

GEOTECHNICAL EVALUATION AND NUMERICAL MODELING OF RAILWAY TRACKS ON COMPACTED SUBGRADE

by

AMIT SHARMA

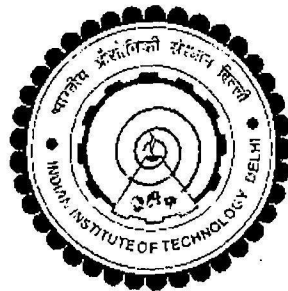
Department of Civil Engineering

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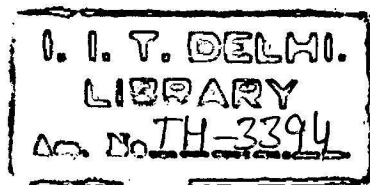
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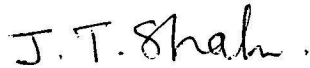
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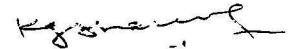
CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the thesis entitled “**GEOTECHNICAL EVALUATION AND NUMERICAL MODELING OF RAILWAY TRACKS ON COMPACTED SUBGRADE**” being submitted by **Mr. Amit Sharma** to the Indian Institute of Technology Delhi is a record of bonafide research work carried out by him under our supervision and guidance. The thesis work, in our opinion, has reached the standard, fulfilling the requirements for **DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY** degree. The research report and results presented in this thesis have not been submitted, in part or full, to any University or Institute for the award of any degree or diploma.



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Asharma
(Amit Sharma)

ABSTRACT

Given the fact that roadways are already saturated and congested, the only viable alternative for the growth of land transportation remains the railways that can either be achieved by the upgradation of existing tracks or by the construction of new ones as per the requirement. In the past, the track superstructure has received major attention; however, the present study is more oriented towards the substructure design, i.e., the design is related to the material and thickness of various base layers of a track. The substructure attains significance because the performance of the superstructure is directly dependent on the support provided from beneath. Moving trains transmit load to the soil below it through ballast and sub-ballast layers.

The present study has been carried out in four main parts, namely, geotechnical characterization of materials and interfaces of various track layers; half-scale, full panel laboratory model tests; elasto-plastic three-dimensional finite element analysis of track structure; and formulation of design methodology. Geotechnical characterization of different track layer materials and interfaces have been carried out. Tests have been conducted on ballast and sub-ballast materials conforming to Research Design and Specifications Organization (RDSO), Indian Railways. Tests on subgrade soils have been conducted on Indo-Gangetic alluvial silts characterized by variation in their plasticity.

Both monotonic and slow cyclic triaxial tests have been conducted on three different Indo-Gangetic alluvial silts, namely, Delhi silt, Allahabad silt and Kanpur silt as subgrade material. The subgrade soil behaviour has been analyzed in quasi-saturated, critical state soil mechanics framework. Based on cyclic tests, simple correlations have

been given for development of cumulative plastic strain and threshold stress of the subgrade soils under cyclic loading. Parameters of bilinear log-log relationship for development of cumulative plastic strain have been evaluated for Indo-Gangatic alluvial silts. A relationship between threshold stress and plasticity index is proposed for low plasticity compacted silts pertaining to low effective confining stresses.

Drained monotonic and cyclic triaxial tests have been carried out on two different gradations (fine and coarse gradation) of sub-ballast material. These materials are locally available Badarpur sand (fine material) and crushed Delhi Quartzite (coarse material) respectively. The tests have been carried out on 38 mm diameter specimens for fine material and 100 mm diameter specimens for coarse material. Large-size drained monotonic triaxial tests on 380 mm diameter specimens have been carried out on ballast materials – two conforming to RDSO specifications and two other for comparison. Both ballast and sub-ballast materials were modeled in terms of strength parameters of Mohr-Coulomb model. Important conclusions have been derived from particle breakage analysis of ballast samples.

To study the interface properties of various interfaces found within the track layers, direct shear testing has been carried out to characterize different interfaces by means of shear stiffness, normal stiffness and coefficient of interface friction. Tests have been conducted by simulating various interfaces that exist in typical north Indian wooden or steel sleeper track in laboratory direct shear apparatus. The interfaces tested are between subgrade and sub-ballast; sub-ballast and ballast; ballast and sleeper; and sleeper and rail. Series of normal load tests and direct shear tests are conducted in the laboratory on various interfaces. Both small size and large size direct shear tests have been carried

out depending on the particle size of the material constituting each layer on either side of an interface.

A half-scale, adequately instrumented, laboratory model testing of railway track has been carried out. Series of tests have been performed on model railway tracks comprising of different thicknesses of granular layers, namely, ballast and sub-ballast, and supported on different types of subgrades. A sinusoidal loading corresponding to 300 kN axle load in the prototype was applied on steel rail supported by model sleepers and a steel rail. Based on the geometric and loading symmetry, only one-half of the track has been modeled. The main objectives of the model tests are to evaluate the influence of granular layer thicknesses and subgrade type on load-deformation behavior of railway track under static and cyclic loading and to use the results of model track for calibration of numerical model developed in this study. The testing has been carried out for tracks laid on both compacted and remoulded soil subgrades. Model track was constructed using the same geomaterials on which laboratory tests were conducted.

Finite element analysis of a railway track with track superstructure (rail and sleepers) along with track substructure layers, viz., subgrade, sub-ballast and subgrade is presented. For this purpose, a three-dimensional (3D) finite element analysis has been conducted using the commercially available software package ABAQUS. The predicted results from the analysis are compared with the model tank test results. Next an elasto-plastic finite element analysis of the prototype railway track has been conducted using the material constitutive parameters evaluated from the laboratory tests. Mohr-Coulomb yield criterion has been used to simulate the behaviour of granular materials and Modified Cam-Clay model has been used to simulate the behaviour of subgrade soil. The numerical

analysis also includes a parametric study of the response of a track with varying modulus of elasticity of ballast, sub-ballast and subgrade; thickness of ballast and sub-ballast layer; moment of inertia of rail; and sleeper spacing assuming linear, elastic response.

Finally, a rational design methodology for the determination of a railroad track has been formulated combining the two aspects of the study conducted, viz., experimentation and finite element analysis. The design methodology is based on limiting the maximum deviator stress induced on the subgrade surface due to traffic loading below the threshold stress of the subgrade soil, by providing an adequate formation thickness. The design procedure so established has a direct practical application in real life for the construction of railway track to be laid on compacted subgrade passing through Indo-Gangetic Plains.

To summarize, the study presents design methodology backed by suitable geotechnical laboratory testing of the track layer constituent materials and numerical stress-deformation analysis (3D finite element analysis) to arrive at safe design of the railway track under different loading conditions in terms of thickness of its various constituent granular layers.

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