

Steam communication with India

By

Robert .Melville Grindlay



This pamphlet '*Steam communication with India. [A view of the present state of the question,]*' was written some time before 1837 by Captain Robert .Melville Grindlay [left], who was then agent for the Steam Committees of Calcutta and Madras, and published in London.

This pamphlet appears on the Man family web site as a result of Edward Garnet Man's marriage to Katherine Jane Matthews, whose father, James, was a partner of Grindlay's in the bank that bore the latter's name.

It would appear that two further editions of this pamphlet were brought out. These ran for 99 pages, thus a much larger work than this 8 page one

All three items bear the same title although each has been variously catalogued and can also be found as : '*A view of the present state of the question as to steam communication with India.*

The latter two editions were published in London by Smith, Elder & Co. The work is very rare and the record here of the first edition helps to preserve it. The contents however hold little interest except perhaps for those curious about the history of British India. The copy below was copied from one found at the New York Public Library. .

STEAM COMMUNICATION WITH INDIA.

The Question of the Establishment of STEAM COMMUNICATION WITH INDIA, is one which has been agitated with greater or less activity for a series of years. Among the Indian Community, both British and Native, it has long been felt a subject of interest, and has given rise to very animated and varied discussion, while it has attracted at different periods the notice of the local Government, and drawn from the highest sources the most decisive testimonials to its practicability and value.

A feeling so general in India, a Country where little disposition for change usually exists, could not fail to extend to Great Britain, whose people, equally interested in the question with those of India, are heading the career of Commercial and Scientific enterprise in an age, distinguished, beyond all preceding ones, by the boldness and success with which the two objects are combined and pursued.

On the 14th July, 1834, a Committee of the House of Commons was appointed to enquire into the Practicability and Expediency of Establishing, on a Permanent Footing, a system of Steam Communication with India. After a laborious enquiry, and the examination of many Witnesses, the Committee passed the following:—

“1st. RESOLVED, That it is the opinion of this Committee, that a regular and expeditious communication with India, by means of Steam Vessels, is an object of great importance, both to Great Britain and to India.”

“2nd. RESOLVED, That it is the opinion of this Committee, that Steam Navigation between Bombay and Suez, having, in five successive seasons, been brought to the test of experiment, (the expense of which has been borne by the Indian Government exclusively), the practicability of an expeditious communication by that line during the North East Monsoon has been established.”

“3rd. RESOLVED, That it is the opinion of this Committee, that the experiment has not been tried during the South-west Monsoon; but that it appears from the evidence before the Committee, that the communication may be carried on during eight months of the year: June, July, August, and September, being excepted, or left for the results of further experience.”

“4th. RESOLVED, That it is the opinion of this Committee, that the experiments which have been made have been attended with very great expense; but, that from the evidence before the Committee it appears, that by proper arrangements, the expense may be materially reduced: and, under that impression, it is expedient that measures should be immediately taken for the regular establishment of Steam Communication from India, by the Red Sea.”

Notwithstanding the strong recommendation of the Committee, nothing has yet been done to carry it into effect. The Indian Community have felt deeply the disappointment of their hopes—Meetings have been held in almost every part of that vast Country, and the subjoined Papers will indicate the feelings and wishes which are there prevalent on the subject. As the advantage to the British Islands would be, at least, as great as to India, it is not doubted that the desire of the latter Country will be met by a corresponding one in this. It cannot be believed that the authorities here can be insensible to the great benefits which would result from the plan, or that they are indifferent to their realization. They have probably waited until the call of

the Indian Community is confirmed by public opinion in this Country, and when that shall have been unequivocally expressed, there can be little doubt of their assent. It rests then, in a great degree, with the people of Great Britain to give, or to withhold, this great public convenience, viz. a full and comprehensive system of communication by Steam, with *all parts of* India, upon the terms recommended by the Committee above alluded to.

CIRCULAR PUBLISHED IN CALCUTTA,

April, 1836.

THE accompanying copies of a Petition to the House of Commons, and of Memorials to the Board of Control, and the Court of Directors of the East India Company, praying for the immediate establishment of a Steam Communication by way of the Red Sea, between the four principal parts of India, namely, Bombay, Galle, Madras, and Calcutta, and England, are circulated in full confidence that an appeal from several thousands of their fellow-subjects in this distant country, a great portion of whom are cut off from the land of their birth and their affections, by an interval between their correspondence with their friends and connexions, of ten to twelve months, will meet with sympathy and support from all classes at home.

To those who have spent any portion of their lives in this country, and have returned to their native home, nothing need be said touching the value and importance, in every point of view, of shortening that interval one-half.

To those who have never experienced the anxiety arising from such a separation from their dearest connexions, and to those who may hitherto never have had occasion to give the subject any consideration at all, it may be necessary, briefly to notice the vast importance of the establishment of a thorough and complete Steam Communication between England and all parts of India.

The value of such a communication to natives of the British Isles, whose lot is cast in India, from the Governor General himself to the humblest individual, has been referred to, and there are many in England who will, from the experience of their own anxiety, readily concur in feeling the value of such early information.

But great and important as may be the advantages of such a communication to such persons, including every single individual, male and female, of British birth, they are in reality nothing in the scale of advantages which must necessarily result to both Countries, from Steam Communication between England and ALL PARTS OF INDIA, if established on those principles alone, which have in like cases been found to answer, namely, Speed, Regularity, Security, and the Junction of all Places of Importance interested in the mutual intercourse.

A reference to the incalculable benefits which have arisen in England during the last Seventy Years, from the increased facilities of intercourse, derived from—first, The Establishment of Mail Coaches, and their extension to all the most distant parts of the country, with the consequent improvement of the Roads—then the Canals—, and, finally, the establishment of Steam Vessels, as well for Coast as Inland Navigation—and, above all, that of Rail Roads is sufficient to show the truth of Lord William Bentinck's opinion, that the advantages, direct and indirect, for Steam Communication between England and India are so great, that they "would be cheaply bought at any price."

If the general shortening of the time required for intercourse, personal and written, between the several places in England, having mutual relations, has been productive of such great advantages, it is easy to see that a similar reduction in the periods of intercourse between two such countries as England and British India, cannot fail to induce like advantages in the ratio of their far more extended, and far more important mutual interests and duties.

To India, England is indebted for wealth, for fame, and in some degree, for the prominent station she holds among the Nations of the World. In return, she has a duty to perform to the countless millions

subject to her sway—a duty which can never be performed as it ought to be, until the barrier which upholds their mutual ignorance, and thence fosters their mutual prejudices, is broken down.

That barrier once removed, can it be for one moment doubted, that the Arts, the Sciences, the Civilization, the Capital of England, would rapidly find their way to India? Their very nature is to extend—they only require a road, and when that is made easy to any place needing their presence, they cannot but go. India does need, and England can furnish them—and it is her duty to do so.

It is her bounden duty to open wide the doors of India, for the entry and spread, *EMPHATICALLY*, of the knowledge of Europe. It is the one thing needed in India to enable her to advance, as, *under the dominion of England*, she ought to do, in the scale of Nations, and this can only be done effectually, by approximating the two countries in the manner proposed.

Among the advantages to England would be the more ready employment of Capital, with consequent extension of Commerce, and the greater security of the Indian Empire; but it is of course impossible, in an Address of this nature, to point out, minutely, the advantages of such a communication; to those who give attention to it these advantages become more and more apparent, and nothing would appear to be wanting to ensure that communication being established as it ought to be, on the most enlarged and perfect scale, but a similar general expression of the public desire of the British Islands, as has now been long declared through all parts of India; and in the hope of inducing that expression, this appeal is made.

CALCUTTA PETITION.

To be presented by the Right Hon. Lord W. C. BENTINCK, G.C.B., M.P.

TO THE HONOURABLE THE COMMONS OF THE UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN AND IRELAND IN PARLIAMENT ASSEMBLED:

The humble Petition of the Inhabitants of Calcutta and its Neighbourhood.

SH EWETH,

THAT the Establishment of a Steam Communication between India and England has been for several years past the ardent desire of the whole of the British Inhabitants of this country, and that this desire has of late years extended to the natives; and that the public wish of all India has been lately expressed in the strongest manner by the voluntary subscription of a sum exceeding three lacs of rupees, of which above one lac and a half were subscribed in Bengal alone, a great part thereof by natives, for the furtherance of this eagerly sought measure.

That, however the subscription of such a sum, without any view to pecuniary return, may evince the anxiety of all India for the establishment of such a communication, yet your petitioners feel that it is impossible to establish it, much less to carry it on, except by means of the united powers of His Majesty's Government and the East India Company; and your petitioners learned therefore with the utmost satisfaction that a Select Committee of your Honourable House had resolved under date 14th July, 1834,—

“That a regular and expeditious communication with India by means of Steam Vessels is an object of great importance both to Great Britain and to India. That it is expedient that measures should be immediately taken for the regular establishment of Steam Communication from India by the Red Sea. That it be left to His Majesty's Government in conjunction with the East India Company to consider whether the Communication should be in the first instance from Bombay, or from Calcutta, or according to the combined plan suggested by the Bengal Steam Committee; and that by whatever line the Communication be established the net charge should be divided equally between His Majesty's Government and the East India Company.”

That Your Petitioners considered these Resolutions as a pledge that immediate measures would be taken for establishing such Communication in the manner best adapted for meeting the wants and wishes of all the

That it is therefore with pain proportionate to the satisfaction which they felt in hearing of the pledge of your Honourable House to perfect this their anxious desire, that Your Petitioners find that up to the date of last advices from England nothing had been done in redemption of that pledge; that no steps appear to have been taken for the regular Establishment of Steam Communication from India by the Red Sea; and that no effectual consideration had been given, by His Majesty's Government in conjunction with the East India Company, to the only question which Your Petitioners understand to have been left to their decision before giving effect to the Resolutions of your Honourable House—namely—whether the Communication should be in the first instance from Bombay or from Calcutta, or according to the combined plan suggested by the Bengal Steam Committee.

That Your Petitioners beg leave to submit to the consideration of your Honourable House the following opinion lately expressed by a Right Hon. Ruler of this country, regarding the importance of Steam Communication between this country and Europe, viz.—

“ I have been a zealous supporter of the cause of Steam Communication from the strongest conviction confirmed by every day's further reflection of its vast importance to innumerable interests both national and commercial. I cannot command the opportunity of forwarding its future success, but if within my reach you may depend upon my most earnest efforts to promote its progress, and to obtain for India an advantage so great in all its *direct* and indirect consequences that in my opinion it would be cheaply bought at any price.”

Your Petitioners, fully concurring in the sentiments above expressed, humbly but earnestly pray that your Honourable House will graciously adopt such measures as to your wisdom may seem requisite for the immediate carrying into effect the Resolutions of the Committee of your Honourable House for establishing a regular, expeditious, and frequent communication between the principal Indian Ports and Great Britain by means of Steam Vessels by way of the Red Sea.

And Your Petitioners will every pray.

Calcutta, 5th March, 1836.

[Signed by three thousand five hundred and forty-two British and Native Inhabitants of Calcutta and its neighbourhood, including the three Judges of the Supreme Court of Judicature,—the Commander-in-Chief, and three other Members of Council,—Judges of the Sudder Dewanny, and Nizamut Adawlut,—Members of all the public Boards, and generally the Heads of every public Department,—the British Merchants of Calcutta,—the highest Classes of Native Subjects,—the Native Merchants, especially those connected with the silk trade, and that carried on between Calcutta and the Red Sea. Since which, Signatures from the Interior make the total 7632.]

MADRAS PETITION.

To be presented by WILLIAM CRAWFORD, Esq. M.P.

TO THE HONOURABLE THE COMMONS OF GREAT BRITAIN AND IRELAND, IN PARLIAMENT ASSEMBLED.

The humble Petition of the several Persons whose names are hereunto subscribed, being Inhabitants of Madras, in the East Indies.

SH EWETH,

That the British population of this part of India have been for a long time impressed with the conviction that nothing will tend so materially to develop the resources of India, to improve her people, to advance her general welfare, and to secure to the crown of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland the integrity of its empire over India as the rapid and continued intercourse between the two countries by means of Steam

That this impression has not suddenly arisen, but has been one of gradual and steadily increasing growth, which the native population has, during these latter years, participated; that the sincerity of this impression, British and native, has been proved by the large voluntary subscriptions which have from time to time been made, whenever a prospect for accomplishing this great object presented itself.

That the government in India, no less than the people, have been anxiously desirous for the establishment of Steam Communication between the two countries, and that Lord William Bentinck, the Governor General, both individually and in council, zealously supported the project in 1833, and subsequently declared, "that its advantages were so great in all its direct and indirect consequences, that in his opinion it would be cheaply bought at any price."

That the public of this presidency have read with feelings of unmixed satisfaction, the resolutions which were passed by the select committee of your honourable House in 1834, with regard to Steam Communication between England and India, but they regret that no effectual measures have yet been taken for its regular establishment in conformity with such resolutions.

That your petitioners, under the impression that the delay in carrying into effect the said resolutions, has arisen from the large outlay which the undertaking was calculated to involve, have applied themselves to an examination of the estimates which were submitted to the committee of your honourable House, and find that the price of coals in India, therein mentioned, is greatly over-rated, inasmuch as they are stated to be from eighty to one hundred and forty shillings per ton, whereas the price of coals has been at Madras, during the past five years, upon an average less than thirty shillings per ton, and this price, your petitioners are assured, is more likely to fall than to rise.

That your petitioners submit, that owing to the reduction in the consumption of fuel, and other advantages resulting from improvements in steam machinery, there are solid grounds for believing that by proper arrangements, the expense attending the establishment of periodical Steam Communication, may be reduced greatly below the estimates with reference to which the resolutions of the select committee of your honourable House were framed.

That with a view of covering a portion of that expense your petitioners submit that it will be proper, so soon as monthly steam packets shall be established, that legislative enactments should be passed, prohibiting, subject to certain necessary limitations for the purposes of trade, the transmission of letters, or parcels, below certain weight, by any other conveyance than those packets.

That your petitioners believe that Point de Galle, in the island of Ceylon, is the most eligible place for the arrival and departure of steam vessels to and from the Red Sea; as, independently of its central position, a voyage between that port and the Red Sea is more practicable throughout the year, than between the Red Sea and any other port in India; but your petitioners, with the greatest confidence, submit all details to the wisdom of your honourable House, his Majesty's Ministers, and the East India Company, confining themselves to the humble but earnest prayer, that your honourable House will be pleased to adopt such measures as may seem requisite for carrying into effect the said resolutions of the Select Committee of your honourable House.

Among the documents transmitted from Madras, is one, appended to a memorial addressed to the Court of Directors, which contains a variety of calculations and estimates of great value. Some extracts are submitted.

In the Despatch from the Honourable Court of Directors to the Bombay Government, dated 14th March, 1834, the Annual Expence of One Steam Vessel, including the capital sunk, is estimated at 26,800*l.*; and supposing the employment of four Steam Vessels to be necessary to keep up a Monthly Communication, the cost per annum is estimated at 107,200*l.* This estimate was framed with reference to the cost of the vessel *Lindsay*, and the heavy expenses incurred in her voyages to and from the Red Sea.

It is then shown, First, that the description of vessels best adapted to the service may be obtained at a much lower cost than that of the Hugh Lindsay. Secondly, that the charge for fuel will be less than had been estimated, (a point adverted to in the Petition), and Thirdly, that the number of vessels, assumed to be constantly employed, was too large. The summing up of the various calculations, with the estimates of the probable receipts are here added.

The estimate will then stand as follows:—

	£18,644 total expense of one sea-going vessel.	
Deduct	2883 expense of keeping up the vessel.	
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	£15,761 sea-going expenses.	
Four steam vessels. Cost of keeping them up, exclusive of sea-going expenses, at per annum	£2,883	
	4	
	<hr/>	= £11,532
Two steam vessels employed throughout the year, sea-going expenses, at	£15,761	
	2	
	<hr/>	= £31,522
One ditto for half-year	7,881	
	<hr/>	
	Grand total	£50,935
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Estimate of Court of Directors	£107,200	
Revised Estimate	50,935	
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	£56,265	
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On the whole, it appears that the annual expense will be less by more than one-half than the estimate of the Court of Directors.

It is now to be considered what return there will be from postage and passengers, as a set-off against the expense.

Taking the number of letters, to and from Britain, which annually pass through the post offices of Calcutta, Madras, Bombay, and Galle, in Ceylon, to be 300,000, as stated in the Memorial of the Inhabitants of Calcutta, and supposing that two-thirds, or 200,000, will be sent by the steam-packet when a regular monthly communication is established, which, if the postage is fixed at a moderate rate, say twelve annas or 1s. 6d. a letter, seems to be a fair expectation, the return, even at that low rate, will be 15,000*l.* per annum.

Newspapers and parcels:—

Madras, as per account for 1834-35	25,843
Calcutta, say double of Madras	51,686
Bombay, say	20,000
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	97,529
Deduct one-third	32,509
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	Remainder 65,020 at 4 <i>d.</i> = £1,083
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There will be a further return for newspapers, parcels, &c., say 65,000, at 4*d.* each, which will give upwards of 1000*l.* The whole return then, from postage may be reckoned at about 16,000*l.* per annum.

Next as to passengers:—

The number annually arriving at, and departing from, Calcutta, Madras, Bombay, and Ceylon, and to Britain, is stated in the Calcutta Memorial to be 3,160.

Now, supposing one-fifth, or 632 per annum, to prefer a passage by the steam-packets, this would give for every trip twenty-six passengers, but say only twenty, at the moderate rate of 400 rupees, or 40L., the receipt will be 800L., allowing 300L., or three-eighths, for the cost of providing for the passengers, the net profit will be 500L. per voyage, or per twenty-four voyages, 12,000L. That 480 passenges out of 3160 will prefer this route when the communication is regularly established, and every necessary arrangement is made for facilitating their progress, by which they will not only gain two months in time, but will save a sixth part of the cost of a passage round the Cape, seems to be beyond a doubt.

Average cost of a passage by the Cape, say	£120
Cost of a passage to Suez	£40
Expense of journey to Alexandria	20
Cost of a passage from Alexandria to Falmouth	40
	— . 100
	Saving £20

The above return from passengers may therefore be safely reckoned upon as the minimum.

It appears then, that there will be a return of 28,000L. per annum from postage and passengers to be set against the expense of the steam vessels; the net charge will, therefore, be only 22,935L., which divided between His Majesty's Government and the East India Company, according to the Resolutions of the Select Committee, will make the charge upon the finances of India scarce more than 11,000L. per annum.

Revised estimate of charge	£50,935
Deduct estimated returns	28,000
	£22,935

A letter subsequently received from Madras, contains some further estimates which shew that the above would in no respect be injuriously affected by the extension of branch Steamers to the various Presidencies, but that such an extension would in all probability reduce the entire amount of charge. The following is a sketch:—

Supposing that the cost of a fit vessel, say 300 tons and 100 horse power, will be 15,000L., the annual charge will be as follows:—

Capital sunk per annum for fifteen years	£1,000
Interest at 4 per cent.	600
Insurance at 7½ per cent. on half the cost	562
	—
Annual charge of keeping up the vessel	2,162
Coal, at ten tons per day, for fourteen days, at 30s. per ton, 210L. per mens., 12 per annum	2,520
Establishment, stores, and repairs	3,000
	—
Total expense for one steamer between Calcutta and Galle, via Madras	7,682
	2
	—
For two	15,364
	—
For one steamer between Bombay and Galle as above	7,682l.
Add for four days coal, to make up eighteen days in the number, for two trips	720l. 8,402.

The following is an Estimate of the probable Returns for Postage and Passengers :

In postage, taking the number of letters according to the Calcutta memorial, and supposing that the whole pass by this channel,

Letters to and from Calcutta	160,000	at 6 Annas.	= 60,000 Rupees.	= 6,000 £
Madras	70,000	4	" 17,500	" 1,750
Bombay	54,000	5	" 16,875	" 1,687
				<u>9,437</u>
Add one-third to the estimate of letters per general packets, or 100,000 at 1s. 6d.				7,500
				<u>16,937</u>
Return by postage of letters				500
Add for parcels and newspapers				
Return for passengers				
Eight from Calcutta, at 30l.	240l.			
Six Madras 20l.	120l.			
Six Bombay 25l.	150l.			
	<u>510l.</u>			
	2 trips.			
	<u>1,020l.</u>	per mensem.		
Deduct expense one-fourth	255l.			
	<u>765l.</u>	per mensem.		
Net return	12			
	<u>9,180l.</u>	per annum.		9,180
				<u>26,617</u>
Total return by postage and passengers				23,766
				<u>2,851</u>
				22,985
Estimated net charge of general packets				2,851
Deduct surplus income for branch packets				
				<u>£20,084</u>
				Remaining net charge
				To be divided between his Majesty's Government and the East India Company.

MAP SHEWING THE PROPOSED LINE OF STEAM COMMUNICATION WITH INDIA.

