

Poetry Series

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph
- poems -

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Daniel Trevelyn Joseph(21 December 1945)

born in tuticorin, brought up in madurai mostly but studied all over tamilnadu, parents were poor but simple and straight. was eldest of four siblings, and heavy as a capricorn, born on the darkest day of the year 21 december 1945.

studied english literature, and taught english for two years. got into ias, allotted to maharashtra cadre, and worked in government till some time ago. since august 2007, retired and working with some private companies in one or other capacity.

Used to write poetry (should say, verse?) in 1969, in 1972, then in 1996-97, and now took up in early 2008.

feel worried to tell others about this writing but this site I liked to refer to for getting some classical bit or other, and then got tempted to ..and now it has been going on for a few months.

like to read gita, zen, osho, tao and matters which treat with things not material.

wife and daughter dont think much of either what I write or read...and others' opinion does not matter much I would say if you dont mind!

i am bald and bearded, and beard is gray except for black patch around the mouth! Baldness is complete, not one hair. you have to go round me to the back to see some hair on the back of my head!

04.08.2013

Thought of Dedalus, then corrected
To Icarus who flew close to the Sun
Till his wings of wax melted,
And he fell into the sea,
Was painted by an old Master, Brughel?
Showing his white legs
And the ship saw and sailed
Calmly on. A poem was written on it
By W H Auden.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

21st Of July 2013

This morning the grey umbrella
In the sky, trying to touch horizon
Started melting with music
Of little drum of raindrop - happy listening!

It is like an invasion of Earth
By arrows made of white raindrops
Let loose on the enemy, cooling
Him into submission, utter and slushy

Birds in the rain don't shiver,
Feel cold. You can see them
In the foliage only on movement
Especially through binoculars.

The cause of this thought is the brown
Pond-heron, a big fellow, who flew up
From the green fen of Guru Nanak hospital
To sit on the tree in the middle of water-spread.

I went back to that window to find
The brown blob sitting on the same branch
Waiting for fish, while behind in our kitchen
My wife is giving food to the six cats at home.

These six are in the kitchen open to drawing-room
Puppu and Ammu in the third bedroom
Will get food thereafter, and then last
The newcomer 'Minnu, come come' outside the door.

The attack of arrows is less in speed
And number allowing our aircraft to fly,
The pigeons, the crows and the parrots
To bring tidings of enemy withdrawal.

But now the pond-heron is gone,
Leaving brown clusters like him
Which are fruits of numerous trees
Which deceive my eyes as birds.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

22.07.2013 Two Women

Walking, I slipped on wet pavement,
No landfall since I had an electric pole
To support me - behind I saw two women
Rather shocked and looking at my about-fall.
I read pity in their eyes, showing
World has pity hidden till occasion demands.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

A Dark Cloud

Sitting on the eleventh floor, I saw outside
And felt the part of a dark umbrella
High and huge in the sky, carrying lot of water
With the light sky beneath all beneath horizon.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

A Dream

I am inside the moving car, thinking
Death is certain if you lose control
Over this speeding vehicle- and then,
I wake up not knowing for a moment
Whether I am dreaming or awake.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

A Lazy Living Walk

Yellow carpets across the full road
As works-in-progress, with copper pods
Themselves standing guard as weavers.

The lone crow plunges into summer foliage
And butterflies pair of brown wings fly
All down in the twittering direction of ground.

Up I see the white spongy clouds,
On a blue sky with a semi-circular one
Overlooking, the half-moon in the day.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Adjust

"You tolerate, I don't
And that is the difference", says she.
"Because after nine or ten times, your tolerance
Bursts its limits, and you lose temper
Shout and say hurting things,
Make me hot, angry and impatient
Because this letting go
Is out of all proportion
To the event or provocation causing it,
Whereas I don't tolerate and keep quiet;
If I don't agree, I don't quietly,
Stomach or ignore it; I speak out
To whoever, wherever, it does not matter.
I don't allow my blood pressure to build up:
And if finally I can't change it,
Then having let out steam, I adjust
Myself to that situation or person:
I take it as part of normal life."

I hear this, and keep quiet - tolerate!
Is there really a life independent,
For words? I can use different words
But can we equate one word to what I do (tolerate) ,
And another to what she does or means (adjust)
Neatly, and be satisfied
That entire reality has been captured there?

If each word stands for specific activity clean,
I don't think it does, but if it does,
I want to transit from tolerate to adjust:
I wish I knew how to do it.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

After A Long Time....

Walked on two sides of tennis court
In the lane banked with yellow and pink flowers
At the end I saw the squirrel
On the tree branch with upturned tail
After a gap of five decades, maybe.
This fellow was twittering,
Reminding me of days
When I looked at birds to trace
The sources of this sound,
Not knowing squirrels produce this.

Other than this fellow, there were honeybirds
Male and female - male in brilliant dark
Green shiny color and so many female
Sparrows and bulbuls happily
Hopping from flower to flower
And the curved beak of the sunbird
Poking into those small flowers
Without damaging them
And only syringing out a bit of nectar.

I felt happy, and my head was at ease,
Weeks after my brain haemorrhage.
In Bhuj in Gujarat for shipping seminar
In the company of my lively wife, Tilaka.
Staying in Holiday Village Resort, room 503
On Anjar - Galpadar Road,
Maghpar - Gandhidham (Kutch) names that
Roll on my tongue and memory like in an Epic
And the day in Spring was 5th March 2011.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

After Retirement

I have crossed sixty, attention is failing.
Lights are fading, recognition decreases,
I feel almost unwanted now and then.

Snake of thought-poetry
Moving through brain-thickets
Flickers - compares responses,
Attention and behavior - power and position
Were then reasons for people listening to me?

Not that I thought it would be different,
But it is one thing to know and another
To actually feel the let-down,
Rather suddenly: as days pass by,
Get used to it, as every donkey to its burden.

I have joined private firm
Where I am respected museum piece
With a suitable respectable title
Among professionals vibrant,
Offering consultancy on infrastructure.

Joy to watch young bright minds close,
Which I never got a chance to in government:
Even if they were there, the distance
Of seniority kept them away, I suppose.

Today my team played cricket
In Wadala East, and won two rounds,
To reach the semi-finals.
I got bouquet of flowers, and am happy.

Different lights are twinkling from setting sky.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Age-Old Indian Problem

Caste system is the best,
One does what one is good in;
Labels don't matter: but skills
And culture i. e. heredity matter.

In the few cases where you have
More than one skill, the system
Should allow you to move across
Professions: each you should improve.

Wait a minute: that philosophy
Will lead to ambition and competition.
Once those two move into the field,
Peace of mind and content - bid farewell.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Agni-Garh (Fire-Fort) At Tezpur

In Tezpur I am, the City of Blood,
Also known as Sonitpur,
The only place in which
Shiva fought with Krishna,
Who as King of Dwaraka,
Had come to fight for his grandson
Aniruddha, who had slept with
Usha, the charming princess of Tezpur,
Daughter of Banasura,
The dedicated devotee of Shiva.

In the war between the two mighty ones,
The Hari-Hara yuddha, blood flowed
Like rivers on all sides,
Around this city on the Northern bank
Of the mighty Brahmaputra.

Aniruddha, the natural son-in-law,
(They had done gandharva marriage,)
Had been thrown into prison.
This fire-test saved the couple
And today the hill on the bank
Is Agni-garh, a big tourist attraction.

With dimming reddish horizon at dusk
I was on top looking down the hill
On the scene of battle sculpture below.
Not able to identify all figures,
The one with a begging bowl in hand,
We climbed the steps down
To recognize that it was Brahma.

The local guide was enthusiastic
That Brahma advised in vain
Both Krishna and Shiva not to fight;
But then Kurukshetra did happen,
As displayed dead bodies prove
In that stone sculpture in the open.

Nevertheless the young lovers
Remained united in Tezpur.
First Aniruddha had appeared unknown
In her dream, and when she described
Him to Chitrlekha her friend the painter
And daughter of Prime Minister,
She drew the picture and found
That it was he, the grandson of Krishna.

How he came to Tezpur and mingled
With her without father knowing
Is a mystery but common in tales of love.

The sociologist has suggested
That the new God Vishnu who was Krishna
Naturally wins over the primitive Rudra, the god
Of the Dravidians, setting echoes within me
Of Jupiter dethroning Saturn,
Aurangzeb putting father Shah Jehan
In prison within seeing distance of the Taj
Since Shah Jehan was purblind by then,
But kept seeing Mumtaz and tomb reflected
In a piece of mirror on the pillar,
Across the river Jumna.

Agni-garh at Tezpur or Taj Mahal at Agra,
Beauty sets the heart on fire by the river.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Air-Waves

Monsoon rain started piercing sideways, wetting me
On the sky-walk from Bandra railway-station end,
Slowing down to watch the play of cool hard breeze
On the falling raindrops at eye-level up from above:

They were color-less seen against the sky on their journey
To earth, but now the breeze slicing through them
Adds impressionistic white dots to the curves speeding
Through the air, noisily, like land-waves with moving foam.

I turn behind at corner to see below National polytechnic
On Anand Kanekar road, with almost all Muslim girls
Wearing pink kurtas, white pajamas and white veils covering head
Rushing to school in batches, like buds on slushy roadside.

But on the other side I see men squatting on railway plot
Beside the huge four pipelines and the trained nallahs,
Invisible to people walking on the road: can't blame them,
We have not given them suitable facilities or values.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Alexander Selkirk

Looked out of the window
Up in the sky, the pariah kite
Was hovering, standing a fitter
Description: then moved sideways.

I was admiring and thinking
'What if our automobile industry
Empowers cars like: ship does
With bow-thruster, move sideways.

It was a pleasure watching
The majestic kite standing
Over the Earth against the sky,
Truly the Monarch of all
He surveys, the bird of prey.

14.08.2013

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Amazing Moment

Arjun jumps backwards into water
With his bow and arrow
In clear waters searching for the target
Of the small moving fish above:

By seeing down its reflection
He takes aim above his head
Releases the arrow which pierces
The fish and carries it into the air
Towards the sun.

Whoever says material skill
Doesn't thrill is a liar.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Amidst Civilization

Outside a mountain cave
On a full moon night
Surrounded by bamboo groves,

Not one artificial light
Distracts my view
From the twinkling sky!

But here I have to look up, search
To the see the Moon
Amid Bandra's many lights.

D T Joseph
12.04.06

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Among Wordsworth, Coleridge And Ted Hughes

Like the river in Kubla Khan,
Gushing forth,
From inside it arises
Beseeching to be put out
In verse-form.

Is it feeling or image,
Thought or experience,
Recollected in tranquility,
I am confused, I don't know.

But I take out pen and paper,
And fix the thought-fox.

D T Joseph
18.01.08

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

An Appraisal In Orange County

I am sunning myself
In my courtyard in Orange County,
In our Private Pool Villa No 702
Of the older part of the resort,
When a small bird does
An undulating flight
Between two foliages at a height
Making me think of small forms
Of life, the bright ladybug
And then the mosquito
The smaller biting insects, spoken
Of in the Bhagavad Gita as the forms
Evil men take in the next birth!
Really, if life is holy, precious,
How I am still so careless of single life
As Tennyson spoke about Nature?

At the same time, the fussy Jain
Who sweeps his path before walking
Or refuses to eat in the dusk afraid
That he may gulp living creatures
Tends to put me off a bit, though.

Tilaka my wife brings me a cup of coffee
And a biscuit which she forbade
A little earlier, and says,
'Coffee is not too hot', knowing
That I like it steaming hot: I praise her
'None can look after me as well as she does.'

Now I appreciate her for all the nice things
She has done to me and my parents and siblings:
I realize my mistake of not having done it earlier
But I don't want to overdo the remedy now.
She is lively, intelligent, good
And is above all great company.
Is completely self-reliant so much so
I am many times helpless like an unemployed!
She is most unlike an Indian wife,

Bold, learns it fast, and does it herself
Without expecting, or leaning on, her husband
To get it done!

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Angel

An angel on earth! Pah, where are they?
They are fairy-tales or christmas carols:
No evidence, not there: but only priests'
Holy men's way of cheering and cheating.

Long ago when we had come to Mumbai
On transfer first, I used to drive a black
Ambassador, and one evening near Churchgate,
The car stopped and I couldn't make out why.

My wife comes from family of engineers,
She knows driving since long, says she quietly,
Check the fuel. And there it was. I found it
Dry. Not a drop. We got down to push.

I was feeling odd. My daughter was six years.
Wife of last seven years got down to lend me
A hand. Suddenly a car stopped, I was worried.
An old gentleman in pure white got down.

He said, " The young lady cannot be pushing,
Madam, please get in. We're here", and joined
Me to shoulder ahead the car: When he found
It was the fuel he got me in drove his car

To the nearest pump in a petrol can of his,
And paid for it drove me back to my car,
Helped me transfer and answered my query
By saying he lives in Lalit building,

Drove away, and away from our life.
He was in early sixties, and now reminds me
Of the line by Matthew Arnold, in Rugby
Ye Angels! ye appear at the right time.

They appear even today and in crowded streets
Too, but he who has ears to hear only hears,
Eyes to see only sees, and others miss,
Like I did: hope he reads this poem of mine.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Anger Uncontrollable

Like summer floods, it comes
The jack-bean-stalking anger
Rising in my mind, though rarely.

When it is set in motion,
It is like the veritable beginning
Of an avalanche, can't be stopped.

It makes me do things I would
Not have otherwise done, nor liked
To do, but it leaves desolate ruins.

Eyes go hard and glaring, earlier I'd shout
From deep inside, but now graduated
To ominous silence - only things break.

Food on wife's nose, glass door pierced through,
Thumb tear bloody, stitched at night by Dr Abde
Cups and plates in pieces, now down to tearing papers.

I don't repent the burst of anger, but
I would be happy if it didn't occur, for
I enjoy the serenity of a cool summer day.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Another Dream

I am put up in a guesthouse room,
Located above on three steps of stone;
I enter, find only toilet, no bathroom,
And in the centre, a big hole near which
Three old heavy white-metal locks lie;
I meddle with them, and soon one falls
From my hand, down sixty feet to cellar
Where men live: I am watching
With fear it might fall on some head:
But it doesn't, I am still worried, all look up,
To only assure that they'd fetch up the lock.

Later, I ask where is the dining room?
Told there is none but that a Mall
Is in front. I can see some neon red lights
On the building across the road: I'll eat there.

Wonder how they manage to get such rooms
Reserved in the metropolis: realize that it is Delhi,
They being Government in national capital,
They manage this, in fact anything they have a mind to.

In the dream, I decide to write a poem – Coleridge-like!

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Anthology

On edge of precipice, if have to,
I go down without flicker or tremor,
It is a burp that comes up
Natural – and I am ready to die.

The poem is born, recognized
First for the idea turning into line,
A phrase: like foetus it grows
By itself, and I am witness, watching.

I can kill it if don't tend it
And take it out in time -
I have lost many in fallopian tube
But that is survival of the fittest.

When I see the new forms
Very few are alive.
Some wiggle only some limbs,
And many are dead wood.

What I suggest is anthology,
Not of full pieces, but of words,
Phrases and ideas: if put together
In good order, that will be it.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Anwar In Dream

The scene was clear
The auditorium with persons
And the representative of Pakistan
Was reported to have arrived.

He came in, and I went to him
Because he turned out to be known
And he came to me happy
A few years junior to me he was.

He is telling me he has come
For giving his Monday lecture
Tomorrow and didn't expect to see me
I remember it is Monday tomorrow.

With that the dream changes
Like as in a theatre in East Coker
The lights are extinguished for the scene
To be changed - all the dream was rolled away.

18.08.2013

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Apartheid In Mumbai

In our house it prevails;
Divisions are clear,
Rooms have to be kept closed
For the cats cannot mingle, living
Closed on fifth floor in Mumbai flat.
They are seven, all handicapped,
Picked up from the streets, and
Right in the beginning got sterilized.

In each of the four regions,
Different colored cats live,
Some of them get on with
Each other while one
Cannot be left with any.

Some are black,
Some white, and rest
White and black
Or brown and white.

Dinku cannot be left with anyone
Though with childhood friend
Ammu, he is more considerate;
He is as they say spastic
And for ever ready to piss on books
Or any paper spread anywhere,
While many get into the sand-tub for it
Chinkie is also now becoming bad!

Zorro the large black cat
Is good at frightening others,
With his sheer size and stare,
But as a rule he and Minnie
Share the bedroom with my wife,
No entry there to any other cat.

Zorro loves Minnie and keeps
Licking her wet all over.
He is more like a dog,

And if he sees me in drawing room
He comes and butts me till
I pet him like his mother would.
My wife says that in the morning
He wakes her by patting on her cheek!

Minnie the cat figures in YouTube
For having learnt to get on commode
Sit properly, and enjoy there
Doing whatever the humans do:
All on her own, no training!

In my daughter's room
Reside the two senior citizens
Sham and Puppup and for company
The little girl-cat Ammu who has
Now grown as big as them.
Puppup as a kid was the first
To enter the portals of our house,
Some nine years ago.

But she is all ready to fight
With one-eyed Chinkie
Who can sort of get on
With Zorro – sex counts, sometimes –
But not with Minnie.

Minnie goes ready anytime
To attack Chinkie
Who makes horrible noises
Though Minnie has not touched her
It is her way of defending herself
And attracting rescuers' attention.

Thus, one cat who fights the others
Means the doors of bedrooms count
And cannot be left open.
Naturally the human beings live
In isolation away from the sight
And sounds of others.
Isn't that apartheid in apartments?

Here the lady of the house,
Treats these black and white
As VIPS, and spends a fortune
Every month on them,
And they thoroughly spoilt
Would not eat anything
But the best of catfood.

Only in my bedroom,
A ban for the cats exists
But the moment door is open,
One or the other is ready to
Come in, sniff, climb on bed
Or window, and ever ready
To baptize anything he fancies
And has to be pushed out.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

April Morning In Mumbai

The birds are gone;
I can see only a lonely egret
Not on Mithi river, but beside
In a stagnant pool off western bank.

Up above, the half-moon
Of Shelley's 'intense lamp narrows
In the white dawn clear'.

On the north, a Boeing 732 rising
At a whale-like angle in the air
With the large fin on the back.

All about me, green mangroves
As I take my morning walk
On Bandra_Kurla link road bridge
Slumdweller squatters regularly
On sides of the dirt road down.

Interrupted by the birdsong
EHA-like, seeking to keep company,
But I'm not inclined, nor able,
To distinguish and allocate.
Forgotten almost.

Heat is in the air,
I return home fast.

Easter Sunday
8th April 2007

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Arbitrary

I am in my Honda Civic car at Haji Ali:
Boy of thirteen knocks on window screen,
But I turn away from this beggar, sure,
Not knowing how to go about it always.

In the morning however at Worli
I had asked driver to slow down
While I took out a ten rupee note
And gave it to that young beggar.

There is no difference between the two,
Both are begging by tapping on car window;
One makes my hand to open a wallet
And the other make my eyes move away.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Arthritis

I am happy that I can breathe,
Walk, lift my arms, sit
Without assistance, get up too:

When the eye goes dull and dark
And ear cannot do business
Without hearing aid, one slumps.

Like God touched Jonah the prophet
When any part of my body
Goes on strike, I realize its worth only then.

It is not that these things don't happen
When one is young, but if one is also old,
That awareness multiplies trouble.

Perhaps partly in imagination, but then
Effectively makes it worse:
As an old man, you get up more slowly.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

As In One Quartet

Yesterday from the Bandra skywalk
Near the Railway plot I saw down
And in the bushes below, there was
Movement and motion and noise
Like the excited laughter of children
That won the poet's goodwill
In Burnt Norton these were sparrows
Though I couldn't see them from above.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

As Water Is In Water

Like the clouds, the pain passes.
Its shape is no more.
Has dissolved, and difficult
To rebuild its shape and substance.

Does Shakespeare say 'dislimns'
Itself? Antony and Cleopatra
Is a great play: range with
Lot of high peaks of poetry
Love and human psychology
Custom cannot stale its variety.
Yes, infinite - I've not forgotten!
Act IV, Scene XIV, Mark Antony to Eros.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Avatars Of Love

Sunday... despite the laziness at 9 am
I went out for walk, but the sun was hot -
I have been remiss for too long
And the body has started paining -
I picked up a book by Osho
Walking along the building side
Reached the Princess Flyover,
And sat on the cement bench under it,
And opened the book.

Next bench one man in early 60s came and sat,
He had flowing white beard on his face
And a packet of biscuits in yellow wrap.

Another old walker stopped and told this bearded man
That somebody is waiting for.... my boss, you know, he says.
The Beard replies, "Ha, ha! see my boss has come"
Pointing at a stray dog black and brown nicely merging
He opened the biscuits and gave two in hand which the dog
Took in its mouth gently
Ran two metres and lying down on ground enjoyed the biscuits,
Got up walked back.
'More, you want', he said, and gave two more biscuits:
Again sat and ate
Again it came, this time he gave only one
Again it came,
This time
I expected him to refuse, or complain
But again the dog came, and he gave now two biscuits
And then ate one for himself.

Reminded me of two other old men;
One old man carrying a burden
Sat for rest outside Wilson College,
And opened his cloth-bag
And threw handfuls twice to the stray cat
Before he ate his food. His eyes proclaimed love to the cat.

I was waiting for my daughter to come out of exam.

Another old man on Marine Drive
Giving, and giving
To the cawing crows, bread crumbs
He was old, weak and cheerful:
Happily he distributed
As though they were his children:
They were.

I, deeply moved, carry the scene,
Of Avatars of Love, if you have eyes to see.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Bathroom

Only place where no stress was felt,
And inner self curled up
To feel peace, was the bathroom.

Out in the world, in office, on travel
Was surrounded by persons
Who thrust applications, perhaps indirectly,
Encircled by things who are no less bothersome.

The water, the lota, and the sound
Of water draining with tabla-like music.
All that made me feel free and naked.

But that was years ago.

I've let go of ambition
To be the best,
To do everything that is asked for,
And now in the process of giving up
Doing things on time, too.

Bathroom is no longer the only sanctuary.

31.01.08

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Battle Of White Ants

Not of termites! but of rain
In the monsoon when it is heavy showers
The water-drop after hitting the water surface
On ground, rises up like so many transparent ants
At so many places, in battle formation.

It is like the candle burned of Zhivago
The beginning of a poem.
But if the muses are not kind
The inspiration dies fast
Like showers on some days in the monsoon
Struggle, and struggle but no words come.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Be With The Flow

You can't step into the same river twice,
Said the wise old Greek long ago;
He could have made it 'flowing river':
But can we call them rivers, if dry?

Even though dry, when I step in
Second time, am I the same?
Cells and thoughts have changed
In the time between the two.

New experiences, new skills,
New food, new revelations,
New appointments and disappointments
Keep flowing into life.

Gautam Buddha starts with aniccha:
Heraclitus was and is right,
You cant step into it twice,
Age cannot wither life's
Infinite changes and variety:
In change lies beauty.

27.02.2008

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Beautiful Leaves

A middle-aged couple I see
Stopping to look with curiosity
At a tree by the pavement, grown
Inside Artek Nagar compound.

I am walking in the opposite
Direction, with some parijaat flowers
In my hand, and wondering whether
They are aware it is the breadfruit tree.

The leaves of this tree are different
Full of folds and angles and sharp edges
That I find them best of beautiful foliage
Of all the trees in Bandra East.

By now on my return, I find again
The two, and realize that it is mother and son.
If I can confuse them as a couple
It is absence of watchful awareness.

If I am indifferent to human beings
And their relationships,
Do I have the right to blame persons
Who do not care about trees and flowers?

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Beckon

Sleep, be with me through the night:
I don't want you tomorrow morning
Sitting inside my heavy upper lids
Offering neither of us any solace

D T Joseph
13.02.08

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Bedlam

At 7 pm on the skywalk, I find
My eyes and ears baffled by loud congested traffic
Pushing me to extreme pressure within my head.

This bedlam is mostly prevailing
At junction between road from Dhaaravi,
And from Sea-Link below Western Express Highway.

Noisy explosions from near S R A office
Where huge metal structure members
Are being cut by workers of DHIL.

I am not able to bear the mix
Of Cars below, trying to beat
One another, and horning away.

Each horn sound acts as an arrow
To pierce the soft ball of my brain
As if without protective skull around.

Feel like having fallen on ball of thorns
You realize that four months ago,
I had a severe brain haemorrhage.

You understand why now I
Do not want to walk out
At this time of the evening.

Better to walk at 6 a m
Now that winter has folded up,
And I have got used to getting up early.

Indian music with violin and flute I hear sung
On my bedroom tv but only till about 5 45 am
Me free thereafter to walk into 'incense-breathing morn'.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Begun Like Keats... I'M In Orange County

My head aches, for having nothing to do
As I sit on an easy chair in my courtyard
With a blue pool at its centre:

Suddenly sails in a yellow butterfly,
Twirling its wings this way and that,
She moves fast to two corners
And swiftly flies out above the walls
But not before another butterfly
White in colour has invaded our space
Meanwhile a greenish one intrudes
Through the leaves and even sits on the tree
Butterflies can see speedily
To avoid a collision or a dash,
Despite all the obstacles
On their not so straight way.

Ah! here now is a spotted butterfly
Floating along, and not trembling away
Followed by a darkening dragonfly
Fluttering its transparent wings
Not the reddish ones crowding above
Special treetops in the month of September.

A holiday where we enjoy life and its silences
Greenery, rolling terrain filled with coffee plants
Where we saw two golden orioles
And heard two racquet-tailed drongos
Singing as loudly as you can imagine.
Life is a celebration on days like this!

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Better Alternative

He is looking for, in his wife,
The soft person who is dead
Since long, the one whom he married
Thirty five years ago: so perhaps does she.

Sooner they realize that life
Is as it is now here;
Not in the cobwebs of memory
Mixed with imagination, the better.

To bring back that tender younger person
Is travelling back in time, impossible:
More difficult than rejuvenation
Of Heritage bodies of Mumbai.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Between 7 Am And 8 Am

Like a huge ant colony on a war move,
The cluster of cars zoom along BKC,
Hissing like wild beasts on a chase -
All this by 8 o'clock in the morning.

No barrier signal except one, and that too
Not honoured at this time of the day!
Is that pragmatism or lack of discipline?
Issue cannot be decided here near Family Court.

In the rainy season, the sound increases swishing
Thrown back by the high sound barrier wall
Attacking both the ears of walkers on pavement.
I should get up and walk before 7: 00 AM.

Let the pursuit of money, success and fame
Go on: human nature in society won't change.
Traffic will go up and our society
Will move towards more pollution and accidents.

That should make me different
Buy a bicycle and choose lonely roads
To wander as a cloud,
And seek solitude and silence.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Between Us

Am I so impatient that I see
Only bad, insensitive things
In what others do?

Am I not secure enough
To allow persons interested
To come close?

Why am I ready to freeze
After encouraging at the start
Steadily then, detach myself?

I begin later to speak less,
Smile less, step backward,
Don't meet his or her eyes.

The message is crudely, silently
Given: No, don't come further
It is not wanted: I am off, distant.

What happens can be predicted:
He or she sees the painful change
And moves away - slow, or fast.

Many disappear completely.
Only those in close circle stabilize
And with proper spaces between us.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Beyond

Grammar is dead: but ages ago taught
To write correct English by Dad,
And praised by teachers giving marks.

Poems should throb with
Phrases or clauses like meat
Freshly hunted.

Finishing with full sentences
Like in prose won't do:
Meaning should sing through words.

I seek blobs of protoplasm,
Raw, and wriggling with life,
For my poetry.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Bhoti

For ever one gets to know
New things from all sides.
Today I went to Dahung valley
In West Kameng District.

In that lap of Nature,
Green hills stretching to blue sky,
With white clouds observing
The Institute functions to promote
Himalayan culture studies.

I learnt the word 'Bhoti' there:
Honestly I had not heard it before.
It means the Tibetan language,
I think so. The in-house journal
Has three parts:
Bhoti, English and Hindi.

It was given to me, along with a dress
By the tall, handsome
Principal G T Bapu as he refers to himself,
Also known as Lama Tashi.

When I go home to Bandra, Mumbai
Be sure I shall google
With Bhoti and learn more.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Birds Of Tawang

On my way to Tawang on the hills,
I had taken my old, Thai binoculars,
A rare copy of the book by Dr Salim Ali,
On the Birds of the Eastern Himalayas.

For that book, I searched in shops
Of Mumbai, placed order on
The Strand Bookstall on Sir P M Road,
After a week, they said Not available.

As Life-Member, I went to BNHS
Asked to buy a copy, was told
That it is out of stock, and only Oxford
Has, but shop has shifted to Andheri now.

Telephoned them to be told politely,
That there is no print after 1996,
And no copy available anywhere:
At this point, the BNHS clerk sprang alive,

'If you are a member, why not
See in our Library, and use it
For the trip? ' Genius! It didn't strike
Me, the dimwit, I went and took copy.

Reminded me of my visit to Sarnath
Opposite Benares, and found that copy
Of Buddha's first talk at Sarnath
Was just not available there or near!

In two days after reaching Tawang, I have seen
Only three types of birds, the white pigeon,
Black jungle crow on pole, shiny and cawing,
And one small green bird with yellowish belly.

After all the efforts to procure the book,
I finished the trip of eight days in Arunachal
Without having opened it: In fifth century B C,
Euripides said rightly at the end of his plays:

“Zeus on Olympus has many things in his store-room:
The gods bring to pass many surprising things.
What was expected is not fulfilled.
For the unexpected, the gods find a way”.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Birdwatching

Quivering of the leaves I notice
In the breeze and drizzle of the rain,
Feel like small birds are flying there,
Eyes search a little, and then realize - no.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Birthday Greetings

You arose in the monsoon sky at Malshej
And shared the room with my wife and me,
Was in Delhi at IETF, but not in Khajuraho;

We have been more than friends
But less than what others thought.

Travelling transmuted express and email
Desires probed restrained overpowered
And truth-and-peace
Sought from Igatpuri to Krishnamurti
To Osho.

Divorced and free, tough and radical
You held me - middle-class, square and prudish -
I am brought up
To avoid 'sin' at all costs:
Neither money nor woman ever made me
Lose track.

But under your moon-lit sky,
I stagger, almost had lost my way....
Did I fall in love?

Let me blow a Happy Birthday towards you,
In advance for the next Birthday in March 2010.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Blank Spaces

I cry tears of bitter pain and sorrow:
One says you write prose and claim it is verse,
The other asks, is it only autobiography?
And one more accuses me of just recording
Good observations, nothing poetic whatsoever.

I think of that Quarterly with Keats,
And of Shelley's passionate defence —
Where is my Adonais? but I should die first!

Separately, my verses, like Basho's haikus
Undergo more revisions.

Last week on tour in Delhi, I read
Modern Indian poetry, searing lines like
'Splashes a handful of moonlight over her body'
And had to confess white spaces between my words
Look and sound more poetic than my words.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Blessed Walk

It was the last day of April,
Took a few moments for 64-year old
Brain to register the ground was wet:
I looked up the sky, full of deep grey clouds.

Started walking out of Jasmine, and a dropp fell
On my bald head, sending a tingling message
Down, and made me see many mounds ahead
Made of dust and mud upraised by fallen drops.

On the road-side, I see a younger IAS officer
Walking with his fair wife in white shirt out,
Following 40 feet behind; he does not know
What luck he has to have a wife follow!

Two more drops, one on each my arm,
I look up to see the widely-spread clouds
Opening up and the Sun ready to pierce
And prove that summer is yet not gone.

All the while, iPod streams in music for me to hear
A Debussy piece that has piano strokes
Resembling the drops of rain, one by one
What followed pleased more - Chopin's Raindrop!
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Life in its long path has revealed sources of joy and pain
Without getting me to be proud or depressed with success
Or failure, happily with greater plus than minus points:
Unlike Housman, I have received more of good than ill!

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Blest

I am more interested in buying
Or collecting books than reading.
With my iPad, in enlarging
iBooks library than in reading!

With music too, in downloading
Rather than playing the music
Is it ambition or acquisitiveness
Or a remnant of ambitions?

I preach to others about how
Substance should be more important
And not technology or success
Or having more knowledge.

Of either books or composers
But that I know a moment of true joy
From a piece of music
Or a page of prancing poetry.

Should life lift me as a wave,
Make me realize the purpose of life
And fall before Lord god Almighty
Who gave me the capacity to live this way.

01 September 2013

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Blushing

Not the tall skyward growing tree,
But this Ashoka is short and round
With more green foliage.

It is said when a woman touches the tree
It blossoms forth orange flowers;
Especially if she is somebody like Sita.

I haven't looked up the etymology:
Whether Mahabharat epic relates
Any story like this when in Lanka.

If true, it leads to confusion of gender;
Maybe not Sita but when Hanuman sees
The tree in Srilanka it blushed like

Water in Cana of Galilee
Which saw her Lord,
And blushed, wine-red.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Bombay Poems

With Pasternak's Doctor Zhivago,
Lara poems I had enjoyed,
Now why not create Bombay poems?
I love these names in my City,
Would love to record them,
Places, roads, precincts and buildings.
Events I leave to the journalists,
And the innumerable TV channels.

I don't have to write poems for others;
Let me not have Hell in that form.
'What others will think' counts no more.

Candle burns inside...

If that experience is not beaten into words,
And ploughshares,
It will reduce this inner process to wax-spread
Leaving me deserted by the Muse,
Dry and empty as my bare, bald head.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Book Of Job – Chapter 3, Verse 17

I awoke today tired in the eye-lids,
With the thought flashing at me,
'Eternal rest', I'll get when, I asked.

The idea stopped me short, made me think -
Sounds strange for Indian and Christian:
Contradicts punar-janmam and resurrection?

Regardless, I have requested my wife
To play the music of full Requiem
For people to hear, and see my dead body!

Eternal rest sounds grand, peaceful, beautiful:
There the wicked cease from troubling,
And the weary are at rest. Hallelujah!

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Borderland

I am inside a moving Ambassador car,
Death is certain if you lose control
On this speeding vehicle is the thought,
And so, I wake up not knowing
Whether I am dreaming or awake!

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Both

She is watching a Tamil movie on TV
In a bad posture - for neck and back
She says because the newest cat
Is sleeping on her lap.

She doesn't realize that it is possible
To have both together
Affection for the kitten
And a good health-saving posture.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Bottled

I told her you are arguing
On all sides.
If you are against yes and no,
And all the three intermediate positions,
I can only ring up and cancel
Tomorrow's appointment.
She doesn't want that also.

Now what am I to do?
See her face contorted
In part anger, and part frustration,
And bottle up my own.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Brain Haemorrhage And After

I have had headaches before,
I would go for guru thailam in childhood
And for Tiger Balm of Singapore in college.

I did not like to take saridon etc
But would not mind a cup of coffee
Or a nice nap for an hour any time of the day.

And now the head starts aching
If I sit on the laptop for more than an hour
Of if I have to handle more than two or more things.

O I now get worried when the headache starts
Thinking maybe it is the bleeding inside:
After all, the same ache I had six months ago.

When I was talking on the maritime policy
In the FICCI and Infrastructure magazine conference
In Intercontinental The Lalit hotel at Sahar, Mumbai.

Lucky I was Khushru, Atul and Nikhil
Rushed me to the hospital within the hour
And the hospital had the doctors and the equipment.

For ten days after the episode, what happened
Has been wiped out from my memory,
Though at no point I went into a coma.

I remember speaking with headache,
Getting off the dais, saying not feeling well
But don't trouble my wife or daughter.

They say that I threw up badly,
Was taken to a room, here the hotel doctor,
Came and advised shift to Seven Hills hospital.

I don't remember how I was taken to the hospital,
Or any of the tests, even the lumbar puncture
Done the next day to reduce my headache

By putting the needle at the end of the spine,
And removing some cerebro spinal fluid
Along with some blood from my brain.

Wife and daughter tell me that I was bad as patient:
Hospital had to tie up my hands and legs,
I would keep pleading that I should be let loose.

Strange to think that 'Seven Hills Hospital' at Marol
Was inaugurated by President Pratiba Patil on 5th July,
And I am admitted on 26th August 2010.

In India, within less than two months
Any institution does not have more than
Table and chairs, and the excuse, "We have just opened! "

But here there were able doctors,
Who diagnosed my brain haemorrhage fast, had
The willingness to explain to patients' relatives.

And so when I get that special ache
Which affects the inside back of head,
I worry again it accompanies bleeding inside.

No coffee, no saridon I look for;
I slow down whatever I am doing,
And hasten to a place to lie down quietly.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Breasts

Firm, shapely, level-looking
Great assets of his girl-wife
Making him proud of the assets,
Loosening tied up movable property,
He knows how to knead them gently
And reach the tip to feel the hardness –
Jealous of others' eyes or touch,
More so, depending on interest
That look or touch evoked in her.

All that when she was in her twenties
Definitely, but descending in thirties
Later, depreciation has set in
Straight-line, or cumulative sagging:
Both lose intensity, but cant sell them:
Yet I wonder what are the other ways
For a man to show sexual interest
In a woman. Foreplay means breasts.
The other area she may perceive
Not as foreplay, but as play itself.

So then till the end, breasts play their role
In bringing man closer to woman.
Truth universally acknowledged not only
By bachelors: and yet, other than the line
"Pillowed upon my fair love's ripening breast"
Some phrases on color or softness of it,
I cannot recall poetry on breasts.
Shame on you, poets – all impotent? ☐

Dark, but lovely... like two fawns, twins of a gazelle
Rose of Sharon, Lily of the valleys, our bed is green.
Solomon comes leaping down the mountains,
Skipping upon the hills, to see whether vine has budded,
Whether grape blossoms are open, pomegranates in bloom,
Until the day breaks, and the shadows flee away.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Breeze

The gust of cool breeze blows suddenly,
In my home on the fifth floor in Jasmine building:
I find on only one side of my forearm pleasant sensation
And seconds later, it hits my shin, swirling
Below the dining table, making hair on my legs
Quiver into awareness.

When our cat Dinku sees me
Near the open window
He is ready to scratch my leg;
His way of telling me
To lift him to the freedom of the window-sill
Where he 'window-catches' crows and pigeons
For pastime, the poor spastic that he is.

As I lift to indulge him, and look out to feel
The breeze, I find huge dusty gray waves
Rolling across the atmosphere
Through the open spaces beside the FDA office
To the mangrove-banked Mithi River
Flowing dirtily down to Arabian Sea.

24.02.08

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Bumla, The Border With China

We were at the Chinese border,
The famous McMohan Line,
Or the line of actual control.

After travelling a bone-racking
Thirty six kilometres on the hills,
Above Tawang, reaching nearly
Sixteen thousand feet above sea.

It took us two and half hours, with
Five military check-posts, to stop at,
Beginning with the Military Police,
Six kilometres off the town of Tawang.

Dalbir Singh a Sardarji met us, at Bumla
with namaskar, showed us the borders
Marked also by lingam-like mountain
At a distance, followed by welcome tea.

In a clean constructed shed, where the Tricolour flies,
With Incredible India pictures framed of Taj Mahal,
Amritsar Golden Temple etc, also the Chinese flag,
And the Chinese wall I saw on 1987 New Year morn.

Out there at high noon, the half moon was clear
Hanging without clouds or stars to distract,
In the bright blue October sunshine sky, worried
Whether we will work for peace at the border.

We saw the Conference room where flag meet
Takes place by turn, tables laid with placard
For India and China, and the last of such meeting
Had been held just a few days ago on 1st October 2008.

My companion Jumli Ado picked up a stone
Gave me as a memento: he said, I could write
Indo-China border, date of visit and keep at home;
I started with disdain at that, but changed my mind.

Dalbir showed us two mounds of stones,
And asked us to shift some stones from one
To the other, adding that as the Chinese mound
Grows in size, so will our friendship with them.

I say the concept of Nation is an idea whose
Time for death has come: we are all a family,
As the old Tamil poet had said,
Two thousand years ago.

The thermometer outside the Indian shed
At border showed then 2 degree Celsius,
And I regret that we still have standing armies,
Ready to devour each other like demons of old.

Only a few metres before the border,
I saw a board screaming 'From this point
You are under observation of the enemy',
And then we enlarge the friendship mound!

What fools these mortals be! Says Puck on Moon
Looking down at us from the clear blue sky
Far above the eastern Himalayas, with pity
On every soldier, politician and vested interest.

Armament manufacturer, and army officers,
The journalists who go through orgasm to cover
The new development in any field including
Battlefront have to be countered by us.

Nothing happens unless the public shows its mind:
If Berlin Wall came down, and VietNam was sorted out,
And the Soviet Union and United States work together,
What prevents us getting along with Pak and China?

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Burning

When they mature, they become
Women in clove, spicy!

They have to show they know everything.
If they hear news of friend's husband,
They take pleasure in telling wife
Innocently, promptly enabling wife to deal
Few left-handed swipes at spouse.

At first chance the wife tells friend
She knows that the other knows.
At every passing the dish, it
Acquires more pungent taste
Leaving the curry boiling.

Soon the couple is into
Oohs and Ahs biting their tongue,
Feeling the heat,
While the friend is puzzled if stupid,
And if somewhat intelligent, angry and regretful!

If husband were to explain,
Then palate is burnt.
After few days, fresh cooking starts.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Butterflies

The famed butterflies of North East India
I saw metre by metre, bend by bend,
On the mountainous road, winding down
To the plains, all the way from Bomdila
On the high, green Eastern Himalayas.

While the book on those birds
By Dr Salim Ali I procured
With difficulty from BNHS Mumbai
For this visit lies asleep, unopened
In my bag, still.

But these gems of Nature
Are all there, twisting their way
On the road, sometime single,
More often in pairs.
They have to complete the job,
Copulate in the short time given.
They dance round each other:
Sometimes I saw three of them
Together: my mind lazily
Wandered and wondered
"Is that a son or a rival,
The third one? "
Mostly I saw the pairs of same type,
Except one where the white
Was courting a black.

The movements of butterflies
Fascinate me no end.
How powerful their eyes
Must be to save them,
From accidents while
They are being buffeted
By both the wind and waves
In the ocean of air.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Camouflage

The flight of pond heron
From above both wings are white
Either side of brown body.
When it perches on ground
It merges with soil and mud around
And not a sign of white anywhere.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Candle Flame

In Tawang, among the hills
Ten thousand feet above sea
I am in the Government Circuit House,
Light goes out while I was
Showing bright Jupiter,
And brighter Venus, long-lost
Friends of mine to Winfred Warshong.

I realized that I had packed so much,
But not the torchlight or a lighter,
Life is like that! And light goes!
Immediately a lit candle
Was brought in, and installed
In the glass ash-tray.

The flame is in front of me
Bluish at the bottom
Covering the wick
And bright yellow flame
Tapering towards the roof,
It is a beautiful sight
Good enough to provoke a poem.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Carom

Heavy my new carom-board is -
Like Antony when Cleopatra lifts him -
But moved out of store-room, and set up for me
To practise, improve my skill so I can later play
With my wife, a regular champion in University
Of Mumbai year after year in the tournaments.

Alone now I play from both sides and watch
Myself and the game: the sounds of the shots
Are two-fold, one from the striker
And another from the coin as they hit edges
Or fall into the pockets: the sound shows me
Whether force and speed were generally enough,
Or precisely what was required.
It sounds like raining sometimes, at other times
Like a small cracker, sometimes like the teacher's
Knuckles in old times on the dull students' heads.

Sometimes the coin falls in smoothly
Without touching any of the wooden edge
And sound comes only when it falls inside
On other coins: a shot worthy of Arjun
Whose coin travels up to the pocket
And falls from edge like a champion diver
With least disturbance of water surface.

With more force, the coin twirls on top
Of the pocket, before it falls in.
Like Apollo, the striker sometimes chases
The coin and falls along with the victim
Into the pockets: I don't know what they do in,
Poor striker! Soon he gets pulled out
From the dark hole into upper light.
But if he did that mischief with the Queen,
Then there is specific legislation governing:
One can pocket another and let Queen rest
Inside or she will be brought out for further
Persecution and buffetings in the marketplace.

The queen is always red, I don't know why,
There is an element of romance in going
After her in the midst of eighteen other
Indifferent white and black guys on field.
One chases her from the beginning,
Some leave her to be won as a dessert.
Queen dominates both carom and chess.
While chess is very hierarchical,
Carom is more democratic, unnatural
That it has the Queen but no King,
Like in England and Norway?

My striker they say is made of ivory:
It hits the other side but will come back not
Describing an isosceles triangle, but at odd angle,
Making me feel that the speed was excessive,
Or wonder whether the edge is uneven.

Sometimes the striker after it leaves my fingers,
Strikes out on its own! It changes
And curves or drags askew which was not
Intended by me, behaves like a creature
With a will of its own, especially when
He has not been held tightly on leash.

While playing, my aim sometimes is correct,
And so is the force which generates the speed,
And yet the carom-men take a religious peramb
Around the pocket as if it were the lingam!
Some more religious than others, repeatedly...

I think how carom represents life: that what
You think should happen and what actually happens
Are very different things: can't predict the pattern
Of events in life or coins on the board beyond a point.

But then, that is only on surface, once you study
The phenomenon or practise enough, then the shots
Land where they should, and so it is in life also,
With of course some exceptions, here and there,
Like lightnings strike where they will,
They can be neither controlled, nor planned for.

Carom-board after a game or two starts grating
And I put some boric powder which moves out
To the pockets along with coins or to the edges -
Not 'with beaded bubbles winking at the brim'
Like in the wine of Keats on the Nightingale -
These deposit unevenly on the line on all four sides,
On the edges inside: in my younger days I was
Told not to swipe with fingers along the edge
To push the powder to the centre, for it is
Possible some small splinter could enter
Between the nail and the flesh, leading to pain
Severe: but now the Boards are modern.
You require oil in any business or game in life,
Whether it is boric powder or speed-money,
Or something else, ingenuity setting it down.
Excess of powder or oil can make your slip
Or get stuck, boss then expects larger bribe;
Like in everything, moderation is the key.

The play of hand, the fingers is infinitely
Various: I play carom with my right hand,
Though I do everything else with my left
Including writing, other games or activities.
When I was five years of age, the first board
A used one, my Dad had brought home,
Was happily playing with my mother,
Who was no mean player. My head was just
Above the Board, and I saw both of them
Playing with their right, and so did I on my turn,
And it has continued for the past five decades and more.

I play with my middle finger bent against my thumb
Middle touching the striker, but Dad played only
With forefinger, and Mom only middle finger.
Some do the scissor-cut, though I always wondered
How one could aim with the scissor-pattern of fingers
Or the zigzagging butterfly see its way through?
Come to think of it, no aim is physical,
It is more mental, the Zen and the art of carom.
One has to aim in the mind, just think and hit -
The arrow flows out of your involuntary system.

The adjustment between fingers, eyes and mind
With muscles takes place somewhere else...
Something else guides the missile, I think.

Like of the planets and shapes of clouds,
I have not understood the reason behind
The lines, circles, semi-circles ending
With arrow tips at either end above base-line;
Or, the centre-piece with a red circle,
And eight triangles inside the large black
Circle, each triangle ending on the periphery.
Four triangles with red painted half, and
The rest black, but all eight have one half blank
Meaning the colour of the board surface.
Also, it leaves eight small triangles, touching
On red circle at centre of the Board.
What is the significance of all this geometry?
Like with the blue sky, and the white clouds,
You may ask them questions repeatedly
But there will be no reply vouchsafed.

Once the designs are there, some rules
Are dependent on them, but not all:
Like you cannot keep striker but full
On red circle at either end of the base line.
There is no rule about the eight triangles
At the centre. It is as if they don't exist.
I can say the same thing about many things
In my life, too.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Car-Washers

As I walk half a kilometer
To MIG Cricket Club for my gym
I see cars parked on either side
Of the wide street outside the compound-gates.

Time is 7 30 am, and the month is of Janus,
The Sun is rising, and it is chill
This year (2008) unusually in Mumbai
Never been so cold in forty-odd years.

Around many cars are water-patches
In irregular design on the asphalted road.
Every other car is being tended
By the car washers. They charge
From 200 to 400 rupees a month
Depending upon the society they serve.

The car washer gets the key from owner
To open up and clean including floor mats
Made free of yesterday's dust,
Some bathe the rims and tires too.

He takes a plastic bucket, blue or white
Rarely green, and with water
And a duster cloth goes lovingly,
Over the entire body of the car
With all the curves, nooks and crevices,
And action leads to erect wipers
Waiting for a wash beneath.

Never seen the tribe elsewhere
Outside India, but it is good source
Of income to the poor.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Cats At Home

Entering flat from morning walk
I see three of them, six eyes
On me. There are on floor in line.
Chintu, leaning his back on wall
Inji the grown female in the middle
With Murphy the male with round wide eyes.

No sign of recognition, and no demand
Means my wife has fed them full:
As I entered she left with her bag
With biscuits, fish and chicken
For the stray dogs, cats around.

I look around: the one-eyed Chinkie
On dining chair and Minnie the fat
In the kitchen near the food bowls
Except Zippie considered my favorite.

I came into my bedroom, putting on
My HP Pavilion 4, I find wardrobe door
Open by six inches, tried to remove pillow
At the bottom to see two ears and eyes of Zippie!

They have become my companions
With each one his or her special features
Levels of intelligence and display
Of affection or insecurity and aggression.

We have nine of them in 3-bedroom flat
Half my pension goes on their
Food and medicine: but they make
My wife happy, me and Joti too.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Cats' Instinct

First it was at Sessa house-cum-cafe
On way from Bomdila to Tezpur,
I saw a grey-coloured cat:
Soon it was at my feet,
While I was eating chicken in food,
Then she climbed with both paws
On my black trousers, leaving ash marks.
I gave her to smell one piece
Of bone: she finished it and came back
To tap me for another!

Later the next day, at Bhalukhpong,
We sat in a ramshackle restaurant
To have our lunch, Warshong and I.
Again a similar coloured cat
Came selecting me out of all persons
Eating their lunch, and got her reward.

I am getting converted slowly
To be an animal lover, like my wife
In Mumbai or Sameer in Pune:
But how unreasonable I get in this,
Will be known in course of time!

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Change

My love for her insulated her,
As I felt then,
From all my relatives including
My parents, brothers and sister.
In thirty-five years,
This has been frozen into her.

But Indian culture still thrives with time spent
Shared with relatives on phone or in person,
Though perhaps professional colleagues
And interesting neighbors are encroaching.

Now, retired, I want warm relationships
With at least interesting relatives
Reviving happy childhood memories.

I find myself alone in relatives' homes
And functions, embarrassed to speak truth:
She still says a clear No to most of them.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Change, Growth Or Realization?

Call it what you will –
Bird, tree, flower, leaf and bits of sky
Everything makes me come alive.

Years ago I would have seen only birds:
There was a season then, for trees.
Now, at 65, it has covered every available thing.

Once I would have judged every man and thing,
Now I hesitate to express: result is I am
Indecisive, and lose respect from others, and self.

The blankness within, is that meditation?
Feeling matured with doubt always,
That it is perhaps simply Alzheimer!

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Chasing This Monsoon

What shall I do when the Angel of rains
Leaves me dry and sweating in October heat
Of Mumbai soon? Their forerunners,
The lightning and thunder of late summer
Have gone a little earlier, and sought
Other places above the sky, leaving the eaves
Drip, dripping with a thud at lengthening intervals.

I walk for some distance and look up some angels
Flying through drizzle in colourless sky, reminding me
Of the wet crow outside my window on 5th floor
Showing patches of white skin, and feathers a-cluster:
All life is a form of angels.

I have reached the end Kalanagar bus stop,
And on walk back, see a small bird flying 20 feet
Ahead every time, and picking up some bit of food
From pavement and as I catch up with it, flying
Another 20 low feet in a straight line to perch:
Didn't behave like a sparrow, and so I thought
It is a lark, till I was level with it to see the black bib
Distinguishing mark of the male sparrow. I wonder
How unlike us who spin and toil, these angels
Simply search for food throughout life
Amidst periods of rest and sleep.

Angels of Duino Elegies of Rilke
I have not understood your nature yet
Only sometimes I think you are the dead
Singing their own elegies; other times,
I think you are outside our ken, only in his
Or you are only ideas, waiting for us to turn
The stone to see the butterfly flapping its wings
Pursuing its mate in the short available time.

Angels have to be felt, and articulated in time,
And put in the poem, painting, sculpture or music
Before they fly away into the light of common day.

Chauffeur

It is a pleasure to be in a car
Where the driver has no ego,
Not against the other fellow
Not giving way, or brushing you past,
Or a smaller vehicle trying to overtake,
Or a cranky pedestrian off with the boss,
Or a troublesome old man, crawling across,
Or BEST bus, street-smart auto-rickshaw,
Mindlessly speeding truck, anyone trying
To show off, be it noise-making Ambulance
Or a beacon-topped car, with lights flashing,
And feeling a foot or two above traffic rules.

It is not given to many
To have the fortune of young driver
Who knows his job well, tends his car,
And yet has no ego hassle at all,
Especially in the chaotic traffic of Mumbai City.

I am one of those lucky ones.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Chemistry On The Streets

It was one young girl with goods
Purchased in one of the grocery shops
Walking ahead of us in ill-lit Bomdila.

The two of us walking behind,
Three boys were coming towards her,
And in a moment one boy must have
Said, or done something to her that she
Spoke out screeching, typically girlish,
And the boy laughed and passed by.

It recalled to me a street-scene
On Indian bazaar I saw in Jakarta
In 1982 when a short plump girl
In frock, going up, was met by a boy,
Who actually hit and pushed her,
And yet she laughed affectionately,
And kept turning her head to bend
Fond looks on him, his back.

It is fascinating to watch youngsters,
And the palpable chemistry between
Some, and the nonsense that goes on,
Mostly with one bearing the burden
And the other simply having fun.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Chewing The Cud

Today's long trip
On Eastern Himalayas
In Arunachal Pradesh
From Tawang to Bomdila
A distance of 125 or kilometres
On the high, winding Sela Pass road
Made my stream of consciousness
Touch and light up different parts
Of my memory cells
About dad and mom when alive.

At the end, I realize
Both are no more since long;
By chewing the cud,
I only hurt myself
And maybe provoked
To hurt others who are alive.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Child Of Three - But Sad

I saw a child of three, led by a big man
In his twenties, holding her such that
The child had to strain up her forearm.

The face of this girl, walk-pushing forward,
Did not show joy or pride
Despite going with father.

I was hurt by puzzled anxiety
In the background of generalized pain,
With mouth open, and lips out-thrust.

Eyes dull, her natural take
On life was bitter and painful:
It killed joy of life in me for awhile.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Child's Play Is Life

Bliss was it in that dusk on Skywalk today
To see children enjoying time, every way.
Boys are so active and noisy, pushing and pulling,
Girls so pretty, and competitive, Badi hokey bomb banegi!

Suffer little children to come unto me
For theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.
Very true even in Bandra East in 2011 AD.

Since days I was a kid,
The distance between parents and children
Has reduced very much, I can see.

Not one child I saw this evening
Looked sad, or morose: not one mother
Or father shouted at his or any child.

Jai Ho! The Indian Child of today
Will surely go forth, and conquer
Wealth, skill and technology.

My hope and fear is different:
Capacity to look inward – a la Kathopanishad,
Will have to be learnt by the child alone,
For the parents have become materialistic.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Childhood

It was in nineteen fifties.
At home we understood English,
Had Tonfunk a German radio set,
Burst more crackers for Christmas
Than they for Diwali: felt superior!

For recreation we used the road,
Salai Mudaliar Street was the name.
We played football and pole vault
And improvised games where ball
Was replaced by a stick in each hand.

You are out if your stick was not
Touching the one on the ground
And then the owner of that stick
Touched you. The objective was
To push his stick as far away
As possible without being out.

Remember when my sister was born,
Twelve years younger than me,
I came home in the evening,
All excited about the game on street,
And father was disappointed
We didn't ask about the baby
Born that day, or even Mom's health.

Going to school meant a walk
Of more than one kilometre
Beyond OCPM girls' school,
And we had a gang of our own
For some years, and if any 'enemy'
Was seen, either he had to turn tail,
Or face our wrath, and boxing skill.

On way there was Gul Mohur tree
And Oleander for us to suck the drop
Of nectar from yellow flower-ends,
Play with the green unripe fruits,

Gather fallen flowers of gul-mohur
To eat the central while-lined petal
With a sour taste.

During lunch interval, I would walk fast
And reach home for lunch,
And walk all the way back
In the scorching sun of Madurai,
Wore no chappal and was in shorts
Got my chappals only in first year BA
In Thiagarajar Arts College, Madurai.

No wonder I am mixed up everywhere
Feel alien with my name and culture
Tho I read Bhagavad Gita and Upanishads
With utmost care and frequency,
And yet fail to be one among them.
Call me by name, and I am outsider.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Child's Joy

A seven-year-old fair child
On a short bicycle,
Steadied by her father in his thirties
Pedaling along the low pedestrian connector
Between the BKC road and Madhu Kalelkar Marg,
By the west end of FDA compound in Bandra East,
On this pleasant Sunday morning in March
Makes me feel happy and relaxed:
For, the expression on the girl's face
Is ecstatic; maybe, it is her happy birthday
And she got this as a gift,
Maybe she is mentally competing with brother;
Or, there is no reason at all other than movement
Out in the open with papa otherwise busy:

But her bliss makes me snap out
From my adult thought-worries and planning
For precious moments, gazing at her,
Recalling words about permitting children
To come unto Me: for of such is kingdom of heaven.

Being absorbed in simple activities,
Motions, colors, lines and games,
And enjoying it fully
With no looking before and after,
Is the essence of Zen and of children,
Meditation, Nirvana, and Samadhi too?

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Chill, Chill - In Karnataka, Now

Silence speaks eloquently here
In Orange County
Under the blue sky
Surrounded by coffee plantation:
I sit and write beside the pool
In the reclining chair.
Down below the lawn with large grass
But with microscopic purple flowers
Like the stars of galaxy at distance;
One bird keeps up his complex song
Trying hard to invite his mate
Or declare to his rivals his territory:
Morning what I thought was hornbill whoosh
Was corrected by Murthy the guide to be
That of cock-pheasant with brown upper wings:
My knowledge of birdsong has become rusty!
I went for a walk through the forest
Alone, reached the end fenced
But joining a road skirting beyond
Which was tangled bamboo growth
Reaching to the top of the mountain-ridge.

I turned back into the county
To go to the lake with green water
Can we have a pure water lake?
I remember ten years ago
Our visit to Pong Yong lake in Ladakh,
The water was icy cold but clear
Salty lake above 15,000 feet
On the Himalayas, and two-thirds stretching
Into China: I swam backstroke a few minutes
And felt my brain becoming a block of ice!
So memorable an experience in that lonely place
Where you have no company
Except pure white spongy clouds
On lake that reflects
Eighteen colors between two rows of hills.

Chinese On Top

Today is the twentieth of October 2008
I am in Tawang, arrived here today,
Forty-six years after Chinese overran it.

I was then doing B A English literature
In Thiagarajar College, Madurai
In the southern State of Tamilnadu.

I was in Second Year and news
On that day was of Chinese aggression
And all newspapers blaring it forth.

I remember attending students' assembly
In the open, Principal Varadachari spoke,
And spoke as eloquently as ever.

I remember the waves of patriotism
That swept through me,
To see how the enemy can overrun.

Now on way to Tawang, I had a chance
To read the book by Neville Maxwell
On India's China war, and feel different.

Not that I believe in all he says,
The terrain makes nonsense of lines
McMohan or any other as distinct.

After all these years, I' m here on
Twentieth October, and feel bad
That I felt then blindly patriotic!

While I strongly disapprove of war,
And all violence, the visit along the hills
Of Eastern Himalayas, around Tawang

Monastery, in the land that gave birth
To Gautam Buddha makes me feel that
We still keep an army is a shame.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Choice

Been struggling with the mouth ulcer
In my lower jaw, deep below teeth in the crevice
Difficult to reach for with my forefinger
To apply any of the tube ointment, got frustrated.

Today I woke up and while brushing my teeth,
In front of the bathroom mirror, it came up
That once before I had taken a piece of cotton,
Applied the medicine to it, and stuck it there.

Went to the drawer I remember I had a cotton ball,
Took a piece, applied 'bonjela' we had bought
In Singapore last year and felt the green blister
Got the protection on right place with the gel.

Realized that everywhere there are easy, effective
Alternatives but by pressure of habit, we struggle
And perhaps even curse fate, destiny or anyone,
Not exercising the choice, ready and lying close by.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Citadel Of Power

It is called Mantralaya in Mumbai,
Nothing less than the hill-forts of Shivaji
In its importance, and devious approaches
And escape routes, with 'mantri' meaning Minister
And 'alaya' meaning temple, holy place:
It affects society in the State,
And individuals ambitious for business,
For getting land or licence or contract,
It is necessary to lay network with it,
From top to bottom, not just at one gate.

The earlier Secretariat is heritage building now,
Unlike the present match-box type;
That one was in line with Rajabai Tower
Of the University and the High Court building
All imposing and grand in Venetian-Gothic
Or whatever they call the style of architecture.
As a layman, I walk along Queen's Road
Opposite, and turn across Oval maidan twice
To drink in the beauty of old Secretariat
Against the rays of setting sun even today
But not without cursing the dwarfs who made
The ugly structures squatting in front.

The sixth floor in Mantralaya is where King sits,
Holding durbar when not on tour, or kowtowing
In Delhi; though diluted, if its multi-party coalition,
And hence more manipulative inside,
Less decisive outside, and the public,
Remaining an abstraction, is not interested
Except to advance own or obstruct others' interest:
Leaving policies for NGOs, Courts, Media,
In fact, anyone other than Government.

From upper floors, one can look on one side
To the Backbay of the shimmering Arabian Sea,
And across to Raj Bhavan where
The titular head of Maharashtra State,
Lies, washed by waves all around

On three sides, end of Malbar Hill area,
So named after the pirates from Malbar
Whose visitation struck terror centuries ago,
And beyond Walkeshwar (walu ka ishwar) meaning
"God made of Sand", and myths and stories
Embedded around a holy and ancient Tank
Figuring in Lord Rama's travel
From Ayodhya and jungles to Rameswaram
To retrieve his wife from Srilanka and shame.

Mantralaya does obeisance to Raj Bhavan,
Like people do mindless worship of Rama,
Goes there or nearby to Sahyadri for swearing in,
And then forgets all about it till the next.

Balance of power shifting all around,
It calls for leadership and integrity to change
But people and their votes are rather blind
Resulting in short-sighted vision and action
Issuing out of the citadel of power,
Never mind, most of the people swearing at it!

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Civil Servant

Proposed as new Chief Secretary
By his predecessor: the new
Chief Minister when I met him in Delhi
Says, " I'll let you know ".
He thinks, "He is perhaps good,
But he belongs to the S.P. camp".
Never does he get back
I read in papers about the appointment.
Balance of power is shifting
Certainly not in favor of bureaucrats
Who cannot help in devious ways.

XYZ meets me, very friendly,
And says "Don't accept the offer
That is coming your way
To be the head of that Institution".

Somebody else, maybe more fitting, gets it;
Time passes swiftly, I am out of Government
Sitting at home, superannuated
With no offer from State.

Then, my Minister from Centre drops in at my home
And requests on his own that I be the Advisor,
Changes headquarters to where I live,
Floors the family, I accept the offer.

XYZ has grown up in public life,
Along with me, knows me since 1972,
As a straight civil servant
Tough and responsive, resolving problems.
But then, thinks "What is the use?
He does good to everyone, or says no to all;
Doesn't do anything special
For my people. Farewell."

No regrets. PPP is up-and-coming,
This mode searches for experience,
Business is growing, and civil servants

Are useful in more than one way.
Where one would have helped
In policy-making, affecting millions,
Now the civil servant helps to make
Millions for the private developer.

Yeah, but does that make difference?
Values keep changing;
Power is to make money,
And dispense favors to do that.
Civil servants have also to adapt
In a maturing democracy;
If that is how people bend,
He has to make do with what sways.

And yet, if he can say yes or no,
And convince people in power
That it is in their and voters' interest,
He can be happy he has done his best.

-x-

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Coffee Moments

We live in Bandra East, the three of us
Me, Tilaka my wife, and Joti my daughter.
Mostly I make coffee for them, for I am
Awake before them, finished my walk too.

I go to kitchen, select the vessel, and pour
One and a half cup of milk from refrigerator,
And equal amount of boiled water from bottle
And light the piped gas stove.

I have opened the kitchen window, which looks
Out of the hospice building of Ernest Borges
Supported by Tata Cancer Hospital, and on
The other side the Guru Nanak Hospital.

Outside this opening the crows appear,
Demand, caw-cawing, to be fed especially
If my wife makes morning coffee:
She claims it's her dead mother back as crow!

Today, one male sparrow with black bib sat there,
And chirped continuously: I felt helpless, for
I could not understand his language at all,
And merely gazed at his restless body-shifts.

Milk was ready to boil, and so it does
With millions of bubbles coming up,
Building up like one of those sea-creatures
Their coral homes one on top of another.

I put off the gas, and with holder
Pour milk in those three cups
Laid on a green tray, where I have
Sugar and Nescafe powder already put.

The middle cup on tray I keep for myself
And there it is is sugar-free tablet
For my diabetes of last ten years:
Middle, because I forget which is sugar-free!

Now I take a small plastic plate,
Pour some milk, and heat a bit
For the youngest of the six cats
At home, and coax her to drink.

Sometimes I am not attentive, I'm 65 now,
And the milk has boiled over, in a flash,
Spoiling the stove; and, to avoid 'firing'
I quickly wipe it clean by wet duster-cloth.

Then I go to open my daughter's door,
Take the tray in, keep and go to wife's
And she comes and we three sit on
Joti's bed, and drink morning coffee.

I take it from the cup, wife from saucer,
And Joti depending on her mood, decides.
Ammu the ugly cat insists on sitting on
Either's lap, with Puppuk keeping distance.

I like these private coffee moments
Early in the morning, and treasure
The family reactions, and day's plans -
An oasis in our dry, drab modern life.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Colors To Notice

While on morning walk today,
Thought emerges to describe the color
Of Mumbai sky, but can't get the correct word:
It is aluminum-like, light gray,
Same wherever on the entire irregular patch
Of sky in Bandra, I am allowed to see through
Hedged in by trees, buildings and roofs.

As the eyes sweep down, the colors
Around me attract: green, blue,
Black, yellow, red BEST bus, the objects reflecting
There is no end to my counting:
In green alone I can see
Seventeen different shades.
Once I start enjoying the difference
Between one green and another
Luxuriant, shiny or dark,
Light-green, or parrot or bluish green
Or green seen against sunlight from below
Or with sunlight falling on the green leaves, -
In between remembering the sea-green incorruptible
Of Carlyle in his French Revolution
Or Lady Macbeth's seas before becoming
Incarnadined -
Greens stretch unending in mind, and around,
Till suddenly the purple morning glory in front
Mocks me: while the special dark pink, above
Of bougainvillea blushes silently at stupid man
Who shows off his reading to Nature,
And makes up by waving and dancing gently.

Colors of Life and Nature are around me
Anywhere anytime:
I love them, including
Different black shadows in the dark.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Comparison

I try to write a poem
Then recall great poets
Writing on similar themes,
And feel ashamed
My substance, words and images
Are so simple, mixed-up
I discard the effort.

After all, Imitation is slavish.
It is fear of not able
To write like Eliot, Hopkins or Keats.
'Desiring this man's art, or that man's scope':
I fondly ask 'Is it right to compare? '

I am unique, each is special,
As Touchstone, I wed my Audrey.
I write what is mine, refine it and leave it;
To read it or not, whether it will survive,
Where, and when, happens behind me.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Connected

Watching Titanic movie
On HBO channel last evening:
Throughout most of the movie, mind
Was hovering around the Immanent Will
Of Thomas Hardy, and not of God, and
Around the Spinner of the Years of the poet.

As teenager, I read novels in plenty
And the President of Immortals
Ending his sport with Tess
Pierced through me clean and hard:
Did not admire the attitude or sarcasm
Behind the references, but could not forget them.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Connemara

Here I am in Chennai Connemara
Having coffee after breakfast,
Pulling out the hotel stationery
To record a poem which was born
Moments ago when I walked the wet lawns
Looking for the mongooses
Seen yesterday.

Today looked up the same tree
For a moment could not see dragon-flies
Then my eyes took them in around same tree-top
Never understood the reason why they choose
A particular tree and foliage.
It used to be in September or October earlier
Now it is December and I see them:
The progression of these cycles
Is interesting to watch.

These dragonflies are the helicopters
Of the 21st century!
See how they speed up,
Take a sharp u-turn
And become part of the heavy
Aerial traffic without a single copy,
Regulating them, and yet
No accidents, no road rage.

It had rained all night
And Dotu warned me
Not to go for a walk
But I did and as soon as I
Stepped out, I slipped a bit.
Was worried could fall
And hurt myself.

Years ago I was at one end
Of the spectrum of conformance,
Meaning didnt care what others did
Or thought: I did my own

Now I ask my wife or daughter
And if they say No or Not now, I refrain
Hence I could not go for a swim
In the blue rectangle I see
From the breakfast table outside -
Part of the price I pay
For my brain haemorrhage
Three months ago.
As they discharged me from hospital,
They said, No swimming
For six months. They said so
Because I had two seizures
While in ICU on the second day!
But I do miss the joy of getting
Into the pool at Connemara,
Recalling the joy of having splashed about
There many times before, alas!

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Contrasts

Luxuriant growth of mangroves
Reflected shadows on still silent waters
Of Mithi river, edged by huge black pipe
On one side, and the row of slumstructures
Of Dharavi on the other, with the rise
Of SL Raheja hospital in the midst
With three slum-children playing
Happily, more happily than rich kids
This side of the pipe, a crow, two pigeons
And one egret flying the sky between...

What a lovely piece of greenery
Though smelly and dirty
In the centre of our dirty beloved Mumbai city.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Corruption

My son-in-law who now has moved to Delhi,
Comes to Mumbai and goes back
Same day with a street dog
Buying for it an AC first class ticket
Seeks a coupe, not to vex others:
Cant get, franticalls my wife,
And she goes 15 minutes prior to departure,
Argues, Kareena-like, in movie Jab We Met,
Or, Kannagi-like, in Chilappadhiharam,
Puts him and his companion in,
Two understanding foreigners, helping.

After the train has traveled a few hours,
The conductor cancels dog's ticket,
After taking dog-ticket-money of Rs 1700,
The cancellation refund in advance!
And issues required slip faithfully,
To be honored after a few days,
Maybe weeks of `pillar to post'ing?
Gives to another man for money
He has a new passenger on dog's seat
Double whammy for him in money!

The country is corrupt, undisciplined...
At every level. As above, so below.
But that is ok. Each lives his life alone,
Depending upon his need for money,
And his power to procure it.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Critic

The poet writes a word or a simple sentence
And his loyal critic writes hundred words on it
Thrusting all his knowledge, eloquence on us
To get equal space on the blurbs, on the jacket.

The word may be just a simple 'not': but,
Explained as essence of negative philosophy,
With existential background, Sartre-ising,
Down to amoral basis of 21st century, etc.

The critic would have loved to be
In the creator's boots: not being lucky,
He makes up by creating his own vision,
Soon to become the official version.

The poet mostly is not interested
In disputing this brighter model:
Maybe it was all in my subconscious,
He thinks; why spoil the ritual to romance?

The poet does not know connections among
The words he put together haphazardly;
He prefers by default to accept, and to be -
What his chamcha claims he wrote, and he is.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Cross

Not to let the driver wait too long
At Mumbai airport in the night
I rang up wife to tell of delay
And she should tell driver.

She wants to calculate, and say
"Till midnight, it won't reach".

I explained, "Don't do that;
If he comes late, I have to wait.
Just tell him that it is delayed
To 9 40 at Chennai". But she
Is impatient, and not listening
To the end of my sentence, says
Bye, bye, bye, bye, bye and disconnects.

I know she love me a lot,
But across misty spaces
Of anger, now and then:
More often, of late.

D T Joseph
02.02.08

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Crow

I have watched crows landing
So perkily to sit, hop and settle,
They adjust their folded wings thrice.
Not once, not twice, but thrice.

Please count when you next see crow land:
It is not like adjusting the sari's pallu
Which an Indian girl does
In her particular unique style every time.

But the Indian crow, described beautifully
By Mark Twain in Crossing the Equator,
It adjusts from its shoulder down and back
Thrice, almost every other time, it perches.

They fly so actively when they want, lecturing,
Or when a dead rat provides food on pavement,
And when they hold conference, to finish off
Eggs and young ones, of all other birds around.

Yet I feel uncomfortable in a place
Where I don't see them, like in Kavarati
In Lakshadweep Islands: is it comfort, when
Habits govern life, and mind is absent?

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Crow II

Numerous crows descending on a dead rat
On the centre of the road when signal is red,
I see them landing but NOT adjusting
Tail-feathers thrice, as I was expecting them to do.

I now doubt my powers of observation:
Suitably humbled,
I look afresh at the crows
Flying to see how they land and adjust.

Life renews its freshness
Deep down always at its core.

Do I re-write the past, and the poem?
Or leave it, but express myself
Now more carefully in keeping with life's
Basic characteristic –
Freedom to change and evolve?

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Crow Iii

They were not there; I could not see them today,
From the Bandra sky-walk on which I walk
Morning times, enjoying the views and the breeze.

But they were there a few days ago, cawing
And playing in a milder breeze, balancing
With their wings slowly beating up and down
To sit on the edge of shaking branches of tips
Of the trees, mostly cassia, but two of them
On the banks of Mithi river, as it rushes
To meet the Arabian Sea on the West.

The crows enjoy slowly landing absolutely
On the tip of the branch which almost
Cannot bear the weight, and goes down to river
But sometimes some crows continue to sink
With the branch and breeze, and almost pride
Themselves on the successful achievement
And others get scared that they might fall, drown
And lift themselves up in the air.

I stopped on the side of the yellow painted sky-walk
And enjoyed the view on both the trees on the northern
Bank of the Mithi river, being populated by at least
Fifty crows doing this exercise, and converting
The two trees on the bank to an Amusement Park
But for the crows alone, and not another soul,
While the egrets, with or without breeding plumage
And pond herons which reveal the bright white
Only when they fly, and merge with soil as they land
Or the water-crows as they are called in Tamil,
Cormorants floating in water, keeping their sticky
Neck up and on sharp watch for the fish, and sinking
To the bed in pursuit of the fish, and then up flying
Their low graceful flight over the water surface
Reflecting own visage, admired narcissus-like
But no danger to their health till they half-spread
Their wings on some stump, to dry.

While watching the crows, I remembered my first visit
To Meditation camp where Vipassana was taught
In Igatpuri, Nashik District where I enjoyed the ten days
When I was not allowed to speak a word, read papers,
Watch TV. I remember the first day looked like
Being in mental hospital. Meal only once a day,
Of course all vegetarian, and sitting on simple seats,
And eating simple food. Four one –hour meditation
Sessions when you were asked to keep eyes closed
And body still. No part to move. Try it. Painful at first,
It takes about three days to get used to keep the body
Still, with Goenka teacher saying that if you cant keep
Body still even for one hour, how will you ever still mind,
Enter into meditation, and enjoy the riches of Being?

I used to go for a walk morning and evening
In that high ground at Igatpuri, by side of Western Ghat
And Pole Star sitting on the hill-ridge across;
Earlier in the evening I saw Mars, Venus and Jupiter
Aligned within a metre of each on the western sky.
Such was the place when the crows in breeze trying,
Playing with it to land on the tips of swaying branches
I saw there first. Then here two days ago.

Aniccha, meaning change, was permanent,
And so today, both the trees were without crows.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Crows - At What Cost?

Half a century and more ago,
When I saw a movement
In the green foliage anywhere,
High or low,
There was the thrill of discovery
Of the bird or whatever –
Sparrow male with black bib or female,
Sun or tailor – bird, mynah or parrot,
An owl or paraiah kite, or even koels,
Black male with red ring around his eyes,
Or his mate the brown serrated one
With song like water coming
Our of narrow-necked pot,
And even squirrels and geckos.

But today I see a movement
In trees especially in urban areas:
It is bound to be crow, crow
Crowing everywhere:
I don't want to be against Indian crow
But when naturalists tell me how
They attack all the eggs and the young
Of all other species, what do I do?

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Crucifixion

Travelling inward, I get stuck at Golgotha,
Even the bare rock cannot be equal to nothing:
Mind flits in an instant, faster than second-dial
In the clock, though the invisible steam engine.

The one among the `me's behind this attempt,
Sounding retreat shamefaced: realizing in sorrow
Meditation is still a mystery since that specific night
In Xavier Institute of Management in Bhubanewar.

In 1989 I was there on the one-week training for IAS
Officers, and partly responding to the invitation
Of the fair-skinned South Indian student-escort,
I decided to read up on meditation in their Library.

Completing course, had to stay on way to Mumbai
At NIRD in Rajendra Nagar, where morning walk
Led me to smooth boulders rising high in the sky,
On one I sat to try my first bout of meditation.

Since then years have passed, including my dark cell
Stay in the Vipassana Academy on Western Ghats
In Igatpuri, and yet I have not been able to cross the I
And drop the externalities holding me down internally.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Curtained Off

At two places.

One is on Bandra skywalk

I can see only tumultuous traffic down:

The sky, moon and stars

Or the cloud, only through the gaps.

The other is on the Sea-Link

From Worli to Bandra.

The side bars are so thick and wide:

I cannot see shimmering light

On water, or the red setting Sun.

The treasures of Nature or life on Worli land-tip

Which I like to see, are continually

Curtained off and so curtailed for me.

Is it security, or lack of imagination of planners?

31.08.2013

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

D T Prufrock 2009

I am blamed now solidly
For what I was praised then;
Mostly by different persons,
And regularly by the nearest.

It makes me shut up at once
Realizing that context alone
Makes most meaning: values change,
Society moves not necessarily forward.

"Wow, at his age he bends
To touch the floor with nose":
Followed by, 'Oh, you were foolish
Not to take care of your back"!

I know, I know if I had then
Not been certain of what I want,
Successful administrator I wouldn't be
A 'babu' in Times of India language.

Forty years gone:
Now, I am not sure
What I want, or even
What I am certain about.

Nothing to be ashamed
To be part of a herd,
Follow your wife's advice,
And hold your peace.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Dadar

Heard about Ideal Bookshop, Dadar West,
When I wanted to buy book on Acupressure
Drove up in the morning on a working day

It is a pleasure to walk on Vachanalya Marg
Saw the name-board of Ideal by Dadar West Station
Salesman is cryptic " In English or Marathi? "
I say 'English', and he tells another man.
The other shows two books – one for 40 rupees
Which was the author I wanted, but the other
By some other author with preface by Morarji
Our former Prime Minister whose own health habits
Drew attention without fail at home and abroad.
I see both the books and buy for Rs 115.

On wending my way to Ideal,
I had seen stationery shops, wanted to buy
A marker pen to write on back of CDs:
Otherwise I have to play and check to know
What material is downloaded on each CD.

In this shop too, the man is cryptic, "What color? "
I say, "Black or blue.." He pulls out
Faber Castell Maltimark in black.

Another man in the shop takes it
And writes with it on the glass table top
Two letters to show me capabilities
And gives it to me matter-of-fact.

I pay Rs 20, and go happily to the car,
Pleased to be shopping in Dadar,
The marathi heartland of Mumbai
And in times when controversy rages
And some beat others up only for
Fault of not being from here,
Even some who were born here
But the grandparents weren't.

Daddy

At the other end of the telescope
Fifty-five years ago,
I see my dad sitting on the floor,
Leaning against the wall in our rented house
In Madurai, eating, munching happily.

In the evening, on way back from office,
He had brought a packet of sweets for four annas
Made of groundnut kernel and jaggery:
There were sixteen pieces
With mom, and a brother, we were four.

I remember we enjoyed the time
So much, cracking jokes, making fun
Pure fun of everything, everyone.
I recall dad doubling with laughter,
Explaining how one chettiar with a big paunch
Described the place where an ant was moving
On his stomach.. on the south-west corner, he said.

Later I remember him on an easy chair
Reading Jerome K Jerome's
Three Men in a Boat,
And again laughing uncontrollably.

He was real Cancer-born male.

21.02.08

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Daily Misunderstandings

Finding her getting hyper,
I gesture to cool down.

She turns a pair of angry eyes,
And says 'Don't interfere
All the time, in support of others'.

I go back to my room, hurt.

My idea was to her cool down,
She perceives it as
My being on the side of the other.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Dawn At Bomdila

Cold, cold, it is icy cold
Despite the wood-fire last night
Touch of feet on the floor
Or hands with any object
Layers of cloth around the body
Take time to ward off the cold.
It is five o'clock in the morning
The top ridge of the Himalayas
Around Bomdila is lighting up
With the bright new dawnlight
Ahead of the rising of the sun.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Dawn In Pune

In the beginning of the month of April,
I was alone in my Pune row-house,
And I woke up at 5 30 A M on a bulbul's call
When it was still dark, and otherwise quiet.

I came out of my bedroom on upper floor
Into Western balcony and looked up
Through the brown wooden rafters above,
To see the dark sky as rectangular pieces.

I was thrilled to see stars of different
Magnitudes dotting the sky;
Like in the old days of 1989-90
When I used to work in Pune,

And had set up Dr E B's telescope on the road,
Near residential quarters to explore sky at night
In my campus of MIDA part of Raj Bhavan
In Pune, to teach and train the government officers.

I went back, and came out on the Southern
Balcony where the sky is open,
To see the bright crescent moon
In solitary splendor, despite one tube-light below.

Below the bright moon, I saw a bright planet,
Most probably Jupiter, beckoning from afar
Jealous of the Moon: and having below
The constellation of Scorpio.

Its tail comprises of three stars in line
With equal intervals, and the body of the scorpion
Has the reddish bright star of Antares, so named
The rival of Ares that is Mars the god of war.

One distinct constellation which does look
Like its name, starts with a curvy head,
Climbs up the heaven with the body,
And ends up with the tail, like a whale.

I remember when we walked on our first night
In Leh, capital of Ladakh on the Himalayas,
I saw this Scpio shining better than any jewel
Ever made by any Cleopatra's craftsmen.

I am so happy, I went in and brought out
My binoculars, and turned to the Moon,
I have never seen such a beautiful sight,
The thick crescent embracing the rest of globe,
In lighter shade, so attached to its full Ego.

Jupiter under scan was yellow-brightish,
While Antares was reddish-bright
Lording it over that part of the dark sky
Just before the dawn was bringing in the day.

As I turned with my instrument to see more,
I saw the line of three more-spaced stars
Part of the Cygnus constellation,
Ready for its flight as the Swan.

Though this my revival of acquaintance
With bits of astronomy, was all along
Accompanied by the 'qui-qui-quee'
Of the lone bulbul which is sure to be red-rumped.

Yesterday was Rashmi's birthday,
Charming artist and artisan next door,
Who was born in my house in Satara
Long ago, and now lives in Aboli with Mom
While ours is named Pushpam after my Mom.

Walking back from dinner at Polka Dot,
After a good tasty meal, last night
I showed her Sirius, and how to visualize the dog
In Canis Major constellation, accompanying Orion.

I used to love astronomy and know some
Names of stars, constellations and planets,
And strange objects supernova etc
And the Greek and Indian mythology behind.

But as memory cells die and I age,
Now I cant recall them easily;
But on a night like this,
I regret it, and feel I should re-learn

The beauties of the cloudless sky,
The splendor of the growing up-or-down Moon,
The differing magnitude of diamonds big and small,
Of the stars of our sky, not all of whom twinkle.

Out of the seven stages of man,
In my second childhood, I'd love to sing
"Twinkle, twinkle, little star, tell me when
I will become a part of you, and shine evermore."

Now the day breaks, earth's shadows flee,
Another type of bird makes his presence felt,
And the noisy motor-bikes and scooters
Begin to be heard on the road, and we drown.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Death

Death is being announced to us
More and more frequently,
As we get old, age, and retire.

Dulcie'kka went first, we heard, from Madurai
Seline spoke to us, gave us the telephone number
Of Dharmarajan: I spoke: condolences and memories.

Sneha's turn today: passed away in Chennai;
Iyra spoke to Tilaka when Page and Samants
Were visiting us: death in the morning today.

Dulcie had suffered from brain tumor and amnesia;
Sneha from mouth-cancer, how she loved to talk!
I enjoyed preferred friendship of both throughout.

Death is stalking us too;
At which turn, which woman
Will get on line to inform our distant friends?

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Decision Today

Decided for twenty four hours
I will not read anything,
Not books, not magazines,
Not on the laptop, nor on iPad.

If I succeed, only then I am a man
Having some will power;
I don't do anything else these days
And so I took this decision.

Continued thinking I should rid
Of all attempts to do better
Or to compete with anyone,
Not even with my own self.

No need to be efficient,
Or effective, think of myself
To achieve one thing or other:
Brain should be made idle.

Yogashchittha vritti nirodh
Patanjali says correctly.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Deposed

He roars, looks haughty and kingly,
The happy pride about him frisking,
So was I, the centre of my home,
I was not even aware I was.

Now I am told what to do always;
I am not trusted with tv or my health:
If I raise my voice by mistake almost,
I am routinely frowned at, I go silent.

I watch the Animal Planet channel,
The old male lion gets mauled, mane and all
Has to keep quiet in own territory,
For fear of younger, spermy replacements!

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Destination

Means to life occupies
Attention and leads one
Along life's pathway.

The day means have
Become secure
There's no motive left.

Life becomes dull,
Rather confused: inwardly
Searching for non-existing

Purpose constituting
Meaning, or salvation if you like,
Never reaching the destination.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Destiny

Choice involves freedom, however limited
Gives one an alternative or more,
Choice being dependent on.
Price, comfort, or familiarity

Can go to this movie or that
Read this newspaper or another
In 70s in Gadhinglaj with one talkies,
My wife and I had no choice.

Looking at it now, I see choices everywhere;
Life is doing one thing rather than another.
Thus it is a mix of both, no choice
In autonomous system, plenty in others.

What then is so great about 'choice'?
There was none for my birth or parents,
Nor would be for death, except type of it
Like suicide or rash driving etc

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Dhammapada In Bomdila

Even a small thing puts me off:
I was sitting in the sofa-seat,
Comfortably reading rilke poems.

He came in: I said `good morning`
When I realized he wants to stay,
I vacated my good seat for him.

He comfortably goes there and settles:
And I am offended inside.
How is that when I am older and senior?

Then I look at myself and feel absurd.
Why I should bother about small
Social niceties, when others don't?

First chapter, Verse four of Dhammapada,
I recall: Those who think he insulted me,
Hurt me, will not be free from hate:

Those who think not he robbed me, defeated
Me they will be free from hate: hate is conquered
By love: this is the eternal law.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Dharma Chakra

What Buddha set in motion,
The Wheel of Dharma
Was already, always in motion.

We used to discuss, with scorn,
The retired officers charging fee
To procure a meeting with us.

Now after retirement while
Doing consultancy, we charge
A higher fee for meeting officers!

I do feel sorry that I thought ill
Of them then, and so now if others
In the chair think ill of me, let them.

The circle will complete for everyone:
Only there is a season for everything,
As laid down in the Ecclesiastes.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Diabetes

What a waste of the world
In which I can see things
I like, but not eat them
Not today, not tomorrow
Not ever. Diabetes.
Describe it as you will,
It sinks its fangs, slow and steady,
And deprives you of all sweets!

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Dilemma

"I confess that despite what you say I am not all that good,
I don't bring anything to the Board by way of value-addition",
In so-called good old British style, I self-deprecate,
And so I lose the job or consultancy to make money.

Now when I become conscious, and don't run myself down,
I get the position but perceive my own performance to be so-so,
Not great: and, are people uncomfortable that they took me on?
Not easy to self-evaluate, if one has been in public jobs for long.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Dirang

We drove through Dirang, the pretty town
On the banks of Kameng river,
Flowing between two green hill slopes,
With water flowing in white patches,
And with a noisy music of its own.

On both sides of the slope
Sit the pretty houses
With sloping roof,
And some gardens and tennis-courts
Seen from road above, pleasing my eyes.

We stopped at the Inspection Bungalow
All rooms christened after place-names,
Our man checks with the Chef
Was told we have to wait for long
For food to be ready: we left.

I registered in my mind
That I should come back in future
With reservation, to stay here
In one of these rooms, they are ok.
But how to reach this place?

Moreover I don't want to come
To Arunachal Pradesh next time
Alone: so I have to check with her
And select only places approved:
So, Dirang, will you pass the test?

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Discover

I know now Durga is her name:
Whole of last evening,
I struggled, fought with myself
To recall this name.

I knew her for years,
I remembered her husband's, and
Father-in-law's names, not hers.

Did it get locked into a memory cell
To which I lost my way or key?
Does it still remain part of me?

Seated in the heart of all, Gita says,
Kingdom of Heaven within you, Jesus says.
Trouble is we don't know, till we wake up.

D T Joseph
16.02.08

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Disgrace

I like to see video lecture of Coursera
Today I watched four lectures
On Coetzee's Disgrace by Arnold Wientein
Of Bright University in the U S.

I had heard all those lectures
Last week. I liked them and the book
Went to Om Bookshop in Phoenix Mall
Was surprised they had the book.

sat and read the whole book,
Of 220 pages unputdown-ably,
Felt like listening to the lectures
Again and am doing it.

The problem is I don't hear them on iPad
And so I have be on
HP laptop where radiation affects me
Much more leading to heaviness in head.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Dislimns

Up in the sky dark seven o'clock
I saw a white patch unusual
It was a group of birds together
Moving South East.

I stopped in my tracks on fourth round
In the MiG Cricket ground of soft soil
And kept gazing up to see the group
Separating, and suddenly disappearing.

Came home remembering the word 'dislimns'
in Shakespeare's Antony and Cleopatra,
Referred to it on my iPad in Act IV
And got Antony saying it as water is in water.

The white patch became indistinct
And then separated into separate birds
And just vanished into nothing
As bit of sky merging into large sky.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Dizzy

It was October 2006: Joti and I
Were on Superstar Libra, the cruise liner
In Mumbai, in a nice corner cabin.
In the morning at sea, she was asleep
I got ready, wearing a suit,
And while pacing within the room,
I felt a moment of dizziness.
The ship was large, and moving steadily
Without vibrations. As DG Shipping on
Highly disturbed seas, especially near Pittie's Island
In Lakshadweep, was never sea-sick.

Two weeks later, I was at IMAX in Nariman Point
Seeing a movie with wife and daughter Joti.
Mercator chairman tall Mr Mittal was there too.
Movie over, got up, and felt dizzy.
Thought must be change of posture after so long,
But dizziness traveled with me till reaching
Home in Bandra. I had to lie down for more than an hour.

Two week later, I felt dizzy again at home this time,
And the filled up feeling inside
Along with the dizziness didn't go.
Then I went into Tilla's bathroom
And threw up heavily, and felt relieved.

Two weeks later, Tilla and I had a date
For lunch since no food could be cooked at home.
Samrat being full, we entered Relish
Had to wait to get a two-chair table.
As we sat, I felt the invading dizziness
Ever so slightly, told her: she ordered lunch,
Said, "Take iced tea; you must be hungry.
Place was full of college girls.
I sipped, but got up, went out
And threw up by side of the pavement
On and on, for twenty-five full minutes,
Retching heavily with nothing coming out
Except grating loud noise from my throat.

She rang up Dr P L Tiwari's Indu clinic,
I was rushed to Bombay Hospital
Jenny and wheel-chair waiting for me,
Admitted to ICU, same night brain MRI done
No abnormality. Next day Vimal and ENT
Checked, nothing seen, soon got discharged
As requested.

Later, ENT Head in Port Hospital at Wadala
Told me it has to be infection in the inner ear.
Can be treated but might lead to deafness.
I spoke to P B Khandekar of exam fame
He and other friends who have suffered similar pangs,
Stated that it will take two years to settle down.
I kept stugeron and stemtil for weeks.

Today while leaving for office at 10
I carried a set of maps and papers
Reading, felt dizzy, in the moving car
Upto S V Road. Nothing new. But this time
I felt something was climbing up my gullet
Got worried, since head was also aching
Is it the same problem, I wondered.

While in the car, thought I'd take water
To drink, but forgot once on the desktop
In office, and then Arjun
With his queries on the new business card
For me in Mayfair, and MIPS.

Who is the master, me or something within,
On some remote control outside?
Birth to death is an unsteady walk in dizziness?
Or quivering of joy in life and nature?

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Do You Feel?

It was still below, at street level
As I climb up and walk on skywalk
The breeze is most pleasant, continuous
But what parts of the body feel it?

One is not aware that it is only in some places.
I am reminded of Goenka guruji's talk in 1990
At Igatpuri, drawing my attention to the feel
Of the shirt-sleeves falling on my upper arm.

He said, " The mildest of sensation
If you become aware of, anger or greed,
It will be easier for you to control it."
It is a leap of faith: awareness empowers.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Do You Realize?

Kathmandu

1 Feb 1998

She is the one they recognize
She does the talking, going forward
She tells them what to do, where to go.
She is with me for last 26 years.

Joined me as a homebred quiet girl
Listened to whatever I said, and took direction from me
She had slowly grown, found herself
And she became a mother, brought up a daughter
Started studying Library Science in Bombay University.
When daughter went to fourth Standard,
Got appointed Library Assistant,
Slowly started making friends, understood issues,
Took sides, became an animal lover.
She took part in discussions, decided to stand up to me
She behaved like Women's Lib,
Shouted back, got angry, shed tears of bitterness
Whenever I shouted at her.
I was helpless because she didn't care to submit
I had no choice but to throw things
To have my way.
She became hardened and decided
That if I were a brute, she'd be Brutus,
High philosophical but unyielding,
Noble and hard-hearted
Equated herself with all
The oppressed and suppressed women of society
And by fighting me, fought tyranny.
She grew to be satisfied with her performance
In this field, and started looking smug
And that irritated me more.
We reached a stage where I felt
I had to give in if I wanted peace.
So did she feel: and both tried to please
Each other but failed miserably now and then.
Then, we grew used to that,
And I was suppressing everything I didn't like,

Till When filled with it, I'd explode
And she'd feel justified in being more nasty
And feel like Joan of Arc!
Reinforcing the prejudices selectively.
All this was reflected in outward behaviour:
Where I'd not take initiative,
She'd go out and order her preferences.

I am inefficient, diffident and lazy
Not ready to take pains or make efforts
Afraid of asking, and making people offended or hurt
I'd rather go without even my rights,
Wouldn't protest an injustice
For fear of disturbing the atmosphere.
She didn't like that; not only that
But had contempt for me the weakling,
Incapable and inefficient.
She loves me very much, thinks
I am a very good person,
That I am a very efficient officer
But dull companion and as an escort zero and a burden
No wonder when we come out
People look to her for orders
My Wife – She is the Boss.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Double Standards

Gap between what we read,
Understand and accept
And what we actually do
Is always there, never diminishes.

'All are my towns, are my relatives'
I read and appreciate in Tamil.
But when I see a beggar
Or a stranger, I don't feel like it.

I am not even aware I don't follow it
I treat the beggar or stranger
As not to be trusted or allowed close
And not even a twinge of conscience.

Instead, thinking I am clever
And right and being proper,
'How can you trust a stranger',
And I hide my cash and wallet!

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Double-Lived

I was struck with that waft of fragrance,
Strictly of rich young women passing by:
Only no woman was seen, nor house near.

I walked past, wondering about Blessed Damozel.
Angels had come down for a picnic in Bandra,
Or spirits of pretty women now dead?

On way back found no sign of presence:
Their fun ended, are back in heaven,
Leaving me searching and aching.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Dragonflies

From the corner-table of Lavasa Restaurant,
I see across the lake below and hills beside
Fleet of dragonflies etched against blue sky.
These move faster than any helicopter,
Manoeuvring, turning to fly in different
Directions, difficult angles at instant notice
Hover, speed up or slow down, so suddenly
Which no helicopter, even the most modern,
Can do: no Air Tower Controller, for them
To guide aerial traffic, yet with no accident ever.

Nature towers over above us
Like the Himalayas over Malabar Hill of Mumbai
Or the Parsik hill of Navi Mumbai nodes.
The simple dragonfly is a master-pilot
Whose skill is beyond reach
For any human or machine.

I love them especially here in Lavasa Ekaant:
We lived in Hyderabad Estate on Nepean Sea Road,
Then I realized that the dragonflies crowd, buzzing
Around the green foliage of some tall, wet trees
In the rainy month of September.
What do you know – miraculously,
Today is the first of September, 2008!

I wonder where they live,
Between one September and the next?
Maybe they fly away to China
Cohabit with dragons,
Till the flames get too cold there,
And they fly back down to India here?
May we bless them here, and there too!

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Dream

Interrogation was going on at night when
Shri P Chidambaram was unreasonable, at last
Forcing me to say, "I am not Secretary Agriculture,
Nor of Planning commission nor Commerce,
But I am Secretary, Urban Development Department,
And I am not expected to have the data you want".
I woke up with the words ringing clear in my own ears.

My God! Am I a buck-passing bureaucrat still,
Three years after retirement, and in sleep, too?

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Drowned

I walk out in the morning from Jasmine
My nine-storied housing society in Bandra
And hear soft birdsong, the bell-like sounds
Of the Indian mynah, the 'tevee, tevee'
Sprung loud and big from the tailor-bird,
Perky, small and restless,
With bass provided by the crow at distance.

I walk through the low lane between FDA
And Artek Nagar society's eastern wall,
Enter the pavement of Bandra-Kurla main road,
And walk up and down the length of 1.1 km
One side, and start hearing the car sounds now.

The tyres make different frequencies to vibrate
The auto-rickshaws produce sounds
With gaps, some cars go along with sounds
Made by different metal parts of the cars:
The buses emit sounds peculiar transiting
To each gear in operation, accompanied
By the horns used in hundred different ways,
Topped by the tinkling brakes of bicycles.

Birdsong drowned by automobiles
Is the swan-song of Bandra East,
Pierced by the Mithi river
Frequented in winter mornings
By terns above and pink-legged visitors below.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Drying Up

Saw this youngster with shirt tucked in
Neat stomach, no sign of a paunch
Made me feel how nice to be youngster
And lean and strong.

Wife is very concerned about her weight
And shape and everything about her
And on the road I see many young women
Looking fabulous at least in my eyes!

I dont remember looking at women
When I was young.
Now it is different: every young woman
Fair, and cheerful draws my attention.

I keep wondering a la John Donne
Was I not weaned that such beauty and shape
Did not draw my eyes out then:
Every plant grows and dries up in time.

The Old Testament passage about their being a Season
For everything is very, very true.
It is a pity I spoiled the tradition
And did not induct wife and daughter
Into reading the Bible regularly.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Early Houses I Lived In

First I remember is Government quarters
In Madras in 1948 when I was three years:
Dad with his dhoti tied half to show knees
Putting bricks to reach our kitchen in rains.

Another day, Temple my two-year-old thambi,
Breaking a glass, and crying "kaapi kotti poach,
Aandai, aandai" the last being his own expression!
Father shaving, elephant decorated passing the street.

I remember Captain David coming with glass box
Of mithais, and Huntly and Palmer biscuits,
And my parents making me feel that these are
Delicacies even for the Englishmen – the standard.

I remember driving a tri-cycle in front, and then
Accompanying Dad with his catapult he was good at,
And Temple passing stools, with worms in them,
But I was so fond of him that I was not repulsed.

Next house was in Srivilliputtur, when I went
To Class One in a school, and my teacher
Lived close, and I would go in a red coat
With a poorie in pocket to her house.

My mom would say that when I laughed.
In teacher's house, three or four buildings away,
She could hear and identify my laughter,
At this distance: I was her eldest child.

We had horrid cock which once sat on
Temple's head and pecked! He rolled
From upstairs on staircase, and landed
To cry and be smothered with talcum-powder.

Next we went to Jamburopuram in Madura.
I joined Nehru school for my second class,
At the street corner was our Church. Mom
Went for Christmas, and we had crackers at home.

Next door, was the tailor who owned the house,
He had two college-students as guests,
One in medical college, and studied whole
Night on tea, and vomited in the morning!

Dad transferred to Sankarankoil while I
Was in fourth standard, and we lived in
A busy road, full of thieves' stories,
And one night papa thought mom was thief!

We shifted to a big house, and there was
No electricity there. Papa would go with
Petromax light and check the locks on
All doors, but looking back, we had no money!

Then we shifted to Narimedu, and dad
Had a small black dog, and I had health
Problems, and people said that I got
Infection from the dog, and that was the end.

We shifted nearby to another house, we lived
In one portion of it, with dry latrine, and fields
Behind. One bedroom one kitchen and middle
Room, but a compound with a nice neem tree.

Then we shifted to another house in the next
Compound known as 35 rupee house because
That was the monthly rent! Also a portion,
But Surendran my classmate in the next portion.

By now tow of my cousins were with us,
Studying in college, and stealthily listening
On our Tonfunk radio to Tamil film-songs,
Which Mom had forbidden, films were taboo.

Then we went back to 25 rupee house on
Salai Mudaliar Street where we used to play
From football, pole vault to every game,
On day Rajiv was born in Kamla paati's house.

Temple and I played till six and came home

And did not even ask how mom was
And that made Dad angry, sadly angry.
The only other time was when I could not sing!

From this house when I completed fourth form
He was transferred to thakkalay border of Kerala
And we had a huge house there, with lot of open
Space, and even jack-fruit trees.

Here Dad taught me how to play table-tennis
On a make shift table, he had taught me tenni-quoit
That is ring-tennis in Sankarankoil, and once
I shot with my catapult a mynah, with partner grieving!

Being dissatisfied with my school, he asked for a transfer,
And we went to Nagercoil, and we lived just above my
Scott Christian High School, with owners opposite,
And whose younger daughter Parimala Gitanjali, I liked.

We went back to Madura for my sixth form, and lived
In the last house of Kattabomman street and next portion
Rajendrans lived, and Kelley the eldest son was in IIT
Kharagpur, and his two sister lived there next door to us.

We then went to Tiruchi, and house was in Puttur Agraharam
That is where the pucca Brahmins stay, but our church
All Saints' was also close by, and I studied by PUC
In St Joseph's college, where Fr Ehrart was Principal.

There being no BA English Literature, father took us
Back to Madurai and I joined Br XII English Literature
In Thiagarajar College near Teppakulam for three years.
We lived in ahouse which had an open well behind.

After two years, when mom's parents moved to own house,
We shifted to the rented house at 16 kattabomman street,
Where Rajan my friend was in thenext portion. We slept
On moon-lit open terrace, studied, and went to touring talkies!

Then to Madras behind Chitra Talkies off Mount Road,
I got into the IAS and moved to Mussoorie in Uttar Pradesh,
But would come at end of training here, and used the flush

Toilet first time in life, and travelled in taxi with Seline.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Early Winter Night

Bright stars, I see one after other
In the dark sky, piercing thourh
Trying to talk to me with their eyelashes:
I like no sight better.

They are embedded there but take time
To fall into the ken of my vision
Arising like unknown pleasures
That take time to register.

This one is big, like a huge diamond-
I know it is planet Jupiter
For Venus is already up there?
She shines bright East of Sirius
The brightest star in the heavens
Part of Canis Major constellation.

Down there on the Southern curve
Of the dark sky, twinkles brightly the Canopus,
Known in India as Agasthya, the sage
Who did penance on the Vindhya hill range
And became the patron saint of South India.

Sometimes when I walk on Bandra skywalk
Before the light stains the bright dark,
I can see the Alpha Centauri shining above the tree
And sometimes slopingly point to the Southern Cross
Which is visible with three bright stars.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Ears

Saw this girl standing close in the Airport bus,
Travelling from terminal to Jet aircraft, held
A long way off in the airport
To save fuel, I guess, and protect environment
At the cost of human time and effort,
Available in plenty in Mumbai at least.

She must be nineteen, her skin fair and flawless:
It was her dainty ear that drew my attention,
Lovely curves and lines, and within all of them
Not a speck of dust or distortion in those whorls
And creases ending as a picture drawn by a master.
It was not burdened with jewel or ear-tops,
Despite the tiny hole - just a black dot on the lobe.

She had lips, flushed and fruity,
Pink as her dress, lips outlined with brown
It was lipstick I thought first, it was her lip-skin.
She had small breasts, but there is still time:
Sporting a pair of dark brown sunglasses
With a brocaded gold-rim.

Her hair was loosely tied up
With one clip at top, and another ribbon
For the pony-tail above her slanting neck.
Her hand on a man' arm in front,
I guessed her Dad.
When she spoke to her father, she smiled
White teeth with healthy gums, neat as her ears.

Her mother was sitting half-hidden in front
This girl spoke to only in gestures and eyebrows.
Walked ahead with parents to ladder,
(Her mother in more modern tight dress,)
Said that they were in row number 21,
To the ticket-tearing guy on the Boeing to Hyderabad.

For once I wished I had an Economy seat.

World is great to live in, because of youth like her.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Eat Slowly

My jaw goes down more than once
And I press my stomach to squeeze up
The burps that arise like spring bubbles,
The gas-results of not masticating enough!

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Egrets And Cormorant

Today I saw the first cormorant
Standing on the stone platform
Black, and wings fully spread
Towards the Bandra Railway Station.

It is the first sighting
Post-monsoon this year of grace
2013 when my eyesight is ok
Despite being a diabetic for 15 years.

Wish I could be still and at peace,
Like him, and darkness personified
Without pollution of light:
Like his neighbors, the thirteen egrets.

There were three buffaloes grazing
Providing fleas and food to egrets
While the water-bird surveys them
Keeps watery distance, drying his wings.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Embrace The Cloud?

My life is full of cloud
Up and out there,
Visible to the few who look at it.

Coming from where I don't know
Going as it likes, (is it?)
Sometimes still watching and moving.

It is not a thing, my life I mean
With a clear distinct outline
Substance and weight.

Colors, lines and edges
Continually changing
If one is aware of them.

Sometimes it drizzles,
Drops tears on my bare head,
On the legs, if I am under umbrella.

I live long after Shelley
Is it true 'I change but do not die'
I am not sure till I reach

The bourne from which
None returns or is it dust
Unto dust, grandpa's soul below carpet?

Let me see: it is a messy grayness
Like dumped cotton in a heap
Earlier there was a nicer line in mind.

Let me at least write the cloud down
Though it is a different experience
Whatever I do, it is only embracing the cloud.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Emptiness Of Words

On morning walk, I raise my eyes up,
Not like King David to the mountains,
But to purple flowers, the Pride of India
Queen's flowers, blossoming bunches out
This hot April summer on Bandra pavement.

I look further up, sky is blue unusually!
Filled with many pieces of clouds
In different shapes and sizes;
To describe cannot go beyond
Squares, circles, triangles, rectangles etc
As if all shapes are governed by angles alone.
What about angles of irregular sponges,
Candyfloss shot through with morning silver,
Evolving like forms of life vibrant, joyful?

In this hot summer April month alone,
More than a billion Indians feel anger
And each Indian a thousand times:
Yet anger is the only available word!
Was your 'anger' last Monday morning
Same as of others or yours on weekend?

Like in Heart Sutra of the Buddha
Form is empty: so also, says he, feeling,
Perception, impulse, and consciousness.
Here anger is followed by other words!

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

End

If my life is coming to an end,
So be it: I have lived it well,
And happily. Is there an element
Of pose? Might be but so what?

I did an angioplasty at fifty-nine,
And five years later now, I feel
Some symptoms as before recurring,
As made the Goa doctor track me.

Pain below both shoulder blades
Grip in front on a short stretch of
Fast walk, but would disappear on rest,
In Lodhi garden of beauty and history.

Of course I might do one more plasty,
And prolong life a little bit more –
But then, there has to be an end.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Enlightenment

Enlightenment

That I have to write like this,
Separating myself from her,
There can be nothing sadder.

When we started our married life
We were so happy with each other
That nothing, no-one else mattered.

We went, thought, and felt always together;
More than for five years,
She came on official tours everywhere.

She would drive the official jeep,
Sing Tamil film songs, crack jokes
Enjoy food in the guesthouses.

Later, if I left on tour to Bombay, alone
She would wait downstairs on steps
Of the Collector's bungalow, dinnerless.

She once took a post-card, and wrote
Darling name she calls me by - kanna, kanna,
Some 849 times.

She would fight with her family
On my behalf, and praise Bombay and IAS
Against Chennai, and the engineers.

She came and slept one night in my office
In Satara Zilla Parishad, when I was sorting out
Teachers' transfer scam the whole night.

She then grew up; I and the people treated her
As a person; she studied to become librarian,
She started working, and thinking for herself.

I used to be happy with her;

I used to be, and am, proud of her,
But now I don't feel part of her.

Life goes through its wheel of Fire:
It is like rim of the wheel, as Kalidasa said,
You are sometimes up, sometimes down.

Shelley too was right: Spring always follows Winter;
Spring may follow winter, but youth does not follow old age,
Not for the same person, even if you believe in re-birth.

Better therefore everyone learns fast,
And remembers that things change,
Does not dream present would remain future.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Enter Hyderabad

Eerie it looks the new Hyderabad Airport
As you enter from the aero-bridge
High ceiling, huge spaces, no persons,
Most unlike India: there is no noise,
No clutter, no human beings as you
Walk, one odd airline representative,
No porters and you come below
To the one revolving luggage belt,
Carousal, if you want stylish one word,
Only when you exit and cross the bridge
Outside the scene becomes familiar.

Long-term planning of infrastructure
Starts well till it gets used by public
When the paan spit starts occurring
And the surroundingss encourage
Noise and clutter, then the sheen on
New infrastructure goes, replaced
By what you are at home in.
Will this arrival lounge be an exception?

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Entomologist

When I see insects I tell them
I love them: I want to observe them.

My conversion took place in Velodi's room
He was the Superintendent of Gardens, BMC.

As Secretary, Urban Development Department,
I had visited his office for the first time that day.

He mentioned he has some old books,
I went to see them lined up in the next room.

I picked up the first volume in a series
On Indian Insects, by a Britisher in thirties

I read the 25 pages of the first chapter and was a convert
I asked Velodi to get me a Xerox copy of the chapter.

Prior to this reading, the cockroach was repulsive to me:
I'd kill it on sight.... never since that day of reading.

I joined BNHS Course co-ordinated by Dr Shubhalakshmi
And my resolve grew, and became stronger, more appreciative.

This evening sitting on the verandah in the residence
Of the Deputy Commissioner, Tezpur, I saw a host of them.

When I spoke of insects approvingly, the DC replied coolly
That while he is not against them, he does not want to eat them!

He added that he does not consider them repulsive, I can see
He is smart, intelligent, and not one to go beyond a senior!

As I write, one small insect with six legs is using
The exact space where I have to put down words.

Flashed before my mind's eye the sight of D H Lawrence
Awaiting his turn while the Snake first slaked its thirst.

I waited for him to finish his job of bending the pair
Of forelegs and cleaning his eyes and small mouth-parts.

While I was puzzled how to check his wings, he finished
His job and showed wings by flying off, to let me write.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Epitaph - 2008

Here lies one who bore Life's joys and pains,
Failures and successes equally or tried to;

Who is grateful for his life, wife Tilaka, daughter Joti,
Parents and relatives, friends and colleagues,
Neighbors and pretty young things, and those who thought
Of themselves as his enemies or victims:

For literature, music, painting, and sculpture,
Nature in her boundless beauty and variety;

The Sun, the differently-shaped clouds and the blue sky
During the day, and the lovely dark night, studded
With Sirius, Canopus, Orion, or the other constellations
Or planet Jupiter or Venus etc, and the growing Moon:

And the awareness to look within,
And see behind the chaos and darkness
The settling down to the bare emptiness
Called Soul, or Bramhan.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Evening In Bomdila

It is one long winding market street,
Of Bomdila, winding down and down,
Narrow, not asphalted, with some slush,
Beginning with the High School,
And then the Government college,
Where in one building, girls were practising
Dancing, and others sitting around to watch.

Next was boys' and more lively:
We wandered on, gazing:
Lights went out in the street,
Black shapes were ahead,
Or towards us.
Some candles lit up some shops
Appeared they were ready for power
Being out.

Girls as always in my eye,
Look pretty and shy mostly,
Boys as always mischievous.
This town is abounding with life,
More shops, even a Nokia shop
We bought in a medical shop, well-lit,
Some Vaseline Lip-care, and went back.
To our Circuit House on top of the town.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Evening Ramble In Bandra East

Sixteen lit frames in one building
Reminds me of yesterday's poem:
Distracted though by this young pair,
The girl on the cement bench in BKC
Fair, young and absorbed with eyes
Glued to her beau three feet in front
Is acting out what he says, full of life.
In front, on the pavement, another pair:
The girl turns and notices: I find most
Are curious but clam up when responded to.
While he not bothered, and not aware -
Springs to take action only if there is
Some interference, or one more beauty!

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Everyman

Walking away from the desk
In front of the decorated Ganpati
He does a slight obeisance
By closing his palms, lifting
Them a little, head bent barely.

People here are rooted in soil:
Change in values and beliefs
Occur only if it means more
Of money or social reputation
But respect for all the gods remains.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Excel (Verb)

Doing the exercises in the gym at Bandra
I count one two three
Generally in Tamil in my mind.

For ten repetitions, as I reach eight or nine,
I feel that I have to do a few more,
And end up at fifteen.

Is it a need for excelling that is my innermost desire?
Has it been installed by mom in childhood
Or papa in teenage?
Mom was angry if I brought 96 out of 100.

Papa's knowledge of and taste for Eng lit
Left me far behind
Despite all my university ranks,
Prizes and medals,
He knew more, he wrote better.

D T Joseph
14.01.08

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Exhausted

For once I scrape all tender coconut
From out of my skull, the tough shell
To write down every piece of muscle
Beneath my bald head. Inside
Now nothing is left, for I have
Learnt the doing of the work
Of cleaning by bringing it
Out into the open -
Under this North East Indian skyl
I cannot deny that despite quality
Ahd workmanship, I am happy
As a child having done its toilet!

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Explosion

Between one pleasant moment, and the next,
Explodes a universe of resentment,

Face contorted and frozen in anger,
Eyes accusing and spewing hate,
Body unattainable, now very distant:

All changed utterly in a flash: the reason,
I gestured, mid-way, to one behind her!

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Fallen Short

In the morning on the BKC pavement
I see parijaat flowers, barely six feet down,
White stars knocked down with pink spears,
Having sweet-smell and yet dead to my nose.

Full many a flower is born to lie down
And be trampled by men and animals;
While some celebrate the flowers in poem
Or on hair, some admire their fetching fragrance.

“The perfume of virtue travels against the wind
And reaches unto the ends of the world”,
Says Gautam Buddha in Dhammapada:
The perfume of parijaat not even six feet!

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Family

The three of us sitting on the steps,
Chatting happily laughing at me,
Witnessed by the spongy clouds,
Descending opposite on hill-sides.

We were having coffee poured from thermos
Flasks given by vyanjan restaurant,
When we saw the million pearls,
Small as small can be on each grass.

The shape of the pearl was perfect,
Pleasing to the eye, hanging on the neck
Of the grass like a single pendant,
On an invisible chain.

The sky was cloudy, and weather pleasant,
Up on the hills of Western Ghats so high,
We watch the butterflies and dragonflies
About their business, only to eat and multiply.

I had the Bhagavad Gita in English
Translation of Sadhu Vaswani,
In limpid prose poetry, that I read
Today the chapter on Field and its Knower.

While reading, unusually though,
I felt that my brain was not fresh
Or clear, but surrounded by cobwebs
Shrinking my ability to understand.

What we take for granted -
That we can read easily -
Is not true, there are so many
Factors that we dont understand.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Farewell To Myself

When I die tonight, or whenever, that will be the end
Of it – food for worms – I am 99.9 % convinced,
Nothing remains, no memory, no karma, no soul.
But then it is undiscovered country from whose
Bourne no traveler returns: those who prate of rebirth
Cannot prove what they were in previous birth.

Mind is its own place in itself one or the other –
Heaven and hell are tricks of fancy,
To keep us on the straight social path.
Billions dead cannot be indifferent
To loved ones on earth ignorant of post-death,
Are they so poor in telecom infrastructure?

If there is anything beyond death
I cannot believe our loving dads and moms
Would not have sent a single message,
Dream, thought or flicker to enlighten us.
No, I am convinced they are no more literally,
And that is why we don't get any sms or signal.

So let me go into death and be no more:
Realize the truth of meditation and be nothing.
Cheer up! my loved ones and friends, and accept my
Farewell: I lived well. You do, too. Nothing beside remains.
Cremate the body no longer mine, and return joyfully
To your work, home, loved ones, things and scenes.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Favorite Things Of Mine

Oscillating raindrops at the eves,
A host of small, twinkling stars,
Exact word conveying the emotion -
Life's beauties consist of such things.

The hidden bird makes its presence felt,
When I take the low lane in the morning
For my walk, reminding me of the poet's
Unsuccessful search to sight the cuckoo.

On way I hang on the tree branch just high
To ensure that my phalanges don't pain:
One of my beliefs that if I exercise them
By putting weight, it will prevent arthritis!

My memory being weak in short-term,
I have to count the three lamp-posts
From the bright blue BKC board
To locate my tree from which to swing!

That is in the night: today, in daylight,
I saw that 100 metre mark in yellow
Near tree to hang, reminding me of Tess
To thy sport, O President of Immortals!

How Literature, Painting and Music
Have come into my life, the first
With my Dad's influence, the second
With my seeing Lust for Life at midnight.

That was perhaps in 1997 at Manek,
Late in the night, on TV, I doing files
I got so mesmerized, after midnight
Read 80 page article in world book.

Invited to Germany, bought CD symphonies
At Beethoven's house in Berlin, just like that
Without knowing much, and later in Paris
A friend set me off in search of Fifth Symphony.

Today, I find my Life is enriched by music,
Eng Lit, watching Painting, Sculpture, Dance
Absorbing Upanishads, Buddha and Zen,
Solving Sudoku and observing Animal Planet.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Fda

In my morning exercise I do on my Hercules bicycle,
I rode by the FDA compound on Madhusudan Kalelkar Marg,
And saw through the design holes on the compound wall
Inside and happily saw the green variety, lawns, trees

And the birds on the branches, birdsong of wide range,
Some structures, personnel working to clean up campus,
Water flowing in place and perhaps encouraging life in it,
All awaiting the rising sun or the moon to reflect.

A thought of grief came to me too, as in his Immortality Ode:
That FDA Commissioner can take a walk in this place, enjoy
With Andrew Marvell 'Annihilating all that's made
To a green thought in a green shade' if he knew his own treasures.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Film Song In Tamil

This evening I am listening to songs in Tamil
As usual, they are film lyrics from old movies
Which were popular fifty to sixty years ago.
They are stored in iTunes on my Dell laptop:
I am hearing "ilamai kaalam, inimai aahum"
Meaning in Tamil, 'Youth season is sweetness'.
From a film called 'Mangaiyar Thilagam'

Do you know Tamil has its own rich literature,
Script and grammar, rich & ancient as Sanskrit?

I look back to my youth decades ago,
And find that now in old age, I think
That my youth was sweet and great,
But I don't recall too many moments
In my youth when I felt like that;
On the contrary, I remember having
Large number of problems as now,
And without the present resources!

Wisdom consists of enjoying what you have,
It really does not matter what you have,
Or what you don't have: what counts is
How you possess them, and treat them.
If you live in the present, in the herenow,
And also are aware of the plus points of that,
Then you are young, old, sweet and blessed
All together. And, there is no other way.

Like my father in his eighth decade told me:
"When young I did not realize that mere use
Of faculties is the greatest blessing one can have:
But when many wake up to realize that, we find
That our faculties are no longer ours to use;
We require glasses, hearing aid, false teeth,
Walking-stick, son to take you to a hospital."
I made a note never to forget that advice of his.

Flights

The blue-rock pigeon folds wings,
And shoots like a missile through
The air. How do I know it is blue-rock?
On its body at the back two thick black
Lines drawn by Nature the Painter of us all.

The house-crows fly normal to
Land at the edge of the pool,
I am finished swimming at Lands End
And one of the crows hops to drive away
One of the pigeons wanting to drink water
And then the crow takes bath, and shakes
Itself free of water, and flies away.

The sky above is spotlessly blue,
Lit up by the Sun from the East
On this Sunday of February in 2014
Up above I search for pariah kites,
Regretting the name - why pariah?
None there was: while I am about it,
The first kite comes from above the hotel
In the usual sweeping majesty
Soaring, soon to be followed by another
In much the same style.

Around I see trees of the palm family,
This particular one we call palmirah
In our South, and toddy comes therefrom.
Our grandparents' caste of Nadars
Were employed on these trees
For their livelihood and my imagination
Takes flight with them, climbing flapping
Legs around the trunk and lifting up.

Up above now the blue sky
Is filled with crows, and kites.
And some pigeons, who fly like boats
On water, shaking side to side
But no question of capsizing,

For they all enjoy their flight. 23.02.2014

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Flowers Of Existence

Many say the flowers
Are the acme of creation,
Tender, colorful, beautiful,
Born effortlessly, dying soon.

I say the self within us
If it can, somehow, be realized,
Is the flower of existence,
Above senses, pointing the way up.

World outside, and
World inside
Thrill me no end,
To live the miracle of life.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

For Joti

The day I have enough money,
I will buy the Ranicha Bhag in full
For my daughter, because she loves watching
All birds and flowers equally and naturally.

I will go searching for all the trees out in the City,
Which blossom with pink flowers, up at a height
A-plenty, record with location and give details
To Joti for her to see and enjoy from her Vento.

Every chirping blue kingfisher near the water-bodies
In Mumbai would be located and gently invited
To neighboring Guru Nanak's living pools of water
To be seen from her bedroom in Jasmine – with binoculars.

She prefers them to the golden orioles that at one time
Brought London traffic to a halt with their bright yellow
Shiny black suit, but here seen in fours or fives,
Male and female, daily from fifth floor of her Bandra flat.

The Chinese Lantern tree, the gorgeous Amherstia Nobilis
In our University Fort Campus, bursts in color for few days
Ahead of summer in Feb/March, when the orange flowers
Will draw her daily from 90 MG Road branch, to gaze upon.

I shall take her every summer to Delhi our capital,
And have filtered coffee under the rich and profuse
Yellow blossoms of the beautiful Indian Laburnum trees,
Except when her friend takes her to Tokyo in Japan

To take part in the tea or sake ceremony
Under the white cherry-blossom trees there
And show her the snow-peaks of Fuji-san
On which Basho's haikus are not silent, still.

M u m b a i
19 March 2014

Forecast

I'm heading for a stroke or paralysis,
I foresee, but choose not to tell her
To avoid an unpleasant exchange.

When I read 20 pages of serious printed
Matter and get up, I find my head floating,
And empty, with no blood flowing up there.

When I wake up late in the morning
The back muscles on left side of spine,
Down at the back, quiver with pain.

When I take regularly the sugeron
Tablet twice a day for two months,
Dizziness still occurs now and then,

Sometimes landing me in terror to
Find my physical reality crumbling,
Leaving estrangement with mysterious fear.

Is that my diabetics laying ground
For gangrene? Will I lose my leg
Or arm, or head? Sugar today was
Not so high – fasting was 128 –
Despite my swallowing two banned
Sweets from the dining table last night!

That mark of exclamation, I think,
Will be my salvation ultimately.
Like the engine-driver in the kids' rhyme,
You bet, my dearest wife, 'I don't care'
I live my life till the end as I like...
And, quietly go when the call comes.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Forgetting

Creeping age and uncertainty
Go together.
No, that is a generalization
And hence partly untrue.
Let me moderate that statement
with a 'sometimes'.

Today I came out from my apartment
Dressed in lounge suit rather unusual;
From the flat in front also
Emerged a stranger in suit.
Since he waited a second for me
Before entering the lift,
I closed my door
And rushed in.
In the background I hear my wife's refrain,
'You are always more worried about others.'

As we reached ground
Question rose whether the hook
Clicked, or had remained stuck?
None was at home: and, Tillumma
Is always anxious that I am careless.

Since driver was not ready down,
Thought it wise to go back up
And check. It was shut.
While rushing back, I thought
"Supposing thief had entered
And closed it shut from inside? "
Like Wordsworth on Lucy:

Of course, no great difference to me.
It is to consider too curiously.

Got into the car now,
Checked my wrist for time
Found I had forgotten
To wear my wrist-watch.

□

D T Joseph,
07.02.08

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Forgive Me!

As I entered my bathroom today,
I saw a huge mosquito flying
In front of the mirror;

In early days of seventies and eighties
Of the twentieth century,
Mumbai did not have this pest
I don't remember seeing a single
Mosquito in Churchgate area.

These days despite the fan overhead,
And the All-Out light for warding off
Still while asleep I get bitten badly
On finger knuckles, even forehead
Awakening me with pain for long.

So, I told this poor flying fellow,
Sorry, I cannot allow this;
And swapped it dead,
As more than half a dropp of blood
Burst out.

As I finished this, I could see
Hanging from the ceiling a different insect,
Whose name I don't know;
But it is flat, diamond-shaped, and can hand
Perpendicular from one of its orifices.

I have not read, nor been told
But I feel that contact with
This small creepy thing
Would lead to skin problems and more.

So, I told this creepy guy
Sorry, I cannot allow this;
And lit a match-stick and burnt
And pushed his corpse to flush out.

I know myself, and people readily say this,

Reading and lecturing on Buddha,
And Gita and Christ and all
Who preach love and compassion
To all creatures – how can I do this?

It is really difficult for me
To reconcile: I agree I can turn
The other cheek, but I find it hard
To agree to tell my wife to do so!
Complexities of life are endless.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Formation

There was a twinge of pain
At the back, around the hip,
Not around but at:

Reminding me of the plates
Terrestrial moving
Resulting in pain of earthquakes!

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Four Streams

The evening Sun is sinking,
Down as half-round in orange;
I can see the silhouette
Of distant buildings etched
Against the Sun
Through the black iron grille,
Between Jasmine and hospice
Named after Dr Ernest Borges,
Where death is not news,
It happens so frequently.
Cancer is not as kind as
Terrorist who kills instantly.

The glass-panes' gap open
Lets in the strong, pleasant breeze
Aware on my chest, hairs on
On my forelegs, I look toward
The Guru Nanak hospital
And the Nursing Training school
In front – they are the landmarks
To our house, sort of address.
Below on the floor, Zorro the cat
And Minnie his girl-friend asleep
With more right than us
The human inhabitants!

It is her bedroom where I am
Enjoying the breeze, my wife
Is chatting on telephone
With her brother Babu in Chennai
About some cousins In Bangalore, saying
She is not interested in fulfilling formalities
Like going all the way from Mumbai to there
To attend wedding of who hasn't bothered
To keep in touch with us all these years.

In all the three T V screens
At home, same report
On terrorists at the Taj,

Trident earlier called Oberoi,
Or Nariman house of Jews
In Colaba; they have killed
101 persons and injured 287,
Side by side, inset, showing
The funeral of Hemant Karkare IPS
Chief of ATS, shot in the head
Last night: he owns the flat
Below mine, a soft and nice
Man he was – a decent police guy.
Raj Thackeray, Chief of MNS
Not to be left behind is seen
In the procession now.

Life goes on;
The wheel is down
But on its way up.
What else is there to say?

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Frightening

Happily I was walking in the pathways:
The things I thought of moments ago,
I now cannot recall, despite trying hard.

My brain goes into still mode,
And eats up all the stuff there
Leaving me blank, try as I may.

Where have the words and thoughts
Gone, disappeared, lost or locked out?
How do they go out, what exit unknown?

Out of control, me not part of my brain?
Or simply losing its dopamine to work?
Synapses no-man-fathomed, failing?

It is dreadful and dark, like for Lear;
The unique cargo of mind in smoke -
Knowing it makes one feel frightened.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

From Ck

Got a mail from Chinnakutty'kka
Yesterday, and I replied in an hour
It led to discussion in the morning -
It is so difficult to understand each other.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

From Now To Then

Saw the bright planet Venus
Last evening on the Guwahati sky;
Felt bad that the heavens
Were no longer searched by me
Regularly, or astronomy studied.
Do I have to leave Bandra
To view the heavens?

But down on earth, President of India
Mrs Pratibha Patil,
Was on state visit to this town,
And wherever we went, though in car
With red beacon, yet we were not allowed
To turn right to the river road,
Beside which the mighty Brahmaputra flows
Silent, wide, gaining and losing,
Relentlessly.

Saw the river first in 1969 January,
My impression was of the sea
For I couldn't see the other bank
We were probationers of 1968 IAS batch
On Bharat Darshan, seeing the country
In batches of twenty, for the railway
Bogie that was our house or hotel
Had only twenty berths.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

From Our Fifth Floor Flat

The bird flying up North
Across two rain clouds
Separated by a ridge of grey light.

I go to the window facing East
To do bird-watching
Remind myself it requires patience.

I see the blue kingfisher sitting
Above the water on a height
In a dry low branch of that tree in water.

dark reddish brown head
Flesh-colored long, thick beak
Bright blue all down below.

Told Tillumma and she wanted
To see, and did. Then the bird flew
Sat in another spot showing chest-white.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

From Our Kitchen To Stars

The flame on our gas-stove in kitchen
Is a mix of blue and yellow-
Only blue is hotter than yellow,
Is said of stars' temperature, too.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

From The Sun To Hell

Having read how the prophet stayed the Sun,
I wondered whether from the old Testament:
Took the Bible to leaf through Judges book
Thinking it must be during the reign of David.

Instead, I came across the death scene of Saul
The first king of Israel, which called to mind
Eros in Antony and Cleopatra behaving same
As the armorbearer in I Samuel, chapter 31.

Got on to read David's outpouring of sorrow
In Mount Gilboa 'How the mighty are fallen!
Jonathan's love surpassing the love of women'.
The Amalekite who got killed, not rewarded.

Searching for what I wanted, glanced through
Gideon's doings, and went back to Joshua
And there it was: he said, " Sun, stand still
Over Gibeon: Moon, in valley of Aijalon.

So the Sun stood still, and moon stopped,
The Sun did not hasten to go down for
About a whole day: and, there has been
No day like that, before it or after it.

For the Lord heeded the voice of man;
I took yellow marker to remind me this -
Drawn by what people thought years ago,
Curious how they recorded, on hearsay?

Ended my peregrinations of the morning
With Faustus' prayer to the Sun to stop
So the Midnight hour wont strike,
For Devil to pull him down to hell.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

From The Swimming Pool

Bright, sunny, cool morning with no breeze
Above the blue, nirmal sky, not a bit cloudy,
Enclosed with buildings except on one side,
For green foliage looks peeps into the pool,
I am swimming back-stroke in MiGClub.

Pigeons more than dozen crowded
Perching on one side of the pool, drinking
Water and as I get near them taking off
On to the sky, disfigured by three wires,
Below the small black birds up above.

They are soaring almost like kites,
Takes me a few seconds to make out
They are all swallows flying unusually
Straight and not the quick flip-flip style
I know them for, on Mithi river bridge.

I push myself back, breathing steadily,
In my red swimwear, but with earplugs
Blue in color, getting tensed up a little
When I return from deep end, for I learnt
To swim after I crossed my 42nd year!

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

From Where To Where?

Mo bike he pointed out to, and said,
'I'll dropp you home in Bandra
And collect the money for the pillow.'

I was taken aback, and told him
I have not sat on a motorbike ever:
He consoled, " I'll drive slow! "

I used to 'half-pedal' and feel grateful
On Ambrose uncle's bicycle in Madurai,
Not tall enough to reach from the seat.

Now in half a century, I find
That sitting pillion on mobike
Makes me feel strange and unusual.

Been an IAS officer, traveled jeep
For first ten years, and then a car
In town, or plane from place to place!

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Galaxy

In front are so many bald heads like me,
As I listen to vedantin Jaya Row -
Her unique spelling for the usual Rao -
Speaking on Chapter XVII of Gita
At huge Bhaidas Auditorium in Vile Parle.

On one bald patch ahead,
I see two, three shiny patches
Reflecting light at different watts,
Depending on bulbs' location above.

Am stuck by the beauty
Of so many flash-points in one head
Reminding me of Krishna's revelation,
And comparison of 1000 suns on the sky,

-----X-----

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Gap

My senses take information
To pass on to the brain;
I can feel many times a gap
In time before the brain gives me
The meaning of what the senses
Have registered: it is like the hearing
Of thunder seconds after the flash.

The interval frightens me,
Of oncoming Alzheimer's.

During the interval,
Had I disappeared,
Exploring the gap?
Like that Chinese painter
Who invited the Emperor
Entered the painting saying,
'Come, let us go see
Where the painted gate leads to",
And never came back!

D T Joseph
02.02.08

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Gems Of Nature

Like a dried up leaf leaving the tree,
Floating like a sail, rolling and pitching,
Butterflies cross the road, happily
And never, never in a straight line,
In the rainy month of September.

How they can see in their twisted
Movements, I wonder: they rush
Close to the moving vehicle: yet,
Never seen a butterfly-accident:

Just at the last moment, dragonfly-like
They turn and zoom, swoop and dance
Away, leaving us to wonder delightedly
At nimbleness of wit in Nature's darlings.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Genius

I started the day without the tight band
Around my head and now it is there
Crushing my head...? No too strong a word.

The ache spreads inside. I am familiar
For years: led me to seek once
That it would rain inside my head.

No description I've ever heard of
Headaches makes me feel. Yes that is it.
Peculiar, but Tilaka will make fun.

She firmly believes that I am crazy
In thinking that I am special
That anything of me - headaches included -

Is different from that of others! Maybe
She is right. But I feel that I'm not here
On earth to lead a life of others.

Then she says I'm selfish, always thinking
And talking only myself! True I do.
Pardon me, but isn't that the sign of genius?

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

'Get 100 Out Of 100'

Like a bundle of sticks tied tight
It was in the past: now the rope
Has loosened and parts are flying
In different directions.

I keep changing my mind,
Adding things to do
Instead of concentrating on main purpose
For which I started, and every time

I think the phenomenon occurs
Only out of desire to know more
And to feel having done things on time
Better than others, and earn praise.

The praise need not be explicit
But I derive satisfaction
From knowing that I did it well
More importantly, better than others.

The effects of Mom's insistence
To do still better in class!

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Getting Old

From Jasmine fifth floor, in FDA I can see
The tree with leaves shining –
Not all green leaves, but a few,
Reflecting the Sun, risen in the East:
At the back the vehicles passing
On the Bandra Kurla Link road.

I don't know the name of that tree:
If others don't contradict, I'd proclaim
It is bhendi tree, which puts forth
Yellow cup-like flowers with red spot
In the middle, though not this season.
Shimmer recites, "Is it a small thing...?"

My eyes are good and can see now;
Past the yellow flowers on my window:
Soon, a dullness will grow in,
And diabetes invade them
When the colours will be put in place
Only by memory, on someone guiding.

They tell me 63 is not old,
But I know better;
That which is within withers
Day by day, pain conquers
Bit by bit, and soon
I'll have nothing left to live for.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Giddiness

With such anxiety to hear I become deaf,
Straining worse, if the accent is British.

She means well, it is not her fault,
If I am sensitive.

Tears arrive inside my lower eyelids,
Ready to flow, but won't.

Severe adjustment for any couple after
Initial years is needed.

While writing the poem,
It's me that flows out in instalments.

Not easy when evenly matched, I daresay,
At 65, I have got – lumped - it, almost!

Giddy but I don't throw up: a sugeron tablet
Ascends through ears to stabilize the brain.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Girlfriend

In front is she - a female sparrow,
Without black bib of male,
Hopping fast and zigzag,
But I can't see the insect
She is chasing: I hear her chirp
Making the pavement
Noisy, if not musical,
Early in the morning,
And she takes off to sit on FDA
Compound fencing, with her small
And light body moving this way
And that, while my mind is slowly
Registering the difference of
Walking as we do with one leg
First and then the other
With her hopping with the whole body
Continuously;
Of perching and sitting, reminding me
Of her legs that bend backwards
While mine do forward.

Life is beautiful, various, and fascinating,
Even to watch any girl-friend's behavior.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Gompa At Bomdila

We drove up the Upper Monastery
Re-consecrated by the Dalai Lama in 1996
Looking bright and modern, neat and clean.

We went up the stairs,
Were told No photography
But inside permission granted
To sit on the low wooden benches
On which monks sit and recite
Scriptures daily, and breathe incense
For us to take photographs
With camera and cellphone too.

I saw for some time around;
Then, I wished I had been alone, for
I would have spent moments
In silent contemplation, instead of talking.

We came out, wore shoes,
Took photographs, spoke to monks
Who happily posed with us.
Our man from Itanagar, State Capital
I saw him giving a monk some rupees
When I asked, he said
It was neighbour's son.

We discussed whether
These teenaged monks
Who have chosen to sacrifice
Life even before they know
What it is – whether they
Are initiated into real
Methods of meditation,
Buddha's own teaching
And not merely rituals.

We stepped up and ordered
Three cups of Nescafe since
Board said Rs 10 for coffee,

And Rs 5 for tea.

All places of worship of all religions
Are becoming commercial
In order to survive, to clean, to light up.
Can't blame them, but it is necessary
To devise measures to ensure
The sanctity of original precincts
Does not get dimmed or changed,
For truth remains ever the same
Between birth and death
While advances flood every field.
This realization should enable the boy-monks
Not to get submerged and always remain above.

With a heavy heart
And pity for my own
Inadequacies, I get in
And sit in front seat
Of the Scorpio with red beacon-light,
Back to the Circuit House, Bomdila,
Slightly less than ten thousand feet
Above mean sea level
On the Eastern Himalayas.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Good And Evil

“Struggle between Good and Evil is perpetual,
Does not change.” pronounced T S Eliot.

I ask, Is it that simple?
What is Good?
What is Evil?
Do we really know?

Patriotism is not enough.
It kills, I say,
People on both
Sides of the border.

Profit gets us the goodies;
Also, the waste, the victims
Of development dispossessed,
The dirtied warmed Planet Earth.

And so on: I can go on....wherever I turn,
It is agonizing grey, inextricable mixture
Of Good and Evil, white and black.

Sure, the moral dimension is product
Of human mind for building up society:
But for the individual, for me,
It is simply life is as it is...tatatha.

Life is full of facts,
Lion kills and eats:
Scorpion stings:
Not Good nor Evil.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Goodnight

My daughter goes to sleep,
Puts off the light in her room,
Even when I am still awake,
Without taking leave of me.

I go mostly to my wife,
Open the door of her room,
And say 'Goodnight' to her:
As one ages, roles change.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Great Deception

To think that all life is same,
And that when one living creature
Dies, it passes on to another in body
Of different name or type, it is said:

“The self slays not nor is slain
It is not slain when the body is slain,
It is even as a person casts off
Worn-out clothes and puts on new”.

This lays the basis for reincarnation,
And minimizes the importance
Of life herenow: cannot prove or see
Like the emperor’s new clothes.

One falls into the same pit if one denies it
Completely, for I cannot prove it; but to make it
Appear life is eternal, ever-renewing
Across births might be a complete hoax.

To believe in re-birth means one is taking life
Or self to be a thing, material and measurable:
The ordinary men and women pretend to believe in Gita
But actually live as if there is only this life available!

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Grow Up

At home, they don't listen to me:
Compare myself with then,
When my words, preferences
Were respected:
But now everyone has grown up
With own job and responsibilities.
Maybe she is right, I am over-sensitive.

I may want to share news
Achievement, discovery or bon mot;
But I stifle it, for it will be ignored.
One is on phone, and the other reads
Her newspaper in detail;
My calling doesn't get through.
It would have been criticized, anyhow.

No, this is not the way to go about:
Living here-now means exactly that,
No comparisons: present is only what is.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Gujarat Sky

Lights blue and yellow on the ground
Ahmedabad shines, as we climb up
On our way to Sahar Airport of Mumbai
Yellow color dominated the roads seen from above,
Some straight and long, some short and joining:
Pilot has now steadied it, and the city
Hides back in darkness.

D T Joseph

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Habit

I am a creature of habit;
If I go daily to gym at Bandra,
It continues well, but if I don't go
One day, for I have to catch
An early flight to Cochin for meeting,
Then it is doubtful whether next day
I will go. True about yoga or walking too.
I have to break that mould
To start the habit again.

I have found that I can go daily,
Or go not at all.
I can either give up completely
On smoking or sweets, or be prey to it;
Same with coffee, either no or frequent;
It is like the pendulum in motion
Swinging to both extremes without fail.
Why cant I control the wings
A little, or more, as I want to fly?

My mind is its own place, and in itself
Can make me do what I do not want to.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Haiku In Bomdila

The blue sky and white clouds sank
Into my bald head ringed with hair
Without a sound – no plop, Basho!

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Haji Ali

At Haji Ali signal, I see street-children,
Active boys, and agile girls,
With a bundle of books each covered,
With cellophane paper, on both their forearms
Smartly walking between rows of cars
Waiting for signal-change, today's
Symbol of urban life and transport:

Each child from a distance reads the look
Gauges interest in the eyes of the passenger
Their judgment being correct almost always.
For the buying of the book or subject-matter,
Not bothered about the long queue in wait
Or of the loyal driver inching car ahead
To save the boss from bother, as he sees it.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Half-Sunday: A Long Narrative

This Sunday morning I got up
With the word slapsick picked up
From night-time wanderings of mind,
Transition from sleep to morning hazy,
Aches and numbness going slowly away,
And I brushed my teeth with Amar,
The Ayurvedic dental cream: stomach proving
To be still not normal after the food-poisoning in Pune
Last Sunday, decided that I should starve today
Then modified thinking to eat only bare toasts,
Actually ended eating everything, and in large measure!
Had bought Imodium, sheet of four tablets
Supposed to settle the stomach,
Been taking last four days;
It improves, and tempts me to eat freely
And become sick again!

Today is Sameer's birthday, also my Dad's,
Who died 13 years ago; my son-in-law Sameer
Must be completing 37 now. He is in Pune.
I called him up, and conveyed, "Happy Birthday!
And many, many happy returns of the Day"
Dotu daughter is away in Norway,
But has been reminding me and wife about
Wishing Sameer on his birthday.
We had decided to give him a cheque but Tilaka
Has already spoken that he would
Get it when he comes here next.
I told him about laptops Baiju and I saw
Yesterday in the Inorbit Mall in Malad, then
Hypercity Mall and also in Croma shop nearby,
Where I was amazed to see the public interest
In purchasing computers as a family.
Sameer discussed Apple, Sony laptops in detail
Comparing them with Dell. I am replacing,
Rather buying new one almost after three years.
My Toshiba Tecra 2
Didn't give me a single day's trouble
Since bought in November 2005: so, no selling it

Sameer can talk with passion on technology!
I want a portable small one with good maintenance
Assurance, at my age.

Sat on the dining table, reading Times of India,
Indian Express and the Asian Age. Then took up
Exim Today for the last three days.

While reading, once I plucked some black bit
From my nose and threw it out of window.

We live on fifth floor.

Her face exploded in anger, making her start
Her harangue and I quickly decided, though late,
I should go to gym, got up and left.

Though late, got ready, took hand-towel
To wipe the sweat in the gym,
The house-key (don't believe it disturbing) ,
Wore sneakers, took shoe-bag, two ten-rupee notes,
And proceeded to the gym. Outside got into auto,
Reached, paid Rs 10/- with the tip of one rupee,
Signed on the register in club with SJ 010
And started on treadmill for twenty minutes
Half at six km speed, and rest at 6.5 km speed
And incline at 6.00 too. Then the stepper
For ten minutes at Resistance level three,
Going up and down at rpm 50.
Then other equipment to exercise
Legs, thighs, arms, fingers, hips etc.
At 62, if I don't exercise for four days,
I get arthritic pain on fingers:
Also, I get sometimes pain in the hips
For over-exercising at my age. Dilemma!
Came back home by auto: had coffee
Heated up in micro-wave – I take it only hot.

Then called for breakfast, had three thin dosas,
I know sugar will shoot up for me the diabetic
If I eat any rice-based preparation:
I should, and generally do, take white oats etc
Once for a while, only one tomato and cucumber.
But sometimes I make exceptions on Sundays.
Then took tablets for blood pressure

And acidity and vitamins, for diabetes tablet
I take a little before my breakfast.
Helped my wife with Crossword again,
She does that religiously every Sunday,
And compares notes with her friends on phone.
Watching TV wall-mounted on her bed-room
(Which holds white Minnie and black Zorro) ,
And we munching groundnuts from box
She had brought to the bed:
I ate quite a lot, and very fast as usual,
Helped her only for two or three clues
And got up... when I saw an argument
Building on my reporting to her what
I said to Sameer about ordering laptop myself.
I quickly got up and went to my room
And checked the dictionary for slapstick
Scribbled a poem on it, and keyed it
Uploaded it on Poemhunter site with three clicks,
My 140th poem, starting from end January 2008.

Went to the other room to listen
To music on my Panasonic system
First Handel's Hallelujah chorus – in
My dad's heaven they were always playing this! –
And then Norwegian Grieg's Morning
Spreading light on the mountains,
Mahler's Symphony No 5 Adagietto
To Dvorak, to the bouncy, springy tune
Of Prokofiev in Peter & The Wolf,
Mozart, and Chopin's E'tude that tests skills,
Faure's Requiem: Pie Jesu, then Ravel
To the loud Habanera of Carmen by Bizet,
Again Mozart with his clarinet concerto,
Then to sweet-sounding Mendelssohn
With his Hebrides Overture and lastly
To Strauss and his Blue Danube
Which my wife used to play on the piano,
And which we rushed to see in Parvati Theatre
In Kolhapur in mid-seventies,
Where I was District Collector for four years:
Was Great Escape the title of that movie?
The music of river swept me along, I remember.

Then to volume 2 of Absolute Classics
Starting with my favorite Hebrew Slaves
That became the Italian national anthem,
Of Verdi, Mozart Piano Concerto 21, Faure,
Offenbach, Brahms, Prokofiev, Handel
To Chopin's Fantasie Impromptu,
Which plays a great part in that movie of his,
Then Rodrigo's guitar and Massenet's
Haunting tune on Meditation in his "Thais"
Thereafter from Swan Lake by Tchaikovsky,
The Opera I saw in Albert Hall with Reshmi,
And ending with Wagner's Walkyrie.

I heard these pieces undisturbed
In the company of Chinky, one-eyed cat
In patches of light brown and white,
The most agile among the seven handicapped
Cats at home, more precious than grandchildren
Or VIPs. Chinky sits between music system and me;
Though friendly with me, she is still ready to scratch!

I turn behind to the steel shelves
To search for books to read: poems
I had in mind: saw copy of Tao Te Ching
By Lao Tzu, paperback. Took it out thinking
That I should keep it along with Bhagavad Gita
Dhammapada, Diamond/Heart Sutras for daily read.
Meanwhile read some part of it before putting it aside:

"One who boasts of his own ability has no merit".

"Sage does his work, but sets no store by it."

No amount of words can fathom it,
Better look for it within you."

"Lingering like gossamer, it has only a hint of existence;
And yet when you draw upon it, it is inexhaustible."

"The highest form of goodness is like water.
Water knows how to benefit all things without striving with them."

"If you do not strive with others
You will be free from blame."

Then, laid hands on Lewis Carroll's
Alice's Adventures in Wonderland
Read the words of the song, I wanted to use
Once in IMO General Assembly, but didn't
Since dissuaded by my boss!

'You are old, Father William', the young man said,
'And your hair has become very white;
And yet you incessantly stand on your head –
Do you think, at your age, it is right? '

'In my youth', Father William replied to his son,
' I feared it might injure my brain;
But, now I'm perfectly sure I have none,
Why, I do it again and again.'

Said Caterpillar to Alice
"One side will make you grow taller,
And the other side will make you grow shorter"
One side of what? The other side of what?
Thought Alice to herself.
"Of the mushroom, " said the Caterpillar,
Just as if she had asked it aloud.
On eating a little of the right side bit,
She felt a violent blow underneath her chin:
It had struck her foot!

Kept it aside for more reading, picked up
R K Narayan's "A Story Teller's Word",
Read first piece in First Part, Fiction Writer
It is so true: I was born and brought up in South India.
Then read introduction by Australian Syd Harrex
Read more pieces such as 'The Indian in America, '
On to the 'Problem of the Indian Writer'.
I have seen the movie "Guide" in 1966 in Madurai
More than once, was thrilled with Waheeda's performance
And the lyrics, but had not read R K Narayan's
Either Guide or any other book or novel.

Now I find I have missed out so much, considering
His grip on his themes, and sharp observations.
Should read this book and some more at least now.

Tried to read lying down in my bed
With the AC on. But knew it sure leads to
Cervical pain, and quickly got up, rested against
The wall, and finished the problem of Indian writer
And covered myself with two thin rajais
And asked light to be put off.
Soon I was asleep, without having had lunch.

Half of my Sunday is gone... Macavity isn't there?

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Hamlet-Like, Self-Obsessed

While flipping, and clicking through my laptop,
I read Wet Grass a poem, idly
Wondering who wrote this nice poem?

Then it flashes in, that Monsoon day
Through my bed-room window
The heavy downpour, the pestle banging.

Not a bad poet, me; only memory is going:
Years after I am gone, will some Mahakashyapa
Smile mysteriously and bring them out in public?

Many poems gossamer-like float in mind or e-space,
Between heaven and earth, like arrant knaves,
Act mad, till the curtain goes up, and the play begins.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Happy Sighting

While scribbling verse
And Zorro the black cat
Was nestling me to pet him,
I became aware of screeching.
And turn to see through window
On the wire seven green parrots.

Suspecting, I bring up my binoculars,
See two out of three that remained,
Have a huge red patch on shoulders
They are Alexandrine.

Nine years ago, I had seen first
In Hyderabad Estate on Malbar Hill
And leafed through Salim Ali's book,
To know about the bird then.

Happy to see three of them now:
I called Joti my child to see; she did,
Despite being busy on laptop.
Greatest heritage I can bequeath.

Name is from Alexander the Great,
Who exported them from Punjab
To many countries known to him:
Not me: Google and Wiki say so.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

He Writes Prose...

"He writes prose, cuts the sentence
With a comma, starts next line
On a capital letter, and uploads
It on the Net as a poem! "

I agree: it is done that way.
But how do you define a poem?
Should be about moon and June,
Rose and daffodils and beauty, is it?

"No, " says my acknowledged legislator,
"It need not be: but it cannot be
Gossip about your wife or neighbor;
It has to be general, extracting poetic essence
From situations, events or relationships."

Thus I get one more definition of poetry;
Whether it is this way or that
I don't know: all the same I this.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Heavenly Lunch

On one edge of the Madhurai Lake
Under majestic granite precipice
We took out our lunch box
And lit a fire under the open noon sky.

We had Teachers' Scotch Whisky
In paper cups, and bread fried on tawa
With a dozen boiled eggs,
And a big thermos flask full of tea.

At 13,000 feet above under the Himalayan sky,
Looking bluest of pure cerulean blue,
Clouds preening whitest of the white,
I have not enjoyed either a drink

Or food as much as I did there and then.
One cup slipped from my hand,
The plastic cup slipped I don't know how,
Spoiling cuff and spilling on my left wrist.

Thereon I made the comment,
That Age will announce itself
Regardless of where we are,
And what we do...even in the Himalayas.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Hereditary

It struck me that after two and half years
In the Gym daily, I don't know the names
Of regulars, or trainers or other staff.

In my present office where I work
For more than a year, I know only
Names of four or five close colleagues.

During childhood I don't remember
A single relative or friend who ever
Stayed a single night in our house.

Nor have we gone to anyone's house,
For dinner or spent the night out
Easing personal space to mix socially.

Parents were aloof though good and pious,
They kept themselves to themselves, and so,
Children make no friends, nor mix easily.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Home Innovations

Soon after marriage we lived in Gadhinglaj,
Where Marathi was spoken, and she couldn't.
While I was away in office, she wrote once
A short story in Tamil, with nom-de-plume 'Joti'.

Child born unto us was baptized, and called Joti,
Teachers correcting spelling till told not derived
From Sanskrit but our names of Joseph and Tilaka,
For us, 'Dotu', that is how she referred to herself.

Being from the South, we always had coffee in bed,
She said "I'll make it sweet" and tasted mine; it was:
For years we didn't start having morning first coffee,
Till the other sipped it, and made it sweet.

In our first home, as we finished meals,
We'd go to wash-basin and she would say,
"I don't know how to wash my hands" and I
Took her hand under the pipe and washed it.

When it was rare to see women driving
In rural areas, she would drive my jeep
Painted blue in the sub-division on long roads,
And sing old Tamil film songs happily.

These and other innovations made our home
A pleasure den in early years, when we lived
In Maharashtra – Gadhinglaj, Kolhapur, Bhir,
Satara away from relatives, classmates, friends...

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Homes We Made

I brought her to the house in Gadhinglaj
With two bedrooms in 1972 July,
Within the compound we had another house
Where lived Principal Madgaonkar
Whose brother was the famous Marathi poet.
The house had the toilet outside away.
And yet my 21 year-old wife didn't ever complain
In that town of 12,000 with one cinema theatre
Where we saw every change, and next day
Rushed off to Ajra, or Chandgad, or Gargoti,
All beautiful places, some with sandal trees!
In spare time, my wife would write Kanna, Kanna
Hundreds of times, and once in a while,
A short story or a poem on forgiveness!

Then we went to Bhir as it was spelt then,
And got a house in the colony of officers,
When Lalit Doshi got Dist Supply Officer
Shifted to give that house to me. I was
Additional Collector, a new post to tackle
The 1973 famine situation in Marathwada.
House was hot, nothing in the house,
Till on loan from Bank of Maharashtra
I bought a godrej fridge through Marathwada
Development Corporation officer's help.
And here she was on way to become a mother,
Though we did not know when the journey began!

Came to Satara as Chief Executive Officer
Of Zilla Parishad with a lovely bungalow
A new two storied house next to Collector's:
In this house I planted 100 silver oaks
Brought from Panchgani, and later planted
Groundnut, and even Basmati rice,
After having built a storage tank in corner
Watered from the President's house.
Fulfilled ambition of naming it "Vikas" -
Work I did, that is, Development in Marathi!
We had dinner on open balcony on full

Moon night. Joti came here as a 20-days old,
After my `paternity' leave of one month in Chennai.
We celebrated here her first birthday, cutting cake
In the presence of Mendonca, Rita and Rashmi:
He was Superintendent of Police, and had
The only color TV in the region! On Govt loan,
We bought our used car Fiat for 14,000 rupees,
I drove it always badly according to my wife.

We moved to Kolhapur, and entered the Residence
Where the British Resident ruled till 1949.
Great house overlooking the Chhatrapati's
Palace. Crow will not make noise in Collector's
House was the saying in town!
We got fancy 9999 car steel grey, first staff-car.
Wooden floor, dancing hall, marble pieces
Durbar hall, carpets and to boot
A beautiful piano made by the Makers
To the British Sovereign, and Michael Pinto
Played on, when he came home once.
During Emergency days, we lived there
Happily, entertaining Lata Mangeshkar,
And Sunil Gavaskar. Club was the place
Every evening, when we were not out on
Tour to the talukas, or to Pune. In Kolhapur,
Joti used to be scared of the camera flash
And would be seen crying in most photos!
The sisters of Holy Cross took her to school
When she was barely two and a half years old.

Then we shifted to Municipal Commissioner's house,
All four bedrooms in ground floor in a park
The front had a lovely short mango tree,
Built up around it, as round sitting place,
And where junior engineers of the Municipal
Corporation I had invited once for dinner!
For neighbour, we had Lt General Thorat
Who was Commander in Tokyo in 1952
Of allied forces, flying both the flags,
And Tokyo, according to Mrs Thorat,
Came to absolute stop, when their car moved!

Then we came to Mumbai, then Bombay,
And settled on 15th Floor in Buena Vista
Stone's throw from Mantralaya,
Owned by Almeida the Police officer
Who worked on deputation in North East?
We had visitors like Bayas, and Sureshkumar,
And Joti grew up to be a student of G D
Somani in Cuffe Parade, for St Anne's school
We were late: and Mother was strict,
Despite request from BMC and Govt
Saying, "You pray for the transfer of one
Of the existing students' father, so that
We can accommodate your child! "
I was MD of Development Corporation
Of Konkan Limited where I got to know
Page, an early MBA from Bajaj Institute
A creative, knowledgeable individual
Who took me abroad first time in my life
To Italy, UK, Scotland and the Netherlands.

We then moved our home to Flat No 5
Of Yashodhan opposite Brabourne Stadium
And lived there for 15 years with a one year break
To Raj Bhavan in Pune as Training chief.
Yashodhan had huge bedrooms, close to office,
Where both my mother and father spent their
Last few months, and breathed their last.
This is the home from which Tilaka sallied
Forth to Rajabai Tower to do B Lib Sc
And got employed there in 1983.
I ventured as OSD in the University from here,
And set the exam and result schedule back
On rails, by calling examiners to paper, not vice versa.
Then off we went to Manchester for a year,
And stayed inYMCA, Alexandra Park there.
When the location is excellent we don't realize it!
Within Yashodhan, we shifted to 4th floor
To a bigger one on promotion as Secretary.

When Joti shifted to Fergusson College in Pune
For her twelfth standard without a murmur,
We lived in sylvan surroundings, playing TT

I was swimming in next compound, I learnt
Computer in 1990, and got Dr Erach Bharucha
To lend me his telescope and studied
Astronomy and even taught participants
Along with Leen Mehendale who was
Additional Director in MIDA
Now renamed after Yeshwantrao Chavan.
My father-in-law, a civil engineer came for summer
Holidays, and got hay on roof-top
And watered it to make the inside tolerable,
Since we did not have air-conditioning at all
In any house I lived in as a Government officer
Till my superannuation! and then on return from Pune
Back to first floor of Yashodhan. From the window,
We would have lush gulmohur flowers burning red,
And the coppersmith would come and sit so low
To make his low boring sounds!

Then to Manek an iconic building on the steep curve
Of Malbar Hill, where we had a huge swimming pool,
And Table-tennis room in the society itself,
Which of course charged us for maintenance heavily.
It was shipowner's building but I had it as
MD of the State Investment and Industrial Corporation
Of Maharashtra, one post which I didn't really enjoy
Because I was not taught to make money
Either for myself, or for the State!
Important work was to drop wife in University,
And pick her up in the evening while going home.

Soon I landed as Director General of Shipping of India
And was given a house in D Block
Of Hyderabad Estate, originally owned by Nizam
Before Independence! Nice complex, with garden,
Temple, cooperative stores, and close to
Priyadarshni garden where I have walked
Six kilometres by sea every evening!
This is the home, where tables turned,
And I gave up leadership of home
To my wife completely without any reservations!

Then, my home moved to C1/1 Lodhi Garden

In Delhi. Nice house since I landed in Cabinet Secretariat in Rashtrapathi Bhawan as Secretary Coordination to assist Vimal Pande As Cabinet Secretary. The house was in a corner With ground plus one, and huge with two mango Trees, and one huge parijaat tree, six orange trees, One drumstick tree, and plenty more!
On Sundays I'd see two hoopoes, pecking ground.
Lodhi Garden originally named Lady Willingdon Garden Is the best in Asia, reeking of the flavor Of the pre-Moghul emperors, their tombs, And building with even then-rare blue marbles, Still in a ruinous state, keeping company With Oriel windows, making me wonder Whether in those days before electricity, Somebody walked through and fell dead!
Tilaka my wife had a nice room with all Specially designed bed, and table And butterfly chair but spent not even Fifteen days there out of the thirty months I lived in that house.

Now, we live in Jasmine in Bandra East Close to Airport, but away from South Mumbai First time in our own home, And with six stray cats who are, and behave like, VIPs in the house. One without an eye, another With defective tail, and the rest spastics, With a newcomer whose defect has not been Revealed yet! Wife runs the show, While daughter keeps putting appearances On the dining table more with laptop than food!

Life is closing down, but when I recall the homes, Me and my wife have made, I have nothing to regret, in fact am happy. The recent visit to Orange County, where we got A private pool villa in the 300-acre hilly Coffee plantation was in keeping with homes We have made through our career of 40 years!

Homewards From Churchgate

From Marine Drive along the Arabian sea,
We drive fast up to Babulnath with temples,
Hanging midway between hill and the sea,
Then on to Hughes Road, then move to
Pedder Road, officially Gopalrao Deshmukh's,
Home to Indian nightingale, Lata Mangeshkar:
Then on to Haji Ali where across the sea
Off Vellard Pier you see the Sufi Saint resting
In the sea, and other side the Race Course being
At a level lower than the Sea named Breach Candy
So named because the waves breached here
And once passed right down to the Western sea
At Buleshwar or Pydhonie which means
Waters washing the feet, in Marathi.

On to Worli, Annie Besant Road, turn at Podar
College of Ayurveda, on, on to Worlikar Chowk
By the side of Century bazaar, leave on the left
Bengal Chemical, on to famous Siddhi Vinayak,
Then to Cadell Road, along some mills, to reach
Shivaji Park, the heartland of Maratha pride,
In Dadar, and then on to Hinduja hospital
With the connecting bridge on top of road,
Enter Mahim, get stuck, emerge on
The Causeway built in the name of
Lady Jamshejji, separating old Salsette Island
Under the Portuguese, and now the Island City,
On to modern clover-leaf to turn left around
To join the Western Express Highway,
Drive left down to enter Kalanagar,
And march along under green foliage
With fruit-bats above, and policemen
On the side, cross Patrakar Nagar, pass
Sahitya Sahawas, to reach FDA gate,
Beyond Artek Nagar which falls between BKC
And Madhusudan Kalelkar Marg,
And enter on the left, in to Jasmine
The nine-storied building, where I live on fifth floor.

Horns

Pi-pee the horn goes on in this prohibited city,
With bright yellow headlights untwinkling
At the red traffic signal about to change:
These pi-pees are like - some sharp and short,
Some prolonged, and some staccato,
Without a conductor, there is none to moderate.
It neither ends nor levels off while I watch.
Like the waves, it keeps coming for ever.
And that variety beats that of the stars
On a dark sky, pi-pee, pi-pee for ever!

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

How All Can I Do?

While going for bath, I think
How I can at this stage show
My love for wife of 59 years
With me for 37 years!

Instead of using the only towel
And leaving it wet for her,
I make do with the hand towel
To dry myself, since I am bald.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Huge, Green Trees

Huge green trees near my house
They tower over the green shoots
Some young trees, some old bushes
But all together speaking loud
Sometimes though not heard by me.

Most of them have dark black or brown
Trunks like vital organs supporting:
Leaves close with each other, and sleep
In the dusk lit by one large planet, and bright stars.
Or leaves pointed like bamboo or humble grass
Carrying white pearls of water drops.

When I can merge with these trees
Or drown in this green sea,
They brood over me,
Like they did years ago in Pune University,
Over the Australian girl's cemetery
Who died of cholera in Inda at fifteen.

They whisper mysteriously above me,
And though I don't follow a syllable
Of what they speak, I know
They are trying to be in communion with me.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Human Touch Of Krishna

Bhagavad Gita contains shlokas
In Chapter Two, how
The self slays not, nor is slain,
[Emerson picked it up from here]
It is never born, nor does it ever die.

And then the Speaker says, 'But if you think
The Self repeatedly comes into being and dies,
Even then, O mighty one, you should not grieve for it'.

Wow! Speaker is Lord Krishna himself
But raises an option human-like,
That life may not be eternal,
That self may not be immortal,
That every being is evanescent,
Alive only between birth and death.

Only Death will meet with everyone:
Whether it is the same self or soul
That gets embodied every time,
Perhaps you put in an appearance
And then vanish for ever, bubble-like.

Echo of Omar Khayyam in Bhagavad Gita
By way of an option only, but still there;
Humans feel it is real, death is end.
Eat, drink, and be merry - they go.
Uncertainty is only for argument.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Husband

Every man in the square framework
Of marriage soon reaches a low point,
Where despite intelligence or assertiveness,
He gives up in silence, when the wife speaks.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

I Live, And Learn

From Tamilnadu and Chennai
And proud of Tamil Literature
Temples etc, and yet didn't know this.

Been to Mylapore and bought things
At Ramakrishna Matt religious books
And to meet Malini whose house is there.

Only when I read the article in ToI
Today in Speaking Tree Supplement
I knew that Siva made Parvati a peahen.

Even now around Kapaleeshwar temple
Peacock hang around, not for worship,
Though Parvati has not got her old shape.

Been twice to the Temple but could not enter
For timing was wrong, and the I did not know
That Mayil in Tamil had got the place the name!

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

If You Like

My poem is like a star,
To notice which, you have to see
Patiently, lovingly and closely:
It is just a dot of light
But it is there, now seen
Behind a cloud of earth
Or its own, or through the cosmic dust
Across the light-years of gap
Between your and my human experience.

It stands for itself, and not
For fame or meaning or money;
Things that don't count:
The observation or thought or feeling
Embedded may be trivial,
But the judgment is whose?

Sometimes the star shines with bright colors
Like the Canopus of the Southern skies,
The ancient lighthouse of Minicoy
Seen from ship 'Bharat Seema'
Proceeding towards Lakshadweep Islands,
Across the darkening silent seas
With a thousand tourists, many domestic.

Mostly the star-poem is still, sometimes it winks,
Rarely it flutters its eyelashes
Like a girl who has connected
And made the impact on you, and
You are not wrong to think
It is in the mind of the reader who connects.

I love to think it is sensitive,
And hence not loud, not seen
In the garish light of your busy day:
Read it at night, slowly, and in peace,
And again, and if you like.

Improved Health

At 65, I have learnt two simple things
That resolves big health problems for me.

One is to drink lots and lots of plain water,
Other is chew and irrigate food with saliva.

Difficulty of passing urine has eased.
Masticating makes it tasty and less too.

My weight is down now, also sugar,
And so are burping, BP and medicines!

Only I drink water more at home and on holidays,
So, colleagues can't count my trips to bathroom.

Chewing reduces intake, fills up stomach,
I start getting complimented for being trim!

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

In Ahmedabad Airport

In a hurry to go home despite
The nice room booked in Taj Residency
In Ahmedabad. Home as destination
Is looked forward to as the resting-place.
Not realizing that it
Is one more station, a place of restlessness.
The train of time keeps moving
Leaving all stations behind.

Here I am, (not waiting for the rains)
But an old man all right.
Because I said I want Indian,
To get more points on Flying Returns.
The constable at domestic advised to go
To international airport
Using the red bus of Indian Airlines.

But I called Dinesh the taxi-driver quickly
On cell: he came back, I had tipped him 30 rupees!
He took me to the International side,
Much drearier with customs and immigration.

But here in front in the security lounge,
Is a family, talking and laughing:
One old lady with full gray hairs,
One young couple, man in yellow t-shirt
Wife in red dress, wearing black specs
And a cheerful middle-aged man
In a lively manner, setting off peals of laughter.
And another man with two young boys,
Aged eight and twelve.
Each one laughs so differently
No need to patent it. The girl's
Is like serried ranks of soldiers
Advancing relentlessly.
Old lady laughs as if she is
Coughing in gaps.

I could have changed my ticket to Mumbai

To another airline from domestic
But I would not have seen this family,
Who knows how to live life, and enjoy it,
Nor written this poem, on the flight
Going onwards to Muscat.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

In Iim (A) Campus

More than ten years have passed
Since you and I met in this campus.
You had come from Malaysia
Slim, brown, drawling your oo-la-la's,
And I was participant for the course
For three weeks, or ten days, was it?
Delegates from fifteen other countries
On issues of public health
Wandered around about us.

When I played table-tennis in shorts
'Aha, he is showing his sexy legs', you said
To Cecilia from the Philippines - she, you and I
Made `the strange threesome', as Prof Giri put it.

We sat in the same row and travelled
To Rajasthan by bus, chatting all the long way.
You commented on the hair sprouting
From my ears 'Wise old man, having
Hairs from the earlobes'.

Talking of difference
In age, you chirped, 'I could have been your wife'.
Mostly together, we grew to like each other.

Your admiration for Singapore
And perhaps your brother-in-law there
Whom you telephoned to, during the accident.
All were subjects of your delightful chatterings.
You told me about how you serve your
Blind mother-in-law, without any trace
Of bitterness or frustration in your voice.

Once here in your room, when you were not well,
Cecilia and I sat through with you.

Once here we both travelled by an auto
And bought lot of handloom stuff in Ahmedabad.

Once later in your room, Cecilia told me
How you have just finished your periods.

Next day you wore short shorts,
Legs and half-thighs flashing
Then not in fashion in India,
And came to my room at night
By invitation, and we sat
And spoke to each other for a long time,
Changing place from bed to chairs
Before I escorted you to your door.

Prof Giri I met later in KL,
And Cecilia in Metro-Manila in 1988,
With you, I spoke from Melbourne
Last on telephone in 1994
And then misplaced your number.

Tonight in the same rooms in IIM campus,
It is sharp recall - the place is floating
With thick memories palpable in the air,
And looking back, - after more than ten long years -
I wonder whether you perhaps thought
Something more would happen in my room
That night,
And did you return, feeling let down?

Date: 17-01-1998

Place: Ahmedabad

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

In Lavasa, Pune

In Lavasa near Pune, surrounded by green hills,
With Tarasgaon dam waters glistening below,
Staying in Ekaant, the retreat with few others,
We had dinner in Vranjan, the restaurant,
Lit with blue central column of moving lights,
My one wife and my one daughter.

We three are rarely silent, when out together;
Chatter – chupper, chupper - goes on; this night also:
At one point, my wife asks us whether she is as fat
As the woman foraging the buffet around centre,
Containing food in ever-silver vessels with lids...
"No darling" I said: but Joti nodded assenting,
Added, "Papa is your husband, after all"!

Long ago, I stopped expressing an opinion
As an honest person would, realizing well
It's not worth it to produce unpleasantness
On trivial matters; better to agree, and get on.

Who knows what is right, what is wrong?
Or, not correct?

Under such circumstances,
Why speak out frank impressions, feelings which
Anyway are inconstant, keep changing continually,
Why express them, and fall into the dark pit
Of vile emotions, buffeted by on all fronts?

Now it struck me why I get angry
Sometimes furiously only with my sweet wife.
She is mostly more intelligent, she
Whom I love and I know I love;
Everybody knows that I'm very fond of her.
Unconsciously when she symbolizes Society,
The Others' opinion, the judgment of world at large,
And keep advising me, correcting me, criticizing me,
I get furious and go beyond normal limits of anger.

Mostly I'm not bothered about world's opinion;
But when others press upon me their contrary views,
Dissent, disdain in words, gestures, facial expressions,
Like Society does on non-conforming individuals,
Then, there is a heavy explosion from my side.

The mad, angry outbursts have nothing to do with
My wife, the person the unique individual,
But with outside society she represents as symbol
At that moment, collapsing on me to crush my self,
And ideas I think of as mine, prize, subscribe to, etc
Even beyond my wife, I presume.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

In The Brain....

Pleasant to walk in the rains
During Monsoon
Esp in Marine Drive. Without any umbrella - ugh!
Who would carry that contraption -
Or any other 'protection' against the rain?
If you dont mind getting soaked
In sweat, grime and dirt
After a run or workout,
Why not in the distilled waters down from Heaven?

As I walk Southwards, homebound
Back from Princess Flyover -
Princess Diana has died last week, poor Thing!
What a lot of flowers and love
In front of Buckingham Palace -
I see on the right a long valley
In which I see crows flying,
No, they are pigeons,
As I verify by looking up!
You guessed it;
It is stagnant rainwater, one foot wide and many feet long
Reflecting the sky with white grey and black cloud patches
With deep blue sky peeping out at places.

So pleasant,
The light drizzle
As the Gods pour
Their blessings on mankind
But modern life is so horrible and hectic:
I wish it rains inside my Head!

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

In The Club

Modern girl, with another:
Unconsciously, at the back,
Blackish, over the skirt,
Above underwear elastic,
Is cleavage - open to sky,
Not exactly sexy,
But interesting enough
Without facial interaction:
Idle thoughts, as I pass.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

In The Gym

Were she of fair limbs and smooth skin
Doing warm-ups with her back to me –
Were she to read my thoughts,
Would she blush... or make me?

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

In Transition

He is on his scooter No 3305 on BKC
Going slowly at 7 am, one foot on road
Same time, to let his 7-year-old son
Bending forward a bit, to skate along.

In my youth only mothers
Did this for children
Today fathers play active role,
Definitely for their son.

Women have now other interests,
Known or not known to husbands;
Wives, young or old, are experimenting-
We want adultery law for them changed!

Men and women are independent
They skate their way, alone or with others.
The family is changing, is it developing?
It is not together any time of the day.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

India

This is not a country
Where the young can be
In one another's arms:
Not in public, not even
In private, if a joint family,
Not in nuclear either, unless
There are only babies.

And yet, as dusk falls slowly
Along the pavement for a kilometre
On Bandra-Kurla pavement,
I see many a young couple
Mostly seated, some standing,
Exuding sense of unexplored territory,
Or sailing into New found land!
The distance between the two bodies
Is a fascinating study, at that moment
Of the strength of their instincts.

One young girl sitting at a distance
More than necessary
Shows in her focussed face
The love she feels: I was thrilled
To the smile start from
Behind her fair cheeks and spread
Up to the corners of her red lips
Her bright face a suffused blush
And joy mingled. For me,
It was like a sudden journey
To the head-source of a known river.
Smiles I have seen aplenty,
But the origin of a smile first time.

The postures and gestures eloquent -
The eyes play, watch over and express
So much of feeling for each other:
I see the boy sometimes treating
Her as his property, claiming ownership
With his hand as collar around her neck,

Not realizing a woman is mysterious,
Her strength being her weakness;
Poor boyfriend who tries to own her
Is into sinking sand, soon will disappear,
If he doesn't watch out in time.

And now I see two old persons
Sharing an argument with gentle voices,
Perhaps about their new daughter-in-law:
The man taking the cause of Sunita,
While the mother suckles the groom still.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

India Today

Maybe, I'm prejudiced. Why Indians
On high visible spots behave badly?
Think it is great to address by designation,
Or first name, and speak more
Than one interviewed, keep
Interrupting, passing judgements?
Forgotten to be decent,
Pleasant in public, or on TV,
Like the stain on the full moon?

We get now many channels,
Like the mountain streams in monsoon:
And everywhere else in the world,
See picture of civilized friendliness.
India in the past was generous,
Simple: student-visitors
From far-off places,
Like Jesus etc at Nalanda,
Sat at the feet of our masters.

Today, believe me, we are held in contempt
For our arrogance, and boorish behaviour.
Sharing Nobel prize for Chemistry,
Ramakrishnan says 'it's a mistake to define
Good work by award': pleasure to read,
But this Tamil has taken US citizenship!

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Inequality

Saw the crane on the tree
At eye level towards Guru Nanak hospital
So, white even Joti and Tilla commented:
I felt that despite the mud
And black sewage where he forages,
He is looking spotlessly white.

We in Tamil literature read
Of lotus coming out of the mud;
But not so much of white crane
Pure as ice in similar environment
If not, worse? Unequal treatment.
Prevails everywhere in Life as in Nature.

14.08.2013

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Inner Being

It quivers inside and is worried
All the time,
About offending anyone.

A London taxi-driver
Pulls up a senior IAS officer
Counting coins for payment.

A shapely young foreign girl in Ladakh,
Comes into our room early morning
Where we stayed on way to Numra valley.

She complained that we spoke loudly,
Were making too much of noise:
We heard her out in silence, ashamed.

Could it be that such instances
Have churned up my inner to pulp
And it keeps, jelly-like, quivering always?

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Inner Life

Magnifying glass and sun's rays
It compresses them to a pint
Transforming and destroying it.

My life narrows to few points:
Reading, seeing and hearing -
The rest are pushed back to nought.

Is that ok? Life comprises of reading?
It means I am like Lady of Shalott
Use only the mirror of books to see life second-hand?

Seeing movies, trees, birds and butterflies
Seeing sunrise, moonlight flooding the sky,
Stars and constellations, opening on the foam?

Hearing music, direct from the spheres,
Beethoven to Bhimsen Joshi, Lata to Rehman
It vibrates on my ears and heartstrings, true.

Words, sights and sounds
Are out there – on the outside:
What is inside, my senses cannot comprehend.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Inner Longing

I have none, say I.
Then the mind roams inside
And feels inner landscape
Difficult to explore;
Uneasiness and emptiness
Alternate now and then.

You split into two
And the deeper self
Advises the outer of
Trappings of the inner
To calm down.

The turbulence is on material things
Money, job, health, relationship
All things located outside;
Slowly, I persuade mind to stabilize
To let go, adjust, come back
To normalcy.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Inner Software

I have a cursor in mind, boots up
To trace the pathways within brain
I grow old, it hangs in dangerous places
Reaching its objects slowing now.
My awareness follows the trail of this
And notices the time delay of synapses.
Software inside cannot be replaced.
Can only be refreshed within hard skull
Let me get enough sleep, and rest.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Innovations At Home

Soon after marriage, we lived in Gadhinglaj
Where Marathi was spoken, and Tilaka didnt know.
While I was away in office, she would write
A short story in Tamil, with nom de plume 'Joti'.

When a daughter was born unto us,
She was baptized, and called Joti
And all her teachers corrected spelling!
Explained it is not derived from Sanskrit.

Early morning, it was never tea but coffee
And she said, 'We'll make it sweet'
And for decades, we drank morning coffee
After both first sipped from the other's!

In our first home, as we finished our meal,
We'd go to the washbasin, and she'd say,
'I dont know how to wash my hands', and I
Would take her hand under the pipe, and wash!

When it was rare to see women driving in India
In rural areas, she would drive my official jeep
Painted blue, on long roads, and while driving,
Sing my choice of old Tamil film songs happily.

These and such innovations made our early home
A pleasure den in those years. We lived this life
In Maharashtra - Gadhinglaj, Kolhapur, Bhir
Satara, always free from relatives and restraints.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Insect On My Table

I was reading about EIA report
In the North East for hydel projects
How they are inaccurate and shoddy:
When I noticed a small insect less
Than one quarter of an inch in length
Light green in colour on my table
Next to my laptop. I reached for the lens
I keep handy in my table-drawer.
While examining it, I found it cooperating
By turning supine: I could see five lines
On its belly, and its legs frantically waving
To right itself but being on glass-top,
It was struggling: I brought a paper-piece
Nearby. Instead of using it, it pretended
To be dead! A few moments later,
It was up, and about, and flew away.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Inspiration

Michael Angelo saw the statue in mind first.
Most situations have a poem within;
One struggles to write it now, others conceive it later,
The rest remain with the block.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Iridotomy

Can you squeeze out a poem from an event?

I did my check-ups for diabetes, since
Both fasting and postprandial were way above
Hovering between 250 and 280 after just two idlis
It was G L who gave me an entry into hospital of his name
Which I thought was a Specialty Hospital for diabetes:
When I went in, I realized it was general hospital with
Spacious places, courteous and helpful staff,
A rarity in any Mumbai hospital, public or private!

[While attempting to write this piece
I am so happy (unutterably happy was the word
That floated up from my subconscious self,
But I realized I am uttering it in a poem!
Or, can one hold that by merely scribbling verse
The uttering has been accomplished? Not sure.)
Moving on the Expressway from Pune to Mumbai
Surrounded by these innumerable hills
With their different shapes, sizes, colors, edges
All connected by the bending blue sky above,
My heart is full with beauty of hills, and freedom
To enjoy such sights, interspersed with green.]

As usual with doctors, one test led to another,
And the ophthalmic surgeon referred me
To glaucoma expert, who did some tests
Checked politely whether I could do more tests
In her private clinic at Chembur. I did so,
And paid her, and listened to her advice.
Back in the hospital for further consultation,
The ophthalmic was not happy, felt pressure
On my eyes is moving dangerously close
To bring about irreversible blindness in course;
Spoke of referring me to Shankar Netralaya Chennai
Or one Professor of his, or to his own wife,
Another glaucoma expert. I chose his wife,
Met her at Matunga, she tested and probed
With gonioscopy for narrow angles, called me

For laser surgery on both my eyes same day
Since pressure was on borderline on right eye,
And well above at 24 – 25 on the left eye.

I told my wife hesitantly, for even I thought
The surgery is done on one eye first..
As expected, wife was upset and irritated
But held it to herself for a few days,
Except saying that doctors prescribe tests
And operations even if not necessary.
I requested her whether she could come
And be with me on the day after vernal equinox:
She said ok, but let us check with Muthu her
Relative, and senior eye-surgeon in Chennai.
I said 'yes, why not?' But knew it was not practical
Without going there. Don't even know whether
He is on to glaucoma, remembering how one doctor
Ticked off the names I mentioned as not for glaucoma.

On the due day, she sweetly and quietly came
And sat next to me while drops constricted my pupils,
Was reading magazines, and posters on notice board;
When doctor came flashing a torch, I introduced her;
Though school-girlish, the doc is nearing forty.

Later the laser machine came in two portable bags,
Was set up, and I was called in,
In less than 10 minutes, surgery was over.
Minutes later, doctor called in both of us,
And explained, on my specific enquiry,
With pictures and models, what she has done,
It was iridotomy. She then gave Ocupol – D
Drops to be put 4 times for 15 days.

Took the fee in cash, and gave receipt,
Has called me back on 2nd April since
I said I am away after 3rd to Chennai.
My wife asked her a few vital questions
To which she replied confidently, clearly
That I wont get glaucoma, it is now prevented.
I did not believe that, the risk of glaucoma
Perhaps reduced, but not removed:

But didn't say it for fear of usual accusation
Of being pessimistic, negative etc, etc.
As we left, the doctor called out,
"Your eyes will be sticky for a few hours
But you can do everything normal,
Absolutely no restrictions", thus putting me
And my wife further at ease.

Like, or unlike, Tennyson on Sordello
By Robert Browning, you might genuinely wonder,
"I got the story of your medical event,
But where is the poetry? " I'd reply that it flowed out
Through the holes the young doctor burnt
Into the black iris of my eyes!

Ask Iris,

The Rainbow and Messenger of the Gods,
To reveal the immortal paradox of raining
Tears with the sunshine of laughter, to show
Why only sometimes the bow appears on the sky
Or a poem gets written on some, not all, events.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Is Life Child's Play?

Bliss was it in that dusk on Skywalk today
To see children enjoying time, every way.
Boys are so active and noisy, pushing and pulling,
Girls so pretty and competitive, Badi hokey bomb banegi!

Suffer little children to come unto me
For theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.
Very true even in Bandra East slums in 2011 AD.

Since the days I was a kid, more than half century ago,
The distance between parents and children
Has reduced very much, I can see.

Not one child I saw this evening
Looked sad, or morose: not one mother
Or father should at his or any child.

Jai Ho! The Indian Child of today
Will surely go forth, and conquer
Wealth, skill and technology.

My hope and fear is different:
Capacity to look inward – a la Kathopanishad,
Will have to be learnt by the child alone,
For the parents have become materialistic.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Is That So?

When I went to his room
In his office, I found him
Telling his PA 'not to get up
Since work is more important'.

I felt let down: but remembered
That I must have been worse
While in office: how Kiran, relatives,
Or personal friends would slide down
The scale of attention, and wait till all
Unknown visitors are finished with.

Why should he be different from me?

At this point of time, however,
I feel that I was perhaps not right
To ignore in office the love and affection
Of people who are close, who are family,
When compared to general public,
Or interested fellows who come for work.

While in office, maybe integrity as seen
By Western eyes, and equity as understood there
Had been given too much of importance
By me to the extent of hurting feelings
Of persons whose ties to me are stronger.

Till one feels one does not realize.

That is so.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Joy

To me,

Every moment is joy,
Every place is joy,
Every creature is joy,

When I walk under blue or clouded sky,
When I pass by a slum in Mumbai,
Visit Pong Yong lake in Leh, flashing
Its seventeen colors from this bank to that,

When I see compound of middle income society
In Bandra East, close to my house,
Sporting a badam tree, an exotic palm,
An ashoka tree, and a Christmas tree all together
Although the leaves are all brown with dust,

When I enjoy my full faculties
Even when it means hearing criticism
Or being aware of pain somewhere in the back.

For years, since I taught English
As lecturer in SVN College of Madurai,
I have given as example for life
A glass of milk
With poison drops two or three,
In the shape of pain, poverty or death.

Now, I have grown up.

Have Zen, and Osho
Made me what I am?
No, joy has always been there
It is only the discovery now.
They are fingers
Pointing to the Moon
Of my delight.

D T Joseph

16.02.08

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Just Friends

While hovering on the periphery
Of her Being,
I used to quote bits of Hindi film songs
On spring, moon, and love to her,
Jab jab bahar aayi....

With strict contempt
As facial expression,
But in words polite,
She made it clear
That it is passé,
Old-fashioned, not done.

I shrank: felt whipped;
Stopped it and stepped out of teenage,
Feeling enormously stupid, shamefaced.

We continue as friends even now.
Was there a deepening of relationship -
Richer, tranquil and unambiguous?

Note: Jab jab bahar aayi - these words mean, 'Whenever Spring comes....', part of an old and popular Hindi film-song.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Kahlil Gibran

It was Vidwans who wrote to me
When I was Joint Secretary Planning Department
Referring to Kahlil Gibran's
Being nonplussed on somebody
In the marketplace
Asking him, "Who are you? "
That was 26 years ago.

It took me a few more years
To wander along to Tiruvannamalai
With Babu my brother-in-law
And start reading Ramana Maharshi
And his japa, "Who am I? "

An onion peeled to nothing,
Says the rationalist:
Reach Nothing which is Everything,
Says Osho.
Reading Cordelia's Nothing
Overwhelmed by the play
I agree blossoming tragically
Into everything.

Man is not the final measure
Though physically his mind is -
Break through mind-atmosphere
Leads into infinite space
And peace.

D T Joseph
07.02.08

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Karma

When the other is determined
To push, till you lose temper,
You have no choice.

And then you are told,
"Entirely your fault
You are impatient,
Get angry for nothing,
Cant discuss anything at all.
Was just a joke, you cant take one? "

I hear it all quietly,
I bear it all patiently,
As I see it,
Digest it all silently;
It has become almost a habit.
I feel the volcano inside,
But cap it, most of the times.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Keep At It!

Light of the Kuthu Vilaku
From Experimental Stage
In NCPA throws up features
Of young girls and old couples
Watching concentrated Nangiar Koothu.

People look beautiful in semi-dark
Their silent passion to encourage dance
This International Dance week,
Makes them special, if you watch
You can see the dances on their pupils, shining.

Arundhathi, tall and dignified
Just returned from China
Says, "Two thirds of her still in China! "
Begins the performance with her
Deliberate and pleasant address.

Honestly I did not followed what followed!
Outside, I had read the two-page note
About fire-test of Sita, source Raghuvamsha
Of Kalidasa the Sanskrit poet foremost:
Maybe the discussion should precede dance.

The music of percussion from two pots
Was from A to Z, the full range,
The sounds tugged at my heart
From the two men, naked above waist
In true Malayali male style.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Keep Ready

Beginning of a poem emerges
From within: an inner faculty
Builds it with wriggling words:
It is lightning at night, and
Once it passes, there is greater darkness.
Foetus eaten up, leaving pain.

Not written down it is lost for ever.
Kept a pen and paper in the car for this.

D T Joseph
25.01.08

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Kingfisher

Thought I saw a bird, and stopped cycling
With one foot on pavement, was pleased
To see a bright, blue big kingfisher.
While watching it, felt a movement wing-stretch
On south side. It was another smaller one
This one was like a cormorant stretching
It's wings drawing my attention.
Had the pleasure of watching both birds,
One showing its bright blue back
And the other brown with flesh-colored beak.
Behind I could see the hop and dance
Of a black drongo with its split tail.
I remembered Joti my daughter who
Loves kingfishers to the extent of preferring
Them to golden orioles.

Suffused with the joy of bird watching,
I pedaled my cycle ahead for a few meters
And entered home, in Jasmine building.

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Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Kites

Kites are flying high this October evening,
On the right side of the skywalk over Behrampada,
Not soaring, nor circling but in starts and jumps,
Sweeping sideways, or descending or rolling down:

On the left, the kites are all at short height above earth,
Mostly kids helping each other to lift the kite off
While one tugs with swing actively to achieve lift-off;
But more often falling to the ground with grass and shit.

I remember ten years ago going to Ahmedabad,
In the month of January during kite festival there
With Chawathe and D K Patel, two general managers
In SICOM, buying a few kites and trying our hand:

One GM's kite cut the other's kite, cut throat it is;
Done so neatly, it flew away and we lost it.
Yes, we had applied generously the paste
The paste that is mixed with powdered glass.

Today I saw one ten-year-old climbing up
The yellow sidebars of the skywalk to retrieve
One stuck above, and getting shouted by skywalkers
One giving a choice Marathi curse-word involving
His mother! The boy climbed down and let it go.

As I walked further on, the sides darkened
And the pond herons with bright white patches,
Were winging home to the palm-tops of MiG colony,
On either side of the skywalk and one swinging
Away In ornithological hierarchy.

And down below on southern side the Mithi river
Asleep as a black winding stagnant surface
Of water, edged with luxuriant mangroves high
Being reflected even in the dusk on water with
Ragged edges of the top of the foliage
Differentiating from the river's black surface.

White egrets are standing on the opposite bank,
Still silent along with white plastic bags
Stuck near the roots of the mangroves, mistaken
For egrets by people seeing from a distance.

Just as in life of ours,
An inextricable mixture
Of illusion and reality!

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Lagerstroemia Speciosa

Bright mauve flowers in March,
Like the woman giving birth
Pushes out, does this tree
When the time comes.

This is the Pride of India
On the cobbled Northern pavement
Of the famous Bandra-Kurla complex
Lying north of luxuriant mangroves.

On both the banks of stinking Mithi river,
Which our local government tries to clean up
But Dharavi and other slums drain into, right
In the center of my own city of Mumbai.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Lear-Drop

Sitting at the back in the car,
Through the window I look out
On this rainy day, pleasant to the eye.

Water-pools, small and shallow,
Of all shapes abound on the road:
It is drizzling and fairly well.

Every dropp that falls on water surface
Leads to rings forming one after the other,
But that is all generally, only two of them.

Even if the total area of the pool is small
The spread of circles on water surface
Has no time to reach the edge of pool.

Because before that another raindrop
Has fallen within that small patch,
Brown or colorless, and eats up rings.

Anon comes a vehicle or human foot,
Into the self-same pool, zooming it up
Out of shape, and re-creating it again.

The whole process of sky impregnating
The pool, and the production of forms
Being spoilt by some accidents,

Unintentional removal of these playful creatures,
Living or in motion reminds me of Shakespeare's
'They kill us for their sport'. Is it leela, or maya?

Life goes on, be it the rain or sunshine:
Nothing to worry about, it forms again,
And again the pool receives the pearls.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Learn From Them....

Pigeons and crows make aerial traffic
In all directions, at all levels
Without any red, amber or green signal
And I have not seen an accident!

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Learning Marathi

We were in Jambhale saheb's car
It was a Fiat, and he was ExN, NRBC
The year was 1970, place Phaltan,
In Satara district, State of Maharashtra.

Another vehicle crossed, speeding.
Mr Jambhale turned and told us
The occupants in the car,
Thyani tuntunith shivya dhile.

I didn't hear what the speeding car said,
I don't know still what were the words
But 'tuntunith' as a marathi word
Took root in my mind, and is evergreen,
'Strongly, with force'.

D T Joseph
02.02.08

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Leaves

Walking towards my gym
In MIG Club at Bandra East,
I espy at the corner a huge tree
Shedding corpses, brown and dried,
Lying loose on the street.

Thought strikes me this is their grave:
Sometimes swept by municipal brooms,
Sometimes burnt for dispelling cold,
Burial place or cremation ground.

For the moment, they are awaiting fate;
The tree having discarded them,
They have fallen to the ground -
Just like that -
The title of Osho's book
For sufi lecture series.

No stress, no attachment
Once the period is over,
Leaf is allowed to fall,
Or it falls on its own.
No argument, no appeal:
I hope I go the same way.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Lecturer

He wrote on the board
"The husband said the wife
Is having an extra-marital affair".

He asks the class, "Who is having the EMA? "
Shout comes up loud, "the wife".

He takes a piece of chalk, and puts two commas
One after husband, and one after wife.

It now reads, "The husband, said the wife, is
Having an extra-marital affair".

He asks the class, "Who is having the EMA? "
Confused murmur of husband, wife flutters.

"Not a word has changed, but the meaning has reversed
With just two commas." Eats shoots and leaves, eh?

May I start the lecture on grammar, he said.
The class was all ears.

D T Joseph
19.02.08

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Left Back

In the security lounge in Chennai,
I am reading about R S Thomas
With a passenger on either side, crowded.

The one on right, a large physique
Is not bothered when occupying the armrest
Or crossing his leg, almost touching mine.

I see in front row two seats vacant
Towards one side: I move to the last one
And bag on one side, no obstacle to passers-by.

By a barest turn to side, I can see
The large hulk putting his bag on vacated seat (!) ,
Without bothering why his neighbor moved.

No sensitive way to handle the ones who are not.

D T Joseph
02.02.08

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Legends

A lifetime of neglect of the artist
Is made up for by a few choice
Adjectives like 'Legendary'
At the time of his death.
It is the fate of many an artist
Who has not lobbied for himself
While alive,
But quietly improved skills and inspiration.

Today Paritosh Sen, aged 90,
Died: he has been made
A "legendary" artist by TV Channels.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Lets It Fall, As I See This Kite

He dropped it on the waters
Of the Mithi river, while I am
Watching from the skywalk.
He has a gorgeous brown color
With a flag of peace on chest.

Maybe it was not fish expected,
Or it was too heavy to carry;
Across the river the egret flew steady
In straight line close to water
Above the slowly ebbing tide.

Back among the green foliage
The brahminy kite perched
Showing the bright white patch afar,
And below, three other egrets perched

At equal intervals on Dharavi bank,
Peacefully having divided territory
Unlike human kings or countries
Who depend on war for this.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Lhasa

I saw a picture of Lhasa
In the Principal's residence:
On the wall could be seen
The Potala Palace or monastery
A place of dreams even for me
With a wide river in front,
Which has a name I forgot,
But it joins the Tsang-Po
And finally the Brahmaputra.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Life

Leg – toe – nail is hard to be cut
I keep forgetting after bath when it is tender:

My eyes are heavy with sleep
But I am hearing i-pod, and watching tv:

Movie I `m watching has no name
Hindi I`m listening to, I don't follow

Life is strange that I don't know
What I want, where I am going.

People seem to be happy, as long as they
Have something to do; it may be play cards,

Or see a movie, or get close to another woman,
Or go Delhi for a meeting in which

He doesn't open his mouth
But he collects sitting fees, and air-fare.

Next door, somebody, a driver works hard
From 6 a m to 12 midnight every day,

And yet doesn't get Rs 200 per day
Out of which the constable takes 50!

Everything I do loses its essence
No sooner I do, read, see, hear, eat or wear

It has lost its desirability, or meaning,
I am at a loss to know why I wanted it.

I lose interest so fast, it is no joke
As they say. Even the most intimate things

Which are supposed to bond for life

Appear so flat, dull, ordinary, not wanted.

The moment I move away from having done it,
There is nothing of permanent interest

Including in yoga, detachment, and meditation.
There are no exceptions. Period.

Moment I come out of meditation,
I have the same feeling after eating sweets,

It is over. It doesn't mean anything.
What is it now? What can I do?

Eat, read, drink, sleep, lie down? No.
Nothing would satisfy me now.

So, I want to die like T S Eliot's Sybil
In the cage at the beginning of The Waste Land.

But then, I also know that it is absurd
To seek Death, which will come anyway.

For, life is precious, and having got a chance
To savor it, no point in avoiding it, or cribbing.

So, I turn back to live my life
With cheerfulness, hoping it will turn
To joy soon, and often.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Life And Existence

A small dry yellow leaf rolling about on pavement
Like a creature imbued with life, no different from pups,
And then, it stopped moving, and was still and silent:
And because of that we think it is lifeless: is it?

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Life And Things

A yellow leaf is falling I thought
Till from near the ground
It flew back as a butterfly.

Across the Mithi river flowing to Arabian Sea,
It looked on the mangrove trunk
Like a piece of mirror reflecting the Sun.

On return, I placed it as white crane
Then turned from skywalk westwards
To see the suburban train, moving out

Like an earthworm with a purple strip
In the lower half of the body:
Living things and mechanical

Get interchanged and life's riches
Are now comprised of both?
How can it be same? One feels, and other does not!

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Lighter

In Tawang Circuit house the lights had gone:
Bearer comes in, the forgets to bring towels
But asks us in the candlelight what we want for dinner.

We had in the bout of darkness
Used our cell-phone lights,
Like big light-worms, emitting soft light,
To find our way in the pitch-black room.

Years ago I used to be a heavy smoker
And had many different lighters:
Since twenty first of November 1985
The day I became Health Secretary,
Maharashtra State, I quit smoking,
And since then my lips have not touched
A cigarette, these twenty three years.

Tonight up on the Eastern Himalayas
No lighter in hand for emergency!

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Lights

This is an evening in March
I'm walking, with BKC road on right
And the lit window panes on the left
Of Kalanagar, Patrakar, and Artek nagars,
Some across the bars of light-filled rooms
And some showing the tube-lights, horizontal
Across the walls inside, and silhouettes of women
Busily doing their work prior to dinner.

On the right the yellow sodium vapor lamps
On top of the road, two on median verge poles
High above the reach of vandals and thieves
But one on pole from either pavement, proudly
Having more than 30 lights in 100 sq meters
The best lit city that I have seen anywhere.

On the road the vehicle showing red tails
Some blinking yellow to show the turning;
Some sporting amber to display the Police car
A few red to show Ministers or vip status,
And most private cars their brand of headlights
And differently designed red lights at the back,
Not to miss the red tips of smoker
In some of the cars rushing past,
Reflecting the brighter neon lights of shop-boards.

Older poets would miss the fireflies,
Though what I am constantly aware of
Is the light-source moving with me
Overhead on the sky across building roofs,
Also patches of darkish branches of trees,
Sometimes against a late crow flying,
Or, huge fruit bats changing branches
On the group of trees where they roost
During the day, making noise
And shitting white patterns
On the asphalted road below.

□

The moon was on its fifth day

Growing and friendly, watching over me
Moving silently with a star or two beside –
Like for the Ancient Mariner, but not on sea
But through gaps of trees and buildings.

Then I see the open air theatre
Being converted by a leading developer
Into a group of buildings, 10-storey high,
Being filled outside with brilliant light points
Nine or ten in a row, seen from anywhere
Looks different, and attention-gathering
Bluish electrical lights married to
Beautiful aesthetic design
To match the blue Sirius or Rigel
Of Orion on the winter sky.

Lights and colors keep me aware,
When I am not looking inward.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Listen, Youngsters

If you are working somewhere seriously
You tend to think life is only what happens
With reference to that work, and that only:
The fine, beautiful, sad, delicate or ordinary
Things that keep occurring on day-to-day basis
Between those two events tend to get excluded,
Get wiped out from observation clean
Leading to a desiccated life, now satisfying, but
Which you regret later when you are older, wiser.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Listening She Walks...

Bits of grey evening sky seen
Through clumps of sleeping cassia
Leaves of the rain tree:
Crosses a twenty-something
With two black plaits folded
One on her left breast
The other on the other shoulder,
Ears stuffed with headphones
From her iPod – even for me
Film music acts as opium.
Today I left it back deliberately
Wanted to see life fresh
While walking, and breathe in
Freshness fully, and not struggle
To recollect later.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Logic Of Life

If I sneeze twice, I am sure
I am heading for cold:
Throat does not feel right:
My cold is not ordinary!

It racks me with wrenches
I struggle for four or five days:
Of course my wife thinks
I make it happen that way!

I keep gulping two large tablets
Blue in colour, of Septilin,
Made of herbs, leaves and roots
By Himalayan Drug Company.

One day I saw in the mirror
That if I retain them on tongue
Even for a few moments,
They leave a dark blue stain

So now I take water first
Keep it in the mouth,
Then put the two tablets,
Gulp them straight down.

This reminds me – I don't know why –
Of the story of Chuang Tzu
And his warden of monkeys,
And his way of pleasing them.

There were used to three chestnuts
In the morning, and four in the evening.
They were unhappy with the arrangement.
So, the warden decided to satisfy them.

With great deliberation he told them
He is changing the whole policy
To four chestnuts in the morning,
But three at dusk: they were happy.

I agree it is all the same in the end,
But do I want to stain my tongue?
Ultimately, life does not obey logic,
But remains the greatest of mysteries.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Look Back!

Point of attention of audience, public and subordinates
Shifts to rising sun, the present occupant of chair,
And earlier tenants are lightened and go up in balance:
Knowing the law of things full well: this is no surprise.

What earlier sailed majestically like container ship
On the surface of the ocean bearing down the ripples
Now is perched on the slope of an ordinary wave
Like a dingy buffeted, this retired DG of Shipping!

In his own office, he hesitates to go and talk
For fear that the persons now in charge of things
May misunderstand, or just take revenge for
Something which they wanted and didn't then get.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Looking Up

Each lit-up window frame is a signature
That stands for each separate household;
Some with bright tube-light, the bulb
Itself not always visible, some with yellow
Tungsten old bulb, some with fans rolling,
Some still, mostly windows with iron grills
Some vertical, some horizontal, some both:
The glass panes transparent or ground and hazy,
Some decorated with curtains, some bare,
One with design on glass, shining through:
Now and then, a charming young girl flits
Through the lit frame, setting my imagination
Astir, to reach the bed in the dark room
Which is not open to the eye of the passerby,
Or a Lara the purest being in the world
Confessing to her Pasha Antipov, who turns
Into Strenlikov, thus making way for Zhivago.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Lost Ring

As a child I read Basket of Flowers
The book in which the ring is lost
Leading to the good maidservant
Being sacked for theft, till the storm
Brings the tree and magpie nest down!

I had this gold ring
The first and only I was ever to have
Babu fitted it on 24th May 1972
In Q/14 Government Estate, Chennai
Near Anna Statue on the Mount Road.
The ring had two diamonds a green
Precious stone in the middle.

Years passed: I enjoyed IAS life
Parents' values of root held on
And I was not interested in money
Or in things: I stopped wearing it
Not on principle or for any reason:
Just like that. Years passed: I forgot.

Last Saturday on 14 January 12, I commented,
'My ring - has it been made into another jewel? '
Promptly Tilaka brought it out, and gave.
I tried to wear wouldnt go into ring finger,
So put it on last finger. Remembered a scratch
On green stone and fetched magnifying glass
Couldnt see any defect. Then a blank.

Five days later, it struck me
Came back like a cloud in empty sky.
Where is the ring. Rushed to one room
Or another, pulled out drawers, shelves.
No sign. Rang up wife, smsed daughter...
NO luck. Next day maidservants searched
Everywhere, to no effect.

I am now waiting for storm-tossed sky
And a crow that comes to eat at wife's hands

Every day to let me know -
But novel dont come down to earth
Not in every case, as you see in the sky.
As they say, Watch this Space!

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Loved By The Gods...?

More than forty years ago Rajan and I
On the suburban train from Tambaram
To Chennai city. A dreamy look on his face.

Shifted gaze from the left of the noisy train,
And pointed to a car down on road near
Mambalam, being driven by man with a tie.

He explained, "As an IAS officer
You would soon drive a new Fiat car":
I don't remember what I said.

A little later I got married with
Rajan standing next at reception
At the Imperial Hotel opposite Egmore.

Three or four months later in Gadhinglaj
My wife informed me one afternoon,
Very afraid, "It appears Rajan has died".

All die, I knew: he was not even twenty-seven:
I continued to eat my lunch to her amazement,
I spoke no word, nor made another friend.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Ma And Pa

How they died in my house long ago,
In Mumbai, though they lived in Chennai.

How she had lymphosarcoma,
Cancer of the lymphnodes, all over,
Doctor had said She'd live at most for
Seven years, and so she did, died at 55.

As Collector of Kolhapur, I or my wife
Drove with her for every sitting
Of radiation in Miraj Mission hospital,
And later for chemotherapy.

Father, how he dragged 14 years
Alone, without Mom, with Parkinson's
Though mild, he suffered emotionally
I tried my best, but he suffered badly.

He would laugh though recalling
How he had kicked someone front
In a football match, excited,
Sixty years ago, recounting to me.

Thank God they went their way,
When they did, and not suffered more!

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Made Of Sunshine?

That smile - was her whole face,
Not something worn on outside;
Her eyes and most of the muscles
Enriching the dimpled cheeks,
Leaving me to search in the dusk
From where the brightness springs.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Maharashtra State

Maharashtra map viewed, bent sideways,
Looks like a bear, with a raised paw in front,
And its heavy bottom, firmly settled tight
On the coastal seat of Arabian Sea.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Maharashtrian

Midway between Pune and Mumbai
On the Expressway, like everyone else,
We stop for a bite and cup of coffee
Plebeian, and step out to see other shops,
While driver Mukesh finishes his vada-pav.

I see some fruits which look attractive
In a pink net-type of bag and I enquire:
He says 'It is chikku fruit': I want to buy,
I ask for price: it is fifty rupees
For twelve of them: Sameer and I can eat.

Moment he saw me putting hand in for money,
He asked "Want to buy? " and before I can say yes,
He continued: "Give change, I have none"
My hand stayed on, his tone was abrupt;
I didn't come out with the 100 rupee-note.

I walked away. He didn't care about it;
He didn't care to make any efforts
To run around and get change from
Neighbors; it is typical of this local region.
Nor is there any regret or concern.

'Marundhya' meaning 'Let it die' 'let it go to hell';
Is what he says openly, and she in her mind.

Maharashtrians are tough and honest, reliable:
But will never be interested in business or sales.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Making Of A Poem

It is like taking a walk
In a forest by the riverside
And keeping a lookout for it,
For anything worth picking up
And keeping in your study
Or in the office to show to the other.
Can be a matter of locating it
Gently picking it up
Brushing aside the muck and dirt
And blowing on it, if need be,
Washing it, drying it,
And carrying it tenderly.

Later looking at it carefully,
Provide the shine and polish
And strengthening in places
To retain it in its place.

That is how I make a poem.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Mango Tree

It is a beautiful sight
In among the hills and valleys
Of the hilly region of Dadra Nagar Haveli
The Union Territory ensconced
Between Maharashtra and Gujarat States.

We are on visit to the capital town
Silvassa on the banks of Daman Ganga river;
To meet Collector of the District,
To present Regional Plan
For this territory, on a high growth curve.

We go around the region
From West to East on top upto Nana Randha
And five km north to Morkhal,
Where MicroPrint Inks Limited is active
And to Khanvel in South and further east
To Dhudhni, with its boating and tourist lodge
And then on to Vasandha village
Encircled by the hill-range around.

There I saw a mango tree in full bloom,
The yellowish white small flowers
On many, more than five fingers
Trying to cover the entire tree
Like a healthy girl-child, now grown
Into a young woman trying to hide
Her body, and firmer body-parts
Rousing feelings attraction and curiosity
To see, come close, touch, pluck and enjoy
In the mind of the male sex
And of jealousy in the other.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Marriage Of Trees

As I walk west on BKC road pavement,
I look up to see the usual sight of foliage,
Trees on either side, branches and leaves
Interpenetrating each other in the air.

My mind thinks of it as a marriage,
Gently reaching and touching the other,
Then embracing passionately, intertwined-
Yellow flowers used for ceremony now down.

Like swollen nipples, some part of the foliage,
They are pink flowers of the rain tree on top:
They practise family planning - children not allowed
Except in small urban squares below near Signal.

The sexual activity goes on day and night,
Encouraged by the sea-breeze that blows
Couched above Balarama, RBI and Income Tax
Caught between FDA and the City Park of MMRDA.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Mars Tonight

Suddenly I saw Mars sitting like a large object:
They say it is a red planet but looks clearly yellow -
Looking like a BMC municipal streetlight miniaturized
And pushed all the way to the sky like Berenice's hair.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Matheran

In a moving car, with one leg crossed
Horizontally, he saw his shoe
On the bent leg lit up in sunlight;
That black shoe had bright patches
Of reddish brown dots. It shocked him
That he could polish brown his black shoes.

He then remembered wearing black
On last visit to Matheran
The green gem among hill-stations
In Maharashtra. There we
Do not have vehicles, but laterite
Soil, and horses. No asphalt
Road either. But a cute train
From Neral for three hours. It competes
With Ooty or Darjeeling, far bigger places,
For this dainty mode of transport
All the way up 21 km climb.

Washed his shoes in water
On return to Mumbai.

Unique Matheran is 100 km away
Notified by MoEF as an ecologically
Fragile treasure to protect, like Pachmari.
Only for pedestrians and horses
Those aristocrats of Nature
Who use legs, and not tire.

Even shoes wear Matheran's souvenir
Shining proudly in the Sun.

D T Joseph
13.02.08

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Me

For heaven's sake, please understand
I cant feel any joy, or absence of it.

All I can feel is ' It is done, or not done',
'I know it, or I dont know'.

Anything beyond these is a construct
Which I can't realize in my mind at all.

I am not writing poetry for you to relish or criticise,
But setting down the simple truth as I see it within.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Me, In Short

I strove with none, for I think certainly
It is not worth my time, nor of use to any;
I want always to aim to please others
As long as they allow, and are not crude.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Medical Victims

Every specialist doctor sells his disease,
As the most dangerous, or silent:
Markets her tests, clinic and equipment:
Understandably, but are they necessary?

This cannot be judged by patient or layman,
Only by colleagues, who are her friends, and
Mostly the doctor does not give
Details which could be counterchecked
With knowledgeable persons.

But after the test or operation, you are told
That "you came on time, absolutely;
The appendix would have otherwise burst,
Or the ICC would have seen only your dead body,
Lucky you came on time."

And there is no way to verify.

I remember the story of CPK enzyme years ago.
I was admitted in ICU of a city hospital,
And on initial tests my wife was told
That I have had massive heart attack.

Hours later, another cardiologist who came,
Asked me whether I was given any injection
While coming here in the vehicle.
I said that I came in the ambulance, and
I was given an injection while traveling.
He replied that explains the high CPK enzyme
Reading which shows the death - of muscles
Around the spot of injection on my left arm -
And not of the heart muscles.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Meditation In Tawang

It was just like last night, as a city-bred
When I got the fortune of a dark sky
To gaze at, I could place only Venus,
Jupiter, and Cassiopeia, nothing else.

Nevertheless, I am not sad or disappointed,
I am learning to content myself
To practise what I preach in discussion
Of Upanishads, the Buddha or Lao Tzu.

Around Tawang, Jumli Ado, Junior Engineer,
My guide tells me there are 150 ponds:
The frog has jumped into the old pond,
Plop! - nothing but Himalayan silence now.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Meeting With Night

Walking out of the lift, and the foyer,
I meet the night,
And look up automatically, to see the lone bright star
Overhead, and the sodium vapour lamps of BMC below.

As I come out of our compound to M K Marg,
In front of the FDA gate on this road,
My attention is drawn to young couples – three of them,
On either side of the road, nestling on to each other.

Walking on through the low connecting lane to BKC,
It is only slowly that the other milder, modest stars
Come into my view, and only when I have passed on
To the new pink-paver pavement, I see the Moon
The sliver above my head through the foliage
With a bit of surprise that I had not seen it earlier.
Actually when I tilt so much to see the Moon,
My carotids get pressed, reducing flow of blood
Above, and I feel giddy in seconds and look down.

I walk my four kilometres with iPod,
Spilling raga music into my ears brought low
And not knowing how to appreciate the nuances
Especially in the speeding traffic and horns,
Topped by the screeching of tyres.

Engaged in a serious conversation in Marathi
Three middle-aged men are standing stolidly
On my way to cross and start climbing the Skywalk.

As I climb up the steps, I see a few single women
Coming down with faces lost in planning
Their work for preparing dinner on reaching home.

Walking through the skywalk I see a group of youngsters
Seven or eight of them arguing with the Security Staff:
I am worried for them though they are in uniform,
But were putting up a loud brave front.

I went on to Beharamapada side of the sidewalk,
It is always alive, vibrant and noisy, night and day –
I look out on the Western dusky sky if I can, Rilke-like
Locate a star often waiting for me to notice it,
I saw twinkling lights of plane taking off from Santa Cruz.

Above the Arabian sea and Madh Island it flies,
Takes a turn to the North, maybe it is a flight to Delhi
From where I flew in yesterday above the Thane Creek
On time, though while going, we had to sit in the Jet
Aircraft from 7 10 am to 11 20 am when repaired it left.

Walk over, I knock since key was not with me today
But quickly pulled out the headphone,
And put them in shirt pocket for my shorts had none,
Lest Tilaka accuses me of the first sin, Man's disobedience!
For she had strictly told me, 'No music' when I started.

Every night has its own colors and sounds and lights,
Activities and surprised reactions, and different persons
To see, or sometimes meet, some sniffing, hand-licking strays,
But gets made up on the sky with moon, planets and stars,
And on ground with innocent youngsters expectant on love.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Memory

On my way to the gym in MIG Club,
Saw on the road ahead
Somebody bent double to tie his shoe-laces.

Another scene rises in my mind,
Eight years ago on the road in Ladakh,
Close to Leh, on the mountain side
In the pure air of the Himalayas, me
Bent double to tie up my shoes
Near the hired sumo; and, as I rose up
I was breathing like a furnace.

Altitude syndrome at 12,000 feet
Above sea-level
Is as bad as attitude sickness,
On the plains. It is sickening.

D T Joseph
14.01.08

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Metamorphosis

Can one understand the degree
Of pain borne by another?
Unless one becomes the other,
It is not possible.

Can one enter into another?
Since the days of the Spirit
Entering the gadarene swine
It is not possible.

Can research make us feel
What the animals or other
Creatures 'think'?
It is not possible.

Can we read the symptoms
And arrive at a judgement?
Despite scope for getting deceived,
That is possible.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Milky Way

Have read about the Milky Way:
Today in Bomdila, Arunachal Pradesh,
Winfred and I were walking in main bazaar,
By six in the evening, and it was dark.

As I looked up I saw this Milky Way clear,
Of stars, solar systems and nebulae,
Just overhead, thrilling sight!
Only I can't imagine how Earth is part of it!

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Mind

Like magic balls, words spring up
From nowhere, bouncing
From mysterious utter darkness inside;
Only after climbing above inner surface,
Do I become aware of them, they get noted:

From where did they spring to consciousness?
How were they selected rather than others?
Where were they lying not known to me?
Originals, or copies? Am stranger to myself?
Dreadful not to know what is inside me?

Do I have the choice to decide what should
Spring up? Which words, feelings, thoughts
Can arise from my own self?
In the unlit chambers of my mind,
Am I a prisoner to computer technology?

Presuming mind to be like the familiar computer
Will millions of storage cells, though not understood;
Of course, we are used to it everywhere
In the medicine or car, the phone or plane,
Principles I don't understand, but use them.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Mindspace

Does the Mind delete the files that are obsolete
Not used for quite some time, but lying within?
How many gigabytes is our mind's capacity?

Not consciously felt but in the brain of files
There is a pre-programmed software quietly
To remove from the bottom drawers or cells.

And yet this computer is good that when asked
It can zoom into all cells including the recycled bin
And retrieve mostly successfully but not always.

As we age, just like an old-fashioned desk-top,
It takes some time, blinks, creaks, wheezes,
Stumbles sometimes, not on the right matter.

There have been occasions when I struggle
To open the cells in my mind but could not
Despite best efforts – the name refuses to pop..

Acknowledge that we struggle, accept we forget:
Just imagine still-with no labeling or algorithm,
Over the years how much we store and retrieve..

Mind makes hell into heaven and vice versa
Said the blind Milton; we know the Black Hole
The Creator's gift-disc for all of us is in hard shell.

True picture of reality, the mind has mountains
No-man-fathomed; with galaxies of stars of light
Interspersed with the holes that suck light to nought.

When palsy or stroke or attack or hang or blackout
Strikes screen in front, or back, of the pair of eyes,
I teeter at the edge of insanity, and save by backing.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Mine Own Poems

Choice is select to remake lines and images
Leaving the prosaic rest out, consign to flames.
If nobody reads as student of literature
The one who is interested in me at least will.

Or treat each piece as a fragment,
Bit of my own life and thought,
Real, and not borrowed, arising
From within me, hence unique.

If not measuring up as poems, so what?
It is produced by me, result of some labour;
What I felt, thought, went through or saw
Reduced to words as best as I could.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Missed Chance

I was pushed in a well of sadness today
When Tilaka my wife told me at breakfast,
"Twenty-odd years ago, in Yashodhan building
Papa had re-read Dickens and others including
Pickwick Papers" she got from Rajabai Tower.

I wish I had known, or rather shown interest.
Happy Dad would have been if I had sat with
Him asking him what he had read that day -
I remember his reading on his easy chair -
And what he thought of characters, figuring.

When young, Papa used to talk about Elizabeth
And Darcy of Jane Austen, or D'artagnan of Gascony
Count Monte Cristo of Dumas, and Henry Esmond of Thackeray
To me, and he would read Three Men in a Boat
By Jerome K Jerome, and laugh till tears came.

As I was lying down later today in my bed
I felt heart-constricted severely, like going mad,
That I did not have elementary courtesy, nor knew
How to please my Dad in his sixties and seventies,
Though he never had a word of complaint, demand.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Mixture

I had intended to write a poem
The first part was of one confusion;
And the last on arithmetical fuzziness
Inside my head, also leading to confusion.

But now the first part has slipped through mind,
The shutters are down inside my head, shutting out
And I cant recall any bit of what the matter was about
It is like a blind man without his white cane in the dark.

Like the cursor on the computer
I send the unnamed point of awareness
Roaming through all parts and cells
Of my brain, but it returns empty-handed.

Like the words and thought
In Taittiriya Upanishad
Who go in search of God
And return without finding him.

Like Jesus says, "The Kingdom of Heaven
Is within you" part of Sermon on the Mount:
Is that the meaning of the Upanishad, that
Thou art, within, and God is not without.

In all this how does my inability
To calculate, divide, and multiply
To find out the income on interest
With interest on income matter at all?

Ah! Now I got it: the confusion was
Whether over-exercise is troubling me,
Or lack of exercise now and then,
Leads to hip and muscle pain at sixty-three!

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Models

The word 'model' is high-sounding,
Or high-heeled, attractive definitely,
Some models even worth exploring.

I saw the truth behind the model,
In reading of the seven stages of Man,
Of Shakespeare's Jacques in As You Like It.

Can anyone ever build a better model,
On stages of human life,
Applicable anywhere, anytime?

Another one strikes me on journey to old age,
Ending with death, as seen in Chapter Twelve
Of the Book of Ecclesiastes.

Can anyone dispute the truth of decline
And degradation of faculties of body,
Better than what is set forth there?

Sorry, dear Reader, are you saying something?
I can't hear for "my daughters of music" are low,
And my 'silver cord is about to be loosed'.

Vanity of vanities, saith the boringly truthful Preacher;
All is vanity: day follows night which follows the day.
Life proceeds inexorably from birth to death.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Modern Poetry

I want to make poetry
Out of modern things
Like cellphones and laptops,
The multiplexes and malls.

If poetry cannot be made
Out of things which people enjoy,
Activities they look forward to,
Then, it is only cloistered stuff.

The ringtones of cells or the lights
That flicker on and around laptop
Are the stars in the modern sky
Of young and upwardly moving.

The Milky-Way fireflies above
Are only carpets for the satellites
To reflect into telephones to issue
Out of the call centres in Bangalore.

Moving forward with Infosys,
One has to land in the back-office
Keep awake across time-zones,
Soon to be sent abroad, a reward, eh?

Card-readers and pen-drives
Can be made to tinkle with poetry
Even into mates to fulfil needs,
Since there are no alternatives.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Modern Religion

Every time I feel useless
Or life is purposeless
Should think that it is an invite
To meditate, try Nirvana.

Turn inward, practise be detached,
Realize how senses are outward-oriented,
By reversing them, hollow bamboo-like,
I should put back something into life.

On inner journey
I close eyes, let go;
See inside what is at the centre:
Nothing, neti neti – the Self.

When it is really nothing, reaching there
With no effort, unmixed with thought,
I soak in bliss and compassion,
Merged into Everything Outside.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Mom No Exception

Good women after menopause
Are so jealous, I say.

I have seen mom-in-law getting
Upset, and covering up
With put-on laughter,
When her husband talked a bit more
To his own daughter-in-law
In the drawing-room.

I never thought Mom was like that -
Shocked I was to hear in Chennai
From Seline and Rajiv separately
That she made hell for Dad in sixties
Because young women in church
Circled him for counseling.

Eldest, and away in Maharashtra,
I didn't know: Mom is dead 17 years now.

When man reaches
The age beyond bedventure,
The woman becomes
Taut and tense, seeing
Him with younger women.
And of course denies being jealous.

That her man is old....
Does it make her suspect
He is doing other things freely?
Whatever that may be

Good women after menopause
Are very jealous.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Momeries

Infant Hardy with his mother on the Roman road,
Triggered the image of Maud Gonne in classroom
Also of my climbing Rajaji Hall steps with my mom
When I was just three years old, and in Madras city.

I remembered looking out of the tram in same city,
When there was an explosion in the middle of road,
On the tram, and it stopped. Dont remember after.

Led to another memory going in bus with mom,
Temple my brother to Ettaiyapuram of Bharathi
To be with Arthur uncle and his family, with Vasan
Leading us in the evenings on the deserted road,
Regaling us with the green-arrow-shooting hero,
Before walking into a library in that small town!

I was six years old, and remember being in the high order
With one older and all others younger cousins milling around.

Vasan the eldest of Muthiah thatha's grandchildren later
Joined Engineering in Thiagaraja College in Madurai.
Poor fellow! he died mad, because they said he saw
A fellow traveller and classmate in the train got his head hit
On an electric pole and had his brains scattered around.

Remember going with Mom to the beach in Tuticorin
And buying oysters sold from a basket by a woman,
Go home for aunt to boil them - heartless, we were,
To pry open to get a few minor pearls called 'sannam'.

Remember Mom dressed in plain green silk and slim
Going to Church alone
Early in the morning, still dark, in Jamburopuram Madurai
When I was in second class, learning to burst crackers!

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Mommy

Dearest Mommy, I dreamt of you last night.

I see a woman lying,
Where is not clear:
I am standing near,
As if in Tata Cancer Hospital;
My look goes to the face, and it
Strikes me like Mommy's.

Soon features settle as Mommy's -
But your left cheek down to jaw
Is abnormal, as if pomegranate seeds
Are stuck in a big patch, and similar cluster
Wine-red in color, on left hip and knee too.

Since you died 27 years ago,
Of lympho-sarcoma, besieging you
For seven years, as foretold,
You never appeared in my dream.
Why now?

What do I have in my mind
To shape the dream this way
Around you? 'Obnoxious little weed',
In some crevice, down under, perhaps?

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Mom-Ories

Infant Hardy with his mother on the Roman road
Triggered image of Maud Gonne in Yeats' class:
I recall climb on Chennai Rajaji Hall steps in 1949
With young mom, when I was three years old.

I remember looking out of the bars on the tram
In Madras when there was an explosion on it,
And it stopped: bus-trip with mom to Ettayapuram,
Of Bharathi the poet, with Arthur uncle and kids.

With Vasam leading on to deserted road out of town,
Regaling us with stories of green-arrow-shooting hero!
I was five years old, and remember being mid-order
With cousins milling, wide-eyed, reading in library.

Remember going with Mom to Tuticorin beach
And buying oysters from fishermen to boil them
At home, to be prised open for minor pearls,
Called 'sannam' in Tamil there where I was born.

Remember Mom dressed in green plain silk, slim
Going to Church alone at night in Jamburopuram,
Madurai when I was in second or third class,
And Papa had got us a boat-like firework and slept.

When I was in fourth standard, Papa was shifted
To Sankarankoil, I was left in her parents' house in
Madurai, and I slept on ground on mattress with bugs,
Held back with 'gamaxen' power all around, that night.

Next morning my grandpa took me early across fields
Before train left, saying to my parents that all night
I was crying silently, and that I would not stay behind:
Parents took me in but, strange, I don't remember crying!

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Monsoon Poem

The autorickshaws are active in the rains
Going up and down Mumbai, negotiating rates
To make maximum money.

The paver blocks on BKC pavement
Turn into inferior mirrors when wet
Other than where tree shade falls.

One man in raincoat walking in front
Disappeared but I saw a bit of sari
Being pushed in: gender disappears in rain.

I felt must rigidify my mind
Now it is too flexible on minor issues
Keeps changing and listens to everyone.

Kalidasa has said like the rim
Of the wheel, it goes up and down
But what if I am taken aback!

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Monsoon Without Rain

Never realized before this
The soft cloudy day without rain
Dry earth and pavement below
Where I can walk without fear

Of slipping. No sun, only slight
Breeze, green trees and birds
Crows, pigeons and pariah kites above
Make me enjoy the monsoon as much..

I walk with my purple umbrella
But did not put it to use
Covered two thirds of skywalk
And came home in an hour.

Saw one big white Audi car
With those four rings in front
Violating the traffic signal
And rushing through.

Carrying some fence-sitter
To push against the red signal
I feel they should be stopped
And slapped: that is the poor me inside!

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Moon

She is my companion true,
Far above earthly infidelities.

Moving ahead of me Westwards guiding,
Following me Eastwards protecting: her act today.

Sometimes vanishing behind high buildings,
Moments later shining through the net of leaves
Her slightly greenish silver presence.

Even with some stars winking at her,
Tempting her to leave track and abandon me,
She stays true, abiding with me, my love.

The clouds are away, gone far on vacation,
In this month of April with the school kids,
Or they would woo, and fall all over, her.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Moon Tonight

The turn my car took on Bandra flyover
Helped me see the part of sky with Moon.
And she looked round-faced – full Moon?
Chauffeur had steadied the car, I was not sure.

Mind went back a few years to my Delhi home
I had counted the full moons to my retirement:
Tried to go up on my terrace in Lodhi Garden
On every bright moon-lit night, alas, alone.

Now I wonder how many full moons before death?
But I don't know how to time the interval between
Now and Death's arrival for me: why not every one?
Perhaps there can be no better addition of riches to life.

From home, I put off TV, wore shoes, closed door,
And went down to walk under the Moon: she was
On the East at an angle: only if I walk East I see her.
Now I pass the lane between FDA and Artek Nagar.

I see the bits of broken Moon through the dark foliage
Of the trees, sometimes branches, some leaves in pairs
Asleep, while palm leaves swaying a lullaby gently,
Brushing on, without ever touching, the distant moon.

As I went on the main BKC road, I could see the full
Moon on this clear November sky in broad gaps
Where there were no cassia or queen's tree, and
No star near, or even far, to distract my attention.

I enjoyed seeing the moon, rather self-consciously,
Keeping track of whether anyone passing by
Is watching me watch the Moon, to think "Is he
A poet or just lunatic, about to fall into a pot-hole? "

Before I turned homewards, I felt sad, very sad
To think that the full Moon is absolutely lost
In the lit streets with headlights and neon-lamps
That one has to search for the moon to see her.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Moon-Pulled

Our first evening in Durban,
It is a full Moon, Venus rising
From the Indian Ocean.

Tilaka had made lemon coriander soup
For all three of us: we sat
Together looking at the moon and had soup.

Suddenly she said 'I cant see'
After some time she addressed Joti
'I can't see left of you: right is also blur.'

She was clearly upset. I consoled,
Harmones are the culprits, you will soon be past sixty
She (Strongly feels that I am incompetent!) grunts.

I look out of the casement
Opening on the foam of Indian Ocean
And find the Moon has become dark.

She is behind a black cloud
I could'nt guess where she is.
I remember my Tamil poem of schooldays.

Aaridum medum maduvum polaam selvam
It means wealth is like the ups and downs
The River creates on the surface of the bed.

It reminds me of Kalidas In Meghdoot
How the wheel brings has one part up
And the other down but alternately.

Tillumma is sleeping now
And Jotimma is lying below
In another bed, watching TV
But imparting emotional warmth to her Mom.

(19 March 2011/Durban, S A)

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Morning Coffee

In daughter's room on the bed,
We take morning coffee
Laid out in cups on a tray,
The middle one is always mine,
For that is sugar-free.

The talk today was about bits of script
From the movie 'Paa' on a progeria child
We saw last Sunday afternoon
In Cinemax behind our house in Bandra
With Red Lounge facilities, at high costs.

I love these golden moments I cherish,
And the cats Poppu and Ammu on laps:
I enjoy the time, and I do not withdraw
To go for walk, read news, nor anything.

For a quarter century after marriage,
We used to take morning coffee only
After she has sipped mine, and I hers
And made it 'sweet'.

I told Dad in 1995 and he exclaimed
That he did not know that such things
Can be done! It had stopped since
Though I don't know how or why.

When the woman grows up
And becomes sure of herself,
Expressions of feelings and softness
Are gone, now that there is no need?

I am trying to retrieve partly
By making coffee when I get up,
Happily sit with them, sit, listen,
Enjoying the family being together.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Morning In Durban

Looking down from second floor of Silver Sands Resort,
On the Erskine Terrace, Addington Beach, Durban at 5 30 am
I see below the pavement neat clean and well laidout,
An old man, showing the effects of a stroke
With right arm sticking out, and feet dragged to move,
Reminded me of what could have happened to me
Last September in 2010.

He stopped at every point, looking out carefully
To the sides for a car difficult for him to avoid
And then dragged himself to the East, to the Beach,
The water-edge on Indian Ocean.
And then it flashed that I can have a recurrence
Resulting in much worse condition, since it didnt happen first.

There but for the grace of God, and prevent it
My prayer is not that God should prevent it,
But that He should give me strength to bear it,
And bear it cheerfully, like this old man early in the morning.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Morning In Our Family

Morning in our Family

“Ok, bye Daddy, I’m going”
Floats across the drawing room
From my daughter, dressed in sari.

Blue and green are SCB colours,
Where she works for last 12 years,
Now looks like a walking Bank!

Very few MBAs stick to same job
Greed impels them, and fear of stagnating,
She is of a different breed!

Money doesn’t matter much to her
She spends freely; gives generously;
Saves minimum; behaves like a non-MBA.

My wife is on the other sofa,
Talking to Zorro and the other cats
By turn, but fond and proud of her daughter.

Joti leaves early in the morning to Bank
Via Gym in Churchgate, and she and wife
Reach back home only after 9 o’clock.

I go to office in the morning, in past
After going to gym or swim or both,
But not now for I seem to overexercise.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Morning In Pune

It was again the month of April
Time was 7 30 AM and Sun was bright
But pleasant unlike in Mumbai:
I hear the two-tone note of the koel
And saw at a distance
On top of a Nilgiri tree with sparse leaves
Three birds, of different sizes.

Took my binoculars and focused,
Saw the largest was male koel
Black in color, and making the sounds
By the way its neck and beak were moving,
The middle one was the pretty female koel
Brown in color, and serrated
I couldn't place the third one before it flew away.

Soon as he spotted me and my binocs
The male stopped its birdsong
Scrutinized me for seconds, and took off.
Now the female which had started
Its different and distinct song, like
Narrow-necked pot water gurgling out,
She kept sitting there, though uneasy,
Like the modern college-going girl
Who is not going to be cowed down by male gaze!

At a further distance,
I saw another bird; on scrutiny
Turned out to be a blue rock pigeon
With its usual pink feet of pigeons
And two black lines on the wings
Special to this species.

All along a little bulbul, maybe with decorated head,
Was calling continuously on a tree or bush
Between the pigeon tree and the Nilgiri
I searched and searched, both
With my eyes and my binocs
But couldn't locate the little fellow

Who perhaps thought his red rump
Is not for display:
But he could have shown me the front!

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Morning In Shillong

The very name recalls to me
My sitting on Ward Lake
With my box-camera alone
And the photo I took
With half real, half reflection in water
Full forty years ago.

In fact, I thought then it was
'Word Lake' and as student of Literature
Was thrilled with that name too:
So much for life and reality!

A great hill-station where
Roads wind, and wind up and down,
And we enjoy sunshine on houses.
Pinewood forests all around is great.

Noise and dust of traffic
Have now invaded the place
And traffic holdups are encountered
Like terrorists all over the world.

Morning walk I did with Ajay
With whom I am staying
And he took me to the house
Where Tagore in 1923 stayed
And wrote one play, and some poems.

I didn't tell him that Tagore
For me has been a little distant
And sometimes too airy for present:
When he wrote them maybe it was different.

We walked fast, and up and down,
Round and near Circuit House,
And I fell paces behind him
Result of irregular exercise.

Properly for the last few weeks,

Considering I have a stent in heart,
Fitted four years ago, and a diabetic,
I should take care of diet, and be trimmer.

I was happy to have been taken
For this walk in the pure morning air
Of Shillong, surrounded by hills
And located within the bowl of valleys.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Morning In Tezpur

Went out to see the silently
Flowing Brahmaputra
At Tezpur, but view hidden
Partly by a familiar copper-pod
Tree by with yellow blooms
Of flowers still in October.

Staying in the Circuit House,
On the northern bank of the River,
I see another tall tree hosting
Two mynahs and two pigeons,
Welcome sight, and ubiquitous
In most cities.

The Cole Part is also thrusting itself
Into my view: I remember the IAS guy
One Mr Bhanu, whom the town loves,
Who had worked as Deputy commissioner,
And renovated this tank by the River,
And also set up Tezpur Environmental Society
As a Non-Government Organization to help,
Though he was a Government official.

The bearer came first thing in the morning
To tell me that I can't go today, have to change
My programme because AASU has called
For a bandh in entire Assam. He was sounding
Quite happy about it: I had read only a small
Item in the papers, Deputy Commissioner
Had not warned me and so I ignored it.
The driver who was to take me to Shillong
Was initially worried, but bucked up,
When Mr Saikia the local officer spoke to him
In the local language, strengthening him.

We moved to La Barthia, saw the sculptures
Perhaps of the Gupta period, 4th Century BC
Graceful stone women, with pretty figures,
And beautiful faces to match, of course small

In size in a big ancient framework of a temple.

We then rushed the local officer back
To his office, and speeded up on
The excellent road to Shillong,
Two hundred and seventy kms away.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Morning Lights

Searching up for the star,
I saw the black crow on edge
Of the skywalk in Bandra East
Well before the dawn appeared!

The Moon was still bright but half
And below her were two bright stars;
A rare sight not seen by me before -
Perhaps one is a planet arrived now?

Walked up and turned North-East,
Saw another bright star above building
Thought ONGC but it was Indian Oil,
Happy at this acquisition of new memory.

Walked on towards Anant Kanekar Marg,
Listening to the Muslim drawl on the mike
Looked up and saw so many points of light
The more I focused my eyes on them.

Only two stars were there and the rest
Were creation of my own brain or vision
Have it what you will or As You Like It
Effect of what I read last night!

I am walking rather weak, and feel not straight
Like the Chintu the little cat that has joined us
Now to become the seventh street-cat
To become part of our family, our true VIPs.

Having entered my sixty-seventh year days ago
I wonder how long I would go on - or be able
To walk or be independent, the worst being
Helpless not able to do or decide on anything.

It has become light, and day established,
I turn back wondering how even by 6 a m
The cars on the road are so many, producing
Loud noise of the tyres dragging on the road.

I like the places and the heavenly bodies, for time
Has made them holy like Keats puts it -
Is it in Ode to Psyche? The latest born and loveliest
Vision far of all Olympus' faded hierarchy.

I am happy to be alive active use my senses
Capable of recalling beautiful pictures words
Scenes which sink in and bubble up
Like Tintern Abbey to Wordsworth.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Morning Tv Channels

I wake up instinctively around 4 45 am
To put TV on: a few Channels like DD Bharathi,
Kalaigner TV dedicate this time of the day
To classical music, vocal or instrumental.

While I dont have an ear for music,
My father's lasting, and only grievance!
Now after so many years I try hard
At least to listen to classical music.

Being a man I get carried away by looks
Of the dancer, figure and movements
Than any technical excellence of the dance:
Of course I have seen a man dance but 10 years ago!

The dance where bare breast or cleavage
Can not be shown to the audience,
Regardless of any gesture or posture
Is Bharatanatyam our Indian heritage.

Like swimming it exercises
All inward and outward limbs
And yet many think our the old
Association of dancers with devdasis.

But it is one of the oldest of the pure
Arts which entertained high and low
And provided spectacle, entertainment,
Music, tradition and exercise.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Mother

Across the aisle on Kingfisher
Flying Mumbai to Guwahati,
I can see a woman in 30s,
With a baby less than one year old,
And the mother's intense focus
Whether the child is happy or angry.
A father would never be able
To pour himself into relationship
With the child like that: no wonder
My daughter is closer to my wife.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Mother And Son

Moving along the skywalk
Nearing Bandra railway station,
I see these in mid-passage
Two sheep, grand-looking
Like those hearded Muslim gentlemen.

One suddenly turned and pushed the udder
Of the other for a milkfeed
The other walked off,
Ahead rejecting the claim
Almost like having said No
In their language.

I am realizing the younger
Endowed suitably is Son
While the other is of course bigger and grander
Bringing up the son with discipline
And timing.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Motto

I have never been modern,
Up-to-date, fashionable,
Doing things one is expected to.

I mean the clothes, words,
Phrases, gadgets, habits
Movies, pictures, the company.

Been for ever fond of classics,
Whether in literature or music,
And followed Father's advice.

Sometimes I feel whether I should
Close the gap, and be like others,
But turn back after a few moments.

The only motto in my life has been
To do well whatever I was into, doing,
To do better than others what we did.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Movies

Dreadful movie of fighting
War, violence and killings:
Good movie, but I don't want
To watch, and encourage
The making of such movies
Nor their counterparts in real life.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Moving Towards Death?

As I walk out of our Schindler lift
The name always reminding of Nazi guy:
I brighten up to the green and blue around.

Compared to yesterday when I did not get out,
No, is that right? Or my blank memory?
I did go to Mantralaya yesterday forenoon.

I saw and had a meeting with Sangitrao,
Later Nitin Kareer, and then Manu in UD
And then Malini in her room with Medha.

How then can my brain forget
For an instant and go blank on yesterday?
Really I must take to brain exercises.

Or, reconcile to grow old, lose faculties,
Go into meditation, be without anything,
Not different from death, consciously.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Mumbai-Pune Expressway

In last ten days, I have travelled
From Mumbai to Pune five times
In this monsoon. Surrounded in the middle
By green mountains that delight me
With their form, ridge and image, varied ever
Like the placement of stars in the sky.

After the toll of Rs 140 is paid,
The car always turns left at Food Mall,
To mix with the hoi polloi
And I order idli-saambhar and coffee
Like a true South Indian, despite my
Forty years' stay in Maharashtra,
Where the locals order poha
Or sabhudhana vada if he is fasting,
Or, he loves vada-pav, the burger
Of the poor man, as they say.

Oh yes and it is such a relief to relieve
It toilet is clean, but that is rare.

Kamat places huge mirrors
To keep the women the decision-makers□
In travelling families to be attracted
To his hotels, cafes and restaurants.

Before entering Lona vala, I see from Mumbai
Bare rock, overhanging and tied up
With metal netting into which
One can see some boulders lie:
I wonder how they can prevent those
That break from the top and slide over:
They are sure the escape the net too close
And fall on the shiny bonnets of cars below.

Around Khandala and Lonavala,
The green slopes are veined with waterfalls,
White at a distance, and gorgeous closeby
Streaming or gurgling wide and broad:

One I saw which fell on granite below straight
And formed spider-lily flowers on impact.
Water splits into different white petals
But unless you are fond of insects,
You wouldn't like the name!

Last time, Tilaka and I, with Vidya and Baiju,
Stopped the Innova by the roadside
Before the Batan tunnel, with glorious
Waterfall on the left. Two cars in front
Had stopped but they were gazing from cars,
I removed my upper clothes and went in
The water like pestles thudding
Over my bald head, making my head
Bob up and down like the body
Of some small bird, say, a tailor-bird
That cannot be still like our minds.

It was cold in the beginning
To settle into luxuriant soak
Enveloping me with warm feeling
Making me move and adjust parts
Like my shoulders, forearms, fingers
Inclined to arthritis to be exposed
To Nature's massage – no oily, sticky
Human hands, or feet, thank you.
Didn't feel like moving out, half-blind
Till I saw a young girl, wet and shy
With golden clothes pushing, backing
From the front. I took the hint,
And vacated the place from under the falls.

Climbed up from below, and behind
The car, dried myself with the towel,
Got into dry change after the women
Had used and screened themselves
To change inside the van itself,
And Baiju clicking photographs
Till we drove off. In the car as we entered
The tunnel, I am told that the Police guys
On mo-bike had come to warn us
That sometimes stones from above

Get dislodged and fall along with water.
Everybody had a good word for police
For this social conscience they exhibit,
Though, rarely!

Merely to see so much of open sky,
And surrounded by layers of green hills,
Darkish at distance, and blue still farther,
Is an invigorating experience for me during
Any time of the year, and especially in monsoon.
What with the rains, the waterfalls and the hills,
I am ready to travel the route any number of times.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Murphy, The Cat

I am telling our cat Murphy
'That one should break away from
All distinctions and remain at ease'.

Unlike the ass of Balaam.
This animal is not talking
Though he looks as if
He understands what I say!

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Music

More interested in knowing facts
About the music, the name
Of the composer, the work, the number
Of the movement, allegro or allegretto,
The instrument, vibrato or pizzicato, etc?
Meanwhile the substance of music
Is not known or ignored.

It is like the eager tourist who is
Only storing up memories and photos
And is not in the place visited
At the moment,
Soaking.

Thathatha: it is as it is:
I want to enjoy the place,
Or classical music piece by itself.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

My Brain

I am reading 'Michelle Obama'
When the words printed are
Mohalla Bachelot ofn Chile!

Two days ago, I read the word became
When it was not there not on opposite page.

My brain reads unconnected, non-existent words,
What kind of a nameless disease is thia?

Today my Kakuro would not resolve
Even after twenty minutes:
Not to make my head heavy, I gave it up.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

My Dulcinea De La Madura

Listening to Kalyana parisu song
Vaadikai marandhadhum eno?
While reading up Ted Hughes
From British Council Library,
And laptop open to go to PoemHunter site,
To check Hughes' Introduction
To Selection of Shakespeare's verse,
Mind travels back to late fifties
When I am sitting on the steps
Of my grandfather's house in Madurai
Which they shared with her parents,
And she is singing this song in their front room
She was in fifth form, and in half-sari,
I in fifth standard, seven years younger.

Words and tune and images provoked sank
Into my heart, even though I had not
Seen any movie then, actually
For not another ten years
Because for Mommy, it was sin.

Years later when I was lecturer in English,
We shared the house with her
In 16, Kattabomman Street, Narimedu.
She came up one bright moonlit night
When I was alone on our open terrace
Surrounded by palm-trees with fronds
On the back of green folded long leaves
At eye-level, the moonbeams shone.

I saw her climbing up the steps
Blocked her with
"You have become too bold".
Her face fell: after a gasp
She replied, "Guests have come: I'm bored".

Budding romance killed brutally,
She never made a move after;
The song she sang innocently years back

Lets off vibrations anytime I hear.
Ted and Sylvia have to wait...

D T Joseph

Note: Kalyana Parisu in Tamil means Wedding Gift. It was the name of a very popular movie in Tamil in fifties. Vaadikai marandhadhum eno? means in Tamil Why have you forgotten the usual? (habit of saying in that movie 'Bye' loudly while leaving from the next house so that the lover can know that she is leaving....)

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

My Large Friend

I am a golden fleshpot that sits
Between his thighs half hiding,
When he bathes sitting easy on
A low stool, enjoying the ceremony.

Soon dried, I get partly covered,
Accompany his wife and daughter
On a Sunday afternoon to a movie
Whose name neither he nor I know!

It is at Cinemax Bandra, I get samosas
Pushed in, and popcorn half-pasted,
Two cups of coffee with sugar
In Red Lounge in penultimate row.

I make him send his trousers to mend
By an inch or two, and then later on
To tighten when he decides I am
Pushing up his space, and reduces me.

Diabetes medicine creates hunger
And I grow larger, though he tries
Hard every morning in the gym
To keep the rest of them right-sized.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

My Wife

We sat together in her bedroom
With my 34-year-old daughter
To keep company, and be a witness
To the exchange of views.

It was satisfactory, you may say;
We spoke without getting angry,
Or feeling judged, or condemned.

She was nice, explained that my desire
To please others, and put her down
Is the culprit here. She went back
Ten years to some Airport – waiting
On our way to Europe, when
I said something which hurt her
Because of my harsh tone, and my interference
Between her and her friend accompanying.

She now says, I might call it jealousy
To suit my ego,
But it is my desire to please
All other women and put wife down
Is the culprit, she repeated.

I felt happy, she means well.
She said it, I thought, with a desire
To make up, and improve relations.
I know now she is interested in helping,
And our love has not fled overhead
To live only among the stars:
At 58, she is pretty and charming.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Mynah Birds In Ushaka Beach, Durban

As I looked down, drawn by the metallic song of mynah bird
I see him hopping quickly on the pavement:
He walked down the carriageway, picked up food -
Insects, I am afraid - and hopped back on pavement
And then I saw his mate landing on the left
A little away. Both were aware of the danger of traffic
And nimbly kept up jumping back on the pavement.
Though standing on the edge of the structure,
Barely inches away from vehicles flashing past,
He did not care to show fear, but stood his ground.

My mind went back by half a century
To Thackalay where my dear father worked
As Assistant Commercial Tax Officer
At the Kerala - Tamilnadu Checkpost
In around 1959. We lived in a sprawling big
House with huge open spaces in the backyard
With huge jackfruit trees, and fruiting too.

CK came and played football with me there!

I killed a mynah with my catapult
And the mate was circling the spot
For the next three days.

We have changed a lot since then,
Both the mynahs and I.

Unafraid, they flew off, showing white spots
Hidden below their purple wings,
But a sure sign of peace, with me.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Namaskar For What?

The Indians think the Sun is the only guide,
The creator of light on earth?
Surya Namaskar!

I look directly at the Sun
For a few prolonged moments
And it may be the source of light
But when my eyes move away,
The result is a dark blob
Of uncertainty, not bright light definitely....
In fact I cannot see anything for some time.

I wonder how the sun produces effect
That prevents me from seeing,
Or as another poet has said
How the sun hides the moon and stars
Seen only when the sun is down.
Truth is like quantum physics, there
And not there, too! simultaneously.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Names

Reading Silvia in Book VII of the Aeneid
I am reminded of my sister,
Her name being Seline, something
To do with the moon-goddess,
And thought of my mother and father of course,
Who chose that name for her, and
For me, Trevelyn, for another brother,
Melvellyn and one more took
The name of Franklyn with a 'y'.
I had 'a' cut out of from G M Trevelyan
Whom Dad was reading when I was born,
As he felt that surname cannot be borrowed!

Lest you think they were simply
Imitating the English – I dont remember
Parents referring to the 'British'! You should know
Seline's other name is Damayanthi
From the old Indian story
Of Nala and Damayanthi
Where Nala says to the children,
"You look mine, whose are you? "
And gets ticked off by his own son
Who cant recognize his changed Dad.

Franklyn was also baptized 'Rajiv'
This was in 1953 when Mom must
Have read about Indira's son.
While the younger two got baptized
With one Indian name, the elder two of us
Were purely English, with a Daniel thrown in
From both the Bible and my Periappa
Meaning father's elder brother
And Temple being my younger brother,
From Sir William Temple: my father
Though he never entered a college
Knew more of English Literature
Than many an Englishman.

Our only child - daughter - is named and spelt

Joti, the product of Joseph and Tilaka,
First syllables combined!

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Nature's Orchestra

I hear at home, when
More than one cat starts
Purring or fighting or fending
Others off – a gur gur orchestra.

I hear while out for a walk
Early morn, the crows and a few
Other birds such as sparrows or bats
That live with us in Bandra East,
Mumbai pin code 400 051.

I try to distinguish each instrument
And then each violin if there are more:
Difficult, but if each mother
Can place her child's voice, so does
Each animal-mother and bird-mother.

Imagine the variety of creation;
None has ever seen two leaves
Or waves alike! Beauty, riot of beauty,
If we have eyes to see, ears to hear!

D T Joseph
10.02.08

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Neat And Loud

The corrugated line of the paver-blocks
Runs with me continuously on pavement
Of the one kilometre of Bandra-Kurla complex
Back of Kalanagar, Patrakar Nagar,
Sahithya Sahawas, and Arteknagar
With Reserve Bank and Income Tax buildings,
Lining up other side of the unpunctured road
Leading to vehicles speeding up, screeching.

Defintion of life being detection of patterns
In what we see, or do.
When it does not fit, we speculate,
Philosophize, and read Existentialist
Guys who write full of sound and fury
Signifying nothing.

Traffic on BKC road rises steadily,
Till one mo-bike rider slips,
And gets carried along about 50 metres
With the machine, and wheels rolling,
And then there is utter silence for a while.

But in a few minutes, it is all set right,
Five other mobike riders gather,
Check the fallen guy and vehicle,
Turn and twist a few parts,
And go their own way, leaving it
Neat, and noisy as once before.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Need To Know All

On way back from Tribute to Dilip Chitre
At Prithvi Theatre, Juhu on this April Sunday,
I see near the over-bridge of Santa Cruz,
An abracadabra word, like heroguhue.

Before my mind could come to grips with it,
Another part started suggesting to leave it.
To know everything is no no: what would happen
If all darkness is removed, and only light left?

The many middle positions and combinations
Which define soft and silken strands of subtlety
In the mystery of night would disappear into day,
And the march of stars across black sky will be lost.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Negative

I am Housman-like, prepared for the worst,
Always talk that it may fail,
May not happen, may go wrong,
Get lost, get stolen, wasted etc.

My wife gets very fed up with it
That once I start
Her facial expression mars her beauty
And I stop midway because
I know she is right.

The best part of it is
That I really don't think
Bad things will happen.
But I want persons close to me
To be not disappointed:
I do myself the best I can.

Shropshire lad was right,
Wise men should prepare for ill.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Neighbor

He was on the plane next seat,
Doesnt mind if he touches my hand,
Whereas I cannot accept that;
I move away.

He after some time does it again.
I wonder: then, I think perhaps
A conditioned reflex for me
That it is an invasion of privacy:
He doesn't think so,
And what is wrong in that?

If space is limited, and so
If I touch my neighbour,
Why should that be looked down upon?

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

New Attitude

By marginalizing every success of mine
Every good thing that happens to me or us
I undermine my own joy and or achievement:
Much worse, end up irritating Tilaka my wife.

She is intelligent, sensitive and competent.
So every time I bring her mood or content
A level down by my attitude of deprecating
Anticipating only failure, I am raising her temperature.

I have now decided (she does like me to use this!)
That I will try to be fair and correct
In judging my success or our possession
And not always decry or belittle it.

She feels that I developed this habit,
In order to prepare her for disappointment
When I am worried that we will not make it
And get disappointed and I dont want that.

Now after 40 years of marriage and togetherness
She says that we both know each other well
And no need to use such subterfuges to avoid
Pain or disappointment to each other, not at all.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Nirvana

What is it? It is a blowing out, they say:
While on morning walk in BKC,
Like for Wordsworth on the moors,
Came a sudden thought to me.

I have an only child a daughter, healthy
An MBA and all that, happily employed
And married for last fourteen years.
But she has not borne a child yet.

I suspect that she doesn't mind having one,
But her husband was perhaps not ready
I don't know why: one cannot talk in India
Such matters with the son-in-law!

I don't know why: perhaps he thinks
His wife is a kid herself, and how can
She bring up another? Or aught else
I wouldn't know what it is. Matters not.

When my wife bore a child at twenty-two,
And described her experience and pain
In Madras hospital, with the stern gynaecologist,
We decided to stop with one; now they with none!

My daughter has crossed her mid-thirties,
And health-wise, it is not wise to conceive now.
When we four die, family nirvana is achieved,
Blown out for the world as it is and its future.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

No Baptism

Thought it was good and to 'poemize' it,
A little later when I took pencil and paper
I could not recall what it was;
I am in 3 C of Kingfisher flight to Bangalore
Trying hard to retrieve it from ocean
Of my memory and unconsciousness
And not succeeding; meanwhile across the aisle
The same girl, young and fair, seated
Opposite me in the airport talking on cell
So sweetly showing her pearly white teeth,
Has come in now and settled on 3 D,
And so now, getting the thread is impossible!

Keeping a paper and pencil to pull out
At once on the appearing of poemizing idea
I had done in the past for a while;
But it made me look vain and foolish
So gave up; but now lost in the dark sea
Of unawareness with no aid from Inchcape bell.
The Spinner of the Years in Hardy's phrase
Spins the birth of the poem and its death
Simultaneously before the baptism itself!

In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost
Or of Love and Lust and Sex
Conception of the poem in this case
Is equal to premature withdrawal
Like that of the man from brother's widow
In the Old Testament since he did not want
To contribute to his brother's genealogical line.
Like Dream Children of Charles Lamb
Will I be able to describe unborn poems
Of mine some day in future?
I don't think so; for it is like the vision
Shown during lightning in dark night
Never again to be seen neither
Above the Sun, nor on the Earth
Nor underneath nor thereafter.

May we be kind to each other
Now and evermore -
Circumcised or not, baptised or not.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

No Barriers

Looking up at the National Flag
I could see the building far beyond
With a lone constable standing leaning
Against the parapet wall, protecting the CM!
High up at a distance the kite flies in circles.

Fifty years of Independence
Lot of excitement all over
Manohar Joshi our Chief Minister
Is making the speech:
Poor man, like Telemachus he does his duty.
The pigeons move noisily from the niches.

Lot of judges, secretaries and VIPs of the City
Dressed in formal wear,
Waiting to be noticed by others,
Feeling patriotic, moved and serious;
Looking to the uniformed police, and their rifles,
Commands, and movements
And getting affected, some to tears.
The parrots wing their way to the copper-pod trees.

The flag flutters in the breeze
After being still initially
And as CM's speech progresses,
Three crows fly separately into view.

Against the blue sky,
The spongy white clouds
From the western horizon
And the Arabian sea
Move majestically eastwards
Ignoring the flag and independence.

15 AUGUST 1997

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

No Need To Know All

On way back from Tribute to Dilip Chitre
At Prithvi Theatre, Juhu on this April Sunday,
I see near the over-bridge of Santa Cruz,
An abracadabra word, like heurgrohe.

Before my mind could come to grips with it,
Another part started suggesting to leave it.
To know everything: what would happen
If all darkness is removed, and only light left?

The many middle positions and combinations
Which define soft and silken strands of subtlety
In the mystery of night would disappear into day,
And the march of stars across black sky will be gone.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

North To South - Early Morning View

Bright Venus appears through window grill
Along with the un-twinkling lights of Bandra,
With the distant rumble of the train
Moving through the City Night Piece of Mumbai.

If I am not catching Jet Airways to Delhi at 6
I would have walked my four kilometers
With two on the skywalk from Kalanagar,
And stopped at the turn near Mithi River

Searching for the two bright stars in the south
The Alpha Centaurii, and struggled hard to see
The Southern Cross to the west of them,
Three bright stars and Western arm, dim.

Whenever I trace it in the early dark morning,
I rejoice that even in the advanced North,
We get to see this Constellation,
Proof of the pleasures of astronomy, God's creation.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Not Different, Not At All

It has taken me 65 years to realize
That I am only one among the many;
Definitely not the best in any aspect.

Coming first in class, becoming gold medalist in BA/MA
Reinforced the view that I am special, different and more.
Now I realize that I am just another walking the round earth,
No special rain or sunshine for me, only what others get.

No point in thinking that I would be attended to urgently,
Or that special kindness would be shown to me alone:
Body and mind suffer as others do, fall sick and bleed,
I too should take indifference of others and death alike.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Not Everything

I am on the treadmill at Bandra
It is set to incline of 6.0, and
Speed of 6.0 km per hour, and going.

In front is the TV screen with Kareena
And Chhote Nawab Saif Ali Khan, wet
And gyrating to one more Hindi film song.

I suddenly become aware of pain
On my shoulders above the heart above
Chest-bones where forearms meet body.

In 2004 the same pain used to occur in Delhi
While walking in Lodhi Garden near home
My daily round of six fast kilometres.

Then the pain increased till I could
Walk no more after ten minutes:
Had to rest, recoup, and then resume.

In September that led to angioplasty
And so I go about with medicated stent
Inside, but outside no sign visible.

Just like my diabetes and high blood pressure,
The inevitable accompaniments of many
Who occupy jobs where demands are many.

Should I also add where the persons learn
Too late how to meet the contingencies of life
By awareness, and slowing down day by day.

To be relaxed, unambitious, to delegate, be
Careful about diet and exercise regular:
A person could have tried his best.

If I were to tell my wife that I felt pain
Today, it will put her off, and clouds
Will form in her face and mind,

Leading to exchange of words,
While fixing up plan of action
With the doctors and their stress tests.

I ask, "Is it necessary to share everything? "
I seem to be developing the bad habit
Of looking to her as the sounding board,

Tuning fork, to be there just to receive vibrations,
Strums and plucks from me, not realizing
She is now grown into a full person with her

Own ideas, making judgements on everything
Including her husband and his health, and
Having her way, and a say in everything.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Not Lust And Rage

That what Virginia Woolf
Writes of James Ramsay
I would not have known
Had I been present in that room.

Stream of consciousness was a phrase
Known to me since my BA days
But now the inner life represented
Is partly understood only at 68!

Thanks to Brown University
And Coursera video lectures.
After college football, tennis as Supy,
I have not done external action.

It has all been reading, thinking
And writing, talking and lecturing:
The result is diabetes and blood pressure
Angioplasties, & sub-arachnoid hemorrhage.

Still every fair, young, need not be
Pretty, girl draws my attention
Makes me feel happy to see her outline
Even if only for an instant.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Not So

My brother
Temple told
That he is slow,
Not fast in thinking;
Testing if hot while ironing,
He couldn't withdraw his hand
Fast enough and avoid getting burnt.

I then felt perhaps that I was not like that -
Now I know that is nothing to take pride in,
For I find my faculties are not under control as of now!
Like this poem, I find each life suffers growth differently.

What is inevitable yet,
It keeps oscillating till
End is ever in whimper,
Pain, helpless, death.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Nothing

Shakespeare's bones did not feel his future fame.
He didnt want them disturbed, right?
What counts is the present

It it is last infirmity of noble mind,
It should be a shame on them!
I mean on those same minds, mathlabi.

Look at our Seers and writers of Upanishads:
Names not known, not inscribed anywhere;
For them, life was only in the flesh and bones,
Future was never a concern: and, look now!

Peace of mind is in the now, it is not in future:
Even success: Nirvana, Shunyata, Everything.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

November Begins

Walking earlier than dawn
I chanced to look up and saw
My ancient friend the Orion
With his dog, Sirius shining bright.
I was happy to see the clear sky,
Remembered October has ended
Without my looking upwards then!

I chanced again and saw
The light that hides objects in heaven,
Covering the face of the golden orb,
As in Isopanishad,
Teaching us balanced Truth:
The Hunter has become invisible.

Again I looked up and saw
A fruit-bat, flapping its wings,
Flying back home early morning
While humans were leaving home.

Once more I looked up and saw
A black bird, shooting above West
Silent, and streamlined:
I realized it was the two-toned koel
Rare sight for the new month of November.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

November Morning

I love to walk out early morning
In the month of November;
There is a chill in the air
Which is felt on my body
But where exactly if I think
It is only on top of the hairs
In certain parts of my hands?

The skywalk elevates my vision and thoughts,
I find the back of the flying pigeons, and herons,
Soon enough the bright Sun has climbed above
The edge of the yellow-green overhanging roof,
Now I avoid the sun on my face by keeping west:
Below I find traffic building up, fast and noisy,
Even though it is not past 8 o'clock.

Turning from Sun and birds to road below,
I can see plenty of taxis and auto-rickshaws,
Both splashed with mandatory yellow and black:
The taxis have yellow roofs, and autos
Yellow strips across their body, the useful
Three-wheeler for people only in the suburbs,
But with noise and inhaling of pollutants.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Occupied

Fair, tall, slim, young, dusky-voiced,
Pretty as a mermaid weaving dreams,
Like light she fills my whole space,
Spilling into every crevice, pore and cell,
Disabling me of all other thought and feeling.

Her eyes are perfect and alive, clear and shining,
But in place, not wandering nor curious,
Her dress tight, leaving armpits open to view,
She pulls her top down often,
To reduce the gap her waist displays.

She pulls out her hair-clip and keeps it by her side,
And whenever moving in the gym,
Parts her hair from back to front,
Takes every exercise seriously,
And does spread out on all the equipment.

She dispenses rich spreading smiles
Only to her trainer now and then and who,
Though responding to every customer's need,
Comes back to her after every distraction;
I wonder what goes on in his mind!

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Offering

Offering

When I kissed my wife awake today
Placing the tray with three cups of coffee
On her bed she woke with, 'Where is my poem? '

This is result of my effort 'For Joti'
My daughter named after us, combining
First syllables of Joseph and Tilaka.

An erstwhile librarian in Rajabai Tower, wife
Felt publishing a book of poems, memoirs
Or anything else by retired bureaucrats

Is absurd for, as she puts it,
Nobody reads them, and pathetic to see them sell
One copy to a library or a school - or gift one.

Now she is asking where is the poem
On her - means, I hope, that she is not
Any longer dismissive of them?

Hinted to her about my 'cats at home' poem
And others on cats, but though fond
Of cats, she is not distracted to ask of them.

Tilaka is alive, vibrant and intelligent
Like a kitten, bold, active and ready to play,
And very kind to all animals and most persons!

She is the organizer of our holidays:
Does it well and enjoys each one ending
With the last in Kumbhalgarh beyond Udaipur.

I am giving Tilaka Mylove this offering
From my heart, with myrrh and frankincense,

And pray that from 62 to 100 she be the same.

21.03.2014,

Mumbai □ Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Old Age

I go to their rooms, and say 'Goodnight'
To my wife, and to my daughter of 35 years.
What better proof than this gesture
To show that I have become old,
And moved from centre-stage in the house?

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Old Couple

Anything that I say or do
Is wrong.
Anything that she says to me
The tone is critical or condemnatory.

We are husband and wife, stupid!

I must be irritating her:
How I wish to understand how not to.

How I wish she'd teach me about it.

We try, and fail: she says, I am the reason;
I must be.
Why should she be wrong?

D T Joseph
18.02.08

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Old Man Says Farewell Cheerfully

What is left in life to do
Except to make much
Of the moments, all of them.

Whatever has to happen
Has been done and over:
Now, is the age of retirement.

Nothing 'has' to be done,
And I accept every thing that happens,
Every comment made on me.

Try hard, not hard but try to live
My life without any tension,
Except when anger or lust takes over.

William Butler Yeats at 60
Had identified these two
As spurring him to song.

For me these two make me
Go out of myself and taste life
Whether good or bad I dont know.

So, I am in that blessed state
Where I dont want to be greedy
For anything but just live pure life.

When death comes, it can come,
There will be no fear or disappointment,
It sinks and I am ready to depart.

Had a good life, good parents,
Enjoyed my studies and subject,
Got into IAS and had good postings.

Did in some jobs what meant public good,
Like in Health stopping smoking in public places,
Or promoting gir children in India.

Best of life was to use my five senses,
And to learn to enjoy art and nature
Most important of all, to look into myself.

No moral imperative for me,
God gave and he takes it away,
Blessed like Job in the Bible.

Let me end my self not on a high
Oratorical note, but on a simple
Daily routine, of helping where I can.

Farewell, dear Reader, when you read
This I am sure I would have gone underground,
Dont spare a thought for me, but look after yourself.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Old Pipes

I opened the door a little in the 4th bed-room
The shelf with two rows of Indian English poems
Impelled by memory of moments of reading pleasure:
I am searching for The Silken Web edited by Sivasailam.

But before my eyes could locate it,
I was feeling dizzy: waited for the episode to pass,
But it became worse, and feeling more dizzy,
Had to move towards open window on the side.

Cross-breeze that blew through to the room-door
Made me feel fresh, and slowly the dizziness
Grew down and disappeared, especially
When I opened my mouth and yawned it out.

It is like the heart arteries clogging the pump -
Somewhere in my neck or region above that
My blood is not able to climb up to the head
Which in any case is decreasing its synapses.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Oleander In Front Of Ioc Building 25.07.2013

A full grown Oleander tree
Seen at eye-level from skywalk,
Lovely leaves with yellow flowers
Trumpet-like and drop of nectar at end.

My mind jumped to Leander
And Christopher Marlowe
Whoe'er loved that loved not at first sight?
Long because of ten syllables and truth.

The only line that Shakespeare 'quoted'
Not able to recall fast where he used it
Search in his 'Venus and Adonis'
Then it struck me maybe in As You Like It.

Yes, I saw the play on my iPad
And on search with the lens
On right-hand top corner, I found
The line in Act III Scene V.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

On Board Of Directors

I am not a corporate creature:
Don't feel at home on Boards,
Speak little and do less therein
Only take part when it is close.

I wonder why they give sitting fees
When I don't do any work or contribute?
Why does some company give commission?
Just because the Act allows up to 1% of profit?

Managing Director is senior and efficient,
He knows his job; I feel happy to watch.
And if possible, I am ready to do what I can -
A word in places, if I think the issue is right.

When I see other directors showing off,
Sharing knowledge and apt comments,
Trying to please the Chairman or make company
Earn profit, and avoid losses, I feel a bit upset.

Not having born rich, nor made myself rich,
Born of and brought up by parents not greedy
Or materialistic, it is natural I feel out of place
Where the profit and loss statement is prime.

Sometimes it suits me and the companies neatly,
For them to have some known name on their Board,
And for me to meet old friends, sometimes make new,
And see places, sometimes new, and learn about market.

Among all the assignments I held in the IAS,
The two that I couldn't like or feel proud about,
Both have to do with finance and investment,
And yet now I am custodian of financial interests!

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

On Coconut Leaves

Wow! that is the exact description!
I just read that in a poem of Hardy.
I read when there is nothing pressing.

I saw that phenomenon
When I was in college
Nearly fifty years ago.

It was in Madurai where we lived
And I studied for my B A English
On the open terrace, unbuilt on top.

Lying supine, flooded with moonlight
I used to be thrilled looking around
Especially at stars and the palm trees.

Those coconut trees had grown
Just above the level of the terrace,
Like young girls, looking out eagerly.

Ready to sweep wavy their wings,
And fly out of the charmed casements,
Into the world of youth, love and kisses.

But the trees were rooted, inviting
Our tender glances at their body-parts,
Hazily dancing or meditating under the Moon.

I have often thought of the moonlight
On the back of those green fronds,
But never gave them the phrase due.

In his poem 'Former Beauties'
Hardy recalls treading till the sod
Under the moon had 'a satin sheen', wow!

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

On First Of July, 2013

Descending scale in four stages,
Was the calling of the crow-pheasant
I had my binocs to locate him
But to no avail.

To compensate, a pond heron flew in,
And two mynahs with lesser
White patch, and the bird boat
Below, accompanied by two on the grass.

Very early in the morning, number is less:
They start increasing about 8 am
Especially the smaller, restless birds,
Sometimes including VIPs like Golden Oriole.

Not to forget the blue-backed kingfisher
I saw in Thiruvananthapuram in Kerala
Catching small insect in the lawn
Flying back to the light-pole.

Steadily he sits, and opens his
flesh-colored beak and adjusts the insect
From across to along the beak,
And gulps it down complacently.

Up above, the dark grey rain clouds,
Are covering us, promising
A rainfall before long, making us
Feel the monsoon through eyes

And ears, and work to be done,
Closing down the open widows,
Removing clothes from the line
And keeping umbrellas and candles ready.

Best of all, the shine on green leaves,
The transparent arrows from the sky
And gentle rain dance above the trees
And fading glory of the colorful flowers.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

On Names

Names have music of their own
Whether of flowers, places or persons.
That which we call a rose being sweet
Everyone know.
Shakespeare or Kalidasa or Thiruvalluvar
Also sound sweet like Tolkaapiyar.

Satara, Phaltan, Gadhinglaj and Bhir
Later changed to Beed are musical too
To my ears - places I began work in.

Is there an equivalent to daffodils
That come before the swallow dares?
Is it the jasmine or marigold or kanakambaram?
Bougainvillae is beautiful too, no matter what spelling.

How about Dadar, Parel, and Worli
Followed , Bandra, Kher and Vidyavihar
Ending with Mulund here and Borivali there.

Name is only a signpost, despite all that
The magician tells us: inherent meaning is nil.
Bombay can become Mumbai
Madras Chennai and Calcutta Kolkata,
Peking to Beijing or as insignificant
as Madurai from Madura.
But it indicates how the wind blows
In political or linguistic affairs
Husband or wife replaced by spouse
In bureaucratic forms or bedrooms.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

On Sylvia's Poems

He writes explanations for Sylvia's poems;
I read and ponder, fondly hoping to link the two,
But after a few pages and a few hard poems,
I think he exaggerates, fantasizes, shows up
Undue haste to arrive at meanings not there.

Why can't the poet-critic restrict himself to what
Is written in black and white by her, and lead me
To meanings outside the text, only if providing clear
Details found in biography, like the elm or yew tree
That grew one on East, one West in her Devon home.

Mary's Song, he calls, one of her masterpieces:
Where is 'the maternal instinct' contrasting emotion
'Of male deity, demanding the sacrifice of the son'?
I read the poem again and again but I find only
"The golden child the world will kill and eat"?

Does the poet have the licence to dream up
What meanings he finds floating into his awareness
As he reads someone else's, Sylvia's poems? And
The public already convinced of the greatness of both,
Reads in silence whatever is imagined and fitted out?

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

On The Cellphone

Saw this woman walking in front
On the low lane between home
And the main BKC road and was struck
By the motion where the top of her butts

Move from side to side,
Reminding me of Sudha's imitation
Of Som in Kolhapur when he came
As Prant Officer, Shahuwadi division.

Later I saw a younger girl
In laced white dress
The breasts tightly packed
And remaining in shape

Movement is steady and forward
The waist is small and no sidling
But intent only on her cellphone
Most people are absorbed on.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

On The Skywalk

Walking alone, she smiles:
What is she thinking of,
This modern solitary reaper?
Some joke in the class,
A flirting moment in the interval,
Or a handsome boy doing a press
At odd moment in an odd place?

Whatever it may be,
I enjoyed the shy smile before
It vanished off her red lips.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

One By One

First death I remember was Joseph thatha's
In his house on his cot, already dead
In Palayamkottai: we went from Srivilliputtur.

I've heard a lot, but seen him only once before,
During one Easter, on evening dining table,
With a plate of food in front with hole for salt!

A year later, in Nehru School, Papa came
Sought permission from Saro Teacher, 2nd class,
To take me to same town to see his mother, dying.

We went in, cot the same, but it was Paatimma
Dan Uncle her eldest son weeping uncontrollable,
With a spoon of milk; reversing, son to mother.

Once she opened her eyes, but didn't take milk,
She died, the one who spent a few days with us
In Jamburopuram and got me sticky sweet to eat.

Later a student Surendresan died suddenly,
When I was teaching in Nagamalai-Pudukottia:
I went to his house, stood silently, seeing his body.

I got into IAS, married, was in Gadhinglaj, Kolhapur
During lunch one day hesitantly my wife Tilaka
Revealed Rajan my friend, the only one, had died.

She, the bride that she was, expected me to be
Shattered, cry or weep and be upset; instead,
She saw me complete my lunch in full, clean.

Later by 1981, Mom had suffered lymphoma
From 1975, and after radiotherapy and chemo,
In Chennai and Miraj and Tata, she died in my house.

In 1984, along with Prime Ministry Indira Gandhi
Dan Uncle died when I was in Manchester,
Under Colombo Plan, doing my second MA.

Dad was sinking at 79, had Parkinson's for ten years,
I brought him to Mumbai had him at home and St Georges,
I saw him, helpless, for six months, and he died.

I have seen my wife's parents, become old, suffer
Get tossed from here to there, tended by daughters,
And die within a short time of each other.

Dad had died in 1995: fifteen years have passed:
I have finished my career and superannuated
From Government, and entered my sixty-fifth year.

I used to count full moons to my retirement,
And now I count them to my death,
Almost all, familiar faces gone, one by one.

Persons close to me speculate but inwardly
Who would be next? After all, I am eldest,
Not just the law of primogeniture, but I know.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Opaque, Thank God!

One woman is gossiping with her husband
How another woman is all the time
Complaining about her husband about
All small, small things: and this husband
Nods his head, and agrees to what his wife says,
Thinking all the time, "What about you, my dear? "

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Opium

In India, opium is the Hindi film music
And songs, and not religion, not at all:
Hindi film music is just on, day and night
At home, in public, and private functions.

The old songs with their orchestra
Are magic in the background:
If one were to listen to the words
In the lyrics, they are full of meaning.

In Tamil film songs, when I grew up
The words were revolutionary,
Thought-provoking, or romantic to the core,
Chiselling into my mind as rock-edicts.

The film songs that capture Indian mind
Weave by lilting melody of Bollywood,
The most powerful prison of soul and mind,
And refuses to let anything else enter there.

People get drugged with the same music
Day after day, night after night;
The songs are good, the music is good,
And many cannot pass time without them.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Options

It is 9 a m, walking back from gym
I look up at the light blue sky today
And the light against it, light
Generally seen only when obstructed.
Is this the light never seen on sea or land?

Below I see rooted green umbrellas
Woven with irregular patches of sky
Seeping through. Just now
They are still, meditating;
At other times, they dance
Gracefully, but soon
Drenched in the monsoon rains
Will do the thaandav with wild glee.

Between the sky and the soil,
They meditate or dance,
And do nothing else,
All these trees.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Outcome

Vomit, faeces, or sweat –
Pearl, flower, or fruit –
Can be the outcome of a process.

Idea, word or experience
Strikes me as seed,
Setting in motion growth.

Ending in a poem, on to a website-
And then I am worried
About its worth, whether unique.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Outside The Pane

In the PHE Guesthouse at Mawphlong
I noted a brown-coloured moth-visitor,
On the outside of glass-pane at eye-level,
Attract my attention, and trying hard
To be part of our team from Maharashtra.

While I couldn't help her come in,
I took a photo of hers for memory
On my cell to make her feel important.
In a world where the insects are prized
And spoken to, I would feel happy.

Prince Philip wanted us to talk to the trees:
it is presumptuous to treat the living, animals
Or children as if they won't understand
And are idiots: living things aren't:
Later, children deaf to you and the rest dead to you...

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Pain

In this wrestling bout
I may or may not win,
But soon shall lose ground;
Age, at 64, will not go back!
And pain brings me down,
I am bed-ridden now sometimes,
But soon permanently:
I would then be willing to quit,
To say goodbye to life?

To get ready to go is not enough;
I wanted to get used to pain,
But when pain chose to visit
Through sinus or sciatic nerve,
It was too much to bear.
I am, I imagine, ready for death,
Not to face pain and be helpless -
Silently, if not with serenity.

□ T Joseph

19.09.2009

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Parijaat

What a pleasant surprise! I see
Parijaat flowers spilled on the pavement,
And the nondescript tree smiling nearby
With one or two flowers loosely linked to it,
As I do my usual morning walk
In the Bandra-Kurla area, which houses
The International Finance and Business Centre
Of Mumbai city on West coast of India.

The flowers are small with six white petals,
Twirled clock-wise, and very tender;
Each supported by a glowing orange stalk
They have a centre dot of orange again,
Merging into a bright yellow rim around.

Above all, it is the fragrance I love best,
Unique, no perfumery has yet captured it;
Exotic and intoxicating, and no wonder
Our ancient rishis hailed it the flower
Blossoming in the gardens of Heaven.

I wonder whether it is 'aniccham' flower
Thiruvalluvar the ancient Tamil poet
Wrote about in his two-line couplet the kural,
"It is so tender and sensitive it withers when
One merely smells it."

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Passages

Her one finger is below his chin
Accompanied with look of love,
She has her fingers intertwined with his
While swinging the other arm,
Here the two both in jeans are facing
Mithi river, close, in deep conversation;
There the two with slight bulge on her tummy,
Preoccupied with something troubling them,
And here the youngster pulling her
While his arm is around her shoulders
And the fingers hooked above right breast,
And so many couples slow down
On the skywalk at Bandra East
To enjoy the moments of togetherness,
Unaware of the anonymous cool, gentle breeze
And the noisy cars speeding away down below.

Sang Yeats of young in one another's arms,
Century later, I too see them loving, tender
While young, and stepping into the world.

Why then, as they grow older,
The couples are no longer like this?
But are growling or ready to find fault
With each other on slightest pretext?

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Passerby

The palm tree flowers downwards,
Pushing imagination along the spine
Of the fronds with green arrows
Shiny one side, and hollow the other.

Ahead of me, they are sauntering,
Shorter than her by six inches
Can she love him and look up to him?

Parts of my body unconnected
Feel pain, now together, now in sequence;
And yet eyes don't miss a single
Shapely figure or curves:

A passing woman bends near my feet
Picks up three wood-like pieces
Tells me, "It is for puja", I cant understand.

Brought pen and paper in different pockets
Having written only the top line
That has been the flotsam in my mind
Last three days off and on.
Took decision to write it down hearing
Arundhathi is writing new poems.

I know I am ordinary, prosaic
Felt it today morning too while reading Boat-ride
Of Arun Kolhatkar: me nothing original.

Was reading Camus on Sisyphus
But was bored: he doesn't make sense.

I have not grown up to appreciate
Existentialism, despite my western name
Nor to create images of poetic beauty
Despite my years of reading of
English Literature.

Past And Present

The hurt I have imposed on her
Keeps welling up ever and anon.
What I said in front of this one or that
How in that dispute I did not take her side –

But I did not do these things
Deliberately to hurt her.
Hope she can she say the same thing,
That she is not wilfully blaming me.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Pearls

I see the pearls below the window bars,
Beautiful and still, looking downwards
On this rainy day in July in monsoon.

Each pearl shines with light:
The entire inner portion translucent
Without the aid of ultrasound machine.

The gap, the spacing between pearls
Is unequal unlike in a chain, but makes
It looks simple, Made in Nature, out there.

Years ago, I remember being thrilled
Looking at a casuarina tree in Igatpuri
With a million pearls at edge of each leaf.

That was when I was doing my ten-day
Meditation course first time in 1990
And learnt about annapana and vipassana.

Since then when it rains I look up searching
For formulation of pearls outside,
Knowing inside and outside life is beautiful.

Staying in Radhanagari Irrigation guesthouse
In Kolhapur district, newly married,
Tilaka and I heard raindrops on metal roof as tabla.

Old memories and present pearls
Constitute life for me. Where does future
Figure in this: should it be allowed to worry us?

Time is a mystery: if everything
Is always present, then how does one
Envisage future, on the right or left?

From whose point of view? If I see stars
As diamonds, and raindrops as pearls,
Have I become alienated in a material society?

Behind the pearls, the sky is grey
Colorless rather, with a low sound
Of drizzling rain, but hides the star-diamonds.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Pearls His Eyes

I would once have pulled him up
That he has not made proper preparation.

But now I have retired from service,
I keep my mouth shut, and just watch.

After all, why cant he take it easy,
And learn it when the time comes.

I should unlearn the high ways
That hierarchy has taught me.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Perception

I come down the lift, and walk to my car
Washed and parked inside the compound.
Driver sees me, and slowly walks to open
Dicky and take out water for him to drink

Contrasting with Rakesh the driver in Delhi:
The moment he saw me, he would run, before I sit
He'd start the car, and get moving:

For him, my time was precious, important,
Not like here - I am retired, and can wait.

Is that what it is, or am I uber-sensitive?

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Pigeons

Today I stopped midway on stairs of Bandra sky-walk
On the eastern side and looked southwards,
To find four men playing badminton with verve,
And between me and them a group of pigeons.

They are the popular blue-rock pigeons,
Identifiable by the broad, black two lines
Above the legs, the pink feet:
Male and female many in number eating grains

Given by some kind soul, every morning.
One male I saw courting a female,
With the usual lowering of the feathers
On one side, circling and ready to mount.

But the female kept weaving her way among others,
And the male kept chasing without succeeding,
And then the female flew away under the Sky-walk
To the western side and far away.

The male had a momentary disappointed look,
But turned to push another male out just like that.
Just then one bus in that Kalanagar bus stop nearby
Changed gear loudly making these hundred pigeons

Hop up all by a foot and when noise of gear was over,
To descend down to pick up the remaining grains.
The gap was like that between two heart-beats.
I was happy to see nature's shock at noise pollution.

Thought I should capture the moment, and since it was
6 30 am and I had no camera, and I am not a painter,
Nor sculptor, I decided I would try to write a poem
When I go back home, and if I remember to do so.

Continued my walk of four kilometers, and on way back
I found equal number of crows, like the Aryan invasion
In the north-west of India so many millennia ago,
Standing one side of these pigeons, who continued.

By tomorrow I shall complete my sixty eight years,
Perhaps complete the Pleasures and Perils of Ageing
Out of Time, the book by Lynne Segal -
Really, I have enjoyed my seventh decade so far!

Despite all the health events like sub-arachnoid
Hemorrhage and second angioplasty, diabetes and BP
I am very happy, trying to strengthen my memory,
Shifting the importance from reading to implementing!

I have earned more during the last few years
Than during the 37 years I have been in the IAS.
And with more scope for doing what I like,
Watch the pigeons feeding I count above everything.

My wife and daughter sit with me taking coffee
Every morning and pamper me with love, and sometimes
Criticism, I am learning to take without getting
Angry not even inside, saying with Tilopa to Naropa,

'Shut firm the mouth, and stay silent.
Empty your mind and think of naught.
Like a hollow bamboo, rest at ease with your body.
Giving not, nor taking, put your mind at rest.'

Do you know 'if the mind
When filled with some desire,
Should seek a goal,
It only hides the light?

(Or that) although the Mind is
Void in essence,
All things it embraces
And contains'?

19 December 2013

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Polarization

All my books I love them,
But had to part,
Send them out to a Library:
Barely was there space for them,
She did not share my joy
In reading and possessing them.

In youth I have seen and heard her
Enjoying Tamil film-songs,
Feeling happy in recalling all words,
Competing with her brother:
Now when I have many on iTunes,
She is completely indifferent.

It was early seventies, we were
Just married, and she was barely
Over twenty, and would drive
My jeep from place on tour
And keep asking me to tell
Which song she should sing.

In the first place I brought her
After marriage, in Gadhinglaj
She used to read a lot, even wrote
A short story; but now when I read
Spend time enjoying books,
She is bored, and feels apart.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Pop! It Came Out!

Struggling to get the word
For the green design shirt
I wore, I was on BKC pavement
Walking yesterday, a wet shiny day.

One old man like me was walking down
On the carriageway, and meeting
A young lady from below, said loudly,
'I forgot your name' looking at her.

That's it: when I heard it
My brain opened up, and
Pop, the word comes out suddent -
It is Anokhi. I love those shirts.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Post Office

Every time I think of entering a Post Office around Bandra,
I shrink a bit and my memory throws me back by three years.

Sameer had taken me to a small one near our home,
So I can send a registered cover to Government,
I think to convey consent to be on the board of IIFL.

Sorry, I said, and smiled at the customer in the post office,
The woman barked at me with an angry facial gesture
Which triggered my anger with never a thought for decorum,
"Do I have eyes at the back of my head to know that
You are behind me, close: my eyes are not at the back? "
I said and glared at her, expecting she will pipe down.

She didn't, and said something more hot, turning aside:
Like a dog not willing to let go of the stranger in territory,
I continued to exchange harsh words and in a loud voice,
Simply reiterating my words to express my feelings.

Thirty-seven and a half years of administrative life
In Government, in positions of power, and protected,
Attended to, and on top of the pyramid always,
Had cut me off completely from being simply nice,
An ordinary person in the midst of ordinary people
And capable of reacting coolly to normal situations?

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Pouring Out

Every girl I see makes me happy
To see her. I enjoy the looks,
The colour, the shape, the waist,
The breasts, the eyes, the voice,
The modulations, the movements,
The glances, the steps, the dress,
Upper lower, the jewellery in the ears,
Particularly in the nose, on the neck,
In short, everything about a young girl.

In fact I don't remember noticing girls
When I was young, or a teenager;
In middle age, I was attracted
Only by women who were nice to me,
It was the behaviour and not the looks.
Now in declining old age,
I find myself magnetized,
When a girl swims into my ken,
I stand transfixed metaphorically
Completely lost, yielding myself -
Not to anything bad, no imaginings
Or mental undressings,
But just the beauty of youth,
Its shape and the female mystery.

What Yeats sang about lust and rage
Holding him busy in old age,
Cannot but turns out to be true for me, too.

I don't go after them,
I don't keep thinking about them,
I am happy when I see them,
I appreciate the beauty of girls.

This is especially so when I am
Away from home into regions
Where girls are fair and different,
Like in Srinagar, or now in Tawang,
In eastern Arunachal Pradesh in India.

Today there was a family in the helicopter,
The woman looked dignified if not aristocratic,
But the man was in monk's robe, the marrying kind,
There was a proud young daughter
Who held her head high and haughty first,
But during the course of an hour's flight
Kept turning in our direction, assessing.
Maybe she was only looking beyond us
To the window on this side of the craft
Showing scenery of Eastern Himalayas.

Today's generation of girls
Are a tribe whose inner self
Is not known to me in any case.
What she goes through, what she does,
Or want, I don't know, I wonder
Whether any one who is older
Even by three or four years really
Understands or shares anything
Especially nonmaterial thoughts
With them, I wonder.

Be that as it may, the colours they wear,
Send my heart and eyes tingling,
When they match colours
With different parts
Of their lissom bodies
And further with gems and gold
Spread all over themselves,
And when they tinkle by, and invade me
With their perfumed bodily presence,
I confess I am all aflutter with life.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Power Out

Power Out

Six o'clock: winter in Mumbai,
Evening hazy with mist on earth,
The sky one unbroken grey above.

Back from Lokhandwala and a two km run
Of first Seafarers' Day was celebrated,
Will be every first Saturday of December.

No lights still, Municipal Corporation
Saves money, but should it be by time,
Or the need of the public for light?

On reaching home, I chat with Joti
Eat some sev and groundnuts,
And put on Tata Sky to watch Travel.

Phut! There was a sound,
And all lights went off,
Leaving us in darkness at 6 15 pm.

I have two short candles lit
And one more, tall on a high stand,
With Joti working on laptop light.

Though whole street is without light,
I still check our fuse-box behind door,
And find everything there is ok.

In the meanwhile, lights came on
For an instant with surge of brightness
Leaving me worried for tv, my laptop.

I quickly went to bedroom and put off
My laptop, removed the plug off the point
From connection to the power, to prevent

Type of previous incident of a Sunday

When something like this led to loss
Of seven thousand rupees electronics.

Now three candles burning on
Dining table, each of the three
Flames behaving differently.

Even the size of the flame
Differs: while one is steady,
Like the yogi in bhagavad gita.

The other shapes more uniform
Tapering towards the top waving,
Above a central luminous dark core.

Below, the wicks are short and dark
In the centre holding forth position,
Like the lingam of Shiva, destroying.

One is red wax, another in a pot,
The third is orange candle
Big and cylindrical.

I waited for long, and remembered
Many a candle-lit scene during Xmas,
And in Doctor Zhivago with Lara in

And Yuri out, on the snow with Tonya,
The melted patch on the frosted window,
Sinking deep in memory of human emotions.

Soon, the lights came, and I put off
The candles: next day, got a firing
For the wax-drops on table and floor,

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Pranayasatakam

Six, seven books half-read are open,
Still I started what courier just gave
A bilingual poetry book by T P Rajeevan.

Started reading these gems in English
Since I don't know Malayalam, and in one
Sitting finished all of 158 pages.

Have never read imagination
So well captured in words
All only between Nature and Woman:

Nothing beside remains: the sparks fly
Between the +ve and -ve forces,
Wholes of Woman's body, and whorls of Nature.

Don't ask me the way to my house;
Every time I come and go a different way
Like you do in my dreams.

For a moment I was ashamed of
What I write - in
But quickly recovered

To realize that what I write
Springs out of my life, which
Another cannot enter, and so unique.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Prayer

I sought pain, planned to look at it,
Bear it, get used to it, wear it lightly
As part of my preparation for old age.

The body obliges, pain occurs bringing
Wave after wave of attack; my look and focus
Cannot bear it, I dither and want to avoid it.

Difficult to be a hero: it calls for discipline
Of meditation on the void to fix attention
On the pain and pain alone, to conquer it.

My gaze is momentary, and then I withdraw
Into the shadows, to pray for relief from pain,
And stretch my hands for the painkillers.

I shall not give up, though.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Premkumar, Apoorva Phukan And I

In 1977 at Rajendranagar in Hyderabad,
The city of the White Moghuls,
Of Rebecca's statue with marble veil,
We were in Institute of Rural Development.

Prem, Phukan and I were out walking
In the evening: with the seriousness
Of men in prime but yet growing up,
We discussed life and literature.

I took from Shakespeare's sonnet
'Rough winds do shake the darling buds of May':
Apoorva who was also in Christian College
Was into the infinite moves on chess-board.

Prem of Loyal College of the Jesuits said,
Fight between evil and good is constant.
Our feeling was he was being childish,
Phukan and I didn't believe in all that.

Years later I was convinced Prem
Was right, reinforcing Eliot's
Perpetual struggle between good and evil
Wondering what is the next change!

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Priorities

Her priorities are clear:
Her cats, dogs- the ill
And uncared for: next
The people who look after them,
Who can treat them;
Bridge teacher, her friends
Who play Bridge with her.
And later in the day
Rummy group in the CCI;
Iyra and Sameer it used to be
Now Sameer is away and off;
Then Jotimma of course on top
Of everything, then Seetha
And Rani, and the maali (gardener)
Has green fingers and twisted face,
Facebook messages and quotes she puts up
Everything and everyone
Except her husband or romance with him
Unless occasionally there is nobody else!
She is past 62, and he past 68! !

18.08.2013

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Private Joke

We get into the lift, Tilaka and I
In our sixties, chatting, arguing,
Doors close, fan is on, we continue
Till after a few moments one sees
No movement of numbers on lighted panel,
Where it remains on 5,
The floor in Jasmine where we live.

Then we laugh, we say
If we don't press ground,
Naturally we remain suspended
In arguments, the stillness outside
We hang in, and think
It is one kind of meditation.

But today this private joke
Got shared by a cleaner-boy
Who was also with us in the lift,
Solicitously looking after us,
But he too forgot to press zero.

All human beings, young and old,
Move in the same life-lift
And share the joke:
For life is to be seen
As private and public joke,
Leading to sharing of joy.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Private Pool Villa In Coorg

I am standing near the pool
In Orange County Resort,
Green lawns around, pool
On blue chipped marble,
Overhung with light blue sky,
Entertaining white wisps of clouds,
I feel cold, shivering cold
As I entered, soon to feel the joy
Beyond expected level.

All tall trees around
From which I hear birdsong
But I cannot see the birds:
Suddenly like a piece of piccolo high above,
I hear the cluck, cluck
Of the LGB, large green barbet,
Is it the bird in Sanskrit mythology
That drinks only pure water straight
From heavens, as it rains?

The other bird goes qwik, qwik
It may be a bulbul, I am not sure -
Age has made me slack,
And with no practice, it is worse.

It is so silent, peaceful
That the crow sounds an utter alien
But not the distant cock crowing
Cock-a-doodle-do:
No, even T S Eliot says coco rico
More realistic sound made by male
Which timed out that late night,
Peter who thrice betrayed Jesus.

The thought sneaks into my mind,
How would it be to have her here...

My wife reports an sms from a friend in Goa
To his wife, ' I am having hell of a time: I wish you were her'

Spelling mistake that ended in divorce!

Who challenges in literature
And poetry, and stakes for love,
The essential being who mingles
With another on the same frequency?

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Proof

The kid is sliding down the structure
At signal turning to Govt colony Bandra
Ahead of the subway on East of W E Highway.

The bigger boy who helped the kid go up
Has run down the slope of the pyramid
Leaving the kid alone on top.

Now the child comes, comes sliding down
I dont know why it makes me recall Maud.

Steady and calm, horizontal on her back
The little girl moves down the slope
Reminding me of what Jesus said.

Suffer little children to come unto me;
For, theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
Quiet bliss on face of the kid proves it.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Proud Father

Every time my daughter refers to her noticing flowers
With their color, shape, profusion on the trees in seasons,
I feel happy that a 34-year old busy executive of the Bank
Has an eye, time, and ability to look up at that kind of beauty,
On crusher-type-of-vehicle-filled roads of our Mumbai City.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Pune Now, Madurai Then

What a beautiful house I have in Pune,
It is a row-house named Pushpam in Aundh
Named after my mother – fair and firm –
Sarojini Pushpam she was: poor thing!
She died of lymphosarcoma at fifty-five.

This house has two open terraces above,
On first floor: I just went out into one,
And saw the moon, almost full, burning
In a clear October sky softly, gently.
On to the other, same moon looked at me
Through the wooden bars put up there.

It takes less than three hours to drive
From Bandra in Mumbai to Aundh in Pune;
It would be nice to spend more time here
There are some nice kitten like powderpuffs;
All shops outside the gate with all the noises.

From terrace at eye-level there are plants grown
Reminding me of our house in Madurai
16, Kattabomman Street, where we lived
When I studied for my third year B A English,
I used to sneak out to touring talkies at nights,

And come back to lean against the parapet wall
To study the world's classics, costing six rupees:
When that light was put out by removing the bulb,
I enjoyed the moonlight on the back of bent leaves,
The palm fronds, shining green, and setting
My heart afire with literary and real glow.

Where have they gone? Ay, where are they?
Yes, a modern version in my Pune house,
Only I come here rarely, and miss on all these.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Push

Pressures, timelines
Are great blessings; make one read,
Take up, write, do and even finish:
With them, a catharsis -
Of compression of vacancy takes place.

Today I am returning
Seamus Heaney to Brit Council Library.
Why did he delet "the worm of your thought"?
Left hemisphere dominates, perhaps,
When the end is near.

No deadline, and
A few more days, weeks, even months,
Would pass: one ends up with fines.

D T Joseph
5 Jan 2008

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Queen's Flowers

During the month of April
Tree after tree in full bloom;
Mauve flowers, pushing out in plenty,
With copper pod yellow flowers on top
Here and there - taller, larger trees.

A solitary bread-tree flaunts its pretty leaves,
Bunch of bell-tree flowers intruding through;
Nearby a frangipani tree with white-streaked red flowers
Bougainvillae and railway creepers on the fence
Along the pavement where I walk.

Line, color, motion, light and shade
Thrill me: what my eyes see each moment
Constitute a better painting than
Any of the greatest of Masters.
Alas, it is evanescent!

13th April 2007
Bandra-Kurla.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Rahul Raj

This Bihari learnt with his young life today,
In BEST bus shot down by Mumbai police

If you are not part of the herd,
Then you are alienated, and alone:

With such news, the tv channels go orgasmic,
But you have lost your life unnecessarily.

After all, there are many kinds of logic,
And one is as good as another.

Rahul was wielding the gun and demanding
For Police Commissioner or Raj Thackeray.

Poor man! In these days of terrorists,
People run out of their patience fast.

Enquiries and commissions will go on,
But you will have to observe from above.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Rain-Concert

The varying sounds on the roof
Like so many drums
Increases, slows, stops and resumes
To the delight of aficionados!

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Rain-Tree

Rain-tree

The rain-tree is of cassia family -
Like an elephant it stands on the road, clothed
With thick green foliage, dark against the sky
All along the Bandra-Kurla road in Mumbai.

You have to exert a little and see
Over the top to see the nazuna-type
Of pink flowers sitting above the foliage
In plentiful numbers, with up-thrust pink hairs.

Unlike the African tulip in front of ONGC
At Bandra Flyover visible from the distance,
Here the pink and green does not show off
As rain-tree flowers don't advertise themselves.

Unlike copper-pod's bright yellow flowers
The rain tree flowers don't weave a carpet:
I've never seen the flowers on the ground below
Nor do they wither on the tree, how I wonder!

In monsoon rains, the leaves shine specially,
Transparent drops falling on walkers below,
Or with a thud on the racing car bonnets too,
Some choose to fall on road to rise a bit upwards.

I have not understood why it is called rain-tree:
Are they attracted, peacock-like, to the rain-clouds,
Or does the rain-bird which drinks water straight from heavens
Prefer this tree, and inspire Kalidasa to write Meghdoot?

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Rainy Days

As Nature-Painter draws lines of paints
From clouds to Earth, you see rains at distance,
Like Ganges descending into Shiva's hair,
Ashen, grey, the color of the rainy season.

No sunlight, dull, slight breeze and cool,
A little drizzle, a slushy or glistening road,
Every now and then rain's musical drops
Varying in sound with speed or size.

Up above the world so high, there are layers of grey,
Spreading over the entire monsoon sky, with
Some spaces of lesser or darker grey, exposing
Clouds moving mischievously about in revelry.

Or, still in sadness sometimes
Soon merging into uniform grey,
Betokening heavy and continuous rain
With the Sun being away on a long tour.

The edges of the clouds exhibit the multiplicity
Of designs, mostly with their different curves,
Not one repeated, and on different planes too,
With no sharp angles but always 'chamfered'.

No harsh light and shadows, not dark,
But darkening, very pleasant to the eye,
Rainy days are my favorites always,
I seek them ever, cocooned in my car-comfort.

I feel bad for the men and women,
Who have to travel in train in the rains,
With the umbrellas being a nuisance
Sometimes to neighbors, sometimes to themselves.

It is ok for the rich to read, and be proud of, Kalidasa's
Rtasamhara and Canto on the Rains every monsoon,
But what if one's hut in the slum is leaking,
And there one's two-year old is having diarrhoea!

Difficult, but I think it is still possible
To cultivate the habit to instinctively respond -
To make the heart leap up from the earth,
When I behold a rainbow in the sky.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Rape Of The Senses

Was the phrase that went through my mind
While walking early morning on skywalk
When I saw the massive steel structures,
Being set up for huge advertisements
On railway plot near the Bandra Station.

In 1987 I paid Rs 45,000 for three days,
For a small hoarding in Haji Ali Chowk,
Where I had put up "Made for Each Other"
With a skull and nameless cigarette pack
On New Year Eve, as Secretary Health.

So, I know money and public education
Sometimes come together behind such:
But does it have to be so ugly, in Mumbai,
Spoiling beautiful views to the sky and sea
Where I started Heritage conservation in 1991?

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Rating

Incestuous relationships,
Inspired by asking
To read specific poems,
Can lead to defective progeny.

Comments made on one's poems
When reciprocated
Can swell numbers or
Lead to introspection.

Hunting for the poem,
Or praise, or recognition,
Within ourselves?
Manipulation is not
Too far in society.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Readiness Is All (Variant Of End)

If my life is drawing fast to a close,
So be it: I have lived it well, full,
And happily. Is there a pose in this?
Might be. So what? No-one else is hurt.

I did an angioplasty at fifty-nine,
And five years later now,
I have symptoms as before,
Rising up to alert me while walking.

Pain in front below shoulder-blades,
While walking then in Lodhi Garden
In New Delhi, stone's-throw
From my home at C1/1 there.

That had led Maya to monitor me
From Goa. Can fit one more stent
To prolong life again a bit -
But then, there has to be an end.

I feel that when the purpose for which
I am living is only to live and nothing else,
It is easy for me to go on the long voyage,
And bid farewell without any regret.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Reading

I think completing reading
A few pages or a book or two
Is a great job, an accomplishment. But is it?

It is no way different from seeing TV
Or movies: only the eyes are at work,
No consumption of physical energy.

I don't know whether the brain has to exert
To read, or is it like the wind
That blows over the still lake?

'Yogash chitta vritti nirodh' of Patanjali
Is the definition of yoga I like best.
But then what does vritti mean?

One translation is 'ripples'.
When one reads, are there ripples
In the brain? any expenditure of energy?

Or is it as smooth as breathing,
Almost automatic, almost regular
But an activity without which life cannot go on.

Or, the material I read, create emotions in me
And thus set in motion
A process that settles into thought or action?

Francis Bacon the wise man covered
Reading, talking and writing together
And began with 'Reading maketh a full man'.

'Full' in what sense? only I think
That brick by brick, my reading constructs
The full multi-storied structure of my self.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Realization

Heart has reasons of which Reason
Itself is not aware, said Blaise Pascal.

At much lower level, I cannot measure
The needs which I inwardly have!

When I open up, I am wondering whether
At all I should, but then the stream begins

As it goes on struggling, picking up speed
I find so much of it coming through

I had not realized that I had tanked so much,
Kathopanishad comes to my mind.

God created our senses to go outward,
Leaving it difficult to see inward.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Re-Appearance

Having started, you come to the end of it:
Taken a book to refer, replace in its place:
Else, life will be one long search for it, etc.

If you are young, you have to grow old,
If you are old, you were young once;
If you are born, you have to die.

But I know that I will not be back
After I die, despite all that you say:
Since I know of no-one who did.

Once I know the essence of what is I
That it is nothingness, it becomes final:
How can nothing ever return, and be felt?

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Reflections

Rilke, Mitchel and Hass -
Once I am in their company
Nothing else matters.

It is like the aftermath
Of my own brain haemorrhage
Just dont know what happened.

After saying, 'Dont tell my wife
She is in South Bombay
And daughter with overseas visitors.'

I passed out: was conscious
And all that, but cannot remember
A single thing for the next eight days

In Seven Hills hospital at Marol.
Helps me to stand outside myself
And feel the experience of death.

Now I know what it is going to be:
Passed away, and yet not out: brain
The bridge between life and death inactive.

After almost three months now
When I strike out alone,
My wife says, 'No, you're not allright yet'

I have agreed with her in this
As in most other things: the initiative
Has passed from me: I await death.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Relative Knot

She tells people, "He said, 'Off relatives',
And I did so:
Now after thirty-five years,
He wants to attend every relative's wedding
But I can't change".

The man thinks, "I stopped church-going then;
Today I want to go to church
Take part in my own way
Picking what is meaningful to me".
But she doesn't brook the thought,
She says she can't change.

Sympathy he now longs for is not forthcoming;
Scissors are out now and then
To sever the ties existing firmly for so long.

"Why are you going away for four days? "
"Because there is a week-end between"
"But this is home", she says, trying to make up.
Modified, he calls it off.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Relativity

While driving the car,
I find the pedestrians a pain;
While walking the roads,
The vehicles a nuisance.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Relax!

Mind jumps from one trouble to another;
Moments ago I was worried about something
But when the time comes, and problem disappears:
Instead of rejoicing about it, and celebrate it,

Mind has already jumped to another worry,
It does not matter big, small or mid-way,
And, starts frenzying ahead to see whether
Now this worry will also go or be realized.

Whether the fear turns out to be true or happens not,
The monkey is not bothered but creates the next to chew.

When will he sit still, meditate, watch the world go by, see,
The cool stream flow beside the green hill below the blue sky?

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Remember, Remember

Day before yesterday
I had got angry, very angry
For what, now I don't remember:
I try to, but the door is closed,
There is darkness
It is all opaque
I cannot see why I got angry
Don't remember at all.

And then, the thought arises
"Why should I worry about it
As if memory is important
As if it adds any great value? "
I then give up the pursuit,
And settle into myself.

There have passed 65 years.
So many things that I did
That happened to me have
Passed into oblivion
Pure and clean, leaving space
For me to go for other experiences
And remember them too, partly.

If I do not have the ability
To forget and move on,
Evacuate and accept new food,
I would not have lived this life,
But headed towards gorging
And bursting with memories,
The eliminated waste of things
That have become a part of the past.

I should be happy, and try, to
Live present life with all senses,
Not be stuck in past. Anyway, I went
And asked my wife and daughter.
Wife said, "Because I refused to listen
To what you wanted to read on

The younger generation written
In the Saturday Tamil Magazine! "
So important I can't recall in 24 hours!

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Repeat

Writing in English poetry
We get tempted to repeat
Words, phrases, lines
One behind the other,
Like in Indian language poems.

When the writers recite them
In suitable sing-song tune,
Accompanied by gestures
Nodding, in a crescendo,
One sees the koel in the crow's nest?

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Rest Of The Cats

In the last poem I wrote, I left out three:
Two out of them lie confined to the fourth room,
They are Puppu the oldest of them all
And who came home first, and blazed the trail.

The other one is Ammu with patches
Brown and black, named so by a Malayali
Pushpa who used to stay with us and cook
Very tasty dishes, and was fond of Ammu.

But now Ammu though big, cannot
Get on with other cats some of whom
Like Chinkie and Zippie fight with her,
Standing in front digging their heels.

The ninth one is Joti's favorite
And I suspect also of our maid Seetha.
She is Minnu, fluffy soft ball,
Young but active like all kittens.

She keeps everybody happy, even senior cats,
Playing with them, chasing the boys
Except that Inji the previous favorite
Having lost her position, keeps hurting Minnu.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Resting

The bird flying up North
Across two rain clouds
Separated by a ridge of grey light.

I go to the window facing East
To do bird-watching
Remind myself it requires patience.

I see the blue kingfisher sitting
Above the water on a height
In a dry low branch of that tree in water.

dark reddish brown head
Flesh-colored long, thick beak
Bright blue all down below.

Told Tillumma and she wanted
To see, and did. Then the bird flew
Sat in another spot showing chest-white.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Retired

One lift of our society opens silent as a tiger
Down below many cats get fed by my wife,
A pensioner without any deadline or constraint
I watch things around, and write them down.

The text changes in the official context, though.
Our ego is so large that it never retires:
But the chair's tenant behaves like the owner
Instant by instant comparing to what he was!

Not that I don't try to remind myself
Of my state being no longer kingly
And that thousands at my bidding not fly,
I can only stare, stand and wait for ever.

When I go to meet them, some get up
And some don't, I can't judge what is up:
I think they are trying to judge now
That they are powerful, and if I am aware.

I refrain from speaking out the point or request
It may be true that I have gone through both sides,
But they are yet to reach that stage to understand
My position, and I feel that a time will come for them too.

When I sit down on the cement benches
To write just two lines a few seconds
Plenty of mosquitoes crowd to bite my legs
But before my retirement too, they did bite!

When I resume walking, there is something
Below one knee-cap and on other leg on calf
A feeling to make me think of stop and scratch,
Which I sometimes do, and sometimes ignore.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Retreat

I am in the pool, swimming -
Breast-stroke, crawl or back,
Beneath the spotless blue sky,
With tall palm trees shooting into it,
And capped by fronds partly lit by the Sun.

When I bob up and down pushing water
Behind with both my arms,
I see the pool-bed below
Full of light-patterns moving
Shivering, interlocking like bits
Of angels, springing from the Sun.

While afloat, gazing above,
Searching – for what I know not
Precisely – the brazen crows
Fly so close they might
Dash into my nose! They sit
On the edge, and dip their beak
Into water, and look up to gurgle
Water down their throat, while one
Is taking a cool bath by pool ladder
Shaking its wings and feathers
Till I can see the white patch
Of his skin behind the black:
After all, it is summer for him too.
Then beautifully dips his head
Twice into water, and then flies up
To the top of the ladder-handle,
Shakes himself free of the water
With a look of bliss in his eyes,
Like a naked girl towelling herself.

What is that? A white egret
Followed by another, but this one
Has a lovely brown patch
Descending from the crown of his head
Around the neck, back and breast
Fascinating as the Nude descending the Stairs,

Though I could never make out the woman there
The egrets fly with two black feet
Stretched straight behind them.

Afar at the other end, I see a young couple
Man swimming, and woman wet and clinging
To the side of the pool, were there yesterday too.
From bits of Marathi floating
In the midst of some English, they are local.
He is trying hard to teach her to swim,
But she is shy, looking here and there
And just enjoying being carried by him
In the water-pool. Then he starts
With breathing lessons under water
He is pretty hard-working,
But it is difficult to see results.
Wives in public don't learn fast.

Two small boys with sun-glasses
Ran noisily from pool to Jacuzzi
Back again, jumped in "plop":
Calling to mind Basho's haiku!

I look up the top seventh floor
Knowing my wife would see down
Into the pool, but I couldn't make out;
Vision of husband and wife being
One-sided always, and hidden from the other.

It is our wedding anniversary,
Thirty-six years of married life
We celebrate in Erangal beach
With the sea, the sky and Joti around
In Odyssey suite of Retreat Hotel.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Righteous

He who in daytime speaks
To persons in front of him
With closed eyes,
Puts me off.

He pretends to use his inward eye
Thinks he is more righteous
Or knowledgeable, I wish
He could see himself.

He who though younger and junior,
While speaking to someone or me,
Winks one eye brazenly,
Puts me off completely.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Rilke

As in Lavasa the hill station near Pune,
So in Tawang and Bomdila on the hills,
I open Rilke poems, and introduction by Hass,
To read Stephen Mitchell's translation.

Amazing...Rilke does talk intimately,
Sometimes obscurely, always passionately,
His Eurydice is pushed back to Hell
By Rilke who tells her of advantages of death.

There are some like this German poet
Who grow on me with every dip:
I feel at home, warm, exploratory,
Come up with a new turn, a phrase
That sinks to become pearls
Like father's eyes – rich and strange.
'In love, ' he says, 'letting each other go'
Is important and adds, ' for holding on
Comes easily; we do not need to learn it'.

His mother called him her 'Rene' 'Miss',
Memory of elder sister-baby who died,
But father put him in tough military academy
And Lou his first love made him change to Rainer.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Rock-Solid

My cellphone can access the satellite
In the sky and any friend in the US
Across the oceans, but when I entered
Batan Tunnel on Pune Expressway,
The FM channel I was listening goes dead.

I was listening to 107.8 to meethi Rani's
Musical laughter and chatter on Meow channel
India's first exclusive FM channel for women.

I thought for waves that it is easy
To travel short distance within the tunnel
But obviously the hills are solid
And don't allow entry, whether or not
You are satellite-returned!

Rani came back like music or rain
After a pause, lively as ever
To entertain me further on way to Pune.

Palm-size cloud stops the sun
A mote it is to trouble the mind's eye
Dripping water-drops wear granite rock
Tender roots of a smile pierce the hard heart
Mysteries and angels appear at every turn.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Romance

Romance lies in the unavailability,
Yet not too far off, just bit out of reach.
The boss's young wife, or neighbor's son,
Slightest of chances - a look, a brush.

Mostly it is engendered suddenly,
But if it were planned and habitual,
Dreaming all the time, then it is lust,
And not the sunshine of romance.

Only a reflection on the mirror for
A look at Sir Lancelot across the lake, or....
Look! through the window on the left
The approach of two eager silhouettes!

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Room-Mate

I have never sharer a room since I left
Mussoorie Academy forty years ago:

In Tawang Circuit House, I `ve been given
A room to share with Winfred Warshong.

Good, dynamic, but never stops talking,
And talks a lot about himself, no harm.

He was supposed to look after me,
But I end up doing things for him.

I can't say I am unhappy for
I would have been lost, alone.

He is a khasi from Meghalaya,
He is a Christian, a Roman Catholic.

With Jumli Ado our protocol officer,
We three take drinks, and chat endlessly.

Warshong has done well for himself
Has poultry, a taxi and rooms for rent.

He is one brother to seven sisters,
Most of them in paramedical field.

He wants to set up a hospital,
He is cricket captain, plays TT.

His bosses regard him highly,
That is why he is sent with me.

With all my reading and experience, I am rather
Difficult to please, but, quiet, so you won't know.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Root Of Suffering

Got up early and saw the sunlight
Among clouds - monsoon is still here
The Psalmist was right:
Heaven declare the glory of God.

From my window, to the South
I see a huge rain-cloud umbrella
Between its rim and horizon, it is bright -
Is it part of God's agreement with Noah?

From my wife's bedroom and window
I explore through my binocs
And see a large crane, walking
In the fen with a question for neck!

I am happy to be alive
And to use the senses
Be free of greed and love of money
Which is truly the root of suffering.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Route

Cant say I've ended with a stent in heart;
The journey to old age has just begun,
Pain and suffering follow on the route
Sometimes lagging behind, sometimes catching up.

D T Joseph
19.02.08

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Rtasamhara And West Wind

Like elephants' ears, sang Kalidasa
About rain-clouds during rainy season:
Rarely have I seen dark clouds on the sky
Like the elephants, but I read the canto every monsoon.

Shelley writes of fierce Maenads
And for long I have recited Ode to West Wind,
Without knowing how a maenad looks,
Nor what is compared: what force and flow, though!

Teachers and parents and some critics
Have such abiding, magical influence on us,
We fall for the effect they produce on us,
Even when words are not fit, not understood..

Favorite poetry matters, and how: it flows in
And glows, and takes root, and keeps
Growing, growing till it becomes a part
Of yourself your nerves, muscles, self.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Rtu-Samara (Or, Pageant Of Seasons)

Monsoon is king of seasons, sang Kalidas
Long ago, and it is true even today for us.

The great miracle is that it washes leaves
Infinite in number, clean of all the dust.

The shine I see on the green leaves
After the showers leaves my heart singing.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Sacred Grove

We saw the sacred grove at Mawphlong,
Walked in till the edge of the Forest,
And absorbed the spirit of the Place.

Remembered Oedipus at Colonnus,
And the sacred grove there to which
His daughters lead the blind father.

Not to resist showing off, I was telling
The others about the volumes
Of The Golden Bough by Sir James Frazer.

I had read them in college, but as Probationer
In Satara District, I was amazed pleasantly
To find all the volumes in the Club-Library there.

The sacredness of the grove can be appreciated
Only after one absorbs the sacred features of
The local tradition from the elders of villages.

What every forest and tree
And soil provide cannot be
The essence of a sacred grove.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Sad

I think I am right, she thinks she is right.
She is impatient, I think;
She thinks, I am impatient;
Both think that the other should change.

Both might be right about the other,
And wrong about oneself!
Both have to understand it happens
Only when both sides err.

Strong words, suppressed feelings
Anger arise at slightest of comments
On reactions in person or on local phone
Response shouted beforehand.

I try hard to listen, and not offer, man-like, solutions,
As the book advises! Nevertheless I am blamed
For not reacting, for not saying anything,
For not taking part, and then for reacting etc!

The woman builds her whole life
On the official scaffolding you offered
For decades, and when you retire,
She is only unhappy with you.

Concern is there, but is not emotionally
Satisfying either, makes both dry and angry
Turn inward, suppress till the limits
And then to routine explosions, fighting.

When away from home, everything is fine
On long-distance phone-calls, statistically
Provocations are much less; waters are still
The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.

As one grows old, poles of support are necessary
But when you have no friends to lean on,
Books and ideas are pale substitutes sometimes;
Home is preferred to anything else.

You sometimes reflect how nice it would be
As in the past when she was dependent, tender
Expressing affection by look, word and act,
Behaving always so as to suit or please you.

But Time never travels backwards
She will not be what she was,
More I dream unrealistically,
The more I would be disappointed.

Now she does not need me,
Does not give me the feeling
Of relying on me under any circumstances,
Grown up, sees herself completely independent.

Your stream now is a trickle; once
She was a small tributary,
Joining your mighty river;
Today she builds dams and bridges,
Allots water rights to farmers
On the banks, and distributes
Fishing rights; while you look
At the parching Sun, and evaporate
The whole day long and grow cold
During the nights, alone.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Sai Baba Temple Sounds...

Heard the sound of shell - the shankh -
In MiG colony on way to Gym in MiG Club.

Reminds me of my first visit
To Puri beach: sitting in a bus
As a trainee for one week
In XIM, Bhubaneswar, Orissa,
I went from MIDAS of Pune, Maharashtra.

Some seller came sideways to the bus
And tried to sell Puri sea shells
Saying they make great music.
I took one, and my friend said,
'Not everybody can extract music from it! '

That was good enough provocation
I tried hard, enough to produce
That deep trumpet sound from the shank.

In those days, it was important for me
To do what others thought can't be done:
As years pass by, I have outgrown that.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Sailing

The crescent moon was like a boat
On the ocean, moving away from us,
Sailing back smoothly, seen through window-pane
Of the Airbus 320 from Delhi to Mumbai.

And then, suddenly a huge air-wave
Pushed her up and up to the zenith,
Our plane had to be steered to the left
So the little scallop shot straight up above,
Resting awhile on top of the heaven
And we aslant, between her and horizon.

My lonely companion of the darkening sky,
Any half of the month, growing or diminishing,
She bathes my eyes with soft moonlight,
Taking my mind away for moments
From the strife-torn, or boring chores of the day.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Sarojini Pushpam

That was my mother and a true Indian:
She did padmasan and taught me to,
Where to keep the fingers for mudra.

She recited the lines of patriotism,
"Breathes there the man with soul
So dead....." of Sir Walter Scott.

She taught me the moving story of Nala
Named her daughter Damayanthi: ensured for
One son at least an Indian name, like Rajiv.

She knew by heart and told me, "The clock
Has just struck two: the expiring taper rises
And sinks in..." City Night Piece of Goldsmith.

She spoke to me of rishis and sadhus of India
Since she was first generation non-Hindu,
Carrying the vibrant, rich past of India!

She was bright, not the sentimental kind,
Simple, worked for thirty rupees a month
In school, to supplement dad's salary for us.

Dad was proud of her always,
We four too, proud of her and fond,
My Pune house perpetuates her name.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Satam Chowk

Your power is given to you
As an IAS officer in Government
By somebody else, by Govt.

Satam's is his own, earned by him
By utilizing his own skills,
Knowledge and resources,
Not getting anything conferred
By law or the Commissioner.

Hence after you both have died
He has his chowk, a public square
Named after him,
And your widow, your family pension -

Nor forgetting that both will end
In course of time.

D T Joseph
16.02.08

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Satara And Kolhapur

Happy those days of youth,
Thirty years ago, as District officer,
In those far-off, nice places –
But was I aware of that blessing?

Worries and disappointments
Would have been there, then too:
Perhaps in comparison it is
I think of them now as happy?

As times passes, one incorporates
The inevitable aches and failures,
Senses weaken, limbs wither:
Looking back makes past happy.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Saturday Morning

I am torn in all directions, alas true!
Yet I consider myself definitely fortunate,
That I can afford the luxury of complaints
About things for which many are struggling.

In front is the laptop, with Logistics news,
Layer behind is my gmail inbox opened,
Also glancing at e-Hindustan Times' headlines
Of yesterday's seven bomblasts in Bangalore.

Outside the window, the rain is dripping
From a grey, dull Mumbai sky, whisperings
That induce the Monsoon mood, internal magic
Very palpable to me, and sung so well by Kalidasa.

Lying in wait for me to read are agendas
Of a few Board meetings coming up soon,
Lots of reports to be read, forms to be filled,
Speeches to be prepared for engagements accepted.

Medicines to be taken, tests to be undergone,
Pricks to be taken for checking sugar-levels,
Sugeron pills to be searched out to stop giddiness
And doctors clinic to be cajoled for appointments.

Being weekend, family wants to see Kismat Konnection,
The Hindi movie latest release in the Red Lounge
Cinemax theatre close to the house in Bandra East,
Expensive and exclusive with service inside auditorium.

My head is aware of aching sensation -
Life is doing one thing after, or along with, another;
It is too much of multi-tasking, being driven:
Shall I say, 'Stop', setting up my own red traffic signal?

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Scylla And Charybdis

I am polite, listen to others,
Keep quiet, and carry out instructions;
I fall into one trap, ignored as ineffective.

I argue, assert myself, raise
My voice, question others' opinions,
Crucified on Charybdis being arrogant.

Aware of the dilemma,
I don't choose, hesitate to manoeuvre, then
Fall between the two into the subterranean.

I am not Odysseus the man of many wiles,
Who steered his ship safely on, after the Argo of Jason
Sailed long ago, in search of the golden fleece.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Seek And Suppress

Psoriasis I had and found out
Nine years ago since our trip to Nepal
In January 1998.
Skin specialist assured me
I will get cured.
But literature and the Net disagree.

My flakes do disappear
With my doctor's medicine.
Not steroids, I check particularly.
Over years he has changed thrice.
But now for 5 or 6 years
I use propysalic ointment.

The slightest drying up of surface
I detect by sight or feel
I apply medicine, by rubbing
Two or three days
And control eruption completely.

D T Joseph

02.02.08

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Self-Analysis

I go quiet mostly in a party,
Don't speak, unless with women.
Persons with sense of humour,
Knowledge, fund of anecdotes
Dominate the conversation:
I listen politely, respond to men,
Not in a hurry to express my view
Simply because I don't have one.

Only on specific areas connected
With my jobs or convictions,
I have some definite views.
And there too it is not always
That I feel like talking out.
I may be considered strange,
But I don't live for others, or
Live affected by their views.

I am blamed for being too concerned
About the others to the extent
Of giving up my rights
Or putting myself to inconvenience.
But that is generally among strangers
Or in the public, the marketplace:
But in a party, to which officially invited,
I am quiet, cannot speak interestingly.

I have lived for nearly forty years
In administration in important jobs;
I have seen many Prime Ministers
And Chief Ministers, other ministers,
Bureaucrats, artists, industrialists,
Commoners, criminals, jailors
Students and Union leaders: can it be
I express myself only if it serves?

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Senile

Death, disease, pain, weakness,
Difficulty in using limbs, eventual loss -
With increasing frequency
These are my thoughts,
As I travel through my sixty-third year.

When Tilaka told me I am becoming senile,
I kept silent a few times, till one day
I made it clear to her, serious in tone,
It is not pleasant to be told that,
And she has stopped since.

Convinced or not, I don't know;
Since my last hospitalization
Two years ago, I remember
The pain at the back of right hand
Where the needle remained three days.

I consider myself hugely tolerant
Yet decided that next time,
Would prefer to be 'poked' every time
Rather than be inflicted everlasting pain,
As an aging man, losing control on body.

Mind is powerful, can make a heaven of hell
So I train myself to look at pain straight,
And bear it so when the real test comes
I shall not withdraw or whimper: decided
Changing to left hand is no alternative.

Last night my right eye pained on pressing, ;
Unusually, I got up at dark 5: 30 am,
Washed my face with soap, still
To see the swelling on right upper eyelid
Signalling the train of thoughts to resume.

Went early to gym, feeling a little relieved
On the swelling going down
Came back almost to normalcy

But recounted to Tilaka, doing her daily
Feeding of dogs on the street below.

Mother-like, her advice gushed at once:
"It must be a sty, keep blowing on a cloth
And foment your eye: it will be all right;
Is nothing but that: I am telling you:
Do it, and you will soon be all right."

In the night I had imagined visit to Ophtho,
The one at KEM hospital, and all known names
Of them, and was imagining myself waiting
In a long queue in a dingy room, eyes `drop`ped,
In a huge, disorderly, discourteous hospital.

Perhaps she is right that I am becoming senile,
With memory fading, cannot remember faces,
Can't follow dialogue in English movies,
Make sense of shrill voices, or a temporary swelling -
She says that I come round generally to her view.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

September

Only in West, March heralds the Spring.
Let me sing to this month of September:

Here this month in India, dragonflies crowd
Green leaf-tops of some acacia trees;

Butterflies then are a-plenty this time
Wave-twisting their way, circling each other:

To eat and mate being their vocation:
Of course, that is our awareness at work.

That we derive reckless joy watching them
Is not known to them – that is what I think!

Monsoon magic descends this month too with
Rain-clouds, not reflected down in glistening patches:

Making me swear that breezy September
I love best in Mumbai, my belov'd City.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Set Off By The Nazi

As I walk out of our Schindler lift in Jasmine building -
The name always reminding me of that Nazi guy -
I still brighten up to the green and blue all around
Compared to yesterday when I didnot get out...
Is that right? Or my memory is going blank?
I did go to Mantralaya yesterday forenoon.
Saw and had a meeting with Sangitrao,
Later Nitin Kareer, and then Manu in Urban Development
And then Malini and Medha, and came back.

How then can my brain forget even
For one instant all that, and go blank on yesterday?
Really I must take to brain exercises.
Or, be reconciled to growing old in the fashion,
Losing all faculties steadily and without regret.
Or, prepare myself for true meditation in which
I am reduced to death steadily.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Seventh Decade

I have entered my seventh decade
A few years ago, and my senses
Have started taking leave one by one;
I am not sure whether I am hearing
In both the ears, when one earphone falls off,
Brain following the dry patch above.

Whatever appears must disappear surely, and
Whatever grows up must die and go down.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Sexy Ear

Saw this girl standing close in the airport bus
Travelling from terminal to Jet aircraft
Parked a long way off in Hyderabad.

She must have been nineteen, was flawless.
It was her fair perfect ear that attracted me first,
Lovely curves one within the other
Not a speck of dust or wrinkle
The creases within the ear ending perfectly.

She was not wearing any jewel or eartop
Then I noticed a tiny hole,
Represented by a black dot!

Her hair loosely tied up
With one black clip on top,
Ending in a pony tail, so called.

She hung her hand on to a man
In front, I guessed must be her Dad,
She had lips pink as her dress
Flushed and fruity, and outlined with a brown
I first thought was lipstick but wasn't,
She had a small breast but there is still time.

She was wearing a sunglass
With brocaded gold rim frame.
When she spoke to her father, she smiled
Showing white teeth ringed with healthy gums.

She spoke to her only in gestures and with eyebrows,
I realized it was her fond mother sitting ahead.
As we stopped, she went ahead, saying Row 21,
And for once I wished I had number on the same
To feast my eyes, for next one hour, on her ears.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Shangtेशwar Lake

From the Y-Junction on return
From Bumla to Tawang,
We in our Scorpio branched off
And travelled for one hour,
On hardy road, through good scenery,
To reach what is known as
Madhuri talav (lake) ,
Medium sized, with tree-stumps plenty,
And huge boulders off the steep
Fallen near the Bridge with green lattice.

Nature takes a back-seat
When Bollywood enters the scene
The original name of Shangtेशwar
Is all but forgotten by tourists and guides.
Madhuri Dixit had come to shoot for film Koyla.
I believe Shah Rukh Khan
Had also come but he was a man,
And here there are more male tourists!
Even I have decided to see Koyla DVD
And say, like Sir Lancelot, 'She has a beautiful face'.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Shapes

I look at the sun, and my eye adjusts
To the rim of the sun, boundaries
Going up and down, perhaps reflecting
My eye-deficiencies?
Slowly my eyes move away from the sun
To the objects in the sky overhead.

I see a plane rushing to South on the West,
On to the leaves of the palm trees above
Sweeping hazily in the light morning breeze;
I see parallel strips of the blue sky,
Between the leaves of the palm-fronds,
Narrow-tipped at the spine of the frond
Triangular, and some parallel.

As I move to trees other than palms
I find the sky irregularly cut
And patched up in infinite variety
Like the way the night sky presents
The objects, gloriously irregular:
How boring if the stars of the sky
Were arranged in squares or regular shapes!

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Sheer

It is frightening
The things I thought of
Moments ago I cannot recall.

My brain goes into still mode
And eats us all this stuff
I am blank: try as I might
Cant recall what went on
A few minutes ago.

Where have they gone,
Disappeared?
Brain has gone out of control,
With many cells and synapses
No longer functional,
Precious cargo inside
Turning into smoke.

Truly no-man-fathomed,
Gerard Manley Hopkins.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Shillong Shopping

I remembered she liked it very much,
The wrap-around she bought in Emporium
In the north-east, last time our family was
Together here in Shillong and Cherrapunji.

So, I went to the lively market
In Shillong crowded, mixing
Cars and people, going in
And coming out of Parking Lots.

While others were buying things
I waited and asked later
About what I wanted to buy
For my wife.

The same shop had those lungis
As they chose to call them: I chose
Three of them, of different colours
Of Khasi Hills.

Then I saw something, and found
It was lycenphaeng:
That is a razoi that is to cover
Oneself in bed, when cold.

Selected the blue colour to match
With existing colours in my bedroom
In Mumbai and bought it, of a small size
Not double since I knew it wont get in.

I won't have space in bags:
I don't like to carry too many pieces
Of baggage, the hallmark of Indians
Going abroad, once upon a time!

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Shunyata

Shakespeare when alive did not benefit
From world-wide fame he earned later;
Only between birth and death is life lived.

Fame the last infirmity of noble minds
Is nothing to be proud of, but an attachment
That would be a drag on what I do.

Indian rishis chanting upanishads in India
did not claim ownership through name,
But gave credit to forebears, so they said.

Life is lived in the now, not in history
Or posterity. That is for others to read of.
End for oneself, emptiness at the core.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Shut

She closes her eyes, then I see them half-open:
Inside the eyelashes, I see only dreams;
Her one hand around my wrist pushing mine down
On her breast a little hard and holding: I take the hint
And press and squeeze, and now the eyes are shut.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Silences

Was today standing below the green foliage
At Khopoli factory of Wartsila in the morning -
It was silent, and the silence sank into me.

It reminded me of the moment in Igatpuri
When I stood among tall trees, alone, silent,
In the Vipassana Academy, and felt
That the trees were speaking to me softly.

My mind moved back to the days in Pune
When I used to walk in that University campus,
And one morning strayed to the Australian girl's
Cemetery, below huge trees frighteningly ghost-like,

Shouting but in utter, eerie silence
Not a wind, not a rustle all around,
Only the tinnitus in my left ear, ringing.

I walked further today to see the two wells
With the locked engine-shed between them,
And saw two "oosi thattans" tamil for needle dragon-flies,
With a bright yellow stick for their body trunk.

Not seen these creatures for last forty years,
Even then not this color, so bright and attractive:
A few others moths and dull-colored insects,
Bring themselves within the circle of my awareness.

Walked further to see the tree inhabited
By white egrets, except one with light brown,
The young ones fall when heavy wind blows,
And sit quietly on ground, helpless but safe.

Walked back to guesthouse beside the lotus pond,
With white lotus flowers, like pure virgins young,
Proudly displaying their body and beauty
Along the lake dressed in round green leaves.

When two hours later time came for me to leave

I saw that all the flowers had closed, looking like buds,
Indicating change is inevitable, steady drying up or death,
Whether virgin or pollinated, done the job or not, they end.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Silken (Reshmi)

In today's world, you get your pimples
And they are seen internationally,
Not just in the poster on the red BEST bus,
On streets of Mumbai like alas, poor Katrina Kaif!
But with the pimple, you are still charming.
What set me thinking was an email in the morning.

My pretty cousin is asking if I know
"The Santiago del Compostela pilgrimage walk in Spain".
The answer should be "No, I don't".
But before I email her back in a few hours,
I would have googled and known as much perhaps!

She, the Engineering student with black curls
Hanging on her cheeks, and huge rings on her ears,
Along with her mother stayed with us in Yashodhan
Near Churchgate in late eighties,
During a summer vacation in Mumbai; moved later
From Microland to Singapore to MBA in Switzerland
And has now become a global citizen
Jetting across oceans for vacation
And has class-fellows dominating corporate sector
In Europe and elsewhere.

Her mother in her early twenties,
Was a friend of mine, slightly older than me,
She used to buy rolls of jasmine flowers
To adorn her long, lovely hair,
While walking with me in the evening
The dusty streets of Madurai in the South;
I used to get Perry Mason books for her,
From Madras where I did
My MA in English Literature
In Madras Christian College, Tambaram,
With its 400 acres of forests
With their green-robed senators,
And taller faculty members
Such as Dr Macphail, Prof Bennett Albert,
Soundararajan, T V Subba Rao,

Vasanthan and Venkataramanan,
Not to forget Prof T K Thomas
Who first taught me
"Life is not white or black
But an agonizing grey"
In that grey, somber voice of his.

Stages and settings have changed,
And now the young engineer grown big,
First Asian Woman MBA from Lausanne,
Operates from a European capital, flits
With bright eyes, and a lisp on lips,
Dreaming hazily afar, upto the horizon,
To places we only dreamt of in youth,
Modern-day Philip of Macedon, doing million things
Ready to conquer the world from Amsterdam,
While her brother treats people around Oxford.

Strange, how we like each other,
Across the chasm of years!
In London, we saw Verdi's La Traviata
Then, Marriage of Figaro, and Swan Lake
When on visit to the IMO from India.
Classical opera and she go together in my mind.
How I would have loved her
Nearby, and not placed so far afield!

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Site Inspection

As the sunlight pierces the tender peepul leaf
I find the meaning of transparency:
With the scams of CWG,2 G and CVC
Occupying space in print, and time in tv media.

Here the light green allowing sun light to pass
Makes it clear that nothing gets special treatment,
Since everything in that leaf is made open and clear
For every passerby to understand.

It is said to be the best disinfectant on earth,
And yet all our architects build structures
Where the sunlight bounces off the outer shell
And cannot enter to let the dark things apparent.

Keep your bookmark on this poem,
And go searching for the peepul tree
In the morning sun, see what I am on,
And then come and complete the reading!

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Sky At Dawn

I woke as usual at 6 15 am
Sat up on my bed; it is still dark winter.
In front, my bedroom window
Faces South East through iron grill
Of squares and rectangles in black.

Venus and Jupiter are seen
Against the grey-black sky;
Here Jupiter is smaller but above her,
Two metres distant, at 45 degrees to West,
Both glowing, and Venus brighter -
Not as my memory throws up, "fair as a star
When only one is shining in the sky".

Below is a red light on a tall building, mandatory,
Back of it I see a few yellow lights from Dharavi
Across Mithi river, and the mangrove forests
Green, luxuriant, pleasant to the eye in daytime,
Though the waters below are murky and smell.

Do the King of Gods, and Goddess of Beauty
Look down to bless us,
Regardless how we live?
I don't know: but I love to wake up
And gaze at the planets bright, and be content.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Slapstick

Today is Sunday for us to rest,
Yet between sleeping and waking
I saw the word slapstick.

Woke up with the word
Wondering about its etymology,
Went to sink, brushed my teeth.

Forgetting, went and came
Back from MiG Club Bandra gym,
And finished breakfast.

Between bites of dosa
Flashed the word, impelling
Me to go pick up volume two

Of World Book dictionary,
And refer to slapstick;
Two sticks tied to slap

With loud noise when
Used by clowns or actors:
I had actually guessed it.

History of words is not important,
But it is their inadequacy
To fully cover idea or feeling.

Two millenia and more back
Kathopanishad has said
Outgoing senses are exactly that.

Poor at sensing inward,
Gathering no inner meaning
Not helping in enlightenment.

My closed eyes dont pierce darkness,
Nor ear hears the unheard melodies,
My hands form slapstick inside in vain.

Words and senses go on their journey,
But they come back... to...
The Kingdom of Heaven within you.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Small Change

Restless am I, discontented,
But not from the beginning!
After sitting in sofa, I find it low.
Look at a higher seat
But by experience I know if I took it
I shall find light there inadequate,
Cannot read, or have light from front
In the eyes - I am not happy,
But only in the details.
I have to train my mind
To accept what is, and raise the bar
To register need for change
Only if it is substantially painful.

The man got up, and I came to the massage chair
I had done it once before and liked it much
With my back not fully in order,
It is pleasant to get a mechanical massage
The hammerings make blood flow fast
And gives you the feel that something
Is being done. Why can't we have it in all
Airports, and here why not more than one?
Ah there! you read stanza one again!
Oops when my shoe'd feet are pressed, it is sexy.

As a retired man, with no ambitions
Like a career official, I should look to
Acquiring experiences such as these
To stretch levels of awareness
And explore consciousness with itself
Not work with doctors or instruments or rays.
Doesn't matter if I draw a blank
Though I doubt that: materialistic,
Consumerist philosophy gives way
As I grow old, makes me look inside
Treating small change not as charity
Nor as treasures of Silas Marner
But as fruits and flowers
On way to the garden of Life

From which we were thrown out long ago,
Or into which we never got identified in full.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Songs - Tyres To Birds!

If differentiation is essence of development,
The noises produced on the BKC road are it,
Even before the dawn breaks over the big Moon
Still hanging as a yellow shining plate up the sky.

The speeding Honda City is different from BEST
Rolling big but softly towards the bus shelter,
Perhaps it is the speed that counts in noise,
For the crude mo-biker teen makes most of it.

Back in our Jasmine building, the Schindler lift
Opens silently that we many a time miss that;
In, you put on the fan switch, and then you are
Assailed with so much noise, can't hear anything!

Early morning walk is laced with loud strands
Of noisy male singing coming from the masjid
From the nearby slum, not tuneful but religious,
Many are intolerant but afraid of even to criticize.

I remember in younger days I looked forward
To hear the recorded Carnatic music blaring from
Temples with red and white stripes in South India,
Near home of my Christian parents in Perungalathur!

I had gone to Sethusamudram, close by Rameshwaram,
With Chairman of Dredging Corporation of India
To see the environmental safeguards in place, but was
Surprised to hear of noise reduction out in the sea.

The noise of the wind, or the pouring monsoon rains,
Or the ever-roaring sea is no different in attack on ears,
But because we are used to think of Nature nicely,
They sound like flute and veena to our partial ears.

First time exploring bird-song, I was distracted when
Young searching for the song of melody and tune,
Till I learnt that caw caw, chir-rup, tu-whit tu-whoo,
And co co ri co are the noises fondly called bird-song!

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Sorry Self Of Mine

Why am I unhappy all the time?
I have got better than many many:
Whether it is the job, or family,
Intelligence or health or friends,
Image or reputation or reach.

And yet, every small slight
Affects me: I feel hurt,
If someone pushes or touches me,
Even if someone does not listen,
But continues his haranguing:
After one instance, I'll never
Speak easily, but only minimum.

I would not ask for anything
I would not criticize or comment
I would not walk ahead or sit first
I look forward only to trouble
Expecting failure or refusal:
I live only for the next thing.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Sorry, Dad!

I was pushed into the well of sadness
When I heard from Tilaka my librarian-wife
That my Dad read Dicketns and many novels
Including Pickwick Papers
Twenty years ago, in Yadhodhan.

I wish I had known, or rather
Shown interest. How happy Dad would
Have been if I had sat with him
Asking him what he read that day
And what he thought of those charaters.

When young Dad used to talk about
Elizabeth and Darcy, Rosalind of Arden, ,
Roger de Coverley of Addison, or Ivanhoe of Scott,
Or the heroine in Thackerays Pendennis:
Mom was no less, taught me Scott's patriotism.

As I lay down later in my bed
I felt bad severly, felt going mad
That I did not have elementary courtesy
For my Dad in his sixties and seventies,
And he never spoke a word of complaint.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Speaker As Listener

A good speaker is never
A good listener, because
He realizes the defects of the speaker
Soon, and in multiple ways.
The content gets ignored
Resulting in a poor listener!

D T Joseph
9th Jan 2008

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Stage

Levels of awareness build drama on or off it,
Othello knows, and does not know we know,
Desdemona doesn't know also we know
Iago knows of both parties' awarenesses,
And builds the plot.
Audience is mostly aware, unless the playwright
Chooses otherwise.
It is the creator who controls others' awareness.

There is a hierarchy in levels too;
He who knows is in a higher position
At home, in office, anywhere:
A little proud and haughty,
Whether she shows it or not;
The bird views from above, grand and sharp,
But the one beneath too, looking up finds
The soft under-parts exposed.

Awareness shines through many levels,
As in the sky above
Or the self within,
As bird or boar, but not found by Vishnu.
While all the time interplay
Of known and unknown forces
We call 'leela' in India
Goes on with or without sound effects,
Multiplying, eliminating awareness levels
Till Acts follow and the play is over.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Substance Of Life

If you have no work, no-one to speak to,
No plan of action, no objective to achieve,
No assets to build, nothing to relish
In eating or reading, what is left of life?

No children to bring up, grandchildren to spoil,
No parents to look after, no spouse to monitor,
No job to perform, or functions to attend.

If you have none of these things to perform
Would you say it makes no difference
Whether you are alive or dead?

Use of limbs and faculties is life, said my Dad.
He said it in Yashodhan, few days before he died:
There is truth definitely in what he said, right?

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Sunrise At Nagarkot, Nepal

29th Jan 1998□

Gold spot pushes from behind the hill,
On the Himalayan range, and moment by moment the gold
Is thrust upwards, a smooth shining ball
Of fire, even as the tourists clap
Symbol of joy at the dawn of life, of another day, spontaneously.
The cameras start clicking;
The honeymooners and eve older couples
Seeking aid from others
To frame them against the budding Sun,
Or against the snow-clad peaks of Himalayas
Piercing into the blue sky,
Coming to be bathed in bright white sunlight
By order and hierarchy, height-wise.

The shapelessly organized spongy clouds
For ever jealous, play the rivals behind, soaring
Higher, much higher, and being more flexible,
Ready to adjust to your every need
Unlike the rooted snow-clad peaks.
They float away disappointed nobody chose them,
Complaining to some poet, waiting on some Ramtek!
Clear the vision of the Sun was as it rose
But now the valley and branches of the Range
'Steeped' by the light reveals mist, mist everywhere
And one has to trace to ridges of hills
Carefully etched out in the mist
As far as eyes can see.
On the sides the hills stand out, cold and sharp,
Brightly clear ridge-line across the sky
Away from the direct path of Sun.

I remember last night this valley fronting
The Sun now, was plunged in utter darkness
Resembling the silence that flows into Yogi's soul,
Dotted by yellow light on the hill to left
Representing the town of Nagarkot in Nepal
And far to the right, a small line of yellow

Seen to be four yellow lights through binoculars.

Up above the Earth, the Sky shone in splendour
Unequaled, away from urban lights
Each star glowed in crowded magnificence
Middle ones bathed in broad white stream
Of the Milky Way, engulfing the Orion,
The Canis Major, the Taurus and even the old Queen
Cassiopeia. Some compare her to a mere chair!
How unromantic! I saw the seven Sages
And with difficulty traced the smaller Dipper
The younger brother and the bright Pole Star at its end.
I could see Leo rising from the East,
Reminding me of the Sunrise in the East
The next day, eagerly awaited at 6 50 am
As helpfully announced by the Hotel management.
Darkness, the silence of the night,
And glorious sky glowing with studded jewels
Above, sank like beauty into my mind
And memory for ever to be cherished.

Having seen the alternate portals
Of light and darkness, Day and Night,
From Club Himalaya of Nagarkot,
I feel that the calm and peace of mind
Can be harvested only in solitude
And during holidays, I should learn
To look for such things even at work.

-----x-----

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Sunrise: Impressions

It is a large round orange plate
Rising above the rim of horizon,
Hidden by a building, and partly by foliage -
Certainly this nude child is not shy?

He soon climbs up, and transforms
Whitish bright, higher but intense
Like a grown-up young person
Whose power lies in nakedness,
Dazzling to look on, if you dare to stare at,
And see bits of eye-crinkling curves.

The morning blue sky over Trombay hill
Soon changes color to dull aluminium;
Now I go about, like one much-married,
With never a thought for nakedness
Till night falls, and the sun has set.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Superannuated

You were earlier on the stage, sought after,
The centre of attention, amidst the throng,
Even your informal words sank straight in.

Then, you are one of them on the stage,
The spotlight still covers you, but successor
Is in focus, and people notice you too.

Then, you are satisfied with the front row:
You get addressed still by the Chief Guest
In his talk, and most of the people speak to you.

Then, you walk in and if the first row is full,
Nobody offers to get up and give you a seat,
And you quietly go sit in a back-row.

Then, you are not addressed
By people from the stage, half of whom
Are strangers, or of next generation.

Then, a few smile at you, and during coffee-break
Come to speak to you as if you are heritage,
A few move in by detracting the present boss.

Then, you have to stand in queue for coffee or tea;
You search for a person to speak to; when your
Turn comes there is no tea, and nobody bothers!

Then the last stage, you don't get the invitation
And you get to hear through friends
Who care for you some pressman who feels bad.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Superannuated Or Enlightened?

'Hanh, you were Under Secretary', said the shareholder,
After the EGM at Tata Tele Maharashtra in YBCCentre,
I, retired and enlightened, smiled kept moving outdoors.

Forty-two years ago, as a Supernumerary Assistant Collector,
In Satara, I remember how we took great offence if referred to
As Deputy Collectors, though public held them in great esteem.

As IAS officers we were and had to be called Assistant Collectors!
The caste system in this particular field was strong, and visible,
The imperial legacy had faded little in three independent decades.

Ten years later, as Joint Secretary in Maharashtra, got stumped
To get a reply from Vidwans, Director, Bureau of Economics
And Statistics, ending with Kahlil Gibran's 'Who are you? '

And how he went silent in answer to that question. Twenty
Years on, I went with my brother-in-law to Thiruvannamalai,
And heard how Ramana Maharshi kept at this, 'Who am I? '

Adam, says the Bible, named them all: and many don't like
Their names being mis-spelt or being called by a mistaken one,
As if they own their name: reckon, would be difficult to prove!

Young and struggling to climb up the ladder, for recognition,
The designation is important – for, it carries powers, duties,
And responsibilities. How do I, the superannuated man, care?

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Superior

Every time I am in an elevator to go up,
And some of the other passengers press
For a floor lower than where I am headed,
Do I feel superior – like a Brahmin of yore?

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Surprised, Not By Joy

The man came charging at me
And asked for money, on my way
To the Bandra MIG Club for my gym.
I instinctively reacted in my own mind
This is no way to beg – he looked
Young, healthy and has the cheek
To improvise on my refusal, “Ok, give me two rupees”
I had a few ten-rupee notes in my bag,
But said, No and kept walking
Without turning to see his expression.

Next day on introspection
I realized it was plain Ego.
Surprised, not by Joy, like Wordsworth,
But by my camouflaging Ego.

Ego helps set up excuses;
People set up their own windmills
And feel proud on knocking them down,
Or whine why they could not achieve
Because of these obstacles.

Can his tone and manner decide the issue?
I can hear laughter coming from
The grave of Miguel de Cervantes.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Take-Off

Swallows in the month of January
Flying one foot above the grass,
Yellow mostly, and some green,
While Air India queues up,
To leave for Chennai:
A wedding in the family beckons me.

I am reading on
Contemporary poets
Tom Gunn, Ted and Thomas;
I am enjoying it after gap
Of decades in which
I was just the Administrator.

Air-travel, and touchdown too, is sexy.
We are now on runway, speeding up madly,
Ready to take off and land with a thud:
Isn't that what the wedding is all about?

D T Joseph
18.01.08
Friday

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Tapering

The year was 1949 or 50, I was four or five years old:
The place was near the well in our house in Zambropuram,
In Madurai. I am taking a long time having bath,
Mom comes in and asks why, I reply, 'I want to be fair like
Kiruba my cousin and so I am applying soap, hard on myself'!

Later in life I always did things excessively,
Read more books than in the syllabus,
Took more tablets to speed up the cure,
Did the exercises more often expecting faster effect.
If teacher said ten reps, I did 20 or at least 15.

Wife would comment that I did not have the virtue
Of moderation, and that I did things way beyond necessity.
As usual she is right, but then from childhood
I seem to have been like that and why change now?

Nearing the end of my seventh decade, I am doing
Structured Life Review and this is a reminiscence.
Just finished reading May Sarton the Journal of
A Solitude and felt the justice of Kathopanishad

Which says, 'The senses of the body ebb and flow~
That is their nature.
Knowing this, the wise do not lament their passing away.'

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Techie

If youngsters can blog,
I can write poems.

Purpose is the same;
Express myself, explore,
Describe events, anything.

Technology improves or speeds
But does not change the Truth.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Technology Alert

Video an improvement over audio,
Can see as well as hear,
More things come into view
As one is placed in the past.

But the freedom of imagination
I had, to imagine Anarkali,
Her looks, grace and stance,
That fluidity is gone!

The cellphone with all its many advantages
Ensures that the senior on holiday abroad
Controls the operation in the theatre here,
Preventing junior doctor from growing up.

We should enjoy benefits of technology,
But research the minus points with care,
And set up awareness campaign
And training, to neutralize them.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Terror In Mumbai

27 November 2008,
The count so far is 101 dead
And 287 injured.

I see groups of persons,
From Police, NSG, and Army,
Moving in or around
The Taj or Trident Hotel,
Or in Nariman house in Colaba
In Mumbai city.
They look sombre, serious,
Holding their weapons
Loosely.

It can happen any time now;
If order comes for them
To enter the building for action,
The terrorists inside
Could shoot and kill
Any of them.

No-one knows their names:
Burkha Dutt or Rajdeep Desai
Would seek to know that
Only when they rush to
Photograph his bleeding hand
Or record his last words
Perhaps the dead man's face.

Reminds me of animals
For some primitive,
Sacrificial slaughter.

Cain and crime,
Battles and war,
Conquests,
Colonization,
World wars and holocausts,
Now terrorist

Killings

Made, make no sense.

I see no difference,
When the crusades took place
Or Kurukshetra or Troy
There was no meaning
Every reason given
For killing
Anyone
Is false;
Nothing achieved
Except further hatred
And revenge:
All utter folly,
Then and now!

Sounds difficult to accept,
But the only true answer
To terrorism is more
Of love and understanding.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Test

She said, "You don't recognize me,
Every time I have to introduce myself."
Surprising me; I am extra fond of girls,
Firmly, at least according to my wife.

Gave her time and space now
And the usual quota of compliments,
Feeling happy to see them sinking
In fertile soil, I even clicked her on my cell.

Took her to my office, introduced to others;
Made her feel important and happy
Hinting at joint ventures between our companies
Though hers is more established.

After a few days, got a mail from her;
Showing her to be a kid, a bit flustered,
Not able to adjust to attention
From older, experienced persons.

While all are equal, of course,
Some have to grow up.

Out of the two, who?

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Test Zone

Tirupathi makes heads bald for free,
Exports our male hair to make wigs
In Hong Kong, Malaysia and Singapore,
Europe and the United States of America.

Thicker than European, lighter than Chinese,
Once these strands are cured they don't break;
With animals' skin and men's hair,
We serve the world, head to foot.

No charity: TTD's income this year
More than a billion and twenty million
On account of just this black gold alone.
Almost one fourth of the donations!

For baldies it is irrelevant, when young
I had plenty, and in early twenties the comb
De-haired daily: by thirty on way,
Ten years later full Tirupathi-returned I was.

Now at sixty-three, can read some minds
With unsaid words, "Go up, you baldhead!
Go up, you baldhead", like Elisha on way
To Mount Carmel minus two female bears.

Lack of hair is great to keep
Control of ego, despite all the crap
About the bald being beautiful -
Passionate, the hands return empty.

I have long passed by these paths,
And now old, I invoke the blessings
Of the Lord of the Seven Hills
By eating his laddu, though diabetic.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

The Art Of Violin Or Carom

Watching masters play violin
Is like my wife playing carom:
The movements are liquid grace
Either there is no gap or the pause
Is as beautiful as the notes,
As her striker, or his bow, moves
With mind behind the fingers.
To see her play is to be present
At the concert. Hear them, at carom.
She, Paganini, Oistrakh, the masters
Play on my heart-strings with
Sheer effortless ease and artistry.
I love the sounds they produce.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

The Doorbell

Once more it rings, the doorbell
A man cannot have peace at home

When the good old postman brought
The treasures from distance with delay

When he pestered us for Diwali or New year
It was limited to him, and had its positive side

But this nameless multitude
Which brings most unimportant things

Continuously seeking your signature
And your phone number with distrust

Is the worse alternative:
Whoever wants instant post?

I could do very well with the long interval
Between despatch and delivery: peace was in it.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

The Joy Of Being

City under deluge, scream the newspapers,
Whole of the City was under waters, like Noah's Ark,
Yesterday.

I was cooped up in my office-room,
Not realising the downpour:
Also, living near Churchgate, in Yashodhan
I don't commute and am not part of the city-life
Really.

Morning I got up late, decided
To go for a walk at 10 A.M..
Thought I would read under the raincloudy sky
Sitting on the parapet wall of the Marine Drive.

Since it would drizzle, it'd be easy to hide-
I search for a small book,
Vaswani's Bhagavad Gita is in office drawer
Others versions of Gita, small, are not so good.

I chose Penguin Upanishads
Walked under the Monsoon sky
Under bright green leaves, and in clean pollution-free air,
With light around pleasant to the eye.
Reached the Marine Drive,
Sat on the wall, and looked into the sea.

For quite some time, I have been thinking of the crabs-
Colour red comes to mind-
Which I used to see on the rocks below the wall in the sea
Not on tetrapods, but on pieces of irregular rock
Say, in front of Marine Plaza,
Hotel that has come up now-
Today as I looked I could see all those friends of mine,
More dark brown than red, unless some reddish tinge in their legs
All six of them, where are the pincers?
I was thrilled, happy to see them.
I sat and crossed my legs and looked westwards.

Felt great to be alive,

On a holiday
Watching the innumerable crabs, each
Moving slightly towards or away from the neighbouring crab
All a few feet above the sea-waves
Crashing at the foot of these rocks
Crabs are not visible always
I remember thinking long ago
That I would sit whole day on the wall to record
The appearance and disappearance of these crabs:
Never did it though.

Wave after wave came and crashed on the rocks
Broke into foam, white and brittle and evanescent
And dirty water with garbage floating, withdrew
Into the sea, to be pushed back at a wee-bit higher level
It is the incoming high tide of the cycle of the Day.

The right corner of my eye registered
A movement, neither of wave nor crab
Now I turn fully to
Watch out and there it was again
Along the ill-defined contours
Of stones, not tetrapods.
On third appearance, I see it. A rat
Small, brown, slow and steady
I wonder what is he doing there.
Next moment I find a crow flying
In the other direction; I fear for the rat.

Looking back to the crabs moving luxuriously,
On so many black surfaces,
I am happy to be alive.
I open the Upanishads book
And the underlined portions hit the eye.
A quote from Rg Veda
'The river is never weary', it says.
I look at the waves and think
Nor are they. I feel a strong connection
Between living and existing things,
An interesting web.

Juan Mascaro writes in the Introduction

“ The joy that irradiates the poetry
Of the great modern Spanish poet
Jorge Guillen
Springs from the joy of Being:

Ser, nada mas. Y basta.
Es la absoluta dicha.

(To be. No more. This is all.
This is the joy supreme.) ”

Mumbai
15 Aug 1997

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

The Muse

Can the glow of poetry
Be created artificially,
Consciously?

What inside us acts
As a touchstone
To decide whether it is a poem
Or prose chopped into lines?

Entering the metaphysical realm,
To taste and find it fizzy and alive,
With bubbles of different sizes
Along the inside rim of the glass.

No wonder ancient poets invoked the Muse,
As a link to something unknown,
The manna that fell from heaven.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

The Music Teacher

Grey-haired, tall, old man, her music teacher,
Wanted to teach her classical music
And not Hindi film-songs my wife wanted.
That was in Manek building in Malbar Hill.

Told her his story one of those days;
He lived with his son and daughter-in-law
In a small house.

He did not mind coming late
To our house to teach;
He wanted to go home as late as possible
To give privacy to his son and his wife,
He had said.

One day their watchman saw in the morning
His dead body in their compound,
A few or many hours after his return.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

The Orchestra

Without short forms, it is not sms-driven
Modern style! I heard BESO just now,
The Bandra East Symphony Orchestra!

The leader is the Indian koel, like piccolo
Heard above the others, piercing and clear,
The red-breasted coppersmith the barbet
Goes on sometimes mistaken for a pump
That waters the fields; from front above stage,
Comes the bulbul ending in trills like pizzicato,
On the side with soprano by chirrup of the sparrow,
With winter-like chattering of kingfisher, bass murmur
Of the zooming down blue-rock pigeons
With the two broad, black lines on wings
Flying down like a boat with two erect sails,
With the unavoidable bullies, the crows
Cawing their heart out in the chorus.
Sometimes there is special appearance
Of the mynah with her metallic,
Ever-varying bells of music, or the larger
Alexandrine parrot with the red should patch
And his screeching presence.

I have company of these friends in the sky
Ever ready to entertain me, if I have ears
To hear, and increase my awareness of now!

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

The Other

Passed Villa Theresa monastery by, on Pedder Road,
After spending an hour and half delightfully
In British Council Library reading Gerard Manley Hopkins
Wreck is on my mind; and the Spiritual Exercises
Of Saint Ignatius –

How far do I understand the life of a Jesuit priest?
How far my negative capability takes me into another,
In another man's paradigm? See me in others, in
Everything, and everything in me, says Krishna
In the Bhagavad Gita –

I try, I reach into some lines and lives
But not fully: for, my imagination takes over
And real me finds doors of darkness and towers
Shut, yielding no light, Oh hell! Can't identify with
Or understand 'the Other'.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

The Question

Peace of Mind -
If I had pursued at 20,
Where now would I have been?

Knowledge, skill and resources
Processing is based on greed
I think now at 66.

How do I get both?
Or do I prefer peace
To anything else now?

Is there a way to remain silent,
Content, be in peace
And yet get skills and knowledge?

Does Nature, the butterflies,
The hawk and clouds
Live with trees like this?

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

The Sixth Patriarch

I had read the Platform Sutras
Of the Sixth Patriarch on the Net
Long years ago.

Now I am in Dahung valley,
West Kameng district, of Arunachal
Formerly known as NEFA.

In the Central Institute of Himalayan
Culture and Studies, Principal Lama Tashi
Gives me a copy of in-house journal.

Poem by a second year student says
That sixth Dalai Lama was born
In Tawang: I am just coming from there.

Is the sixth patriarch also sixth Dalai Lama?
I dont think so: I knew Tawang area
Is beautiful; now I know it is also blessed.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

The Vicks Inhaler

It is years, why decades since I use it
Only now I find Vicks is ayurvedic:
I find now it to be used within two years
From date of manufactured printed on it
At the bottom: I didnot know that either.

Partly this gives answer to my question
Of what I should look forward to in retirement.
There is so much to learn even about
Ordinary things: life made easier,
More beautiful, more helpful and so on.

My haemorrhaged brain jumps
To shlokas of short Isopanishad
Which starts with Isa word
Standing for God, the One Beyond: it says,
KNOWLEDGE and IGNORANCE take you to hell.

I am sure it does: more knowledge means
More problems and aches, like more money!
Those who have less of both will never
Understand: because for others it looks
As if more means only happiness, alas!

Things dont represent truly
What one takes out of life-
I might have used it for ever
Without correct effects. This inhaler
Has been made six years ago!

Of course in this case it is confusing
Knowing validity would make no difference?
I guess the effectiveness would be less.
Would you say beyond two years,
Would there be also ill effects?

Like the irregular patterns of stars
In the night sky - ever delightful,
It is the role that knowledge plays

On actual circumstances of life
That leads to joy or sorrow on same stuff.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

The Zen Moon

Could see the Moon thrice as big as usual,
Bright full greenish moon – silent, witnessing.

On the south, a bright object is flying, like a broken bit of the moon
Is running – it is the plane light, flying with bit of Mars, one red light.

I turned north and walked up to see the water-body below
At one point I can see the full moon in water like a bull's eye.

On the other side, the moon was fragmented and reflected
On the glass-walls of the HDIL Tower, moving unevenly as I walk.

I am travelling like Basho the Zen Master and Poet,
I stand and store food for future,
Like Wordsworth on banks of Wye near Tintern Abbey.

Went up to Bandra Station, and today could see
Alpha Centaurii and companion, main reason why
I walk early in the dark: bonus it was to see Chitra, Auriga.

Above Venus is shining bright,
Like the brightest of diamonds,
But kept away from man's grasping hand.

Life is as it is: what I see and hear.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

They Too Walk

There were three mynahs on the road,
Close to the pavement edge.
One flew up into the green overhead
The other two were walkers like us
But with body swerving side to side.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Thing

When does a person become a thing?
Thing occupies space, person the attention;
Person reacts and feels, thing moves and falls;
Thing is heavy or light always,
But person alternates on mood.
Thing has no participatory skills,
Person has the choice to.

When social 'superior' indulges in acts
Which are not fully understood
By the other, who becomes tongue-tied,
Submitting, submitting, submitting,
Thinking that is how it is, the dharma,
Then the other is being treated, as an it.

When you enter her
Like entering into a room,
You are treating her as a thing:
Only when you are merged by passion
And together lost among the stars,
You are true human beings, and
Float back to your bed on earth
And kiss each other softly,
With no thing between you.

Person comes from 'persona' a mask
But the warm-flowing blood and relations
Between persons, not any mask of personality
Conveys truth behind things.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Think

On the table by my side stands
Amul toned milk packet or box
Spilling, spitting milk from mouth-corner
As if it is a baby, a human baby.

I have my diabetic breakfast
Oats with milk in blue bowl, alone;
Where do you draw line
Between living and inanimate things?
Does it too exist in the mind?

Thou shalt not kill, they think they obey;
But they are non-vegetarians!
And, do vegetarians think
Vegetables don't live?

Life is a mystery I cant understand,
But I do accept it, as it is, in toto,
And let me put baby to sleep in the fridge! !

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

This Moment

I feel poetry, any fine art, is inadequate:
The moment abounds with so many dimensions -
Senses, almost all of them, are busy
Engaged with their prey,
Forms of play, of aspects of life,
So many spring on all sides,
The substance of them all
Constitute the stuff of life
At this moment.
No poem ever can come
A galaxy-distance near
The heart of the matter
Of this moment of life.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

This Morning

Prisoner of a moment's truth, am I?
The Sun rises in the East, and drenches
The green foliage, even underside, in light.

Once having said or thought some thing
I tend to repeat that so many times after,
That it appears like the permanent truth.

No, but every day it is a new and different sunrise
And like worshippers of Rk Veda, centuries ago,
May we be surprised that the Sun has risen today too!

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Thomas Hardy

Today I taste poems of Hardy
Out of joy and freewill.
True I should have read them
Fifty years ago. As a student
I then read poets to ensure marks
In the examinations, and
To show the world I know,
And make my answers and talks
Richer in allusions to impress
All and sundry; no, perhaps not.
How I get carried away with words!
No, I don't see myself as a youngster
Consciously setting out to impress.

There was my stylish friend Clement in MA,
Who would on my face and to the girls,
Boast, "Trevelyn, he doesn't make an impact
On first sight, but is good in studies,
Managed to obtain first rank in BA,
But in MA it is reserved for me".
Despite the trumpets he blew in Tirunelveli style,
I was friendly with him, grateful to him
For the way he befriended me first in MCC.

We don't know ourselves at all
In many respects.
What is duty, and what is pleasure
Always confused me in studies.
I realize now when I pick up Hardy poems
Rather than agenda items of Board Meetings!

It is simple: what I read out of compulsion is duty,
What I do without any reason to, is for pleasure.

Voltaire-style, I don't agree with a word of his
On President of Immortals or Vast Imbecility.

I defend to the last drop of my blood his poetic skills
Though I love life with sun-lit blue sky or grey rainclouds.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Thoughts On Television

Last three days in Tawang, I remained
Without tv, cellphone or newspapers.
Now in Bomdila the Circuit House has TV
From which I find that Raj has been arrested.

And people are rioting, a container burnt.
All because he has to appear before court.
Some say Govt is making him a hero,
Some blame Govt not taking action on time.

Like Vipassana master teaches us
Sensations are weak and tender if we become
Aware of them in the beginning, easy to control.
But once grown full, it is not easy to cut.

In public life, on issues where both sides
Are strong, govt should not be lost in a maze,
But concentrate on actual persons
Who indulge in violence, rather than try to solve issues.

It is stupid to associate consequences
With causes and delay taking action.
Tender and beginning, violence should be seized,
Government should take action, and finish it off.

If a person is seen throwing stones,
And burning the bus, on that evidence
Why he cannot be booked and punished
Immediately on that irrefutable evidence?

Television channels that make such fuss
And repeat the topical news and sights
Should lend evidence to establish crime, and help
End violence, and not just increase viewership.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Three Women

On vehicles at dusk
In vibrant Ahmedabad.

One is behind her husband
With her child in arms
A little ahead on the road
I can see sideways only
The edge of her right cheek:
Cant see it, but she is smiling, I know.
What is it about the cheekbone and muscle
That indicates the smile
I can't pinpoint, not being a painter!

Next, with headlights on is a car
Coming towards us
On this narrow road,
And with cars parked on either side
Without any gap.
This car is coming slowly
And as it crosses ours
I see the fair, young and shapely girl
Driving the car rigidly
But quite conscious
That nobody blames such a driver!

The third I see, young and demure,
Behnid her husban, on a scooter.
Stopping at signal
He turns full back to her
And talk to her pretty eyes
Fully concentrated on him.
She shakes her head up and down
In silent admiring approval
Like a lovely doll
Every few minutes
At irregular intervals, till it turns green.

It is a pleasure to see young women
Tagging along, feeding the ego of men

Preparing themselves to take on,
And order around old men
Which their husbands soon will be!

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Three-In-One

I am listening to Allegro
Of Winter by Antonio Vivaldi
On my iPod, the birthday gift
From Tilaka my wife two years ago:

I am walking in the morning
Under the shades of green trees
Looking at purple flowers
On the fence outside Artek Nagar.

I look up to see the sun bright
Sky blue and clean, with
A white shiny helicopter
Taking some VIP down south.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Threshold

There is nothing, no product or act,
Which declines not in satisfaction
With every repetition.

The economist might label it at once
And call it by the name since he prepared
For his examination.

How much has
The law or theory of diminishing returns
Been applied to daily and intimate
Situations, not patently 'economical'?
At least my school or parents didn't tell me.

How is virgin boy to know when he is
In love, and aching to get close, and kiss
Or hold her around the waist,
That once he achieves his ambitions,
He will most probably seek ways to distance
Himself, and either realize the truth,
Or look for another product or act,
Not realizing.

As the Preacher has said,
There is nothing new under the Sun,
Nor does anything give joy always.

Shunyata for oneself and karuna
For others are – the very best here,
And if it is there, for hereafter.

I am therefore not preaching
Against the product or act,
I am telling but the truth
Of what follows inevitably.

We must live like everyone,
And yet derive the best
We can out of life, I say.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Through A Slum-Street

Walked through Shastri Nagar
It is a slum on records
Of MHADA, and all other authorities
Dealing with land, housing and slums.

I walk through that at 7 30 pm to buy
A cigarette lighter from Meena Bazaar
In Khetwadi, since Anand Bazaar boy
Said that it will take him few days to get it.

I am overwhelmed by the rich texture
Of urban life, and social relationships
In these so-called slums, where men are busy,
And women busier, but more friendly.

Houses are small but people are thick
With each other: I see eight women
Sitting in ten square feet area, most friendly
Laughingly review the day's activities.

Everything is fresh, whether it is food
Or gossip, or clothes they wear;
Possesses only three saris but she wears
Only the washed and clean one every day.

Next is a shop, and then a computer training class
With at least sixteen computers, in that one room,
Brightly lit, with eight to nine youngsters,
Cheerfully but seriously bent over the lit screens.

Next is a temple, dedicated to Buddha,
Whom they have taken over
As belonging to one special category,
Because Ambedkar embraced Buddhism.

Opposite is a laundry, then a repair shop,
In the next house, I see a computer whiz-kid typing,
Inside the lady in white is watching color television,
A popular serial, where exaggeration is name of game.

Life is so rich, generally lived together with gusto,
Of course sometimes there may be a loud fight,
But of late, not seen or heard, since active
Young and old are into livelihood business.

While Town Planners and pundits lecture
On mixed land use, and waste of great
Infrastructure for lack of it,
It is in this slum that I find ideal mixed land use.

When this slum is redeveloped, the pitch
Will be different and dark socially; walls rise
On all sides, children have no place to play,
Middle aged women become middle-class and boring.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Tibetan Tea

About ten years ago, we were
In Ladakh for a fortnight
Kept hearing about Tibetans
Keeping themselves warm by yak
Butter poured in tea to drink.

Now in Tawang, close to Lhasa
Jumli Ado to look after us,
I raised the point of Tibetan tea,
With yak butter: he broke his silence,
"We call it 'namkeen chai', salty tea".

When he saw us off at Circuit House,
He said he would try with his friend
Called him up right there on mobile
An hour later, he was back with a big flask

I had the salty tea – warm, buttery,
Rich and different,
One more desire fulfilled, one more step
Towards Nirvana, I can die in peace.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Tim On Sylvia

He writes explanations for Sylvia's poems;
I read and ponder, fondly hoping to link the two,
But after a few pages and a few hard poems,
I think he exaggerates, fantasizes, shows up
Undue haste to arrive at meanings not there.

Why can't the poet-critic restrict himself to what
Is written in black and white by her, and lead me
To meanings outside the text, only if providing clear
Details found in biography, like the elm or yew tree
That grew one on East, one West in her Devon home.

Mary's Song, he calls, one of her masterpieces:
Where is 'the maternal instinct' contrasting emotion
'Of male deity, demanding the sacrifice of the son'?
I read the poem again and again but I find only
"The golden child the world will kill and eat"?

Does the poet have the licence to dream up
What meanings he finds floating into his awareness
As he reads someone else's, Sylvia's poems? And
The public already convinced of the greatness of both,
Reads in silence whatever is imagined and fitted out?

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Time

He was a religious leader of Muslims,
He was MPCC chief, a political party boss,
He was Minister for Revenue and for Law,
And he had written a serious book.

After the book-launch function, as usual
There was a meet with the Mumbai Press,
And in the question-answer session;
One scribe asked, "How do you get time? "

His reply sank deep in my heart.
I have repeated it to many,
And don't mind repeating it to many more,
To drive home importance of prioritizing things.

Said he, " The world's busiest man finds
Time to brush his teeth."

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

To A E Housman

Imagining future completely dark
Means not learning one's lessons;
As hopes were dupes, fears may be liars;
Sensible to expect a mix of good and bad.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

To Die, To Sleep...No Perchance To Dream!

Can I go suddenly?
Not fall ill, be helpless
And drag it out in pain
And dependence?

Expenses in time and resources,
Avoided, knowing full well
I have lived my life,
Got whatever I wanted, achieved.

What happens in deep sleep,
Or in meditation if ever I manage -
The Shunyata that Buddha talks of,
Is to be preferred - to ICU or OT.

If liabilities for parents or children
Remain, it is different: our parents gone, .
Only child married, employed, and wife smart;
I'm free as the sky, I'd like to merge in it.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

To That Unknown Bird

Wish I could fold and gather
Like a thin carpet the sunlight
On the pavement this wintry day
And conserve it for a summer morn!

A bird watching me, calls out
By bass song, must be big in size:
I hear and notice, but cannot identify,
Wish I knew his language like mine!

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Today

She said, "I don't care about what others think."
I recalled how as newly married,
She would not hold hands in public with me,
And she replied, "That was then; today,
I don't mind holding anybody's hands! "
I did not continue, but moved out,
Knowing it will sink in, but in due course.
Just now, she has to have her say in full.

Reality has no provision to rub out
What we felt on any one of the yesterdays:
We can do it differently today, thank God!
Sometimes Life holds you
To the consequences of what you sow.
I admit now my reference to past was bad.
That it was different in the past cannot be held
To detract from the truth of the present moment.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Today Is My Birthday!

The first day of my sixty-seventh year,
I slide open the three window panes in my bedroom,
To find the huge red circular plate of the Sun rising.
Geometrically disfigured by tall buildings
In Bandra Kurla complex towards the South.

I feel the fresh breeze blowing in, fresh
And cool: I notice it is blowing from East –
North-east monsoon was a reality
In Madurai during childhood, not now in Mumbai.
Got up at five a m, and went for a walk.

Remembered to take my old binoculars
Stopped at the corner near Mithi river on skywalk
Peered, and peered thru binoc, but had no luck today
As the Souther Cross constellation was not visible,
Felt like Matthew Arnold on the Dover Beach!

The layers of faith have been now darkened,
And polluted away into a deadly grey,
But still after completing sixty six years,
I am happy to feel life pulsing though
My body and mind, enabling me to enjoy

Moments of joy and beauty, use my senses,
My incomparable brain, and the elusive
But subtle and highly evolved brain-mind.
Reading is my only hobby, and friend too:
At present I am into "The Tell-tale Brain"
By Dr V S Ramachandran, Lucknow Boy
Of Vinod Mehta, Power of the Powerless
By Vaclav Havel who I read has died three days ago.

Some are born,
Some die,
Some celebrate birthday!
What infinite variety and color! !
Everyday I feel thrilled to be alive, and aware!

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Today's Commandment

She is feeding dogs below
I am going out for morning walk
She tells me, 'Forgot to wear dentures:
Keep yourself quiet and dont talk'.

I have two pieces one upper palate
And another for lower: stopped
Using upper till dentist
Insisted I wear it, lest I become Dracula!

I go to sleep without removing
Mostly, though I clean and gargle
But wear them back when I go
To bed and sleep comfortably.

Advised by wife, this morning I walk
Quietly and in any case apart
From wishing one or two whom I know
I dont know people to show gap of dentures.

Sometimes I put them in warm water
With a big, white tablet Fitty Dent
Which dissolves quickly to become
Blue foamy solution, cleaning dentures.

In the morning I wash them
And wear after brushing teeth
With Strong Teeth paste of Colgate
And then begin the day.

It means I go to kitchen
And make coffee for us
Using milk and nescafe
On the hob, is that the word?

She is concerned and she heeps track -
Knows husband in and out: and now old
May not look after himself, she thinks:
Does not want others to see my gaps.

I recall her instructions now and then
And ensure to keep myself silent
Walk briskly, watching the leaves and the sky
And do not allow others to see my yawning lapse.

Yet the feeling is of suppression and monitoring
Even when venturing into incense-breathing morn
I cannot open my mouth but only my eyes
Because my wife has said so! Lipsealed! !

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Today's Walk

Butterfly zigzag against
High green foliage in BKC;
Next moment, below the fronds
Of coconut tree, leaning on pavement;
Then, flashing across the road
On to wiper glass of speeding car,
Swerving last moment, I hear
Inaudible laughter of the butterfly.

Young owner-driver unaware,
Immersed in preparation
To reduce the provisions
And yet convince the ever-questioning
Audit committee prior to Board meeting
Misses gem of the near-miss.

Kalanagar bus-stop bench gave me rest,
Sunlight produced vitamin D:
Another ten minutes of walk,
And rest in front of Income Tax Office;
Looking up, I see two crows perched close,
Just like the two birds of Upanishads,
One preening its feathers, and the other
Witnessing, silent and still.

Time may in future take away
Moments of such joy and freedom:
Encaged in hospital ward,
Or in bedroom prescribed.

I get up slowly but happy,
Basking in the moment,
Pushing the future fear down,
Wend my way home.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Together

Some husbands and wives are,
Like the snow-clad Himalayas,
And the white clouds above;

They are seen together,
But are not on same plane,
And do not move together.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Too Late

Cant see with both the eyes, they are dim, he said.
One cant do cataract with both eyes simultaneously,
And for one eye, they charge five thousand rupees.

I gave him in late 80s when my salary was that much.
He took the money, and mus thave done the operation.
I dont remember to have asked him about it.

I never offered to give him amount for the other eye.
And yet this is my Dad who paid back my loan scholarship
First things from the money he got on retirement.

I want to shout only one thing to all children
'You may be busy and important, but your parents
Will soon pass away, and you should not be left with regrets.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Town Planning

As the plane climbed up at dusk over
Meenambakkam Airport in Chennai,
I look down from window-seat to see
The concentration of twinkling lights
That indicate the main road in the city,
Not straight but perhaps formed over time,
Narrowings between two developed areas
Or the result of some indecision or litigation?

I recall my long flight to Buenos Aires in 1987
And a week-long stay in Claridges' Hotel mid-town.
The concierge pulled out just a palm-sized map
Of that city of ten million - before the advent of laptop -
And could give me directions to reach any part of city
With just two of three turns according to that map.

It was truly a planned city: flying above it at night,
One would see a lit-up chessboard,
Not the Chennai-type of snakes and ladders!
Well, does it make a difference, one wonders at times?

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Traffic

Looking out of the window of Tilla's bedroom,
I can see Guru Nanak Hospital, from my house,
Shining in the morning sun, with greenery all around -
A seed is sown, and it springs to life in words, thus:

The sparrow takes a long undulating flight from here.
Cutting across is a crow, zigzagging;
Meanwhile flies a magpie robin in a different direction
- I recognize by the white patch moving in shiny black -

I hear a couple of crows cawing
At distance, when now a mynah with yellow beak
Flies past below: Ariels, are they?
As much happiness they bring to my world.

While Mumbai or Heathrow airport
Is full of congested aerial traffic,
Here we have graceful traffic
No Air Tower Control or traffic policemen!

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Training

Just read a beautiful haiku in Tamil,
Wanted to share the joy with daughter
Sitting next in Deccan Air to Chennai
But she smiled a gentle refusal.
I withdraw; but my mind leaves not that trail;
Why do I want to share with her,
Or anyone close? Why get hurt?
So, you don't share, don't talk
And get accused of being indifferent,
Even insensitive, which is hurting more,
An ant on dry stick with fire at both ends.

Naturally once it happens too often,
I get angry, and want to show anger
Clearly to sensitize people
To the needs of others.
After all, I am not harming one or wasting time
Only trying to share the delicacies of
Of life in art, literature and sometimes persons.

So, why do you put me off all that time?

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

Now, I stop to think differently
Recall what wife says - I am used to power,
To people listen if not kowtow,
But now I am not on top of any pyramid
Of power and hence should behave
Like any ordinary citizen or customer,
And not assume rights or power
By raising my voice or expecting too much
Nay, any deference or immediate compliance.

At sixty-three, I should look forward to pain,
Illness, hospitalization, needle on vein, discomfort,

Loneliness, neglect or indifference from others,
Death of faculties one by one, till every faculty stops.
This time should be treated as training period,
Regardless of what others – in family or out – say!

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Traitor - Et Tu?

The poet writes a simple sentence
And the critic or interpreter
Writes hundred words on it
Bringing in his knowledge
And eloquence, explaining it
With existentialist background,
Disputing traditional religion,
Going back to swinging sixties
Or amoral base of the 21st century.

Poet himself is not interested
In disputing all this: he thinks,
Maybe, it was in my subconscious,
Why deny what I am not sure about?

The critic would have loved to be
In the creator's position: not lucky,
He creates his own vision of that poet,
Which takes over the official version.

Not knowing, the subterranean links
Between words put together on surface
The poet rests content, eyes closed, on
What his admirer thinks he wrote.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Transit Back

As social company has increase
With Ajay, then Vijay and Malini,
And later neighbour Mr Oberoi,
Another of the same tribe,
I find that the desire to write
Has gone shrunk.

Walking into a warm place,
Home of a friend
Has also dried up the chance
To keep observing myself and others.

The things both inside and outside
Were giving me material
To work up, and filter out ideas,
Happenings, lines and words.

Already the northern hills
Of Eastern Himalayas,
Of Arunachal Pradesh, Tawang
Dirang and Bomdila are distant.

Barely one or two days have passed,
I stayed in Tezpur which
Masked the transition and now
In Shillong, back in usual set-up.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Transported

He asleep brushed his lips full on mine,
Travelling in bus at night with students,
I could not help, I came.

Was lecturer in college then,
Have travelled a long way since,
Stopping, starting, changing.

Thrill has receded, still in need
Now and then, frequency reduced,
Strength is ebbing, It is time I went.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Travel

I love to travel but only to see
New places – no repeat visits for me:
No institution or act or thing
Holds my interest after once seen.

Want to reach the place,
But not spend time
In what people generally go to.

The thing dissolves in my hand;
The perfume lasteth for a little while,
The place soon shall know it no more.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Tread Softly!

I am closing windows and doors
Of my brain because she wants it
Not to interfere with her administration.

Since I am old and weak,
No point in getting angry
Or trying to assert myself.

Of course it does feel hurtful
That people for whom you have done
Everything turn round and tread upon you.

01.12.2013

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Trees And Birds

Summer brings forth the yellow carpet
Woven in different patterns on pavements,
Made up yellow flowers from cassia trees,
Side by side with white dried-up bird-shit,
Under foliage, along with here and there
The red pattern of betel and areca juice
Spit out by my paan-chewing countrymen.

The trees shedding yellow flowers are huge,
Forty to eighty feet high, with thick green foliage,
Comprising of feathery mimosa-like leaves,
Arranged in pairs of pinnae, 6 to 20, and
Spreading half across the carriageway,
Sometimes forming a complete arch
On wide, wide roads.
They push forth flowers in bunches,
Summer gifts interspersed with copper pods
The shield-bearing trees – *Peltophorum Roxburghii*
Or some such jawbreaker of a botanical name!
The Scottish doctor William Roxburgh (1751 – 1815)
Was superintendent of Calcutta Botanic Garden.

The flowering season starting in March
These yellow flowers cupped in coppery
Red downy calyx, with petals inversely oval
In shape, hairy at the base, and much crinkled
At the margins, fall regularly down
And make carpets of bright yellow
Till they wither, or are swept away
By the municipal sweepers with masks.

On these trees once I have seen
Large number of small birds
Each with different plumage and twittering,
Alas, no longer. What I now see are
Crows, crows, crows,
And some pink-legged blue rock pigeons,
And an occasional mynah or parakeet,
Not to forget a pariah kite

Though bird of prey, reminding me of a baby.

These peltophorum trees are a-plenty in Mumbai,
But not as noticed as Gul-mohur (Delonix regia) ,
Which also blossom in summer in the City.
In the past I have seen them covering one third
Of the Malabar Hill range seen in the Northern horizon,
As one started the car on Marine Drive
From Air India building on Nariman Point.
But, of course, now reduced by buildings
In place of trees.

Let us be kind to shade-giving trees
Reduced by construction activity,
And small birds, getting destroyed
By the crows eating their eggs and young ones.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

True Freedom

Why is he talking so loudly to her?
She is sitting on the bench with him,
Slim, young, fair, and sweet-featured,
Only face glum. What is the argument?

As I stroll for my evening walk on pavement
In Bandra Kurla Complex, it attracts
My attention, whether it is serious
Or light, like to see the movie or not.

Are they friends, neighbors in love?
Or want to convince the community?
Pleading for change of religion or more
Dowry, with greedy parents behind the boy?

Whatever it is my heart is pained to see
The girl being talked to in a jamming tone:
Not a civilized thing that a young girl
Can be put under pressure this way in public.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Turns

"Come back", he wrote, yes my dad said so:
I had left Madras later renamed Chennai,
In 1968 I left, selected into the IAS by UPSC.

I was on training in Satara, Maharashtra
A bachelor sitting in a Class III quarters,
Among 18 other tenements in three blocks.

Near to the bungalow occupied then
By Dr Mutaliq, and Mr P R Parthasarathy IPS
Superintendent of Police, and 10 years my senior.

Had picked up very little Marathi in Mussoorie
And feeling alone in this place, no friend,
No relative, and me looking blank on holidays.

Wrote home accordingly, and father responded promptly,
Come back, leave the job: for a middle-class family
To tell the eldest son to leave IAS: but my dad was special.

Nearly 10 years later in Buena Vista Mumbai
I remember on the balcony telling me wife
"Let us get out: We can go back, I leave IAS,

And work as Lecturer but let us quit and move
From here, the State and go far away from people
Who disturb our family happiness".

The daughter, only child, six years old
In the next bedroom on the 15th floor,
Unaware of the turmoil among adults around.

Everything subsides: nothing remains: I did not leave IAS:
Time has a way of turning both ordinary and disturbing
Material, churning them and in time transmuting into gold.

Thirty years later now I write verse around those words,
Which have lived in memory, accompanied by events
Of no ordinary significance: does gold have anything more?

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Twenty-Sixth January

Brightness was falling from the air,
Like every evening from Elizabethan
Till now, the lone fruit-bat flying west,
Reflections of sky and advertising boards
Defining boundary of water-body by rail.

The young girl, utterly fair and healthy
Holds my attention for some time,
Till cell-phone of her handsome partner
Intrudes leaving her separated, morose.
Put out, I look down the skywalk into garden.

I see a woman playing with kids on haunches
With light from behind her falling into my eyes
Hiding her face and features. The young pair
In one corner seriously talking, with the boy
Looking elsewhere and the girl glued to his face.

Two small kids pass by gravely, the girl holding
The younger boy by the hand rightfully;
Today being our sixtieth republic day
The FM radio is patriotic, while I find us freely
Doing every corrupt thing, in equal measure!

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Two Groups

We can be divided into two groups
The perfectible, and the perfect.

I fall into the perfect group, thinks my wife,
For I speak with assurance and arrogance.

But she thinks she is the perfectible group,
Which is modest, and thinks it can improve,

And perfect itself in future, and perhaps never
Does, ha ha ha! that is the eternal joke on them.

Now I shall reveal to you what led to the birth
Of this sad but realistic poem on Gandhi jayanti.

Waheeda and husband had come home being Id,
The Muslim festival, and a holiday for us all

Because Gandhi chose to be born on this day.
I had to leave to meet the guy from Hong Kong.

While leaving Waheeda and hubby at home,
I got into the car and thought came up in me

Waheeda is a good and warm friend to us both,
But she is a no brainer, my mind threw up.

I checked myself at the impudence of it:
How can I judge: judge not, judge not

Not just to be mathlabi, and therefore
I shall not be judged because I don't judge.

That is the hallmark of the traditional Jew.
Same problem, world survives on prejudices.

So, while moving in the car to Powai Lake
To the beautiful Renaissance Hotel

To meet Mr Avinash Mukherjee from Hong Kong
COO of a German company of Ship-management

I decided I shall write about the perfect
And the perfectible, noted on a slip

With the pen I always keep in the car
Along with notes to keep the memory on.

Journey of thousand miles begins with a step,
And the birth of a poem is with a thought

And a word that stands for a metaphor
Or feeling which springs from within.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Two Things

From where I am now
In the context of my age,
Position, location and family,
Two things only count:
One is pain, what is;
The other is - what is going to be -
Of limbs, faculties, memory,
And the final going to be - of life, death.

Of the latter, I am not afraid:
As I experienced three years ago,
When my parameters were sinking
On the angio-plasty table in cath-lab,
I was conscious fully that in seconds
Not me, but my body could be carted out,
Dead, and yet I didn't feel fear.

For some time now, the aim has been
To get used to pain;
I have seen my mother in late 70s
And father in mid-90s,
Suffering from pain, pain, pain;
I read in their eyes what each felt,
And stood helpless by their side,
At the most pleading with the doctors
To give another morphine shot.

Dear reader, I try to train myself
To look at pain, my own, physical pain,
By staring at it, concentrating on it;
There is no magic to it, but it strengthens me
To bear pain. Even a simple plaster
When being pulled out with hairs
On my skin, gives me good lesson
To bear pain. When an injection
Is given, or I bang my head or leg
I don't close my eyes and pray
To be rid of the pain, but seek
Strength to look at, explore and bear

The pain, thus obtained.
I convert each incident into an exercise
To train to bear the pain fully,
With no anodyne.

Pain not physical doesn't bother me
Because I have no attachment to
Anyone or anything:
No special consideration, no ambition
No liability, no regret, no lingering on:
At least that is what I try to be.

When it comes to my wife
Of thirty-six years now, I cannot like Jesus
Of his mother, say, "Who is she? "
But I do react to her moods, and words
Instantly, despite trying not to;
But I know it is my weakness
Last infirmity of my poor mind?

It is fine, words are ok, saying them
Is easy: when the test comes
It pushes me, makes me worried
Upset, go quiet, tolerate, get irritated,
Maybe say something harsh which puts off
All around: but I know that once
I reconcile to pain and to death
I have achieved my nirvana
And that is the best training I can
Give to myself before going beyond.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Two Voices

Stray dog, black tall and big,
Walks in front, turns to look:
I see the red, raw wound
On its left eye,
He has no complaint, almost majestic.
I feel "Thank God,
I wouldn't have been able to take it."

I think simultaneously
How existence can
Have this treatment
Meted out to him,
No fairness, or what?
But bending my mental knees
I do not presume to proceed.

Seeds of unhappiness,
And of happiness
Are sown the moment
We start comparing.....
And yet, 'progress' requires it
But do we want that
At the cost of going up and down?

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

U Turns Of Life

I have become an aggregator
A few years ago, but after ed
As I recall when I went from home in Bandra,
To south Mumbai, I would try to think of
Every other thing to be done, and list it.
It began with one timebound thing
Say file data with CA for IT return
Then why not buy that book in the Strand
Take some passport photographs in the Asiatic
Opposite Churchgae, buy a DVD in Rhythm House,
Give watch for repair, buy pair of missing
Brown socks, and so on.

This leads to forgetting some,
And then to doubt about memory,
Onset of Alzheimers, or fear of Parkinson
Genes from Papa.

Now I am in a 'disaggregating' spiral
Dont want to link up one to the other
But just want to finish one before
Even thinking of another, let alone doing them
In a combined manner.

Every U-turn

Lets me climb up to Ooty hill station.
Soon I know the same succession of U-turns
will also bring me down to the ground, flat
From vertical to horizontal too!

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Unborn

After lights were put off for sleep,
And I drew myself the blankets on,
I had a poem springing to life
Within me.

I knew that if I dont sit up
And write it down now,
I may not be able to do it ever
And yet I slept.

Now I remember only this thought
Accompanying that child not born
But not a bit of the face
Or parts of that child!

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Uncle

I am walking on the Marine Drive as is my wont
Every morning, when I hear some shouts,
Which is usual, Indian streets being noisy:
I kept walking, but repeatedly one word
Penetrates my ears; it is coming across the street
In front of the residential block of NCPA
From the other-side of pavement at Nariman Point.

After a few moments' resistant persistence,
I turned across to the face the direction of shouts,
And found a group of teenage boys and girls
Twenty-somethings with all pairs of eyes at me,
Calling out to me across the street,
Uncle, uncle, uncle, uncle... "Please take our photo".
I crossed the street, and froze them and me in time.

I have been son, brother, bhau, friend, young man,
Respected Sir, etc but never an uncle for public.
It came as a shock this Station where the train has arrived.
Not that I thought I would not grow old, not at all.
Well did I know about change and time and getting old.

But with all that knowledge,
Awareness of passing time,
Graduating to be uncle was a surprise.
It is one of those defining moments,
Behind which I cannot go now.
That was a different me then.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Under The Clouds

Till 68 I did not ever use it
Always walked out in the rains
Or, continued walking without umbrella
On the Marine Drive,
In the Priyadarshni Park on Nepean Sea Road,
An extension of the Warden Road.

Now I don't want to add trouble to wife
By catching cold, sneezing etc
And so been taken to Amarsons shop
By Anil having seen my wife go there

Searching for a rain-coat for herself.
I waited to buy a small one for men
But ended up buying a larger
Maroon-colored one.

The cold rain drops on my arms exposed,
On the leg, between the shirts and skin
Sexily chill, while swinging my arms
And out of the range of my umbrella.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Understand Death?

Read Alcestis of Euripides on iPad
What genius! Great questions! !
The wife ready to die for Admetus:
Heracles defeating death,
And bringing her back to friend.

My mind travels to Kathopanishad
No fight with death there but serious
Pointings out on senses, self and mystery.
Despite many readings the substance remains
to me Unknown, like bourne of no return.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Unknown

If Elizabeth had died and gone early,
Diana crowned queen, young and fair,
The dark tunnel might not have claimed her.
Don't know what affects who, when and how.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Unpredictable

Do I want a life of certainties?
I will get it
I will see a movie today
I will finish this book tonight.

Will it make it boring?
If I learnt how to bring
About everything I want
In a sure way, there is no charm left.

It is like having a sky
With stars in the constellation
In geometric shapes
Like circle, square or rectangle.

Life as it is, is more interesting
Pleasant and keeps one alive
All senses at work
And internally, god-like.

17.08.2013

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Unusual

Yester-eve from skywalk steps
I saw a pair, dawdling
And then sat on the side wall
Down below.

Girl was Muslim
And young, covered in black
Fair face shining above,
Attractive and tall...

While I was watching them,
The man opened his mouth
Not to say sweet nothings,
But to yawn!

I was shocked: how can he,
With this young and pretty girl by his side
I cannot imagine myself doing it
I wonder what she thinks when he yawns?

Of course if he yawned there has to be
A reason for that: maybe surfeit
Of her presence, or worried about
House, money or parents.

The yawn did not affect her
As far as I could see; she was
Normal, not under pressure,
The pair had gone when I returned.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Up Above The World So High!

Back-stroking on the blue waters
Of the pool in Sandesh The Prince,
The hotel in Mysore, place known for
Brindavan Garden and the Mysore Palace
Lit bright on Sundays, drawing
Crowds ready to stand an hour
In queue jostling with the foreign tourists
Each holding a drinking water bottle
With the blue cap.

Back-stroking in vacancy, suddenly
I see high above three paraiah kites
Circling in the evening Sun,
Showing transparent, golden wings
Feathers shining brilliantly,
Slow and steady and majestic.

I get out of water, and lie on
The recliner out of the pool on blue white
Towel, and now I see patches
Of white cotton sky, and lo and behold!
I see a speck moving near the stars
Almost in God's heaven: I am thrilled
With my own eyesight, and wonders
Of Nature. While I am at it,
I locate five more black dots developing
All into birds up above the sky,
Without a care in the world:
Why would they go that high,
Where there is no food, no place to perch and rest,
As we human would consider?

They are
Jonathan Livingston Gulls out
To savor life, and not compete!

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Urban

I see, while walking in the evening
On the sinuous Bandra skywalk,
I see this battalion on the left below,
As soldiers they fall in line, silently,
Waiting, ready to spring, in attention.

To let fly once they receive orders;
More of them joining from Dharavi,
Slow-moving, but large and intimidating,
Filling up the gaps at the far distance,
And coming to a halt joining the wait.

On the right, I see another battle
Where the arrows are flying past
And fast, having two fireballs in front
And carrying bright red tail-spots
On Thackeray Bridge beside Mithi river.

Some arrows are flying faster
Making way through irregular gaps
Moving forward perhaps for recce-ing,
Not questioned but weakly by others
Who also move towards the frontline.

For this entire warfront, the commanders
Stationed in their spots on vantage position,
With an orange middle eye like Shiva:
When he opens the top red eye, it is "Halt"
When he opens the low green eye, it is "Move".

Urban life is one long and tense battle series
Guided by logistics signals for hot missiles
In which are carried who don't know
Where they are headed, to or from,
Nor what they want when they reach.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Vanitas Vanitatum

Just checked Poemhunter Reports.
Only ten hits for whole of yesterday,
And I have 382 poems on the site.

Earlier it used to be 80 to 100 hits
A day: when it reduced, I consoled
Myself this way, and that way!

I concluded that the method
Of counting has changed,
Or somehow mistakes are creeping in.

The tracking counter does not like
What I write: or that the modern
Reader does not like to read

What I write either because
He is yet to go through stage of life
That draws him to spend time

To read what I have gone through
And thought it worthy to record -
But then, I know it is only my Vanity!

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Vodka

My head aches, and a lousy feeling
Of having succumbed remains;
Last night, as a diabetic, I had refused
All drinks in the evening at President Hotel
In Cuffe Parade, with new Secretary Shipping;
Later, in Mayfair rooms at Worli, celebrating
Wedding anniversary of Ashok and Ranjana
Who were my Assistant Collectors in Kolhapur,
I was happy mingling with colleagues, young and old,
Till Ashok came, shook hands to express delight,
Pushed me to the bar, and while I said 'No',
Then no only to whisky, finally agreed to vodka
And said no to 'sprite' as too sweet to mix,
I agreed to vodka with orange juice.

As usual I drank my first glass fast, kept chatting
With empty glass in hand till
A nice waiter-boy came solicitously
To refill and I didn't say anything,
So, there I was a confirmed serious diabetic
With second glass, and this morning's headache.

Lucky, by the time I composed these lines
In my mind, while walking on the BKC pavement
In front of the three Reserve Bank of India buildings,
The headache disappeared, but leaving
I am sure, a high sugar level in my blood.

'Lord, what fools these mortals be! ',
I can hear Puck's birdsong
Along with sparrows and pigeons
Under the light blue morning sky.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Walking And Reading

Hail to thee! Each a mighty prop to old age,
Me retired, withdrawing, and unambitious:

Present back-ache should not become chronic
Unable to walk and exercise, increasing sugar.

Decade old diabetes mellitus of mine,
Should not become cause of blindness

I can't imagine spending stationary time,
In darkening gloom, not able to read classics.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Want To See

I love to read poetry.
Today was reading 'Edge'
By Sylvia Plath – what
A musical name! Nevertheless
She committed suicide soon

After, deliberately edged herself out;
The poem has one image, 'as petals
Of a rose close when the garden
Stiffens', made me think
Whether I have seen it happen.

Cut out, O poet! everything;
Leave only a few essentials,
The reader will weave the net,
Make the image and even
Fall down to worship, trapped.

Cuts across my mind
Memory of something else,
Read a few days ago;
Wanting to recall an image
From a poem by R M Rilke.

In parallel, my mind
Runs to a scene in Khopoli
Where I saw the white lilies
Close even by eleven o'clock
In the morning, amid round leaves.

But roses, whatever I have seen
The petals wither and widen
And become flaccid like all,
And fall away; don't recall
Seeing them 'closing back'

Searched and searched and got
What I wanted: the line
From Rilke: in his 'Orpheus.

Eurydice. Hermes': "her sex had closed,
Like a young flower at nightfall".

That is ok; flowers some close
In the dark: but, queenly roses -
I want to see the rose garden,
Not of Eliot but of Wordsworth,
Whether the roses close or wither.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Watching The Moon

At less than 10 degrees from the horizon,
The full moon, looking pale yellow, rises:
I can see it unlike the Sun in that place;
Struck by color, I watch it moving up.

As the full moon climbs up the silent sky,
And reaches 30 degrees, the yellow becomes
Very light greenish, and at 45 degrees it takes
Over normal color, associated with full bright moon.

Change is built into life, and existence,
From the rock to the color of the full moon:
Trust not that things will remain the same,
Or, that the relationships will not change.

As a child, I have heard my elders say -
'Ettusuraikkai kuuttuku udavaadhu'
Meaning in Tamil what vegetable you see
On paper cannot serve the purpose of food!

Having learnt that things change,
That nothing is permanent in life,
Are we ready to move from moment
To changing moment, without losing our cool?

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Watching The Rains

Standing on ground floor and watching the rains,
Like so many maggots, living insects
The drops jump and squirm above earth
As if they are alive, and enjoying life.

The drops falling from heaven
May change the size or intensity,
But the dropp falls independently,
Till it falls down, joining with neighbors.

The sound of murmuring rain,
Raising its voice in waves of intensity
That go up and down like in a sonata
Drowns out all other interruptions.

The cement-concrete road in BKC
Shines with liquid light, like a bride,
Newly laid, spreading wetness below
Ready to receive more thrusts from above.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

We Are Like This, Only - II

Regardless of the levels of hierarchy,
High or low, rich or poor, old or young,
We interrupt one another, and feel not sorry.

Does it mean the Indian cannot keep quiet,
Be patient when he feels he has understood
The speaker even though latter may not be done;

But our man has enough stored in his mind which
Calls for response, and he cannot await
His turn but must interject, ejaculate.

I just entered our corner shop Anand Stores,
I asked for yoghurt, he said "doesn't come now, "
Wandered to chat with his friends, and argue.

Unusually, I raised my voice to remind him
I am not done yet; he got me some dahi, and
Before I could ask for Thumbs-up, out again!

Consideration for others: isn't it best any time?
Courtesies: observed only by some foreigners?
Should we not adapt to be among the best?

As long as we don't change to be patient and sensitive,
The world smiles before us, and sniggers behind our back.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

We Are Like This, Only!

My Kingfisher Boeing landed in Delhi airport
And I seated on 8 A, on my window-seat alone
Experience many sounds of many types,
Heavy thud of the back-tyres, and then
Thick metallic part of plane vibrating to noise,
Then the front tyre landing to a different sound,
Then what arises from the interaction on runway,
Other loose things singing their grating chorus.

When I see on the airport ground
Two human beings too close for comfort
In these days of daily terrorist blasts,
Looking like employees: the second man
With both hands in front – in the way we associate
With only one thing. My countryman was 'peeing'
In the glare of the morning at 9 am showing back to the plane.
Natural citizen of a great superpower, not bothered.... eh?

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

We Are Seven - Syllables?

To sleep, eat, read, talk or listen
Is all that exhausts my time
Till Death would put a full stop
To the entire process.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Wetlands Of Bandra East

Morning walk of two kilometres as usual
Partly on BKC roadside, partly on skywalk
And with the pair of binoculars.

Southside of Anant Kanekar Marg,
Waterbodies on railway lands hosts
A great number of birds: I saw egrets
Of all sizes, diving and upping cormorants,
Pond herons a-plenty, displaying peace
While flying, or merging into dirty environs,
Sparrows perching at the mouth
Of cement pipes on the municipal drainage
Guarding their females from undesired attention.

Mithi river flows mirroring
A pair of river terns, white and flying
With powerful strokes, south of skywalk towards
The Arabian Sea on the West,
A mynah with more black around the face,
Flies down the huge hoarding,
While a sparrow keeps jumping upwards,
As if climbing a staircase on the same hoarding;

I take a turn to the left on the skywalk,
And I see through binocs a cock-pheasant
Fairly up on the tree, with a male koel besides
And two bluish crows sitting so close to make
Me feel it is a new exotic bird!

Winter is the season for birdwatching when
The river remains a sewer and water-pools
Absorb all the shit and waste from the banks...
Without waterbodies and trees, where would birds be?
How long will they survive in clean neighborhood?

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

What A Pleasure!

Saw the white half-moon
Over the dark Backbay
On this monsoon night.

I did not expect to see
Anything bright in the sky
Filled with grey and dark clouds.

By the time I was in Worli Sea-face
The Moon had burrowed a nest
For itself and happily looking out for me!

Moment like this takes me
Out of myself, and floats me
To the Empyrean, is that the word?

Mumbai
15.08.2013

1

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

What Do We Live For?

By the time we reach
The stage to ask this question
We have passed a few years on earth:
We have studied, acquired some skills,
Landed some employment, and married
And are steaming along the way,
Getting higher bands in career
Producing children at home.

When the question arises in 40s
Wife consoles, diplomatically reminding
You have to get your daughter
Married, and build your own house,
Neighbours and colleagues say
That you are yet to reach the top
Become the CEO, or get pension.

Later interested in philosophy,
And yoga and meditation,
One watches one's breath,
Goes inward and start visiting temples:
If not proceed to Igatpuri
To learn vipassna,
In any case quoting
Sacred texts unctuously.

Then one realizes
That it is still a journey
To where one doesn't know
Physical death being only certainty.

Is this the objective,
Is it what we came for?
Or, having been born,
We are throwing up options
To satisfy ourselves in this game,
All answers being irrelevant!

What Is Right?

Mosquitos in the running car are a pain;
I am ready to kill them
The surgeons with the rolling syringe,
But for thinking of Jains and others

Who believe in nonviolence and no killing,
Wearing masks to avoid the creatures
Being breathed in,
Not eating food at night for same reason,
Makes me think.

Some take intermediate position
Of downing the windscreen
To gently guide them out of the car.
I wish they were more susceptible
To such software.

If there was month-old baby
Sleeping in the car,
And a fat winged creature sucking blood
From her curvy cheek,
What happens?

Would even a light push
Of the blood-gorged insect
Lead to its death
With bursting of blood, staining
The innocent cheek?

What should not be done, and why
Is what puzzles me.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

What Joy!

How many more full moons will I see before I die?

Tonight it is bright: on a clear May sky.
In front, a bright Venus is sloping West
I am listening to Parag Trivedi on iPod
Appreciation of Western Classical Music.
Parag illustrates with Grieg's morning
And Chopin's Raindrop.
I am hale and hearty at sixty-four
Enjoying the use of all my faculties
Enjoying the breeze and my evening walk
Without a care, or any deadlines.

I decide to walk more than usual
Climb up the skywalk for two kms more
On way back I find the Moon
In the midst of black and grey clouds
Of a shape irregular, wordless
To describe when the last bit of the Moon
Hides into the cloud but soon emerges
Like the train from the Konkan tunnel
Till my beloved from her sleep in the morning
Like a bright young girl into sunlight
Like the butterfly from the cocoon
Like a poem in my clumsy, confused head!

After gazing at the Moon from stairs
Of the skywalk, I climb down:
In those few moments
The sky has cleared again
Like by magic! She is now
Just alone in solitary splendour
Shining greenish soft light
In a full sky, full of inscrutable life.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

What Possibilities!

Duino Elegies of Rilke

Are whose elegies?

Occasioned by whose death?

And, who is composing them?

The German poet who had worked

With the French sculptor, Creator

Of the Thinkers or the Kiss – Auguste Rodin

Wrote these ten elegies over ten years.

He could imagine himself in place of the dead

And formulate the hopes and fears of theirs

And spelt them out in these elegies

And a few other poems and sonnets.

As the Russian Marina Tsvetayeva wrote to him in 1926

“You are poetry itself”: I still remember how in 2008

I had taken his poems translated by Stephen Mitchell

To Ekanth, the hotel on top of Lavasa during the monsoon.

And got the shock of Rilke’s acquaintance

With that brilliant introduction by Robert Hess:

Rilke feels Eurydice had more things to do by being

In the Underworld than joining Orpheus above!

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

When Will We Learn?

Two women crossing the last part
Of a wide road off BKC Main:
It is then where I hear two-segmented
Sound of the impatient horn
From the free-left turn
By a tourist taxi, issuing irritated
Warning notes making the women
Stop with a shock, hold back
Laughing awkwardly,
Till his Highness passes.

Twenty years ago in Beijing I've seen
Heavier vehicles wait for cyclists to pass,
And cyclists for pedestrians.
Likewise in the developed West,
Have I seen the cars stops for pedestrians
Regardless who is right, and who wrong.

Time is important for everyone, man or woman,
But not more for the rich and car-drivers alone;
Courtesies make life rich and livable.

When will we learn these small things
In our cities in the India
Of Buddha, Gandhi and of nonviolence
That Might is not Right
And being polite is not weakness?

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Which Is Real? Chuang Tzu Or Dream?

To do one thing, or plan to do it,
And before doing it, jump to another,
Seems to be my fate, when alone.

To read newspaper or magazine,
Or watch the TV channel, and which,
Or make the phone-calls is the problem.

But when I am with others,
I behave like a firm person
Who has been a decisive administrator!

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Who Am I?

Flowers are the ultimate,
The essence of existence:
We do not require an Osho
To tell us that - god is
In them, god is the flower.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Who Is The Owner?

Everyone here is now proud of an I-card hanging around
His neck, with the black strap and lamination shining:
I remember years ago in World Bank, Washington
When I saw this, and we did not have security problems
Here in Bombay, I felt sad how these Americans are not
Feeling bad, treated like dogs with a collar around their neck!

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Why This Distancing...?

I would not take the same route
For fear of meeting someone known.

The fear or objection has nothing to do
With him, or our past: nothing unpleasant

Just the fact of meeting a known person
On the morning or evening walk.

On BKC pavement or anywhere
Does not attract me and so I avoid it.

I know many feel happy to meet anyone
Who recognizes one in public, some are proud.

But why? we brothers were discussing
Last week in Chengalpattu in Temple's home.

Perhaps Dad and Mom not encouraging
Anyone to come home or us to go anywhere

Might be the reason. But Rajiv and Temple
Sang together, 'No, it is lack of money'.

I do not think so: it is not necessary
To have money to entertain or go visiting.

26.11.2013

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

With A Kiss

Make me immortal with one
Line of a poem of mine
Treasured by some readers -
Sweet Helen! it's a kiss of thine.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

With Ajay Bhalla On The Rock

Climbed the Rock along with Malini in Khasi Hills,
Khyllang rock about sixty kilometres away West
From pleasant Shillong, the capital of Meghalaya,
Reaching upto the sky by more than 1000 feet.

With a stent in heart, running sixty three years,
I still didn't give up, but reached the top, and no help.
The way was steep, lucky the surface not slippery,
Only the top should be railed in to prevent accidents

We managed quite a few steep slopes like ants in line,
And cracking jokes on everything under the Sun,
Munching biscuits, groundnuts, gulping sandwiches,
And posing every now then with favourites to freeze.

There was a husband rock, the highest and the wife
Just by the side but not so tall and strong, and then
There was a baby-rock which many did not attempt,
But Vijay and I went up there and felt family-men true.

We could see large number of teenage groups
Boys and girls, with no supervisor, climbing up
Like hill-goats, with not a single false step,
But too bold for me to be comfortable.

It was a grand view but the camera even
In video mode doesn't capture the grandeur
As my own eyes do, the depth and periphery
Are observed by natural eyes not artificial.

Moreover the eye captures what comes next moment
And thereafter too, whereas the camera once having clicked
Or captured cannot wait in time or go back to see what is
Happening at the next moment, mind supplying interval.

Ajay Bhalla and his team of officers had taken care
To ensure that no-one will slip or get tired or fall,
Nor would anyone be thirsty or hungry,
It was luxurious outing, in the lap of beautiful Nature.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Woman In India

The BEST bus slowed down on Kalanagar stop
On BKC main road in Mumbai.
There were some passengers waiting,
Two women and one man.
Man was middle-aged, and women much younger.

Since the World Bank assisted long, purple bus
Rolled towards the further end of bus shelter
And the bus was crowded, all the three moved
Towards the front entrance of the bus.

It could be seen no-one was getting off here.
I saw that the man was faster, and got in first.
Thereafter the two women got into the bus.

He could have easily waited and allowed
Or invited the women to go in first.
There was enough space inside, no queue
Or jostling crowd: the bus was halting.
And not rushing off.

I was thinking the Age of Chivalry is dead.
On the streets of Mumbai, and during office-going
Times, there was no chivalry any time
Deferring to women is not middle-class morality.

It is seen in the top and upper middle class
Mostly to lay ground for better relationship.
If enough time and chance were there,
It would lead to flirting to establish
An acquaintance and explore scope for an affair.

In another sense, it is good. We don't treat
Them as weaker vessels! No need to help them.
We are a free country. We believe in equality.
If she cannot run or manipulate to get in
It is her bad luck.

She should not have been born a woman,

Having done so, she has to go through this
Many believe it is her karma. The moving bus
Moves, she has to run and take her chance!

03-06-2013

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Women

Women enjoy life more than men;
A young female employee waits
At the bus-stop in BKC clad in colors
Matching top to bottom, orange.

My daughter gets ready to go to Bank
Dresses up, picks chain to match;
Ear rings are handled daintily.
Looking like a statue, she moves out.

Whatever they see or hear, they register more;
In any incident I would go by her report.
Even in sex, while man reaches the peak fast,
And falls like a waterfall, she floats like an ocean.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Words

I wrote poems on each insight of the moment:
And then suddenly I realise the joy of being
Alive - for, at any moment
There are so many insights
Impinging on me through just five senses.

Wait a minute....

What ignorance to think that I capture life
In words, - empty, poverty-stricken words!

Life of one individual at even any one moment
Is larger than can be put in million words.

No wonder the sages reach for meditation,
Wordlessness and silence of the depths of Being.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Words In Nine Lines, Or Any Number

Every word can be a peppermint.
If it is a proper name, then
It is special, a branded chocolate
you can put it in your mouth
Such and lick but not gulp it down
Bite and masticate and savor it
Word will yield its essence to you
And become part of your memory structure
With sound, music and meaning.

Every word is also a jail
Holding its inmates
With its own measurements
Having different appetities
And alive for different tenures,
Disappearing only when she decides.
I cannot imagine that my life
Can continue as it is without words
And yet I dont pause to poemize them!

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Wordventures

Between Tawang and Bumla,
It is said there are 150 lakes.
Today we saw at least twenty-five
Expanses of water, some edged with ice.

Suddenly the word 'tarn' floating
Came to my mind from 'Fidelity'
A poem by Wordsworth I did in school,
'Tarn' is a small lake high in the mountains.

Across the chasm of fifty-five years,
The contextual importance of the word,
Bubbles up within me, as I wind my way
To Bumla to step on to Chinese territory.

What if I were to find the word is gone,
No longer in use, in the dictionaries;
Marked obsolete or extinct; but for me,
Still the word lives within my brain-cells.

Like that dog, I am loyal to the word -
Riches of experiences are embedded
In images, recalled mostly in words,
Sometimes in other forms of fine arts.

I find that pure travel from anywhere
To anywhere out of the way thrills me;
There should be no objective behind the travel,
Not a business proposition, or specific destination.

It is during these peregrinations,
That my mind dives deep,
Or wanders around and comes up
With experiences to be put in poems.

I know, I know many would not read them:
Dismiss them as diary, or as prose;
But it does not matter: I like this form
To release what process goes on inside.

After all, established poets have written
How much of poetry? You wade through pages
And then come up with two poetic lines
To be quoted, and read again and again?

Your reading of poetry should change:
You should not look for 'poetic' lines,
But see beneath the words and images,
Whether anything worthwhile is conveyed.

When T S Eliot writes of 'smokefall',
It becomes worthy of comment:
So should it be when I fly into the clouds
And high mountains on my wordventures?

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Worry

If I have to, have to do anything,
I get tensed up.
Why? Because it means
That I have to make more
Or lose money than I get now;
That I get name of achiever,
Of knowing more than other;
That I get praised
For efficiency or punctuality
Or whatever;
That I get or lose power;
That I don't have the suspected disease,
Or I have it,
And so on.

If I don't have to be tensed up,
I should not bother about money or power,
Fame or achievement or pain or disease:
If I reach that position,
The chances are I would be dull,
Bored and full of inertia.
Is middle path more important?

One should care about these things,
But not to the extent
Of generating tension.
Do one's duty, and not expect,
Not have, any right to fruit the result
As Krishna or Christ advises.

Chuang Tzu says: "Success is not for him
To be proud of: failure is no shame".
Such a Kingly Man too, like golden lads and girls,
Must come to dust and death.
Why then build up tension within?

Say I to my own self then:

I am worried whether I shall

Reach on time, whether boss will be unhappy,
Whether I have to undergo eye-operation,
And you are preaching about death.
As if I don't know that everyone has to die.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Worship

Summer in Bandra
Bursts into red and yellow,
In copper-pod and gul mohur
Though now gul mohurs
Are dying out: the fresh bloom
I once saw near Yashodhan
In Churchgate has grown
Showing signs of old age.

Today at the signal
Where we turn left towards
Family Court and MMRDA
I saw two green plants
Taller than me sporting
Yellow trumpet-like flowers:
Two of them standing
Like dwarkapals of old
For the traffic signal
Which is the guiding God
Today, saving us from disasters.

I stood and counted -
One has 120 bouquets
Each having 8 to 10 flowers.
The bees and flies
Were frantically busy
Just like the drivers
Of vehicles doing namaskars
And peregrinations around
The modern traffic signal
And going about their jobs.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Writings

I had given her all the verse I had written.
She sat like a judge on my productions.

"Some are good, but not poem-poems,
She said, sitting tense in my office-chamber,

Gesturing inverted commas
With both her hands.

My vanity was surely hurt:
What was worse, I knew that already.

"Burn them", I said.
Didn't write a poem after that.

Why did her view affect me so much?
Because she had written poetry,
Four pages of her poems
In a marathi magazine I have seen.

Or, is it because I liked her?
She knew a lot about life and love.
She was half my age,
Challenged my academic distinctions

Matching with her own; and,
No stranger to modern literature:
Not as she charged 'square' like me,
She could wander around with ease.

All that was long ago: now I feel
Her comments need not stop
Flow of words or ideas springing,
From being written down.

Nine years are a long period.
Life is passing by...
Let me start writing what I feel,
As I complete sixty-two years today.

20.12.2007

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph

Yielding

Monsoon has broken out this year on time
And yet I have not penned a poem, using
A few green metaphors springing from the depths;
But keep reading management and marketing
Books, dry-as-dust. Ere I die,
Can I afford to let even one monsoon go?

Now I see the green mattress in front of me
Pommelled by hard, glass-like pestles
Of the rains straight from above
Banging the supple grass, with nearby trees
The green-robed senators watching the bed, on which
Lucrece, Philomela do not resist, but accept....

When the breeze blows through the sheet of rain,
Waves get created, rolling zigzag
And spreading out into thin air and drizzle
Against the colorless gray sky of monsoon
That descends into the essence of life,
To impregnate every form of life still.

I see through the gaps of falling lines of rain
And find water-surface, reflecting begetter
Smiling from above, while blind commuters
Standing with umbrellas over their heads,
Men and women with no identifiable pattern,
But eyes searching for BEST bus number from afar.

Modern life has no place for drama in the heavens,
Or intimate facts of life in nature or presented in art
But for only amassing of wealth and hurrying up,
For pumping in the dark without a care
For what happens to the woman in her muscles
In her pains and joys, and gentle closing of eyes to dream.

Daniel Trevelyn Joseph