

A Discourse on Darjeeling Himalayan Railway

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Abstract – The Darjeeling- Himalayan Railway also recognized as the “Toy Train”. It is a 2 feet (610 mm) narrow gauge railway line, which runs around 86 kilometers between New Jalpaiguri and Darjeeling in the district of West Bengal under NF Railway. In 1999, UNESCO proclaimed the century-old train as a World Heritage site. Construction of DHR began in 1879 and was fully operational in 1981. The peak ranges from 100 meters in New Jalpaiguri (328 ft) to about 2,200 meters in Darjeeling (7,218 ft). Any tourist's lifetime experience will be a trip from Siliguri to Darjeeling (around 7 hrs journey) or a pleasure ride in Darjeeling. In this paper a narrative approach will be presented regarding the characteristics of DHR and its impact towards the tourism point of view. The methodology used in this paper is developed through a vibrant interplay of research topics, theory, experience, dialog, and perception.

Key Words: Darjeeling- Himalayan Railway, Toy Train, NF Railway, World Heritage Site, UNESCO, Tourism etc.

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INTRODUCTION

The Darjeeling- Himalayan Railway is also affectionately called "Toy Train". A trip to Darjeeling is considered one of the most amazing trips throughout the world. Both the landscapes and the railway line, which is simply a masterpiece of engineering and without a question one of the world's attractions, which attracts travelers. Fairly absorbing is the Darjeeling Himalayan Railway's history. It was in 1878 that Mr. Franklin Prestage (at that moment Eastern Bengal Railway Company's agent) brought out a suggestion with a concrete plan for the Bengal government to construct a train line from Siliguri to Darjeeling. The Former governor, Sir Ashley Eden, named a committee to review the project. In 1879, this committee revealed that, the project was profitable and would be of excellent benefit to the public and government. Construction began that year and the railway line had reached Tindharia by 1880. Till Kurseong in the latter year, the construction of the line was finished. It was opened for traffic to Darjeeling by July 1881. Finally the name of the railway line was given as "Darjeeling- Himalayan Railway Company".

OBJECTIVE:

The primary objective of this research paper is to delineate the basic characteristics of Darjeeling-Himalayan Railways. It would also highlight the impact of this railway on tourism point of view. The methodology used in this paper is developed through a vibrant interplay of research topics, theory, experience, dialog, and perception. In this paper the

objective of this study is to identify the structural variables and to exemplify the significant features for which it has become one of the top heritage sites among the world.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY:

Yes, the study is considered to be significant because, of the fact that it directly involves with tourism sector. However, a thorough study has done regarding the DHR along with its special characteristics. In this context the present study is considered to be the contribution of socio-cultural impact. This will help in redesigning and further of existing preplanning of the Darjeeling Himalayan Railway.

IMPORTANCE OF DHR:

The Darjeeling Himalayan Railway is the first and foremost instance of a mountain passenger railway. Opened in 1881, it introduced bold and imaginative engineering approaches to the challenge of rail links on a hilly terrain of excellent beauty. For the people across the World, DHR is very popular. Daily maximum numbers of tourist across the world come to travel this exceptional natural beauty.

Now a day, the importance of DHR has been increased more. DHR was in bad condition by the 1990s and Indian Railways attempted to abandon it. A number of local individuals, inspired by Darjeeling's Sherab Tenduf-la, requested that Indian Railways maintain DHR open and develop

this as a tourist attraction. Indian Railways requested to UNESCO to declare DHR as world heritage site in the year 1998. After that, in the year 1999 finally DHR was listed in World Heritage Site, save it as the Darjeeling Hills people's glory as well as for the entire world's people.

RESEASONS FOR DECLARATION AS WORLD HERITAGE SITE:

In 1998, the Government of India applied to UNESCO for the Darjeeling Himalayan Railway to be included in the list of World Heritage Sites in recognition of India's social, cultural, economic and industrial importance. In its 23rd session in Marrakech, Morocco, on 5th December 1999, the UNESCO World Heritage Committee decided to designate DHR on its list of World Heritage Sites, claiming the following reasons:

The DHR is the first instance of a mountain passenger railway and still most exceptional. Launched in 1881, it introduced bold and inventive engineering approaches to the issue of an efficient rail connection across beautiful mountain terrain. It remains completely functional and maintains intact most of its historic characteristics.

DHR is regarded as an excellent instance of the impact of an intelligent transport scheme on the social and economic development of a multi-cultural region, as well as tea gardens, a model for parallel innovations. In many areas of the world, railway development in the 19th century had a deep impact on social and economic development. The DHR demonstrates this mechanism in an outstanding and formative way.

The other railways which are declared as World Heritage sites are predominantly subject to the tunnel construction method, pathway, etc. But, DHR is identified as the only and a fully operational railway with its initial locomotives, coaches, carriages and structures and its unique winding loop and zig-zag reversal infrastructure.

As it connects the distinct cultures from Siliguri to Darjeeling in the various societies, for this reason also DHR is identified as a World Heritage Site. All Darjeeling Hills inhabitants are part of DHR's World Heritage Site.

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CONCLUSION:

The Darjeeling Himalayan Railway is no longer a major mode of transport with the passage of time and better-motorized road. The cargo service was completely eliminated and the 'Toy Train' has become an unforgettable joyride for travelers. In a couple of years, this will be India's only steam-engine train. In 1993, a non-profit institution called the Darjeeling- Himalayan Railway Heritage Foundation was founded to promote the reconstruction, redevelopment, and retention of the Darjeeling- Himalayan Railway as well as its stations as living museums. Out of the three museums of Darjeeling- Himalayan Railways, the Ghum museum is very significant. It is on the premises of the Ghum Railway station. After the declaration of DHR as world heritage site in the year 2000, this museum was opened for the visitors. Associations called the 'Friends of Darjeeling- Himalayan Railway', sponsored by the Darjeeling- Himalayan Railway Heritage Foundation were created in a number of nations, all devoted to the preservation and renovation of the 'Toy Train' as a railway legacy.

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