

## Travel & Knowledge

Travel makes the horizon broader. Some such knowledgeable statement has been attributed to some Francis Pork or Bacon I do not remember whom. I had read this essay while travelling by a local train in Mumbai. Not an ideal environment for study and remembering.

I have spent a good part of my life on road.

The first journey was on the haystack on a bullock cart. A night journey. From my village to my aunt's. I was less than 3 years.

In working life. Roughly 3 hours a working day and may be more on other days. Of course on working days I daydream. In sleep I dreamt of better working days or travels.

Travel by road was enjoyable in the city when I was young and 54 inches tall. For different reasons than travel conditions. Until I grew moustaches (or until they grew naturally at ripe young age of 19) I was asked by the conductor of the bus "Half ticket?" I was amused no end but the saving in *annas* was beyond amusement. It was serious. I needed all of those *annas*. And kept them.

Road conditions kept worsening. For young ladies in the family way, it helped in delivery without surgery. Smaller the vehicle, faster the delivery. For older generation, it can make your bones brittle on most of the roads.

Travel by railroads was good enough, comparatively, those days. There was no fear of getting sandwiched. Good part of my studies was done in the trains. A student with book in hand – and mine were quite thick and hardbound – was treated on par with girls (and ladies). For getting seats officered. Thick books with a man with moustaches in later years did not yield the same results. Parity had been lost.

Travel by air was nice. Someone else paying for it – the employer – all the time; they were official visits. Someone welcoming you at the door of the aircraft with folded hands – nowhere else including at home have I received that welcome. Oh! Yes! My in-laws did it but that was before marriage.

Once there was someone looking like Khushwant Singh in the seat next to me in the aircraft. He asked me, after he had gone through his office mail – papers – "What business are you in?" He was not pleased with my answer that I was working. And I was not in employment to please him; he did not know that.

Moneybags and empty bags should not travel together. He did not have enough for a personal plane and my employer had enough to pay my fare. So we happened to be together with no choice for him. He almost had to rub shoulders with someone smaller than him.

Recently, I was travelling by a passenger train – least cost personal travel – if there is one. Two Gujarati businessmen were talking about Gujaratis, Marwaris and Madrasis. While the first two communities were busy making money through business and industry, the Madrasis were happy being typists and were happy seeing their children becoming typists, according to them. And the language of conversation, as can be imagined, was Gujarati.

That was some enlightenment for me about Madrasis. I include myself in that group because anyone from south of Vindhya is a Madrasi for them. I did not want to enlighten them about typewriter being an obsolete item and about Narayana Murthys. Ignorance is bliss. Bliss is a state which many crave for but few attain. These two had attained it with so much ease; some aspiring *sanyasins* can emulate them.

I look forward to more journeys by that passenger train from Ahmedabad to Mumbai to broaden the horizon of my knowledge. Just to prove Pork or Bacon right. Not to become a *sanyasin* through enlightenment.

By Mr. H.R.Shenoy, Mumbai, Age 67yrs [hrshenoy@rediffmail.com](mailto:hrshenoy@rediffmail.com)

[www.silverinnings.com](http://www.silverinnings.com)