

Dear Akhi,

I saw a documentary recently that included passenger train travel in India. I was surprised to see hundreds of travelers sitting atop the railroad cars. I think there were more people riding outside than inside the cars. *Is that safe?*

Aghast

Dear Agh,

I am sitting now in Syria, outside the Damascus gate. I have never been to India. Do you know your geography? If so, you must know that more than two thousand miles of arid land stretches between the borders of India and my country.

Perhaps, some day, they will build rails between my gate and New Delhi for the fastest of trains. Indeed, since that train will travel through Iraq, Iran, Afghanistan, and Pakistan, the faster the better! May Allah bring tranquility to all those neighbors soon.

Akhi has seen a documentary, too, about your country. You have many trains and nearly one quarter million miles of rail, but most of your mighty engines pull freight to market. Your people do not travel by train the way we have for decades.

Instead, you have ten times as many miles of paved roads for your motor carriages, most of which carry only one passenger, with no one on top! The documentary said US citizens prefer the convenience of auto travel. But Agh, if you would choose rail, you could meet your neighbor across the aisle, or atop the carriages. You could make new friends while conveniently letting the engine master get you to your destination. And, my new friend, think of the fuel you could save.

Akhi has lived a long time. He has seen auto travel come, and, by the grace of Allah, he will live to see it go. There is not sufficient fuel for all your one-passenger carriages. Rail is cheaper and builds community. Both are preferable for Akhi.

Akhi wishes you well as you move from roads to rail, and prays that you save the oil for your lamps, your machines, and most importantly, for your children. If you don't, it will soon be gone.

Will that be safe?

Peace in all you do.

Akhi

Ask Akhi...



Akhi, the beggar sage, sits at the city gates instructing all in the dance of life. . . .

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