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SONU SAWAAL POEMS

[DESI DENNISES]

M.D.SWAPNA

SONU SAWAAL POEMS

Episodes of Indian Children
Both intelligent and articulate
A5 size 32 pages
Poems DD 1 to DD 26.

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Kanchana - kanchanakathiresan@gmail.com

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For copies mail

engoneforall@gmail.com

kanchanakathiresan@gmail.com

phone message only [whatsup] .8762789139

PREFACE

According to this writer, cartoons are great .

The art of cartooning is mostly high jacked by highly creative people, obsessed with political and sometimes economical and social subjects. Many got immortal fame along with their cartoon characters .

Comics, cartoons, pictorial representation etc. have been subjects of great admiration as well as envy for this author . ‘Dennis, the menace’, Charlie brown and others of ‘Peanuts’ are a few of these.

Some subjects are beyond geographical and cultural frontiers .
Such a subject is ‘ childhood’

Great would be the anecdotes if only the great caregivers of children could recall and express their experiences . I admire all of them : mothers, grandmothers, playschool preschool and primary teachers , ayahs and caretakers, wardens and workers of orphanages and children’s homes , paediatric ward attendants and the list may be longer. All these people do the unenviable job requiring care, affection and most of all patience.

A few episodes are given in poetic form . The author’s regret is that these could not be directly enjoyed by children themselves or those who may not read English .

Poems are given numbers, dd1 dd2 etc just to show many more might come.

PREFACE[1] -DESI DENNISES

Munna, Munnu, Munni
 Sona, Sonu, Soni
 or any other local name
 I use for Dennis of cartoon fame.

Capers of children are the same
 all over the world, hence their fame
 I am following for many decades
 Yet the charm never fades.

I thought I could use verse
 since I am no good at art or sketch.
 But I can draw from my local source
 words and ideas and to verse stretch.



PREFACE[2]- DESI, WE

Sona, Sonu, elder Sawaal
Munna, munni, kitty all
are desi children quite vocal
given here in dialects local.

Dennis and brown speak English.
Ours are umpteens, Urdu to Assamese
Languages many, flavour is the same.
Child-speak, I have given the name.

Dennis can be a menace ;
Charlie may be a charlatan;
Our desi devils are no less;
But all of them are innocent fun.

Aunties are strict but caring.
Uncles are generous but boring.
Everyone is good , like sweet guud
All are nice, like sugar and spice
They all agree, children are carefree
And any fun is meant for fun.

*[note; desi – here, Indian
guud – jaggery [Marathi]]*

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ALPHABET

Even if Sona weighs just ten KG
 He will be admitted to LKG
 It is an unwritten law of the middle class
 To push the baby to school early and fast

Sona is used to being pushed
 He knows ABCD and ZYX too
 Thanks to his parents he too rushed
 To wherever he is supposed to go
 And whatever he is asked to do.

So, Sona knows how to catch
 The elders in their own net
 He too can ask questions to match
 “ I have written **a, aa, I, ee** , what next?

*[note: a, aa , i , ee – the first four letters
 of most of the Indian languages]*



AQUARIUM

Walking along the glass walled aquarium was a treat

Touching a shark or a whale with hands or feet

Sonu and Sawaal were thrilled:

“Thank God! The walk-way is air-filled”

Water in the lungs of a human in water

will sure lead to a drowning disaster;

What is special in fish’s gilli

that is not in an animal’s alveoli?

[note :gilli - sonu word for gills]



ASSAM [2]

Sonu said: “It is a feast
 in the north-east;
 Street vendors are also good
 Not stingy on serving food .
 For a big snack
 I don’t have to ask .
 On their own they give bada bada.

Sawaal said : Stupid Sonu! Their bada is our vada “
 Sonu replied : You only stupid! It was still big bada .
 Uncle said : Thank goodness! Their snacks are big,
 like the river, and their hearts too!
 Now go in and nicely ask aunty
 if we can have some Assam tea .



[notes :

*Assam- a state in the north-east India
 famous for elephants, rhinos, tea estates
 and the mighty river Brahmaputra.
 vada- a fried snack common all over India*

bada- ‘b’ replaces ‘v’ in Bengal and Assam]

BABY’S FINGER

The baby, Munna’s cot was wet
 So was his diaper and shirt
 Sonu obviously uncertain and uncouth
 Was trying to force water into his mouth.

Sawaal the elder came running

“Sonu, what are you doing?”

Sonu: He wanted water, now he refuses

Sawaal: He can’t talk, he can’t ask

Sonu He put his finger into his mouth and said ‘nee’

Sawaal All children suck thumb

Don’t you know, you dumb

Mother came and cleaned.

Sonu and Sawaal learned

Crying is the only way

Babies show what to say.

Sign, symbol or syllable

Small babies won’t be able

To express hunger, thirst or pain

Mother guesses first,

And does time and again.



BAD WORDS

“Shut up” the elder sister shouted at Sonu
 “Never say that, I thought you knew”
 “Sorry sis, I didn’t , I’m just repeating
 What uncle called aunt , before he started beating.

Sawaal:

Sonu, many uncles are wrong, arrogant
 Remember only a few act like gent
 I’m Sawaal, but I never asked the meaning
 Of the nasty words they use for demeaning.

Many times they say and we have heard
 Yet they declare the same as a bad word
 As always, if they say, it must be true
 Do they follow their own rules?

They never do

It is nothing new



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Sonu and sisters! Look we are lucky
 We are happy as we are and enjoy
 Grown-up adult life is awfully yucky
 They scold and abuse to hide their lack of joy.

BENGALURU

Sonu, Sawaal and uncle visiting Bangalore
stopped at the shores of Lake Bellandur
According to Sawaal , they were struck with awe
by the bizarre sight all of them saw.

Sonu said:

See, see! What a scene !
such a thing I've never seen.
Fire on water, flames and smoke!
I'm not joking, look, look!

Uncle said :

Factory waste,
chemical pollution.
Too much, too bad;
needs a solution.



Sawaal said :

Bangalore women are lucky;

They don't need gas or kerosene .

They can take water that is free

The fuel can burn and also clean.

Sonu said:

Sawaal ! don't loudly tell

your idea to a local business man.

If he hears he'd start to sell

' fiery water' in a bottle or can.

[note ; places in Karnataka , India.

True event around 2015 CE]



CLIMBING

LIZARD CLIMBING UP THE WALL

What do you call that , asked Sawaal ;

Uncle said;

Physics of vacuum suction
and the creature's wilful action.

“Squirrel scurrying up a tree tall

What would that be ?” asked Sawaal ;

Uncle said;

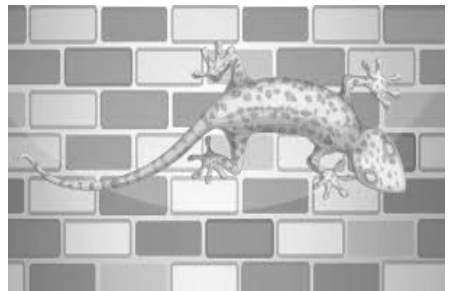
“ Not great science to study;

Not worth an M.S. or Ph.D.

How about ants and insects we see
climbing the same wall or the tree?

Uncle said;

a matter of locomotion
not even an exam question.



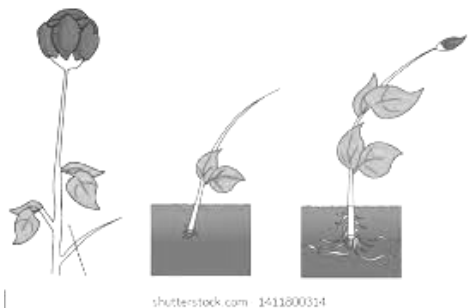
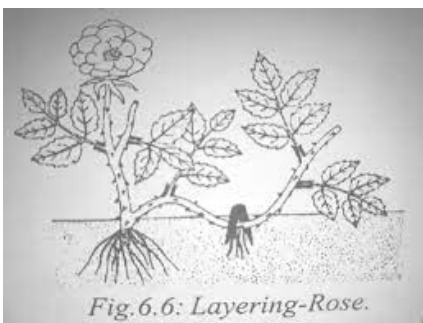
When aunty was plotting the rose
 by sticking the stem into the mud ,
 in Sonu's head a question arose:
 “ Will the stem grow and flower as good ?”

Aunty replied “Sure it will.
 Plants grow from parts to full.”

Sonu asked:
 If part of a plant can grow full
 can we not grow a puppy
 from our Rani's cut-off tail?
 Dad said:

“ We cannot and for that I am happy “

[note Rani- pet dog
 in biology [botany] the phenomenon is called ‘ totipotency’]



LOST AND FOUND

LOOK! There it is
Which i found missing yesterday
Missing it was ; never found;
I clearly recall: just like everyday
I kept it on the table above ground

Now i find it on my chair
Which I'll not miss when i sit
Sure i would never have left it there
What with my shaking hands and wavering wit.

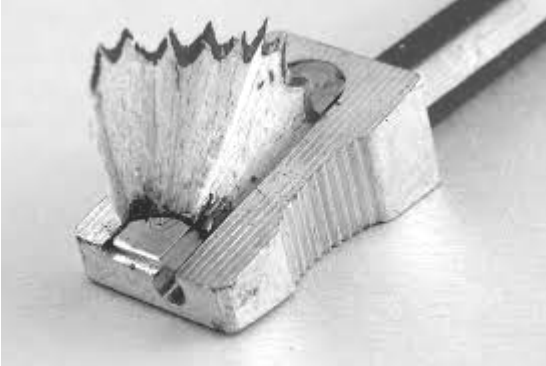
The maid might have found it on the floor
Perhaps the person who found it elsewhere
Thought it fit to visibly put it on the chair;
Lost, but found; lose sleep over it, no more.

It is neither a gold ring nor a silver utensil
It is just a puny writing tool, a pencil;
Mental thanks to the unknown finder
It now goes with the eraser and mender.

My pet pencil, pink coloured and pointed,
I got back, only to see it bald and blunted;
I recall i sharpened it yesterday as ever,
And gave Dennis, the pink timber flower.



This pencil, let me re-sharpen
 And keep it on the table with care;
 Let us see what will happen:
 It'll end up there, blunt, on my chair.



My old fountain pen lost and found
 With no ink left, fully empty;
 Ha! How many objects can be found around
 Scope for pranks by Dennis aplenty.

Mender, stapler, chalk , anything i use
 Is also his , if it is in this space;
 Preschool desi Dennis in this house
 He can be both a darling and a menace.

Lost and found inside a house
 Is a Disney game of cat and mouse
 Unless you are dull or spiteful
 Children's capers must be delightful.

I wish i could play cat and mouse
 With desi Dennis in this house
 He knows how to play with me ;
 Does see-saw on my arthritic knee.

ASSAM [1]

Sonu and Sawaal went to Assam

“Is it better than Mysore?” asked uncle Ram

“Yes, they have big buffalos, they fear;

They did not let us go anywhere near”

Sawaal said “ Stupid Sonu, you should know;

It was not a buffalo. It was a rhino.

Sitting on an elephant, we looked down

On their rough hides, black or brown.”



BADA BADA

Sonu went to Shillong in Meghalaya
Resident clouds seemed to call “come yar”
She ate bada on the banks of bada-pani
When asked, Sonu’s bragging chatter:
“Great eating big big near big water”

[note: Meghalaya – a state in India –
literal meaning: ‘abode of clouds’

Yar= friend

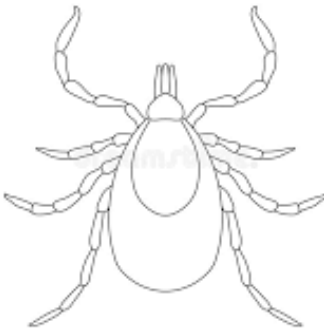
Bada-pani literally ‘big water’ - name of the lake

Badabada= big vada , a snack]



TIC ANTIC

Desi Dennis is known for his antics
He knows his dog and its body tics
He needed for his trick a target
He let his dog roll over the carpet
Of his neighbour who duly got sick



BIN

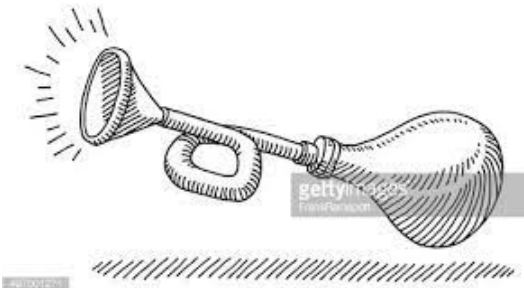
Sonu is a girl, very quiet, intuitive;
 During our hunt for a house to live
 she said, “ this is not the one to live in;
 They don’t have lid on the dust bin”



HORN

Sonu went on a road trip from school
 Saw the spiritual side of Nashik
 When asked she said : the banyan trees were cool
 But drivers think horning is music.

[note: Nashik- a small town in Maharashtra
 famous for holy banyan trees – Panchavati]



NASHIK

I met a man who visited nashik
 who said he was quite sick
 Those drivers all the time honked
 and even when the car is parked ;
 Allowed kids to play as if honking was music.

Sonu said children can play
 and make noise where they are.
 Drivers all through the day
 make noise wherever goes the car .



DAM

Sonu saw KRS dam near Mysore
 Plenty of water stored , I'm sure
 So said Sonu and asked why
 So much more is flowing by?

When the dam is full and water is more
 Than what we can safely store
 The excess is let to overflow
 It helps those down below .

Then she saw Jog falls “ What a sight!
 Does it fall like this day and night?”
 “So much water, then there must be
 Another dam above; Shall we go , see?”



OBJECT

Sonu and Sawaal were always at home;
 Thanks to the wicked virus, they can't roam;
 Clever minds can't be curbed or chained;
 Their own games the duo designed .

sawaal says " read"
 sonu asks " what?"
 read a bookok; score one.
 sonu says " write"
 sawaal asks "what?"
 write a letter .. right; one point

As I eavesdrop , the game goes on:
 " I can eat " "eat what?" "fifty idlies"
 "you can kill" " kill what?" "kill time."
 "you can cook" "cook what?" "your goose. ha!ha!"
 "you can make" "make what?" "make mistakes. ha!ha!"

I would say, [if grammar was my subject]
 Any transitive verb can have an object ;
 These children in a game of their own
 unknowingly use action verb and object noun.

*[note: this comes under the category ' grammar poems'
 written in 2021 CE during covid lockdoen period]*

*[Transitive verb- a verb that takes a direct object.
 in " she eats fruit" 'fruit ' is the direct object and
 so, "eat" is a transitive verb.*

*Intransitive verb-a verb does not have a direct object
 e.g sit, stand]*

QUESTIONS

why are babies always crying ?
what will make Mr. Wilson less nasty?
how can we make icecream as food?
 Sawaal's questions were good !

Buddha said :
 Ask only those questions
 whose answers lead to wisdom;

Ask not those questions
 for whom answers we don't know yet;
 Another Buddha will be born, I bet,
 to hear and clear any honest doubt
 before Buddhism itself is faded out.

Sonu said " So, Sawaal!
 Do not put uncle in your bait;
 Your questions have to wait."



WHAT GOES UP

Sawaal says:

What goes up should come down,

A statement which needs no proof or test .

Just look ahead, up and around :

Daily sunrise , noon and sunset.

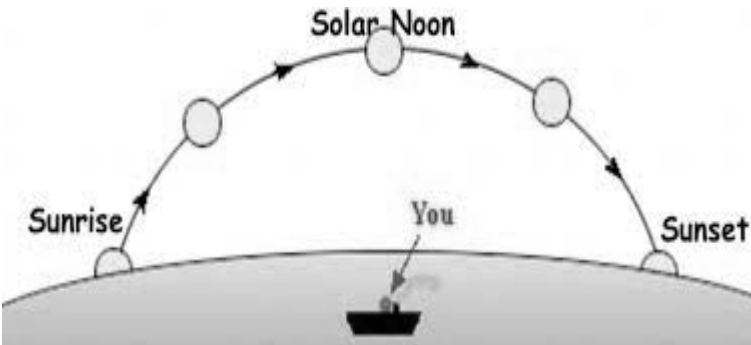
Aunty says ;

That which goes up will come down

a statement made by a care-free clown;

Commodity prices, once up, stay up;

Even the cost of a lowly lentil soup .



SONI, SONU, SONA

Little Soni goes round and round
Her skirt floats up and around
When she turns with her hands spread out
Her skirt looks like an umbrella opened out
As she herself rotates like a top
Let her play, don't force her to stop.

Desi Dennis Sona too
Wants to play like girl Sonu
You can tie a towel round his waist
Now let him, like Soni, turn and twist.

Sonu the girl
 Knows how to cook and serve
Imaginary dishes
 Using her mini kitchen set
Let Sona the boy
 Be with her and observe
And do as he wishes
 He will be as good, I bet.



CORNFLAKES

Desi Dennis had developed a crush ,
a taste for the breakfast cereal
Anything desi, made at home though fresh,
is only so-so, second class not ideal .

Even elders had to be taught and told
that nutrition claimed is a myth.
It is thanks to things to go along with .
How can you speak to a six year old ?

Porridge or pancake, parotha or pongal ,
can never survive in the cereal jungle.
To make it crackling, do you know how
when Munna wants it ready made now ?



HURT

For me, Sonu is any child
 healthy, intelligent, normal.
In rural society free and wild
 or in a family tight and formal.

Sonu can be a he or she ;
 For children there is no gender;
Tantrums, though violent they seem to be
 the true feelings are always tender.

Sona's throwing things at everyone
 is not violent or meant to hurt.
If anyone is hurt he would be the first to run
 to get a plaster or offer his own shirt



PRO-VERB

Sawaal suddenly said :

“English is partial” I do want to announce;
 Some parts of speech are special, preferred
 Nouns are given proxies , namely pronouns
 As help to verb, proverb is never referred

If a pronoun can replace a noun
 A proverb should stand for a verb
 An Englishman from a village or town
 Will give a full sentence for a proverb.

After a while Sawaal solemnly said:
 “We have to manage even if something is no good
 We have to eat roti and bland daal
 And learn grammar even if it is no good at all.

SWEAT

We play run and shout
 and get tired and sweat.
 Then we drink buttermilk
 said Sonu: “I have a doubt;

After drinking smelly buttermilk
 I saw uncle kuduka shout
 and walk unsteady and sweat .
 Uncle kuduka is sick, I bet”

[note :

kuduka – drunkard-kannada
smelly buttermilk- local liquor]

WHEEL CHAIR

Sonu went to the hospital
to see her friend Greg
Gave an apple, wrote her initials
on the plaster on Greg's broken leg.

Each plastered person on the wheelchair
Being pushed around or on his own
“Only two wheels; good, super”
Said Sonu, trying to climb on one.

Sonu went to papa's office
Saw a smiling senior boss
“Thank you sir “ on getting toffees
For the first time she was at a loss
For words as Sonu saw the senior
move away, not walking; but his chair
sliding smoothly on small wheels.
Sonu asked, “Has he broken his heels?”



THE POT

Tell me what
is meant by 'pot'
The single syllable
makes me miserable.

Give Sonu a slate
and a piece of chalk;
In minutes she'll make
the silly syllable to talk.

Since a child, Sonu is clever,
She just draws a circle.
If fully closed, it is a ball;
If open with a neck, it is a pot .

