1. Importance.

1.1 In the comity of nations, the relative importance of a country can be assessed by the extent of its communications - one of the most commonly accepted criteria of a country's importance. Indian railways are the greatest nationalised undertaking in the country, the responsibility for successful working of which now rests on the Indian Government. "Over 40,000 miles of vital communication - maintained by us; maintained by over 800 crores of rupees - invested by us; over 40 crores of rupees - spent by us on purchases of stores; over 7,000 stations - manned by us; over 8,900 locomotives, 17,000 carriages and 2,29,000 waggons - run by us; these constitute our Railways."\(^1\) Their working, however, has not received the attention it deserves.

1.2 Ever since their inception, since 1853, Indian railways have passed through various stages of evolution. From construction by Guaranteed Companies to State Construction and Management and Mixed Enterprise, Nationalisation has been their latest phase.

The question as to how far the Indian railways have served, in the course of their various stages of evolution, the interests of the country induced me to study the history and problems of Indian railways. An attempt has, therefore, been made to give a connected account of the manner in which the railway development was brought about.

2.0 Outline and nature of the Thesis.

2.1 This thesis mainly presents, within its folds, the objective analysis of the railway policy and the critical description of the railway practice in India. I have drawn upon the authorities on the subject and have acknowledged them at their proper places.

2.2 The thesis has been divided into two parts. Part One outlines the history of the development of Indian railways. In this part, the study has been conducted by periods determined chiefly by the consideration of changes in the railway policy of the Government. Emphasis has been on the discussion of the evolution of railway policy and the various issues connected with it and not on merely the chronological events. Statistical tables have, therefore, been given only when absolutely necessary to illustrate the points. Part Two of the thesis relates to the discussion of various
problems of railways, in their historical perspective, for instance, problem of separation of railway finances from the general finances and the working of the Separation Convention (Chapter VI), the railway management and control (Chapter VII), problem of the multiplicity of gauges (Chapter VIII), the railway rates policy and practice (Chapters IX and X) and the fresh problems of railways that have arisen in the context of the developmental economy of our country since Independence (Chapter XI). The presentation of a true picture of the railway development along with a correct appraisal of the various problems connected with it, without being led to highly unrealistic and biased conclusions, is in itself a very formidable and responsible task. This thesis attempts to do this limited but essential work.