
The Invention And Development Of Railway Transport

In the past, people used to travel by foot from one place to another. It became a problem when they had to travel with some of their goods, especially for long distances. This is when they introduced the idea of using animals as a mode of transport. This was also not efficient as the animals would often get tired and fatigued during a journey. Something had to be done and this was the start of a great era of ideas. "The idea of running a vehicle along a track dates back thousands of years to Ancient Greece which tracks were worn into reel by primitive wagons that were moved along by hand or animal".

The first basic railways were designed using wood but there was an issue of keeping the vehicle on the railway. After realising that wood is not the suitable material to use when building a railway, steel was brought into the picture and it was a total success. In the early 1700s and engineer called Devon Thomas invented a pumping engine powered by steam. This was used in the mines to pump water up and down the country. From this invention, James watt was able to improve the engine to one which can power up a whole entire train. Watt harnessed the steam power and increased the efficiency of the steam engines. An idea is only a dream unless acted upon. In the early 1800s (1804-1808) Mr Richard Trevithick who was a mining engineer acted upon his idea and turned it into reality by creating the first real locomotive, which he called "Catch me who can". This invention travelled 19Km/h and operated by burning coal, it was a steam engine and the fourth locomotive to be created. From Mr Richard's idea, many locomotive trains were born between the 1800s and the 1900s.

In the golden age of rail travel the trains which were produced were made stronger, faster and cleaner. Cleaner in a sense that, electricity started being used to power up the subway instead of burning coal and damaging the environment. The first electric powered train was invented in 1837 by Robert Davidson who was a chemist in Scotland which was powered by a galvanic cell. The diesel powered engine started operating in 1912 on the railway in Switzerland. It was not used for commercial reasons, although it was able to support heavy loads, it was not fast enough to transport goods in a short space of time. In the early 2000s China created a train which travels 693. 6Km/h which was used to transport people between towns. The train was powered by magnets and is still being developed to something better to date.

In South Africa, the recent railway development we have is the Gautrain, which was created in 2010, the year of the International Federation of Association Football. The Gautrain travels within the radius of the Gauteng Province. It uses a card system instead of paying cash; you buy a card, load it with money then get on the train. This just shows how far the evolution of trains comes from. All of this started with just one invention and it elevated to so many great

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inventions. There are other modes of transport but I personally find the train as the best invention of all the other modes, reasons are to be discussed below.

Travelling by train can almost feel like paradise, especially for females since it allows you to carry more luggage as compared to motor vehicles, buses and planes. With the high rates of accidents in the world, the train is still ranked the safest mode of transport. Travelling by train might be slower than travelling by your own vehicle but it guarantees you safety. In South Africa, the Gautrain implements the park and ride system for those who would like to park their cars and travel by train. This has a positive impact on our environment. Also, crime levels are decreased since most trains now use the golden card system instead of paying cash; chances of getting robbed are decreased.

Railway transport is usually affordable and reasonable so you don't have to spend a lot of money on travelling. It is family orientated, in a sense that everyone can travel using a train including families and since it's affordable, the whole entire family can tag in on the journey. While travelling, you can do your work, contemplate and enjoy the landscape since you won't be driving. Once you are fatigued, you can rest comfortably without having to stop your journey. Even the Metrorail company which is Passenger Rail Agency South Africa, has trains that travel for long distances for a cheap price. They also have a section of first class where they offer service such as rooms where a person can sleep. Trains are efficient since they can transport approximately 2500 passengers per hour. Imagine having to transport so many people using motor vehicles. There would be air and noise pollution and the traffic would be disastrous. Certain trains have a regenerating braking capability which allows them to save electricity through traction motors while braking. While in a train, you get a chance to be social and interact with different people, who have different views on different things instead of being isolated in your car.

One may argue that travelling by your own motor vehicle is more remarkable due to its speed, the convenience of personal space and comfort, forgetting that they all come at a highly unreasonable price. Unlike a car, it's not your responsibility to maintain and repair a train, so it does not cost you much. Railways transport has a positive impact on our economy as it creates jobs opportunities. With our recent creation, the Gautrain; it provides services for tourists and also accommodates for handicapped people. The trains have non-slippery surfaces and handles for people who cannot walk; it provides sufficient light, signage and non-reflective surface for people with eyesight problems. Trains reduce traffic congestions and if more people use it on a daily basis, it can reduce air pollution since a lot of Chlorofluorocarbons won't be released into the atmosphere. Railway transportation is also used to transport minerals from mines to main cities in South Africa and also it assists when it comes to trading goods.

I critically think that trains as a mode of transport is one the best invention that were discovered.

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It even help street vendors to make more money. As in South Africa there are people who sell their products at the station and even with the train. I have literally saw interesting things in the train been sold, some of the things are man-made. Even though most of them sell food and refreshments, but make the shoes by their hands then they sell them. Some of this people the get arrested, the reason being that the police say that they have valid permits to sell their products. I totally think that is unfair because they are trying to make a living. In short, Rail Transport is the most efficient mode of transport because it benefits human kind socially, economically, environmentally, financially and also it secures them making them feel safe. Rail transport makes transportation of heavy goods much easier and it helps with reducing traffic, air pollution and noise pollution as compared to other modes of transport. It assists with transporting a large number of people in a short space of time without causing accidents. It is family orientated since families can bond during their time of travel; these are all the reasons why it remains the best mode of transport. Hence I personally rate it as the one of the best inventions that were made. Past experiences play a huge role in our current situations and have a bigger role to play in the future. As it all began by an idea of creating rail which was later developed to a locomotive and then to a fully functional train, Richards's idea of locomotives is still being bettered to this day. Engineers all over the world are looking for other ways of developing railway transportation so that it can be more beneficial to humankind. I also believe that we will be excepting great changes on the current effective trains we have now.

New features are being added to improve the functionality and convenience of railway transport, features which are environmental friendly, simple, safe and enhances socialising are being brought into the picture. These features include, Energy flooring which generates electricity from footwall, Virtual shopping wall which offers convenience and ease, Monitoring drone for predictive maintenance and improved security and mobility and lifestyle hub for business, leisure and connecting with different beings. The future does indeed look futuristic.

In a nut shell I totally believe that railway transport is the best invention that were found because of the above mentioned reasons, thoughts and feelings. I like to personally thank Devon Thomas in this writing for inventing a railway transport. As this mode of transport has bought change in my life. Since I was a child I was using a train to Gauteng Province to visit my relatives. I also believe there are people and the governments that would like to thank Devon Thomas for the great work that he has done.

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