

HOME ALONE

and other
Sonu Sawaal poems
PART 2



M.D.SWAPNA

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1. DESI DENNISES

[Desi Dennis is not one child, but any Indian child]

1. I am a fan of Dennis
How great a fun is
he, though a menace
deserves all praise.
 2. Same age all these years
sending daily simple cheers
by words, action, gesture
a great cartoon feature.
 3. Many in India too
have taken as a tool
comics, cartoons for gain
and also to educate, entertain.
 4. Among us, English educated WOGS
Of late, many have resorted to blogs
to pen our penny worth matter
or some apps* of wasteful chatter.
- [Note:* whatsapp, Facebook etc
WOG –westernised oriental gentleman.]*
5. Some want their child to be a genius
Many torture their little ones to give us
poor followers, a circus show by the child
with parents as ring masters of the animals wild.

6. Those who try to push genius into a child
miss out the genius in every child
already present and waiting to be found.
by anyone who cares to look around.
7. Sonu is the name I have given
to a local Desi Dennis in my mind.
Sonu, by his or her antic, has driven
me to see Dennises of the local kind.
8. If I had tried to picture and draw
for readers of comics to see, applaud.
my Sonu has to have a face, dress
and a house, location and address.
9. But mine is not a usual
comic strip which is visual
Mine is a trip, mostly mental
to do a Desi Dennis, experimental.
10. Any young face, fair, black or brown
In a footpath, hut, village, or town
will be picked up to be my Sonu
and see what he/she would speak or do.
11. Any boy or girl around five
Sonus are there in every city
We have to keep alive
our senses to find them witty.

2. COMICS

[Author's tribute to 3 great comic strips]

The great comic was done by
 Oops! I don't recollect the name
 Years and decades have gone by,
 Little Dennis the menace remains the same.

Similar is the story of Charlie Brown
 He and friends are fresh, never grown
 Great is these artistes' creation
 about life and nature of each generation.



"WELL, IS THERE ANYTHING NICE IN THE HOUSE THAT DOESN'T BREAK?"



3. DESI, WE [1]

*[Indian context, Indian children. Innocence childish pranks
and wit-All universal- Many names]*

1. Sonu, Sona, Sawaal
Munna Munni Kitty
We, desi dennises are here
To give in verse Indian flavour.
2. Dennis speaks English
Ours can be any: Assamese to Urdu,
Umpteen languages and dialects
But I call them all as one – child speak.
3. Dennis can be a menace
Charlie may be a charlatan.
Our desi children are no less
They too can be innocent fun.
4. Aunties are fearful or fearsome
Uncles are serious or spiritual
But we think
Everyone, towards us, is good and nice
They think we are like sugar and spice
They too know
We are carefree children
and any pun is meant for fun.

4. DESI DENNISES, SONAS (2)

*[Indian context, Indian children. Innocence childish pranks
and wit-All universal- Many names]*

If I had made Sonu with a face and dress
with a family in her own or rented house and
address

I would have been compelled to picture and
draw

For the readers to remember Dennis and
applaud.

My Sona/Sonu are not the usual
Comic strip which is visual
Mine is a trip, mostly mental
To see desi Dennises, experimental.

sample

Sona was taken to the Mysore Zoo
To the white tiger, he said 'boo'
When asked, he said "everything was good,"
But the elephant did not finish his food.'

5. ALL DESI

*[Indian context, Indian children. Innocence childish pranks
and wit-All universal- Many names]*

1. I write in desi English
 more specifically a mixture
 Of Kanglish, Tanglish, Hinglish*
 See it has its own texture.
2. There is no dictionary compiled yet
 for the desi English I flaunt;
 From movies, TV, and the media I get
 Whenever an apt term I want.
3. Even events have to be Indian
 like the colours of Holi as custom or fun
 How else can I describe as it is done
 by our people, in our place, tell me my son!
4. Cartoon Dennis is a menace, but also a delight
 Peanuts Brown is friendly smart and bright
 Disney with his animals goes a whole hog
 to admire and offer justice to the underdog.
5. Through my verse I want to show
 This is one universe as we all know
 and that beauty is quality
 of universality.

6. For a Dennis, I have a Sona
or Sonu or Munni or Munna
For a Charlie I have my own
Sawaal, rural or urban, mostly brown.
7. Children who read or see comics
May call me a copy-cat; I don't mind
They may say, "This uncle mimics"
I'm glad if the meaning they can find.
8. Uncle, aunty, sister, brother
are not family or relatives direct;
Respectfully people refer to one another
Such words used in our dialects.

[Note: Kanglish etc.

Ka-Kannada. Ta- Tamil Hi-Hindi]

6. POHA AND FLAKES

[Global and local breakfast foods, both are welcome]

1. Sonu has her doubt
 if 'poha' is 'flake'
 as in cornflakes.
 How could it be
 when poha is old
 and flakes are mod.
2. Commercial jargon and brand
 can compete and obliterate
 the age-old customs on hand
 if one leaves the latter, to its fate.
3. Business promotes brands
 mainly for its own profit
 In the process, they join hands
 with the nutritional scientist.
4. Desi dishes of great value
 are branded 'hot' or 'cold'
 'gharkhi murgii' is not new
 as my grandma had told
(so said Sonu)
5. Sonu can have the cereal
 from the shelf, from a cardboard box.
 I can have my ideal
 hot batata-poha from cooking pots.

6. Sonu and me
are happy, as you can see.
Unlike uncle and you
We can choose, the old and/or new.
7. Merits and money
are yours to worry
about which we don't have any
care or control; we just make merry
with a little of this
and a lot of the other.

*[Notes: poha-beaten cereal; batata=potato;
gharki murgi-proverb meaning 'grass across the fence'
'hot' 'cold' -irrational classification of food items- hear
say.]*



7. NAME SWEET NAMES

[Children have sweet teeth]

Sawaal asked: "What did you eat?"

Sonu replied "A square piece, a sweet

"Its name? were they cakes?"

"No idea, whatever Mrs Wilson makes"

"Sweetness is the same

Whatever be the name

I don't eat the name, Sawaal,

I enjoy the sweet, that is all.

8. MOUTHFUL

[Siblings teasing each other]

Sawaal: Sonu! What is this ?

Sonu : I don't know

Sawaal: now see and tell

Sonu It is a nose and mouth

Sawaal: see the third picture

Sonu mouth has things inside

Sawaal: it is full of food.

Sonu So?

Sawaal: So it is Sonu's mouth.



Seeing water in Sonu's eyes

Uncle called her near

Said something in her ear

softly so that Sawaal could not hear

Sonu : What is this ?

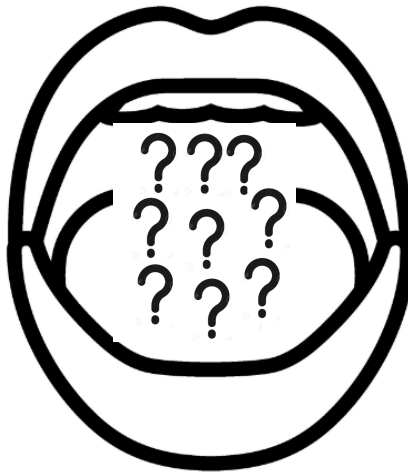
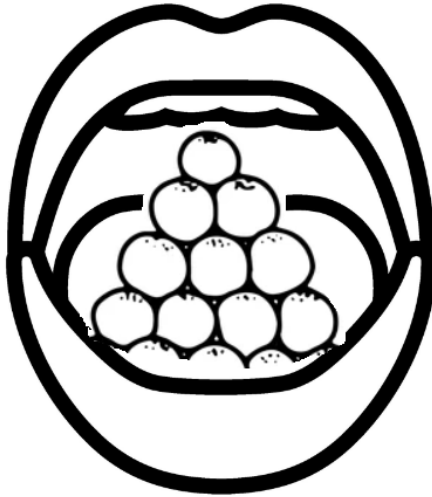
Sawaal : I know, this is an open mouth

Sonu Now see and tell

Sawaal **mouth has things inside**

Sonu
Sawaal
Sonu

Not things , questions
so?
So it is Sawaal's mouth



9. LIE LIES IN THE EYES (1)

[Children cannot maintain a lie]

When she is away
 We talk about mother
 When we are at play
 about us does she bother?

“Let us go directly ask her”
 The duo said: play stopped;
 About to enter they hear their mother
 “Don’t step in; floor is freshly mopped”

Sure, she worries, our mother
 about us, as well as the floor,
 Neither the children slip, be hurt
 Nor the floor be full of dirt.

LIES LIES IN THE EYES (2)

Sonu to Sawaal

Why are you staring at me
 like the naughty circus monkey?

Sawaal to Sonu:

Don’t shout; please be calm
 Don’t look there, its our mom.

Now I know you thieving ape
You think you can escape
by avoiding eye to eye contact
Alas! It is no use, your act.

Your guilty eye
Exposes your lie.
And, the missing sweet
points to you, the cheat.

10. DARJEELING

[Sonu and Sawaal (S and S) in Darjeeling , a hilly region in India]

Sonu and Sawaal from India's south
 took a tour north with uncle and aunt
 In addition to victuals, each mouth
 was full of comments, praise and taunt.

They all went to Darjeeling
 Got up at four and got into a jeep
 In spite of shivering and cold feeling.
 Did they have any memories to keep?

Sure enough their care takers had
 so many comments, good, as well as bad
 Sometimes stupid, sometimes innocent
 but remarks memorable cent percent.

Sonu said: "I have seen ice in our frig
 Only cubes or slabs, not so big
 It was cold but only like glass
 Thin brittle, nothing great, it was.
[Frig- refrigerator]

You say it is a big river
 I see no water; only ice;
 I don't want to go near and shiver
 To see from here, is quite nice.

[Sawaal with a chuckle said:]

Water cannot be so white

Someone must be pouring milk

[Sonu said:]

You are pulling my leg, I know

No one can live here, not even a cow.

Uncle opened his mouth to explain

But thank God, he didn't;

Spoil a trip all joy and plain

Perhaps aunt gave him a hint.

Five or more high Himalayan peaks all in a row

posing for rows of shooters like Sawaal

Who packs photos of columns of ice and snow

Sure she will show and brag to one and all.



11. GUNTUR

[S and S in South India and tasting snacks]

Ten year old Sona
Had come from Agra
The group reached Guntur
On their South India tour.

Experienced elders easily chose
masala dosa with allum chutney
Sona ordered differently from those
“I’ll try new items in our journey.”

He searched the menu
saw something brand new
No one in the group knew
how will be a menapattu

Sona who said, for me no dosa,
was shocked to see what he saw
On his plate was a smiling
dosa without any filling.

“Sorry for you. Don’t worry” said Sonu.
We will order and all of us share a pesarattu
Telugu words are longer
Their side dishes are stronger

“I too got cheated once,” said Sonu
I thought golgappa for me was new
When we were all in Jalpaiguri,

I got gols of paanipuri.

[Names of snacks are used

Allum chutney - side dish made with ginger, taste-hot.

Guntur – a town in Andhra Pradesh – South India.

Telugu – local language

Jalpaiguri – Town in North India

Paanipuri, golgappa- snacks popular with youngsters

Menapattu, pesarattu – dosas [local pancake like snacks] made with different dals, pulses]



12. THANJAVOOR

[S and S visit a Temple in South India – fun, no offence intended by]

During down South in their tour
The group reached the town of Thanjavoor
Everything was big and beautiful
In the Big Temple, the giant Big Bull.

Milling crowds before the main deity
Women in sarees and men in veshti.
Not to tease and more for fun
Sawaal asked Sona “Did you have darshan?”

Sona said, “I saw Shiva as he stood
with a slice of the moon on his head.
Laughed Sawaal loudly, “Ha! Ha!
What you saw was not Shiva

It was the pattern of white hair on a bald head
at the back of the man who was ahead.

[Thanjavoor – a temple town in South India.

*Veshti – not loin- cloth as some ignorant translators wrote-a 2
metre long wraparound cloth as menswear.*

Darshan- seeing, viewing God , saints etc.

Shiva - depicted by artists

In the Big Temple – Shiva in the form of lingam].



13. VADODARA

[Gujarat known for generous heart but accented English]

Our group went to Gujarat and Vadodara
saw the place of erstwhile Maharaja

They were invited to an ongoing party
Guests were dancing to the beat of dhol
Chef said, “We have excellent coffee
and all snakes are in the hole.

Shocked Sonu refused to move
and stood where she was
Uncle said, there is no reptile
for you to fear, no cause
Sumptuous snacks are in the spacious hall
Gujarat’s English you may call.

They crossed Saurashtra to reach Kutch
All the way, Sonu said, there is not much
to see, except carts pulled by camel
Animal and the driver decorated colourfully well.

[a map will help

a picture (photo) also.

Snakes in the hole – actually snacks in the hall.

Many palaces in India are tourist attractions].

[Dhol - a percussion instrument.]



14. OBBATTU

[S and S in Karnataka, South India, same snacks different names]

In Karnataka Sonu saw a sweet shop
 Let us see what is new, please stop
 She said," This is new; let us buy obbattu"
 Sawaal cautioned "let us remember Andhra's
 menapattu"

Uncle said, Sawaal you are on the dot;
 Yet let us taste he said and bought
 Tasting it he said, "Didn't I say?
 This is just puran poli of our Pune.

*[Obbattu, Holige, Poli, Puran poli
 – similar sweets
 Menapattu – similar to dosa]*



15. ANAND

[Gujarat – Head of ‘White revolution in India]

The group went to Anand in Gujarat
 Seeing the dairy, “Do they take bath
 Like Cleo of the Nile in milk
 and eat shrikhand smooth as silk?

When told most Gujarati’s are veg,
 and all are fed, no need to beg
 Sonu said, “Why do we need meat
 When there are so many goodies to eat?”

Why did they name Anand, so?
 Let us ask a localite before we go.

Uncle Patel said:

No one here needs to beg or borrow
 Here, anand hi anand, no sorrow.

[Gujarat- a state in India

Anand - a town where Amul diary was started.

Cleo – cleopatra.

Shrikhand – a sweet made with milk cream and sugar.

Veg- vegetarian

Patel – Common surname in Gujarat.

Anand - means happiness].



16. INDIA VISIT

[Witty remarks on many places.]

1. Sona was taken to the Mysore Zoo
To the white tiger he said “boo”
When asked, he said, “Everything was good
But the elephant did not finish his food.”

2. Sona had a sojourn to Bombay City
Enjoyed a double decker BEST ride
When asked, he said, what a pity!
Two buses, only one man compelled to drive.

3. Sona sat on sands of Marina at Madras
Eating peanut sundal; waited for the hot air
to cool and he said, “Poor Madrasis, alas!
It is hot since the sun does not dip in water.”

4. Sona went to Kolkatta and saw the big bridge
Ate mishti dohi with freshly fried fish
When asked, he said, “Poor Bengalis, alas!
They have to respect a bus as their boss.

[Notes: BEST-transport company in Mumbai/Bombay.

Marina – beach at Madras/Chennai - East coast.

*Sundal, mishti dahi -snacks in Tamilnadu, West
Bengal respectively.*

*Calcutta =Kolkotta. Bus=boss. Bengali pronunciation
and accent].*



17. DEHRADUN

[A special museum in a Himalayan hilly town]

1. Sonu and Sawaal went to Dehradun
 “The sun sets here so soon
 wondered they
 who are from Bombay
 “The hills here swallow the sun .”

2. They went to an ancient exhibition of local
 trees, plants and insects;
 “Yuk, why bugs?” Sonu made her disgust vocal
 Sawaal too said “Bugs infect.”

3. *Uncle said:*
 Bugs, insects, germs all infect
 is what we say, but in fact
 they live by eating the waste
 Bad to good, old to new, isn't it great?

4. Leaves flowers, and all fall
 It is nature's way to clean
 the waste, as we humans call.
 Bugs do the job; they are not mean.

5. Sawaal said, “now I know
 Sonu said, “tell me later, if so”
 Uncle said: “always ask, don't be shy;
 Good to know, what, how and why”

[Note: DehraDun-a-famous hill station in the foot hills of Himalayas. Museum there is worth a visit].



18. ANTS

[Children Stealing sweets warned]

Sawaal asked: Did you steal **chocs**
from the tightly closed box?

Sonu said: Yes, do you want some
be quick: before mother come.

“Too late buddy, mom’s here”

“How does she know ? Did you tell her?”

“No see the lid is still loose

You didn’t know how to close”

When Sonu was about to eat

Mom shouted : Don’t eat the sweet

Sonu asked how did you know

I thought in stealing I am a pro.

Mom said you silly goose

You left the box lid loose

See umpteen ants going in and out

What use now if I shout?

Go quick take off your pants

before you are bitten by ants.

19. PRANKS dial

[Neighborhood menaces]

Preschool kids are a pleasure
The monkey tricks and the mess they made
Thinking of which is a treasure
of memories even after many a decade.

Much before smart phone age
Random ringing was in my lineage

Pressing the 'redial' was my daughter
You could hear the voice on the other side.
This side, only a loud laughter,
"I did not dial, my father did."

What HER daughter does now
I can't find out from here;
I hope the mother will know
Not to scold or create any fear.

20. PULLING LEG GAMES

[Light hearted word play]

In progress was a game.

Was 'pulling legs' its name?

You are AB; can you guess?

Yes. Always Beautiful

No. Airless Ball

You are BC; can you guess?

Yes. Best Child

No Before Christ = old

I am D

E

F, can you guess?

Yes [I] Do Everything Fine.

No. [I am] FED up [with you]

I am GHI; can you guess?

Yes. Goose-Head Idiot

No. Girl Highly Intelligent

For me, lock-down leads to laziness

For them, it induces innovative busyness.

21. MONKEYS

[Children are always compared to monkeys]

Sawaal asked Sonu

Answer if you know

Why are the tails long

for these mischievous monkey's gang?

I know clearly the reason why

When their children climb very high

the mother can pull from below

You're elder, you didn't know.

They know how to pull the tail

You know how to pull my leg

Uncle said: Sonu next time you go free

tell me if you climb a ladder or a tree.



22. I is STANDING

[Alphabet- learning child's fun]

1. Suddenly Sonu said, see, see
I know how to write ABC.
Sawaal said, you can only talk
and like a mad monkey, walk.
2. Hey Sawaal! This my savaal*, listen.
One chocolate bet, if I win.
I will be saying, you writing
Now start, 'I is standing'.
[*Note: savaal (Hindi) -challenge]
3. *Sawaal said:*
"you are wrong as usual, kid
'I is standing' is stupid
'I am standing' you should state"
Sonu said: "let me go and bring my slate.
4. *Sonu declared*
"Madam taught us how to write
Our teacher madam is always right."
Sonu wrote; half-filled her slate
"Sawaal! You lost, one chocolate.
5. Curiosity got the better of me
I peeked and eyed like a spy.
On the cloudy slate what I see
Just 'I's, not any other of ABC.

6. Yes, I is standing, I agreed;
 standing lines taught by ma'm
 I alone stands upright as it wished.
 Only in a sentence, it is 'I am'.
7. Sonu learns as she is taught
 Sawaal likes to think and question
 Childhood interaction, I thought,
 is thought provoking, delightful dimension.
8. Sawaal has lost a bet
 to her junior, and a chocolate;
 Betting can be good or bad, yet,
 It teaches about give and take.

*[Note for those who need it :
 A is the first letter
 B is big ; b is small.
 When I am standing I am tall.
 I is the 9th letter.]*

24. GOODS CARRIER

[English language is funny in the eyes of S and S]

1. Papa was impatient as it was getting late
as our car waited at the toll gate.
2. For Sonu and Sawaal it was fun
to see elders argue and tempers run,
Sonu saw trucks carrying bread, biscuit
“It is written GOODS CARRIER. It is correct”
3. Then she saw lorries smelling bad as they
rushed
Perhaps carrying garbage, tobacco or dried
fish.
Here also it is GOODS CARRIER; wrong, not
correct.
It should be BADS CARRIER, am I right?
4. Sawaal with a superior tone
Tried to explain on her own.
Then papa joined and said
GOODS noun is different from being ‘good’.
- 5 Said Sawaal , “Because it is English,
Equal treatment for right and rubbish”
Sonu said “Now I know
“you don’t have to pretend so.”



[Note for those who need it :

Good [adj.] nice, well behaved, not bad

Goods [n.] merchandise, freight

Bad [adj.] not good

Bads – not used]

25. I(CE)- SCREAM

[Pun on the Word]

When I scream I get ice-cream
When you scream for ice-cream
You get the same

When he or she screams for three ice- screams
He or she gets only one
Because our uncle is good
No favours in snacks or food

If we all scream for ice- scream
We will get ice- scream
If they all scream they will get ice- scream
But only one each
For, our uncle does teach
How in life to be fair
We all should equally share.



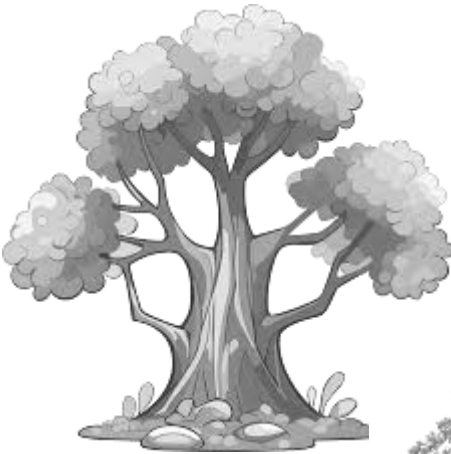
26. BRANCH

[One Word two meanings]

Sonu was outside the building of a bank
A branch of the bank, near water tank.

She said,

“If the branch is grown so big, I see,
much bigger must be the mother tree.
Without the tree, the branch is alive
Money is great; can make dead things live.



27 GAMES KIDS PLAY (2)

[English language games self-generated by S and S]

“We were talking among ourselves.

How do they know we are talking about them?”

Complained Sawaal about the neighbours.

Uncle asked: “What were you talking about?”

Only about objects: “Frying pans” and “half moons” Sonu said, “No, they were saying in our language . I remember “BAANALI” and CHANDRALEKHA”

One girl said, “Stupid Sonu, It was not “CHANDRALEKHA. It was “CHANDRAKALA” and we were not talking about a girl.

Uncle said, “No wonder you were caught. Go and apologize”. When they returned, Uncle said, “Don’t reinvent a wheel” or “find out about flint stones to start a fire” – Coin new words.”

Soon uncle happened to be in the ear-shot (=near) where the kids again assembled.

We can call her “popcorn”
and the *kadoos* uncle Durwasa”.

“Bulldog” for the fat grim faced goon

“Alsatian” for the well dressed child-hater.

“Doberman” for other slim but fearful uncles.
 Parrot, for the repeater.
 “Mankill’ for Jill
 Railway gate for the boy without front teeth.

Sawaal said

“Four-eyes” for someone wearing glasses.

“No, you should NOT say that “

It was uncle’s voice.

Similarly you avoid referring to a leucodermic person (white skin spots) as ‘milky’

We should not make fun of natural disabilities.

Can talk about only their behaviour I thought if you want fun; but with sense of fairness”.

All agreed. They [the victims of our fun] should also smile.

[kadoos – grim, stern – slang Hindi]

[it is hoped that the readers are familiar with nicknames mentioned here]



28. GAMES KIDS PLAY[1]

[English language games self-generated by S and S]

1. “Who wants a cake?”

asked Sawaal. Sonu said “Yes, I do.”

“Okay, this soap, you take
and wash the dirt off you.”

[Note: cake of soap]

2. “Do you want to see a 100 kg mango?”

“Where, where?” “See Mr. Wilson go.”

[Mr. Wilson – a character in the cartoon ‘Dennis, the menace’.]

3. Aunt came, To tease Sawaal:

“You like western clothes.

Do you want to don a dress?”

This time Sawaal said, “Where, where?”

3a. Uncle gave a chit

On which was writ

One Dawood’s address in Karachi

Not for innocent, children, chichi

So saying aunty gave a chit

Seeing it Uncle said: this is it.

3b. Aunt gave a chit of paper

In it was a famous actor’s Bombay address

*.[notes: in the cartoon series MR. WILSON IS SHOWN AS
AN OBESE PERSON*

Dawood- known as ‘don of Bombay’ – a gang leader

Famous actor- hero in Hindi film DON]

29. TELL ME WHY

[Queer curiosity]

1. COVID lock down was harsh
on everyone, On Sawaal no less
Nevertheless, she learnt to wash
her own clothes and neatly press.
2. Sonu had no such problem, since
she never used to go to school;
Seeing Sawaal bored and tense
Sonu said: "I have an idea; it's cool"
3. You make a simple statement;
Then say to me "Tell me why"
The game is only for mutual merriment
Don't know the answer, no need to cry.
4. *Sonu:*
Many trees you have seen;
Why are the leaves green?
Quick and prompt was Sawaal's reply.
I can't stop myself from being a spy.
5. This tree came from a seed, yes?
That seed came from a tree, right?
Go and verify if you can't guess
The old one has green leaves, left and right.

Children always copycat the old;
Small ones are made from a mould.

6. Sawaal said, it is my turn:

“Tell me why milk is white”

Sonu said, “I can’t read and learn
I will guess; it may be right.

7. Cow gives milk; Cow is in shed;

In shed, no colour, yellow or red.

No factory, no dairy, to add flavor

Calf likes pure white, no need for colour.

8. The game went on, perhaps,

about air or water on taps

size of nose, colour of hair

and all things here and there.

9. Children find their own ways

of being busy even in these days

of isolation and code of conduct.

From imaginative minds, emerges the product.

10. As an elderly person if I just observe

and be a reference book when in need

I surely hope and believe I would deserve

to be called a kid’s friend indeed.

30 EVEN IF YOU WANT, YOU CAN'T

[Elders beware, your suggestion may back fire]

1. It was fun to watch
 Children play hopscotch
 Even if I want to get up and join
 and the tiny ones laughingly let me in
 my arthritic knee
 will not allow me.
2. Life plays a game with me
 And perhaps with all the elderly,
 Even if you want, you can't
 except to exist like a plant.
3. Suddenly a bulb brightened in my head
 And I summoned the small ones and said
 Listen to what I say
 You can talk, do and play.
 Away from the sun or rain
 The game I'll soon explain.
4. Then I told them my thought
 which the Tyrant Time has taught
'Even if you want, you can't'
 I was not ready for the final affront.
5. Sony said the words to me
 "Play hopscotch with us, jump in

Even if you want, you can't " "
 I said you are right, you win.
 But do not act very wise
 Go find a person of your size.

6. Then I heard words of action
 and a lot of teasing, interaction
 Fly like a bird // Swim on sand //
 Repeat this "seashells..."//
 Stand on one hand //
 Climb a coconut tree//
 Try, catch me etc. etc.

7. How soon, I was not very sure,
 the game came to my door.
 I heard one say
 Even if you want you can't
 The other said let me try
 if uncle won't cry.
 Even I was curious to know
 what command will Sawaal give now,

8 I can't believe what I heard
 "Use a comb on uncle's head"
 That is when I got up from my bed
 Putting on my bald head, a cap
 and said, "It is time for the game to stop."



31. SOFA AND SONU

[Sofa or Trampoline]

So far I have managed to keep
 my house fairly disciplined
 Until now I used to go to sleep
 on my sofa, dusted and cleaned.

My long and short set of sofa
 was a fit and fine furniture so far
 Now that Sonu, Sawaal and kin
 have come, it has become a trampoline.

Monkey, if it jumps on the bed
 falls down and breaks its head
 If children jump on the sofa or bed
 It is only loud laughter that is heard.

Sonu is careful not to fall;
 Other friends too. They all call
 My house as a gym; nay, better
 After work - out they get bread and butter.

[Gym- gymnasium]

When all around, laughter rings
 Creaks are heard from the furniture's springs
 Increase in fun time, may decrease the life time
 of the furniture? So what? It is only mine.

Sitting on the sofa, the elders gossip
while strong or weak drinks they sip
Sofa is the furniture they choose
for watching the idiot box in use.

The sofa might have preferred a better role
of playing a part in active amusing, good goal.
as of stimulating the mind and sinews
of children, provided they don't misuse.

Let sofa become a trampoline
An extra role to serving me fine.
Jumping is better than gossip and scandals
Fun for toddlers, they are not wanton vandals.

The furniture called sofa
has served us, idlers, so far.

Now that the toddlers have come
The soft item had become
a playing, gym, a tool
before they are jailed in school.

32 “ TICKET, TICKET”

[Turnstile turns into a toll gate]

It was nice to find a place to park
our car near the entrance to the park
entry to which was through a turn-stile
We had to stand in a single file.

Sonu quickly ran up ahead and stood
Holding her palm open and a stern mood
Said, “ ticket, ticket ‘. All of us pretended
To hold a chit and put it in the hand extended.

Aunty asked, “Is this a new game?”

Uncle said recently we had been to a show
Sonu perhaps mimicking the same
Youthful playfulness makes her act so.

33. READ A PICTURE

[Unlettered Sonu tries to guess]

Sonu said:

Sawaal! You think I can't read
See I can read with speed.
Come here, take a quick look
Sawaal saw a picture in the book

Sonu said, I can read this page
and began to sing like a bird in the cage.

Sawaal said:

Sonu! What a noise you make!
This is not a Happy Birthday song
This is a recipe on how to make
at home, without oven, a sponge cake.

[note:

for those who need:

*Sonu started singing happy birthday since she saw a cake and
people in the picture]*

BUTTER CAKE RECIPE



INGREDIENTS

- 1½ cups butter,
- 2½ cups granulated sugar
- 5 eggs
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- ¾ teaspoon almond extract
- 3 cups all-purpose flour
- ¾ teaspoon baking powder
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- 1 cup milk

34. COPY CATS

[Children ape Elders]

Children are copiers,
aping their elder peers
moms, dads, oldies ,
other petters and even scoldies;

Munni holding a short stick
on one hand and chalk on the other
posing a stern look
from a frame-only spec
scolding a student , who is her mother.

One end of the saree across a shoulder
the rest trailing on the floor,
Munna's modelling is profound
until he trips and falls to the ground.

Children are apers;
Sweet are their capers.
Every child is a mimic
Each of their charades is chic.

They endlessly copy and repeat
with a grin or smile , nice and sweet.
Beware of what you utter
There is a copy cat around
Know which side you butter
Eyeing you, there is a child behind.

*[Notes: Munni- girl child; Munna – male child ;
oldies, petters, scoldies, apers - author's words;
saree- long Indian women's dress]*

35. RIVALS

[Sibling competition to please mother]

Sonu and Sawaal to each other
were close and also rivals
Wish to be the only pet of their mother
by trying to be of help during festivals.

Sawaal thought how she can
help her mother, since she knew
in south India In the month of Jan
the harvest festival was due.

She got flowers, jasmine, and marigold
Seeing which smiled her mother and told
Sawaal don't you know we hail the sun
No need for priests or any pious one.

Sonu from a distance saw the scene
made bold to come and intervene
Papa came from bazaar this morn
and brought sugarcane and ear or corn.

Mother hugged both the children
Your rivalry is fine, more of fun
than contest. Both meant well
who is better who can tell?

Both of you girls are like sugar and spice
To me you are like my two eyes.
Call papa and let all of us eat
today's pongals, savoury and sweet

36. WHO ELSE?

[All pranks – doer desi Dennis]

1. Only one shoe is here?

Where is the other?

Who will take one of the pair?

Who wants papa to stay and repair
his tricycle?

Who wants papa not go out?

Only indoors move about?

Hey, Dennis, where is the other shoe?

2. Papa says: I want to go out.

Where is the scooter key?

Dennis says:

Be my partner in the carrom game.

Let others search, till then we'll play.

If they don't find it till the game is over

I will get up and find your key.

3 Papa smiles and says:

"What did you say? I'll get up...

Hey! Someone come and lift up this kid

Ha! Ha! Ha ! here is the key

Desi Dennis was sitting on the key.

He had done it again. Who else?

[Dennis – the original cartoon character on which Sonu is fashioned]

37. TABLE

[Small Sonu wants a small table]

1. Sonu is just three feet height
Sawaal is taller, little overweight.
2. Sawaal was doing her homework of art
standing near the dining table
Sonu wanted to observe and take part
being short to do either she was not able.
3. Sonu was peeved
and very aggrieved
“I want my paper and pencils
a kitchen set with many utensils
Papa, give me a table this small
so that I can work like you all.”
4. Papa said, when you go to school
and given lot of homework to do
You would be tall like Sawaal
Then the small table will be of no use to you.
5. Sonu had tears in her eyes
I want a table for my size
I want now I want... I want
It almost became a chant.

6. *Sawaal said:*

“Papa please let her get
before tyrant teachers dominate
A day will come when
Dining or work table will be gone
Only mugging of
multiplication tables will remain.”

7. Let this be a happy home
with a table as a toy
Soon monster maths will come
all happiness to destroy.

8. Mom came in and said
I agree fully with Sawaal
Later, tables of data will be laid
by the computer to kill –
the happiness of all.

38. THE TANK AND THE BANK

[A lesson on money management]

Sawaal

Our overhead water tank
is like our uncle's bank
Do you know how?

Sonu: Bank is also on the upper floor

Sawaal

You are wrong as usual
Water is necessary
Just like money

Sonu

Now I know
Tank stores water
Bank keeps money

Sawaal

You don't take water and pour
Waste it all over the drain and floor

Sonu;

Listen uncle! Now I too know
Take just what you want now

Uncle:

After I draw,
The bank and the tank will hold
The balance for our household

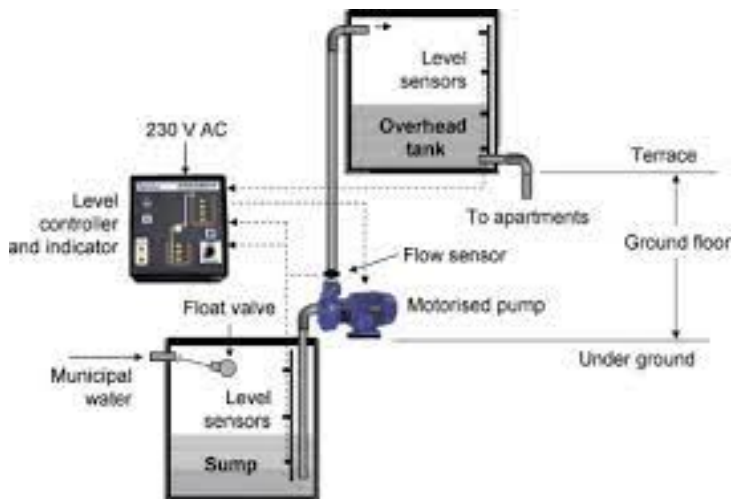
When water level goes low
 It is time for upward flow
 Let the motor run until
 The tank is once again full

Sawaal

If money in the bank is less
 We cannot go to school, unless
 our elders put money in the bank
 like motor puts water in the tank

Sonu and sawaal

Please remain always full, water tank!
 Please be helpful, savings bank!



39. THE CRANE

[Bird watching]

1. Sawaal, Sona and Sonu
 hung on to the friendly birder;
 as if for a long time they knew
 both the uncle and his binocular.

2. Beside the lake, perched on a mound
 The group, silently sitting, soon found
 Feathered friends, coots, ducks, egrets, wagtail;
 But the crane, one has to see without fail.

3. Standing on one leg, tallest of the lot
 Observe well, Sonu, binoculars we have got.
 Yes, long slender legs, a joint at the knee
 One leg bent double, one straight as a tree.

4. Sawaal said:
 I have watched so long I don't understand
 Whether he uses only his left leg to stand.

5. Sonu said:
 Watch a little more;
 When his left leg is sore.
 He may change to his right
 Birder uncle! Aren't I right?

[grammar note to reader weak in grammar

who wonders about 'aren't I?':

You are foolish, Sawaal, aren't you?

I am intelligent, aren't I? In place of 'am I not']

6. *Birder uncle said:*

Sonu perhaps is right, I guess;
 Sorry children, I have to confess
 The question in my mind never came.
 I'm just a naturalist in name.

7. He will stand, he will wait

Till he got a fat fish
 The crane's patience is his bait
 To achieve his quest and wish.

8. Tolerance time of a crane's knee

Has it been studied by even Salim Ali?
 Which Patanjali taught this crane
 To rest the other leg until its turn came?

9. *Sonu said:*

Uncle! You are talking
 to yourself while walking
 Who is this person Patanjali
 What connection with Salim Ali?

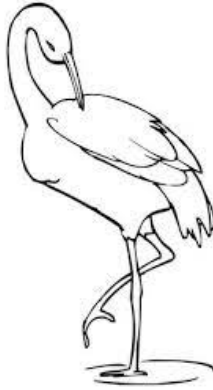
10. *Uncle said:*

Sorry children, Nature is mute and dumb.
 The more you see the more questions come
 Some have answers some are just so,
 Go on learning, yet there is more to know.

[Notes:

Salim Ali – Famous Indian Ornithologist

Patanjali – Ancient Indian Author of Yoga.]



40. CUT PIECES

[Generosity of the neighbor]

When Mrs. Wilson was cutting the pie
Mr. Wilson asked: "Four pieces, why?"
She said, "We may just be two.
Can't we count neighbour's children too?"

Children know what Mrs. Wilson makes
whether it is cookies or chocolate cakes
Thanks to the aroma in the breeze.
Also seen on the table each item, a piece.

Our neighbour occasionally comes
to borrow sugar, butter or flour,
My mother is generous as she is sure
They'll come back in children's hands as yums

Mrs. Wilson answered her man:

Eggless, I make my cake
so that anyone can take.
It is on the cake, the icing
To see children eat, rejoicing

41. TRING-TRING CYCLE

[Unfair Elder pulled up]

1. “Side, side,.... Tring, tring
 Sonu’s cycle coming”
 Before uncle from Bombay
 could get himself out of the way
 everyone could hear the crash,.
 “Why are you so rash?”
 Uncle said. With a long pause.
 Sonu crying, attempted ...because . because”

2. Sawaal strutted in and took the side
 of Sonu, “Don’t answer this uncle;
 He only wanted to scold and chide
 His fault, by attacking, he wants to hide.

 Some questions don’t deserve any reply.
 Answers were contained inside, said to imply.

3. Turning to uncle, said Sawaal
 You stood on her path like a wall.
 Sonu did not hit you, preferred to crash.
 Tell me uncle, who is angry and rash?”

4. The last question by Sawaal
 Did not need any reply at all.
 Answer to that was in-built.
 Clearly indicates uncle’s guilt.

5. This is not the end
of this story; it went
longer until uncle sent
the cycle for repair and mend.
6. Meanwhile it came to be known
that our uncle liked to share icecream cone
Though his wallet became lighter
He liked to listen to children's laughter.



42. WATER

[Rural Sonus of all ages]

1. I thought our Sonu and Sawaal were the best,
much more vocal, logical than the rest
of children; until I found many as smart,
no matter they were black, fair, tall or short.
2. Once we all went to the village pond
Whether we know swimming or not we are fond
of getting into water, wade and splash.
Today, fear of depth made us just wash.
3. Then came the local children, as we stood.
At one glance, our fear they understood.
Two of them of Sawaal's height made
with veils tied together, a barricade.
4. Come strangers, be within this barrier
You are safe in water, until here.
5. Before we could say thanks
The children were in the pond
All ages and heights, closing their ranks
making a safety chain with hand on hand.
6. I asked, "Do you all know swimming?"
The tallest answered with joy brimming
"Knowing swimming or not does not matter
We float; after all, it is our water."

7. The meaning of her statement, I got
 When I saw in this remote rural spot
 Each child holding an upside down water pot.
 Both floating, rising, ebbing; what a scene!
 Our good luck! We the urbanites took
 A tour had been to this spot of rustic folk.

[Notes :

veil- also called 'odni' 'dupatta' loosely draped length of cloth on the upper part of girls.

Water pot – in villages women collect water from wells or ponds]



43. SHARING

[Children grab, in order to share]

1. She never asked, “May I ?”
Sonu always had an eager eye
On my plate of food, snacks, fruit all
She snatches a portion, a child after all.
2. Mother shouted: “Uncle’s don’t touch
You have your plate; it’s quite much”
Sonu ignored mother’s mild scold
Came and sat by me, quite bold.
3. Uncle! Mother does not know,
She knows less than a crow.
Eating together from the same plate
feels better and tastes great.
4. I take from yours
You take from mine.
The taste and flavours
aren’t they super fine?
5. Sonu is too young to be a saint
She is true, innocent and natural
Her strict mother will faint
if I report the events, factual.

6. I could never tell her mother
how we put our plates together;
Fingers of both of us wet with food
Feeding each other felt very good.
7. Sonu is too young to know, but I see
meaning of words like sharing and empathy.
Egalitarian is too erudite even for me.
But children grow up. Isn't it a pity?

*[Note:Stanza 3: I hope Sonu later will know about
Tamil Thirukkural – about the crow openly
inviting all to share food].*

44. RHYME TIME

[Juvenile rhyme words]

It is early morn
 It is dewy dawn
 I fear
 For my rear
 which will get wet
 if I venture to sit
 on the grassy lawn
 in this early dawn.

Saying hello is fun
 To greet the rising sun
 Who, from a rotating red round
 Turns a white ball above the ground

When uncle is doing Surya Namaskar
 I say “ good morning” to my yaar
 Enjoying the early morning scène
 Has become my daily routine.

[yaar- friend, Hindi]

Sole, Surya, the sun
 You shine for everyone.

**You are with us the whole day
 When it becomes dark you go away.**

I know you will
Be active still
And make your show
of light and shadow
In street and meadow
of far off countries in the west
where they welcome you with zest
to delight all children ,
plant and animal kingdom.

Do you ever stop, sleep or eat
Or always on your celestial beat?

*[Author's apologies for putting big words in children's mouth.
The lines "you are with usyou go away " is a true quote
i.e. spoken by a child.]*

45. DOSA

[No cliches with witty children]

1. All the members of our family
 were there, each with a plate
 waiting for the hot dosa, though oily,
 being a Sunday, breakfast was late.

2. The door bell rings;
 “Go open the door”
 The cold breeze brings
 in the neighbour next door.

3. The bachelor uncle in his language
 used to tell us proverbs with his comment
 One line of the original expanded to one page
 Until we politely say, enough for the moment.

4. One example:
 What will you **bring** when you visit us.
 What will you **give** when we visit you.

5. Empty handed he had come
 Having eaten dosa, more than one
 “Please pack me a few, with some
 chutney” so saying he would’ve gone.

6. But Sonu won’t let him leave
 Told mother; “Do not give;
 He had said “Your dosa is so-so
 You northerners don’t know

the technique special for the south
to make a dish, melting in the mouth.”

7. Sonu told the guest

“You came here bringing nothing
It would be best
if you go elsewhere for anything”

8. Sonu’s mother said, “Sorry, Sonu is blunt
Pushed the packet in uncle’s hand and he went.
She then summoned Sonu and sternly chided
“To be polite, you need to be properly guided.”

9. Mother said:

“Go” “Please go” are fine. “Poda” is bad
In his language it is impolite
Learnt his lesson, neighbour uncle had.
Now go and say sorry,
and make things right.

[Notes:

*Stanza 4: Literal translation of a
Tamil proverb about a miserly
leech of a man.*

*Dosa: a snack, originally
South Indian*

*Stanza 9: Tamil ‘da’ ‘di’ are
suffixes used usually with verbs
to show disrespect,
or to very young children].*



46. GLASS HALF FULL

[No cliches with witty children]

Mr. Wilson said:

Sawaal!

Look at this glass, and tell me

If it is half full or half empty.

No, Mr Wilson, whatever my reply may be

You are sure to argue and call me naughty.

Sawaal went to Sonu,

Tell me whether this glass

Is half full or half empty.

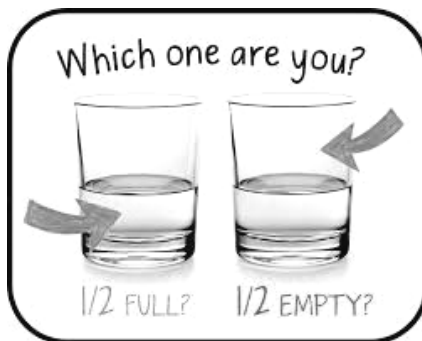
Sonu replied.

I am not a student of your class

I don't care whatever it may be

I am happy mine is less than half

This is bitter syrup for my cough



47. UNCLE PAI

[Author's tribute to a great comics creator of India]

Picture itself tells the story

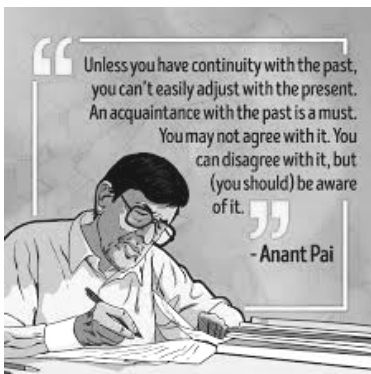
Extra words add even glory

Cartoons, comics are not less literature
than any novel, poem or work of stature.

Amazing artists used 'toons

Sketching heroes fighting goons

Uncle Pai used the method of pics
to depict mythology and Indian epics.



48. RAIN

[Making fun of English phrases]

It was a rainy day
Staying indoors was dismay
for our girls of wander lust
Sawaal broke the boredom first

“ Have you seen hundred hounds
Hundred cats together on the ground?”
“ No, you are fooling me , they will fight”
Come, I can show you now
See it’s raining cats and dogs .. how!



49. WHO ARE YOU?

[Politeness taught by S and S]

Sawaal rang the door bell
of her neighbour Sue
whom she knew very well.
Sue asked “Who are you?”

I AM A GIRL
I AM A GREAT GIRL
I am the most intelligent girl on this street
I am a food taster, swimmer,
Race runner and above all
A gate crasher
Now ask me like this.
“ Can I or may I help you?
Or even “What do you want?”

50. BAT – BALL

[Unfair to girls in sports]

1. Sawaal brought a complaint
I knew it because it is plain
She always camouflages her grief ‘
by asking a question, though brief.
2. “Why is Bhaiya so biased?”
“How do you know he is so?”
He says “Girls cannot play cricket
But what he plays is just bat-ball.
3. “Did he say why?”
“Sure, But very sly.
If we play and ball comes very close
he says, girls will be bleeding in the nose.
4. I am the uncle, known to be fair.
So, did I call Bhaiya and ask?
Others may say it is their affair
Or straight away take Bhaiya to task.
5. I did neither
Instead called Sawaal and said
“Wear a T-shirt and come
I will show ball tricks, some.
We played throw and catch
Much slower than in a match.

6. Then I showed her the patches
 on her shirt, due to missed catches.
 If you were a keeper
 Your nose would be here.
- 7 . Perhaps Bhaiya is right
 Or, too strict against you.
 But I will tell you straight
 You girls practice, you and a few.
 Show him that you all
 Can throw and catch a ball.
10. Whom will I tell?
 It is time at least a few
 Vacant sites or quiet gulleys
 Be reserved for Sawaal and Sonu
 away from any teasers or bullies.

[Notes: Bhaiya- elder brother[Hindi] here used as a proper noun [= given name]

Gully means "narrow lane" in Hindi.

Gulley – lane]

51. SONA SPEAKS

[Kids' language witty though funny]

1. Desi Dennis, Sona, is learning words
by the direct method of repeating what he
heard.
2. When he says to Mom "Let us eat, I say"
I tell him it is not polite he reminds me.
You only said yesterday
"It is very tasty, I say".
3. When an elder told
the cycle-riding Sona
"Be careful"
Sona seems to have said
"Don't teach me. I know how to "ride."
When I said it is not polite He says,
"Mom told you so when you went to the kitchen."
4. Sona sees, learns how to do
Sona hears, learns how to talk.
Sona does, learns how to work
All children see, hear and repeat
the elders in the house.

So, I say, mind your idioms
when children are around.
Don't say, "Don't teach me"
I say, listen to me, I beseech you.

52. HOME ALONE

[Home alone only in the movies]

Sonu was home alone watching
the movie of the same name on TV
She wanted very much to watch
Hence the elders used the latch
and just for a while gone

This is how Sonu was home alone

*[latch – a locking system which can be manually opened
from inside and only with a key from outside]*

Egged on by stubbornness and vain pride
she had said she wouldn't be afraid
Now a goon from the screen jumps
out in front giving her goose-bumps

She said to herself
it is all in my mind
Courage I shall find
Then came a thought
though it ought not

What if they break open the door?
Let me make it more
difficult for them than
to walk in. What else I can ?

I'll do what I am able
So pushed behind the door, a table.

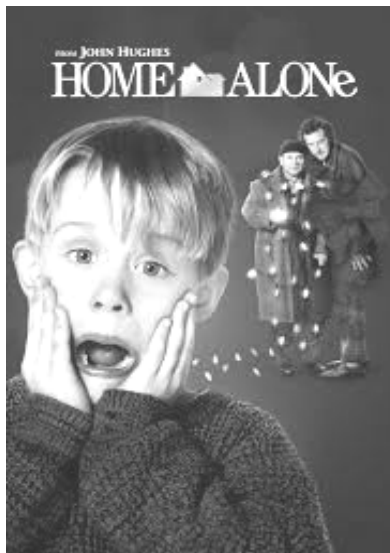
Soon, voices- sound of turning key-
Then the door bell – once, twice, many
times, sonu heard. But did not move

from a corner resembling a cove
She was, or wasn't afraid, we are not sure
She would not budge from the corner she chose

Pushing the door and the table
Parents entered
Not before the crash of some
Item splintered

TV switched off and Sonu was safe
In the warm arms of her mother
Mom said:
It is never good to behave
adamant, for you or any other.
See what you lost
A picture you loved most
Glass broken but photo is yet
not gone; that of your pet.

[*moral:*
Let not children be
left alone in a
locked house and
certainly not with
TV on]



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