontinent and will remove mis-Governance and corruption. Railway connectivity and Rail ramifications in the border zone connecting the towns and villages and hither to desolated hamlets in the region will begin are new chapter of strength and development in the region and strengthen the bonds of federalism and federal structure in the country.

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