

30 LESSONS FROM LIFE

Slices Of Experiences From Across Five Decades

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BlueRoseONE.com
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PREFACE

First, a declaration:

I have NOT used AI, in fact I have not even searched online for any rhyming words. All that you see in this book was generated first-hand by me alone from memory, using my own vocabulary. Only online aid I allowed myself was the website of Oxford Learner's Dictionaries to double-check whether a word I wanted to use did mean what I wanted to, or could be used in the context I intended...

Okay, now that is out of the way, let's get on with it!

Writing anything is never easy. Whether it's a simple mail to a loved one or a formal application – we always tend to think twice before giving a final written shape to our thoughts. Of course, the backspace button has made things far easier now, but I am sure each one of us is never happy with our initial drafts.

And you shouldn't be too. For it's the dissatisfaction with our work which encourages us to keep improving it. The flip side is giving up and letting it go after coming to terms with what would eventually be released as the final version. But for all of these scenarios, the basic requirement is to get over that infernal writer's block and just start writing!

Anyway, I should be the last person to say all this since I had always wanted to author a novel for decades (in fact, I still want to) but I never got around to it. So, when I first saw a poetry writing challenge on social

media, I said why not! At least here was a task that – by just attempting –would reveal where my capabilities stand.

The result, after overshooting the initial deadline by months, is this small collection of poems. It's coupled with the personal realisation that authoring a novel should hopefully be far easier than these rhyming texts. I mean, like I said at the beginning of this preface, writing itself is not that easy, and to write in rhymes most definitely taxes you! So, I certainly hope my novel – if and when I get around to it – would be a far easier task.

As for this foray into poetry: The only takeaway for me personally has been the immense sense of satisfaction after finally completing this task. I sincerely hope you enjoy reading these poems, in whatever shape I have left them for you.

And don't forget to let me know what you think of them.

Thanks for your support,

Willie



DEDICATION

*For my mother, Bharati D'Souza, who
brought me up single-handedly since
my father passed away when I was 13.*

*And for my father, Conrad Anthony D'Souza,
who shared so much knowledge with me in so little time.*



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

"Life is a succession of lessons which must be lived to be understood"

— **Ralph Waldo Emerson**

This work would never have been possible without the several teachers and senior editors who have patiently taught me and ensured an exponential improvement in my language over the decades. Right from my schools – Don Bosco in New Delhi and more so at St. Francis de Sales in Nagpur – the foundational years in education are what shaped my writing capabilities.

These were further refined under the watchful, critical and appraising eyes of several colleagues and editors across newsrooms of such well known publications as *The Hitavada* in Nagpur, *Mumbai Mirror* & *The Times of India* in Mumbai and *Business Standard* across Mumbai & New Delhi. I am and will remain forever grateful to them for guiding me throughout my career.

Most of all, I must acknowledge the immense help and valuable insights my family gave me during the course of this task. My daughter Grace and son Mark helped to catch errors and provided tips on what could be improved. (Although our interactions revealed that the proverbial generational gap does indeed create differences in even how we grasp language itself. Case in point: I used ‘*three Rs*’ as I had learnt them in my childhood – to denote *Reading*, *’Riting* & *’Rithmetic*! But they thought it meant *Reduce*, *Reuse* & *Recycle*!

Well, in this case, I stuck to my version, however archaic it may seem now to the younger generation!!! ;-)

Still, it goes without saying that I am grateful to them. I particularly owe a lot to my wife Zarine for the rock-steady support she eternally provides. Her advice was extremely helpful while giving shape to this entire collection of poems.

I owe a lot to Malhaar Shinde too for taking over the designing of this booklet's cover. A student of designing, it's his ideas alone that resulted in the final visual you see!

I would also like to take this opportunity to give a shout-out to a huge inspiration of mine – Radhakrishnan Pillai, or 'Radha bhai' to me! His successful journey from a columnist to a smash hit author, while still being humble and down-to-earth, is something all can learn from. *Radha bhai, you had put my name in the Acknowledgements section of your runaway success 'Corporate Chanakya' book. Now I've taken this opportunity to do the same!*



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1. Can We Keep Cons Busy To Reduce Cybercrime?!!

Whenever my mobile rings with red 'spam' caller ID tag,
If I'm free, I rush to answer the call, and this is no gag,
For I want to keep busy telemarketers & cybercons alike,
I know – that's unlike most who tell 'em to take a hike!

The reason: Keeping 'em tied down is a national service,
You help shield other citizens, but this is not for a novice,
After all, you can never ever confirm any personal data,
And NEVER share OTP or you'll lose a whole more lotta!

So if a call "from TRAI" threatens to cut my tele service,
I beg for 2 mins, then bargain for another 5 over "fees"!
If my "parcel is stuck at customs" and asked for a fine,
I holler a lot why "cash-on-delivery" option isn't mine?

“Get rich quick trading online” is mostly a fun chat,
For I ask advance stock tips, but the caller falls flat!
A long complaint is kept for “online jobs for big bucks”,
When I make it clear the offered pay is too low & sucks!

“Maturing insurance policy” & “tax refunds” are tricky,
Cause here good cons can make you feel real lucky,
Again: Never reveal any bank or other details at all,
I just keep saying “UPI it to my no.” through the call!

Some callers cut in few minutes, others stick for ten,
Those who talk long always ask, “Why I indulged them?”
Pat comes my reply: “This is a national service of mine”,
Well, one went ballistic, all others in a huff cut the line!

Now I admit I haven't yet faced a "digital arrest" scam,
But if I do, I'll cut call and put phone down with a slam,
Because that I cannot do – living 24/7 in front of a cam,
So, that's the one call where I'll say, "No thanks ma'am!"

But jokes aside, do be careful online and during a call,
Don't share info, especially now that AI is used for all,
Of course, if you feel confident and have free time,
Then keep cons busy to perhaps reduce cybercrime!



2. Be There For Kids, Cause They're Gone In A Blink!

Seems like only yesterday my baby was within my arms,
I blinked, and she's all grown up, on cusp of adulthood!
I still recall my baba taking wobbly steps towards me,
I blinked, and that tiny toddler is months from teenhood!

They've no memory of cute gibberish they first spoke,
Of the favourite trinkets they picked over toys far better,
We parents remember antics, about which we still joke,
Of course, work made us miss more things that matter!

True: In a fast-paced world you'd be blessed to be there,
When they say their first word, or start on solid foods,
Still, you must prioritise your kids – show that you care,
Learn not only their loves but also all the shifting moods!

If you fail, you won't be able to tell kids' facts from fib,
They'll grow aloof along with an ever-widening distance,
Then you'll catch yourself wishing they're back in crib,
Hoping for the shortest chat at every possible instance!

Yes, you're working and trying your best to provide,
But do give time to your young while they're at home,
NOW is when they need you and want you on their side,
Do that and they'll always return, wherever they roam!



3. I Know Only One True All-Rounder

An 'all-rounder' can bowl & bat – most desis would say,
Or similarly call a kid who's good in both studies & play,
And many think excelling in 2 things is what most may,
But truly my school teacher was miles ahead in this fray!

For I'm talking of Sir Chris from my Nagpur alma mater,
He was THE all-rounder I know, a master in **8 paths...**
An electrician, plumber, carpenter, even cobbler I gather,
Coached on sports fields, and taught science & maths!

Every 'hobby' of his has had on me a profound impact,
He was first **electrician** to show me all kinds of meters,
Till date I take e-lessons to get right all Wattage facts,
As **plumber** he showed wrench & twine to plug waters!

As **carpenter** he has all tools the trade would need,
But it was his **cobbler** avatar that truly blew me away,
For he's only one I know to own an anvil that's 3-heeled,
What *mochis* have, on this he's repaired shoes sans pay!

This made him perfect handy-man, ever ready to work it,
No need to call technicians – Sir repairs & maintains all,
He once made for me a wooden boxed power circuit, For
years it controlled my C'mas lights, and I had a ball!

Then, of course, as his SFS students would vouch for,
Sir is **teacher** of science, maths and history-geography,
And he's **coached** winners in football, hockey and more,
There's another two, enough to challenge all philosophy!

For Sir is also a **musician**, the six-string most fav of all,
Helping him and his band to entertain at several fixtures!

But few know he's **fiction fan** – comics, merch he has all,
So, tell me truly, where will you find this rare mixture?

Real fun is when this talents' combo piques his curiosity:
New tools evoke grunts like Tim 'The Toolman' Taylor,
On learning new tech or idea Sir will show some felicity,
And boy, he really does take to it all like a fish to water!

That's why I always say Sir Chris has set a real high bar,
For someone now to be called a true all-rounder by far!



4. Hey Caregiver, Take Care Of Yourself Too

It's never easy when a loved one becomes sick,
More so if that person becomes bed-ridden too,
For then it's like everything in life stops to tick,
No one knows the challenges here except few!

Entire family is forced to go into a lockdown mode,
Having to relearn everything – right from scratch,
Tasks like bathing & feeding now become a load,
No one can leave unless a stay-in maid you catch!

Then comes hospital bed and wheelchair combo,
Those underpads, neosporin powder, cotton galore,
Info about catheters one must learn even if a dumbo,
Air mattresses, maybe BiPAP machines come to fore!

But in all of this it's easy to lose sight of a vital fact:
Take care of YOURSELF as the caregiver you must,
Whether it's the movies or an outing – do it with tact,
Else there'll be two patients & household will go bust!

I know it's not easy, since getting help is not cheap,
After all, my family has seen this over a dozen years,
But believe me, if you keep slogging without a peep,
YOUR health will give way, leaving nothing but tears!

So, even as you worry about the patient all the time,
Doing their exercise routines & scanning for a bed sore,
Learn to trust the maid and step out – it's not a crime,
In fact, try to get a few days and rush to the seashore!

So remember: If someone has to be taken care of and fed,
Take care of yourself too, else you'll end up in same bed!



5. It's A Small World, And Getting Smaller, After All

For ages, six degrees of separation was the norm,
But social media has brought all folks into a swarm,
And all new connections are older than you think,
With common friends present before you form a link!

Now you don't bump into friends just out of station,
For you find familiar faces even on global vacations,
And if you don't find abroad folks you hold very dear,
You will at least find our own lingo spoken very clear!

In fact matchmakers aren't used in some communities,
For in those, every family has fully networked aunties,
These are out to settle every single nephew and niece,
Fulfil that mission they do even if it breaches the peace!

Industries are no exception, with every field being small,
Junior and senior execs know across firms one and all,
So much so, if on the work floor of an office you sneeze,
Your ex-colleague will message “gesundheit” in a breeze!

So be very careful of what you say or do, or how you act,
For even without cameras word can travel – that’s a fact,
A secret is so when in mind – believing that is your call,
Because it’s a small world, and getting smaller, after all!



6. Don't Die Alone!

I know, I know: The above is blunt and morbid it sounds,
But I'd like to share something I've observed with you,
Too often so many prefer a life alone with no love found,
Neither a child nor a mate they have – friends too few!

Am sure you've noticed how this malaise is on the rise,
Particularly among modern youth busy building a career,
No time for old pals, having with colleagues some fries,
Going to office parties, designed to make work merrier!

Oh, job wise they are forging ahead and doing very well,
Going places as the busy man and raking in the moolah,
But without a relationship they are in a mental spiral,
A scream inside, a facade outside – they can't fool ya!

Worst is the realisation that they are in life quite lonely,
Some envy who're settled – thankfully they're scarce,
Few look to pets, but true intimacy is with humans only,
So pick a soulmate, while you can still do it with grace!

Never mind societal norms, love whoever reciprocates,
Someone who'll share a movie, trip, or chat on phone,
Who shares your joys, in bad times helps and never frets,
Only then you'll have a life partner and never die alone!



7. Parents, Ensure Kids Visit Your School!

Nearly all kids' school is different from their parents',
Never knowing where the older gen learnt their three Rs,
For small ones, they have no idea if it's same or different,
So parents, show your kids you did not study on Mars!

Today's kids have water purifiers and coolers, ACs even,
They are no strangers to projectors and fast computers,
Their school trips are to cities, maybe to a foreign region,
Homework is done with AI, leaving aghast all elders!

Oh sure, your school has all that now, but take them still,
Show where in your era it was plain, ambient tap water,
Tell how fans worked if you had power, forget digi frills,
Picnics were to rivers – certainly no Google as a helper!

Talk of the sports field and focus on development overall,
How all vied to be an NCC cadet – Air or Army Wing,
Hard work for projects, concerts – all answered the call,
None had personal screen, but all sought a bat to swing!

If it's a century-old school, your kids will see thick walls,
Maybe a tough life, but your pride too – that you're cool,
They'll recognise real education, away from cafes, malls,
Just for that, dear parents, ensure kids visit your school!



8. There Are Far Tougher Jobs Than Yours

Far too many of us don't exactly go to our work gaily,
Dragging our disgruntled selves in a drudge to office,
But ever wondered which is the toughest job globally?
For if you did, you'd surely never give your job a miss!

Well, let me share with you a personal list I've made,
Of folks I think carry out far more challenging work,
Be free to agree or disagree – that I've never forbade,
But note how in these careers the toughest tasks lurk!

First, obviously, are personnel in uniform, gun in hand,
Yes they are fed, clothed, sheltered and given purpose,
But when facing danger for our defence in a distant land,
Respect is all we can give for doing duty sans any fuss!

Next come police who spend long hours fighting crime,
Undermanned, they still take on a burden that's large,
For elections, VIP security, festivals – all are duty prime,
And fulfil it bravely do cops, ever ready to take charge!

Third for me (first for some) are the doctors and nurses,
Here too we see long hours and dangers like Covid,
And so many times, in case they fail, they face curses,
But carry on they do, in spite of all, without getting livid!

Then there are those serving in the field of hospitality,
Full of drivers, doormen, housekeepers, waiters, chefs,
A holiday means a hectic time that'll keep them busy,
Respect they must all their guests – amid tips or tiffs!

How can we forget members of the fourth estate,
Those that share with all a news learnt firsthand,
Whether it's a parade or pandemic, a rally or riot,
Even in a festival – newsrooms will always be manned!

We can't miss teachers, responsible for shaping minds,
In fact those in charge of tiny tots find it far tougher,
They stay calm while dealing with brats of all kinds,
Trying their best to turn out good citizens for the future!

We've not talked of the janitor, peon and housemaid,
Far many others whose work everybody refuses to do,
And never forget the mothers who don't even get paid,
So with such tough jobs, there's nothing in yours to rue!



9. Always Be In Touch With Your Elders

I recently met up with my school time vice-principal,
An aged Fr. Ivan took one look & exclaimed, “Willie!”
Proving his elephantine memory was intact and integral,
Making all concerns about his health seemingly silly!

It was well over two decades ago that I left school,
And here was Father Ivan impressing me with queries,
Recalling my extended family in his deep thought pool,
Completely shocking me with his sharp mental faculties!

What struck me was his knowledge of my family tree,
Revealing how much he must’ve known of each pupil,
With still sparkling eyes, looking at a student with glee,
It shows how happy elders are to see their wards grown!

It got me thinking: How often do we visit a teacher?
We must at least write, give an update on our career,
Tell them our deeds, on which firm's rolls we feature,
Then we can see how their eyes fill with a joyous tear!

That is why I regularly visit someone who taught me,
If I cannot, at least I try to send a message or two,
For these are the folks who set our thoughts free,
If they are not happy for us, then ask yourself who?

Even with family elders, we tend to underplay their role,
We forget especially those who helped in tough times,
Don't say you were too small: You know of their dole,
Not staying in touch could be one of the worst crimes!



10. Get Over Your Stage Fright!

Recall that first time being called to speak on a stage,
Address a gathering, or lecture on a chosen topic?
I am sure you would've instead preferred a cage,
With legs turning to rubber and you starting to panic!

Your preparations must've gone out the windows,
Those facts and figures drained from your brain,
What's worse are teasing looks from own fellows,
With mic slipping, you swear never to do this again!

Well, truth is ALL good public speakers have felt this,
In fact, ask and such old fears they will with joy share,
Since clearing of the initial hurdles fills them with bliss,
And now it's a distant memory – a nicely fulfilled dare!

Similarly you have talent too for becoming an orator,
Just keep at it and take the centre stage persistently,
Of course, do your research to turn into an educator,
And soon you'd be a sought-after speaker, consistently!

Then it won't matter whatever gremlins invade the dais,
Whether projector or pen drive fail, or PPT doesn't play,
If sound system goes kaput, you'll still make your case,
For now you're clear voiced, with feet no more of clay!

There's a reason you must know in public to speak:
Sharing experiences may turn another's career bright,
So never ever in limelight allow yourself to turn meek,
For educate others you do by getting over stage fright!



11. For Delivery Man, Go Beyond 'Thank You'

One of the most unique things of modern times is this:

You press a button, and a person runs to bring you food!

Whether you're used to it or eager for a culinary bliss,

Someone is rushing to deliver while it's hot and good!

E-shopping isn't different, all depends on delivery chain,

Some firms use good ol' postal system too for last mile,

And customers hardly e-shop once, for all do it again,

With foot soldiers running final leg to bring you a smile!

Spare a thought for the courier guy running your route,

Harsh sun or heavy rain or cold – he's eternally on road,

Meeting deadlines to earn a little, on troubles he's mute,

With a stuffed bag he rides a bike, ever in mission mode!

So, the next time you open your door to receive a parcel,
Make it a point to go beyond just that “Thank you”,
At least ask if he needs water, if you can, offer a morsel,
You’ll get empty bottle to refill, far more times than few!



12. It's Mental Health That's Truly Wealth

Too much attention is paid to being physically fit & fine,
And, for most, it's after encountering a health problem,
But talk of mental well-being & many say it's out of line,
Despite mental woes now forming a pandemic emblem!

That's because there's still so much stigma attached,
So, those anxious or depressed fight battles all alone,
This, despite their troubles being utterly unmatched,
They prefer to suffer silently, hiding any painful moan!

Well, let me tell all of you with depression or anxiety,
Definitely those grappling with some suicidal thought,
Or if you stumbled and have substance abuse mighty,
For all some help exists – it's not with difficulty fraught!

Even if you are not a patient but know of another,
Step up & try to get help by being a caring friend,
For an early intervention can be the biggest buffer,
Providing high recovery chance – that is the trend!

So, be on the alert for any changes in behaviour,
Or a difference in sleeping routine or in appetite,
For it could be a silent cry for help or a saviour,
And timely support from you will make it alright!

Well, my friends, take care of yourself and others too,
Value mental well-being as its price is known to few!

*(Dedicated to all the mental health warriors
at Chetana Foundation and beyond)*



13. Don't Forget To Network With Your Neighbours

Ok, so you may know who stays in your neighbourhood,
But have you ever joined them in any celebration,
Better yet, invited them to share your drinks & food?
If not, change this today by setting things in motion!

Next time there's a birthday, don't keep it private,
Ask your immediate neighbours if they can join you,
You'd be surprised at the fun you can have till late,
Even as you cement ties now known to too few!

Be clear I am not talking of gatherings in society,
But more of personal events under your own roof,
For without those all turn strangers and even nasty,
And then it becomes real tough to live a life all aloof!

Good ties go beyond just sweets during festivals,
For in difficult times you get vital help right next door,
With precious support at sad events like funerals,
Then you see a good neighbour's worth and more!

Oddly enough, biggest aid today is receiving parcels,
I can't think how those without pals manage this,
So, don't keep to yourself in your precious castles,
For, believe me, you're missing out on a life of bliss!

It's simple really: Problems spawn if you stay away,
But network with neighbours & they'll make your day!



14. What Comes First: Family Or Workplace?

So, you wanna be rich, putting career above all else?

Driving yourself to succeed and rise to topmost rank,

Working hard – no denying, but for a fat bank balance,

Got a family via miracle, but no time for 'em – be frank!

Ever the busy bee, you wanna be focused on your work,

Friends and relatives' events are not even on your radar,

Family can attend them all – you'll from job not 'shirk',

Since your efforts will ensure a bigger house & shiny car!

You've even taken care of health – gymming or running,

But you're in another world, dawn to way beyond dusk,

Never a minute to spare for folks eager for some loving,

What's left of your personal relationships is just a husk!

A time comes when you realise how stupid you've been,
Say, a peril befalls you or family faces some health woe,
Then suddenly you see, to help, only very few are keen,
Or when your workplace cuts costs and asks you to go!

That's why Bud, for family make it a routine to be there,
Yes it's tough to take leave, but do take 'em on a holiday,
Weddings, definitely funerals – try to attend each affair,
Cement all personal ties, don't set them in fragile clay!

Okay, you need to save to ensure your family's future,
But do bear in mind they also want to see your face,
God forbid, if family breaks, there's no saving suture,
So, set priorities right: Family, or just the workplace?



15. Don't Miss The Joy Of Reading!

In this era of digital screens and gratification instant,
So many folks give in to devaluing every written word,
But to do so keeps us from well thought-out content,
Leaving us a blink-and-miss version of our world!

I am not asking you to seek balanced facts and figures,
Nor am I pushing here only a newspaper, mag or book,
What I like is text (+ visuals?) from laymen and leaders,
And if it is well-researched, it will broaden our outlook!

You don't even need to look for what's in good old print,
Since all reputed web portals will do – as will Kindle,
And from right wing or leftist essays you needn't sprint,
Because you're bright, knowing with whom to mingle!

That's why I pray: Whatever the material, keep reading,
A recipe, an insightful article, a DIY topic – every stuff,
Just aim for any new info since the brain needs feeding,
And soon you'll be able to debate anything off-the-cuff!

That's cause when you read, you're more likely to recall,
After all, it's not a video of few secs you forget easily,
Then there's pleasure of feeling paper – that's best of all,
A joy known to those who plunge into reading freely!



16. Visit A Jungle!

In 2007, over half the world was recorded in urban area,
A seminal shift from our well documented rural history,
But that doesn't mean we cut off from all flora & fauna,
For it's our duty to avoid jungles turning into a mystery!

So, ensure you visit at least once a wildlife sanctuary,
As it is, India's blessed to have many to choose from,
Of course, which animals you'll spot remains a lottery,
Even then, it's an amazing break from city humdrum!

For your guide will point out amazing birds & deer,
At a water hole you'll recognise many a pug mark,
And that green has a smell you'll get in no career,
To top it all, you'll learn monkey calls are no lark!

Parents especially must take their kids to jungle,
For that's where they'll see the real circle of life,
They'll learn how the cast of 'Jungle Book' mingle,
And where Mother Nature rules, there's no strife!

Now the real jackpot would be to spot a big wild cat,
For that, just go to one of 50 parks tigers call home,
We have 3,000+ tigers – forest officials deserve a pat,
But they remain elusive, still in jungle you must roam!

Just remember: Always follow instructions of your guide,
Only then you'll have a jungle memory that's bona fide!



17. For An Only Child, Life's A Lonely Leap

As a member of 'Gen X', I belong to a rare breed:
One who is an only child - no siblings whatsoever,
So, I had no one at home to follow or anyone to lead,
I got lonely when others chose their sister or brother!

Funny thing was mum had six siblings and dad eight,
And most of my pals had one, some even two or more!
But due to mum's foot woes, my parents sealed my fate,
Deciding one's enough, even if childhood will be a bore!

So an only child I became, never to know any sharing,
The result: I was eternally chubby, far from being lean,
Oh, folks said I was lucky to be focus of all the caring,
Even if I lost half the parental love on turning thirteen!

With no in-house contemporary to play or fight with,
Books, and of course TV, were my primary playmates,
Fav topics covered fact & fiction – history to Jedi & Sith,
With hyper imagination that could stuff a billion crates!

Decades later, when my mum became bed-ridden,
As the only child, my family and I had to care for her,
All friends asked: “You are the only one...no sibling?”,
Even as we turned our drawing room into a mini ER!

So, when it came to me & wifey (who has two siblings),
We decided one may be fun but two is definitely better,
They can take care of each other and share all feelings,
And hopefully help one another to become a go-getter!
I know, in this expensive era raising kids is not cheap,
But for an only child, life becomes a very lonely leap!



18. Late-Night Travels, And Some Travails

For well over two decades I've worked a graveyard shift,
Leaving newsroom only after sending the page to press,
This shifted timetable has its quirks, if you get my drift,
And take care one must to avoid health being a mess!

But travelling off-peak hours does have its blessing,
For one, you miss Mumbai local's terrible 'crush hour',
Since at both commuting times there's no one pushing,
Do get a book or movie on mobile, else the trip's dour!

Also, watch out for some real weird characters at night,
I learnt to be alert on last train near Reay Road station,
For there thieves snatched your phone without a fight,
And exit in a flash before it even came to your attention!

Best alternative to avoiding this was the office drop car,
But there you had to wait for the vehicle's quorum,
Hoping against hope all on your route live not too afar,
Else – to avoid a 'Mumbai Darshan' – all start a scrum!

In the office car there were some unwritten rules for all,
You were dropped as per distance but no lady was last,
So, I'd get a female coworker home & confirm in a call,
And then head home in a manner that's not at all fast!

Biggest problem returning home 1-2am or even later,
Is that if you have a heavy meal at that hour unearthly,
For certain your body ends up with problems sooner,
Acidity, lifestyle diseases – you'll become unhealthy!
So, graveyard shift saves from usual commuting blues,
But it's a travel with some travails that come in all hues!



19. Life's A Blur When You're Busy, But Sans Pals...

It's so easy to forget our past when we're living busy,
Especially bosom pals with whom we'd blown up town,
They stood by – in good times, or when we were queasy,
Pushing us and boosting morale when we were down.

When we lost a pet, they helped bury with honours,
When we had a tough exam, they set up group study,
To help, they came over in harsh sun or heavy showers,
For each problem – as well as a party – you had a buddy!

Most fun was when billeted with them away from home,
Either for Taekwondo or NCC's annual training camp,
When we grew up, we learnt to go far to further roam,
We had wild drinking sessions in dark with just a lamp!

But see us now – more interested in achieving targets,
Worried about annual appraisals, soon to turn quarterly,
As for buddies – each one less remembers, more forgets,
There's no way we'll escape the repercussions mentally!

So, please, don't forget your friends, make time for them,
Better yet, just call and create a plan for a reunion ASAP,
Since we all know our pals were crème de la crème,
And life's a blur when busy, but sans friends it's CRAP!!!



20. Help Kids Get Off Screens!

It's quite common to find children stuck to screens,
Making it a task to get them to study, play or even eat,
And this is seen in those who are younger than teens,
Acquiring their attention for a mere 2 minutes is a feat!

Gone are the days when all knew *kancha* or *gilli-danda*,
How to spin a top, or touch blue skies with their kites,
What Yo-Yos is just their emotions – immature kinda,
For so many grow without mingling, sharing and fights!

To top it all, specs are being worn at ever younger ages,
With e-comm & food apps, all prefer online ordering,
Teachers find it a challenge to get students to turn pages,
And growing dependence on AI is simply frightening!

But I ask you: Can we blame these kids and their peers?

Didn't elders plonk them before a TV to keep 'em busy?

No wonder their cyber antics are cause of our fears,

Something we have to tackle so they don't remain lazy!

Good news is we can wean them off but slowly, steadily,

Mix in exercises, board games – learn them you must!

Offer a new language or music class they'll take readily,

Then, of their own accord, the screens won't come first!

(Dedicated to all the mental health warriors

at Chetana Foundation and beyond)



21. YOU Can Do Social Service!

I've found nearly all want to do some good in society,
But no one knows where to contribute or even start,
Well, there are many NGOs into good work with piety,
Uplifting bit by bit those who're from luxury quite apart.

And it's unfortunate our society faces several woes,
Desperately in need for some help in any segment,
This is where I appreciate those who've become heroes,
Joining up like-minded folks who're helpers fervent!

The truth is, even YOU can in some small way help,
Never mind whether it's a religious body or some club,
Your joining a social service institution will give it fillip,
They always seek support – there's no way you'll flub!

I for one was lucky to have found my way into Rotary,
In just months our new club executed many a project,
We have helped out few orphanages through charity,
And worked on mental health & misconceptions correct!

We've aided cancer patients via camp for blood donation,
Raised funds to finance Jaipur foot & prosthetics for free,
We are even focused on animal welfare too as a mission,
And have health camps in slums to bring some glee!

Social service needs time, effort, funds – just give one,
Help however much you can, and life's mission is done!

*(Dedicated to my Rotary Club of NaMastu,
Navi Mumbai, all Rotarians and even other
armies of unsung volunteers who are neck deep
into social service in this vast & gigantic country)*



22. Taking Stock: A Way To Gamble Legally?

B. Graham's 'Mr. Market' has investor legends aplenty:
His pupil W. Buffett eyed value to make over \$100 billion,
J. Simons used a secret formula, earning tons of money,
Our own Rakesh J. grew each initial rupee to ₹100 million!

Trouble is, such tales of treasure fire up several dreams,
Almost all of them having just one aim: "Get rich quick",
Never mind that share trading is not as easy it seems,
Unless you're in for long haul, knowing stocks to pick!

But folks who don't know F of finance lack patience,
These are the ones who've taken up as a hobby F&Os,
No wonder their trading and returns are all nonsense,
With over 90% losing money in non-existent portfolios!

If it's about acting like a veteran, all have tips galore:

“Buy on rumour, sell on news”, or “Buy low, sell high”,

Dozens of similar ‘rules’ are rattled off, and some more,

But seek hard assets and all “gains” turn into a white lie!

Worst is intra-day trade: Eyes on terminal, nerves taut,

Hoping to get profit, not loss, and avoid living frugally,

Whether result is red or green, addiction risk is fraught,

Taking stock, you ask: Is this a way to gamble legally?!!



23. Learn To Play A Musical Instrument

I'll tell you about when my daughter was 5 years old:
We put her in classes to learn the electronic keyboard,
And while she was intelligent, and for her age real bold,
Her small hand couldn't play chords, and she got bored!

That's when I, aged 35, decided to jump in and join her,
The move did succeed in getting her back to learning,
But at that nearly jaded age, I almost came a cropper,
For with a late night job, the midnight oil I was burning!

Then something wonderful happened to both of us,
Together we applied ourselves and kept practising,
I cleared 4 Trinity exams, she found in 6 success,
She even took guitar, did 3 exams & still is playing!

Not only was father-daughter bond made stronger,
We also learnt something nice with our joint efforts,
Even my son now learns music & plays together,
He's progressed in Trinity via inconsistent spurts!

Sadly, due to work demands I left music years ago,
But I can read song sheets & try to guide the kids,
I really miss playing keyboard – with them or solo,
As music refreshes & stops you from flipping your lid!

So, do take time and pick up any musical instrument,
It can be a Western one or a lovely sitar, veena or flute,
You have to practise, but your thoughts it helps to vent,
20 mins daily is good & you've bragging rights to boot!



24. Why We Jump Jobs Against All Odds

Remember the first time you entered a new class?

Or perhaps that first day you started on the job?

Being nervous, afraid that you are made of glass,

Wishing for success, hoping nothing makes you sob!

It's worse when you join a place where others are set,

Already having made their friends, formed up groups,

As an outsider you have no support, making you fret,

Each task may require jumping solo through hoops!

In your last office they gave you three farewells,

A framed picture collage with a poem on your traits,

'Miss you' they said – on their praise one still dwells,

Will you get a similar team, or keep missing ex-mates?

Anyway, now you cannot be a brooding newbie,
Rather, be like a fresher who's eager to please,
Fast learner, top performer, not another wanna be,
For you can't afford to let your life's progress freeze.

You need to just focus on what's required of you,
Dive into the deep end with killer instinct of a shark,
Help all in office, as you finish what you've got to do,
While ensuring you upskill to avoid being in the dark!

And soon you'll become once again 'Mr Dependable',
Earning the trust of all at your new place of work,
Success truly assured after you rise to 'Mr Indispensable',
A label awarded after you're seen as one never to shirk!

That's exactly when you know it has all been worth it,
After all you wanted new tasks, not just that 30% hike,
And anyway for whom do we line a nest bit by bit?
Why, it's for that family that with all your heart you like!

So carry on little soldier, on with your mission,
Keep slogging to ensure a financially secure future,
Along with acquiring assets that'll be your creation,
That's why we jump jobs: For the family we nurture!



25. To Self Be Kind, Don't Rewind!

They always say to err is human and to forgive divine,
But are you yet to let go of all past mistakes of thine?
Forget others, you have to of yourself first take care,
Otherwise go on new life adventures you'd never dare!

It could be an embarrassing memory, an exam failed,
A proposal rejected, a trip on which you never sailed,
A job you never took up, an investment gone wrong:
Leave all of it behind, focus now on where you belong!

Only way past capers matter are the lessons they offer,
For without those you will still bumble along and suffer,
Those valuable experiences are all you should treasure,
But guilt or regret? Those don't even bother to measure!

Even if hindsight is 20/20 and foresight legally blind,
Be aware of the joys you can have to be of happy mind,
What's happened can't be helped – just events bitter,
Focus on improving your future to be mentally fitter!

Dwelling on any painful memory always helped none,
So, forget them all – you've enough on your plate to run,
Especially in this era when all seek some solace in mind,
Learn this cardinal rule: To self be kind, don't rewind!



26. What Awaits Our Kids: Future Shock!

It's snowing in Arabia, after Dubai's earlier thick storms,
While in America super cyclones breach known norms,
Already in India we are no strangers to wrath of nature,
All know our children face a bleak weather-wise future!

It's not as if this has come with no warning to all of us,
For decades we had mercury rising, hotter summers,
Still we kept burning fossil fuels, making smog galore,
Industries ignored climate change, whatever the furore!

Most unbelievable is dumping in oceans tons of plastic,
After seeping chemicals and garbage hills – it's fantastic!
Despite all evidence, policymakers just give in to lobbies,
Always they turned a Nelson's eye to all our fatal follies!

The irony of it all? Mother Earth is NOT in danger here,
Who will suffer is just us humans, and all we hold dear,
Our atmosphere and waters will go, but not our planet,
We'll die, with an adaptive species becoming dominant!

This was all avoidable, but now many wonder if it still is,
For scientists fear we're past a tipping point – a crisis,
If that's the case, a dark fate is in homo sapiens' stock,
And what awaits our kids is no less than a future shock!



27. It's NEVER Too Late!

Here's one of life's truths: It's never ever too late,
That goes for everything, especially a good deed.
Accept that fact, even if you've many complaints about fate,
And keep adding knowledge, or help someone in need.

Wanted to do social service or give back to society,
But you never knew how to fulfill this good intention,
Or were flummoxed between donating time or money?
Well, take a look around at the many living in privation.

Don't waste time: Do your bit, even if you wonder how,
Maybe join an entity providing shelter, clothing, food,
For the downtrodden need your help, they need it now,
It could be you're the only one who can do some good!

Even in relationships, did you ever hurt someone in past,
Or storm away in anger from that formerly close pal?
Well, what stops you from seeking rapprochement fast,
Is it fear of rejection? Ego? My friend, let go of it all!

Forget whose fault it was, just forgive and give it a try,
If words fail you, just forward that WhatsApp joke!
Remember: No man is an island, left alone to cry,
And when together, all get more happiness to soak!

Many a times you've avoided learning what's new,
Not exiting a comfort zone, nurturing a failure fear!
Don't flinch from picking a new skill or a language anew,
Because you're made to fly – believe that and see it clear!

Only then can you spread wings to take a faith's flight,
Maybe resume that long-pending course frozen online,
Compose that dream poem, or finalise a book to write,
Start on your laptop, or swipe on your phone – it's fine!

You see, it is time to take matters into your own hands,
Delete the negative, add only good things in life's crate,
As you add skills, mend broken bonds, enter new lands,
You'll realise that, for all purposes, it's NEVER too late!



28. Why I Pick Mainland India Over Mumbai

Two decades ago I left my hometown Nagpur for good,
Moving to mega city Mumbai to boost my media career,
I had blessed relatives here ready with shelter & food,
But 3 months on I shifted, even if they were very dear!

My aim was to rent own place in this metropolis vast,
But little did I know the astronomical monthly figures,
You were shown holes-in-the-wall where none can last,
I didn't know how I could manage with salary meagre!

I did see places from Western 'burbs to Navi Mumbai,
But at the time I was goaded to stick to Western Line,
Still, sky-high rents meant nothing I could get close by,
So, off I went northwards to rent a place & call it mine!

For more north I went, the cheaper the cost of living,
So much so I visited Vasai & its then vast open land,
Forget rent, I found apartments' purchases thriving,
And in 2005, a home loan helped get my own pad!

Vasai was amazing – cheap, green & lots of fresh air,
But there was a catch (as always): Huge water woes!
Plus, distance to my CST office needed some dare,
I commuted 4 hrs daily for 4 years to do all chores!

And that too in the legendary crushing Virar train,
On that route, there was no off-peak hours at all,
Even second-shift commuters saw all energy drain,
But at home, you could wind down & have a ball!

That's cause in Vasai at least you saw the blue sky,
Not like other Mumbai suburbs' concrete jungle,

Then there was no traffic, on roads you could fly,
From 'train friends' to neighbours, all did mingle!

Now for over a decade I'm a proud Navi Mumbaikar,
Things are far better here with it being a planned city,
Biggest advantage is connectivity, by bus, train or car,
With shorter distances, commuting is now less gritty!

For many, this place now also has their workplace,
As you have industrial estates, malls and IT parks,
Outsiders see wide roads & airport, since there's space,
Using sea-spanning bridges & rock concerts for a lark!

To top it all, you have – for now – lovely green cover,
With a cleanliness that's ranked top among cities,
There are long cycling tracks and lakes all over,
One truly hopes this remains this way with the trees!

So, now you've got a fair idea where I prefer to live,
True, Mumbai is where I have earned my daily bread,
But get away from hustle & bustle – that's my missive,
Else those pollution & traffic jams you'll eternally dread!

Basically, quality of life matters to me more every day,
That is why I pick Mainland India over Mumbai any day!



29. Maybe It Wasn't Meant To Be...

Never cry over spilt milk goes the ancient adage,
Still so many of us refuse to forget a silly mistake,
We remain in a bad moment – not turning a page,
Crying over lost candy when we can have a big cake!

Lost a mobile or a smartwatch? Still, don't you fret,
Count the good times you had with it and move on,
Look for a replacement, maybe a better version get,
And yes, be more careful but never ever be forlorn.

Even with folks, if a pal goes away or you lose a love,
Understand that relationship was perhaps not for you,
Have faith, another will come who'll enjoy your verve,
For the universe HAS someone who'll connect like glue!

Even in a job, if you exit in months instead of a year,
Don't you worry it didn't work out – it's all for the best,
For a better role does exist that'll boost your career,
So, be alert and grab it to ride toward your life's crest!

Bottom line is don't you ever dwell on the past for long,
Rather, focus on present and listen to your inner voice,
Then you'll ignore missed rewards, aiming for next gong,
And you'll know what wasn't meant to be with poise!



30. What It Means To Be An Indian...

When a close friend of mine went abroad to study,
He had an interesting interaction with many a student,
They couldn't believe he knew three lingos as a baby,
For no one saw learning beyond English as prudent!

My pal explained how at home most know at least two,
3's common too – Hindi, English, surely mother tongue,
But grasping this fact seemed tough except for very few,
Though it got me thinking: A bell in my head was rung!

The question is: What makes Indians, well, Indian?
Sure, land of spirituality & rich-poor disparity is there,
Despite an initial socialism that nearly made us Fabian,
But what makes *us people*, about what do we care?

So, personally, I feel Indian means fluency in 2 lingos,
That's the least – we may understand a couple more,
Of course, some know more and to them I say kudos!
But languages aren't all, though count is global lore!!!

Since Indian also means you may belong to a religion,
But you certainly will have friends from 3-4 other,
With all celebrating multiple festivals as one legion,
Biggest advantage being holidays to enjoy further!

Oddly, for decades there has been another quirk,
Nearly all now have a relative in Mumbai or Delhi,
Biggest common reason for this shift being work,
Some are foreign citizens – a number rising swiftly!

But I thank God that I'm an Indian for a big reason,
And that is the huge range of cuisines we get to enjoy,

Street food to regional favourites, across every season,
No wonder we tend to quickly put on weight – oh boy!

Being Indian further means being aware of our history,
For we have a rich and varied culture, a proud legacy,
In fact, I feel max king-queen stories are in our country,
To ignore even our folktales or mythology is fallacy!

Now the elephant in the room is the huge population,
But for a decade or two we get a young workforce,
And with digital routes we now avoid crowds as nation,
Hopefully, we'll be good denizens & chart right course!

