

Musings on life: An anthology of poeTRY
by
RAJAN MADHOK



June 2020

Table of Contents

DEDICATION	6
INTRODUCTION.....	7
THE REASON.....	11
Moksha	11
THE PLACE	11
North Wales	11
THE MEANS	12
As they come	12
Is this poetry.....	12
Literary peasant	12
THE PROMISE	13
Be	13
BACKGROUND	14
The immigrant.....	14
Slow realisation.....	14
Epiphany	15
FRIENDSHIPS	17
Lunch with a friend.....	17
Ruby class reunion (1)	17
Ruby class reunion (2)	17
College years	18
Home	18
Friends (1): Count your blessings	19
Friends (2): The wise one	19
Friends (3): Help me	19
Friend (4): Win: win.....	20
Friends (5): If only	20
Friends (6): Hypocrite	20
Humanity.....	21
Life's pleasures	21
Happy New Year (1)	21
Happy New Year (2)	22
FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS.....	23
Your parents	23

Same but different.....	23
Birth	23
No second chance	24
Partner (1).....	24
Partner (2).....	24
OLD AGE AND MORTALITY	25
Body count.....	25
Death	25
Living will – living well	25
Euthanasia	26
Just rewards.....	26
You know what is coming next.....	27
Old age	27
Only the lonely	28
Living dead.....	28
Never say die	29
Life goes on	30
Why be afraid.....	30
Setting example	30
PEARLS OF WISDOM.....	32
Retirement	32
Same to same.....	32
Daring greatly.....	32
Carpe diem	33
Kindness of strangers	33
Musturbation	33
Surrender.....	34
The search goes on	34
You matter	34
Do not take the easy option	35
Blind spot.....	35
Meaning of life.....	35
Worthwhile life.....	36
Gratitude and hope	36
If I could turn the clock back.....	36

Que sera sera	37
In Search of Meaning.....	37
Their Life.....	37
Donot Confuse Things	38
Whatsup.....	38
Self love	38
You are important	38
Root Cause	38
Solution.....	38
Anger	38
Love	39
Money	39
All that matters.....	39
Let your hair down	39
Forgiveness	40
Secret of happiness	40
The sweetest.....	40
I believe.....	41
Impotent rage.....	41
The good life	42
Imagine	42
Stupid man.....	43
Best gift.....	43
Time.....	43
Biding time	44
Hear ye, hear ye	44
Being human.....	44
In case	44
Chasing recognition	44
Life's Journey.....	45
Slow or fast	45
Here and Now.....	45
BEING WITH NATURE	46
Seasons of the sun	46
Childhood joys	46

Carrying on	46
Got you black dog	47
Walking on New Year's day	47
Home	48
Walking on hills and moors	48
In the woods.....	48
The best meal, ever	48
Let off by snow.....	49
Hill walking	49
Fellowship of strangers	50
AND FINALLY	51
Life is beautiful	51
This too shall pass	51
We are all philosophers now	52
Joy	52
Seeking joy	52
Talisman	53
Digital sabbath	53
Silence is golden.....	53
Talking is over-rated	53
EPILOGUE	55
The end or new beginning.....	55
Legacy	55
ABOUT ME	56

DEDICATION

This anthology is dedicated to the friends who supported me on my journey. I have been very privileged to have had them in my life at various stages since I first arrived in the UK on 03 Sep 1980. So, on the 40th anniversary of my arrival here - THANK YOU.

ITHACA

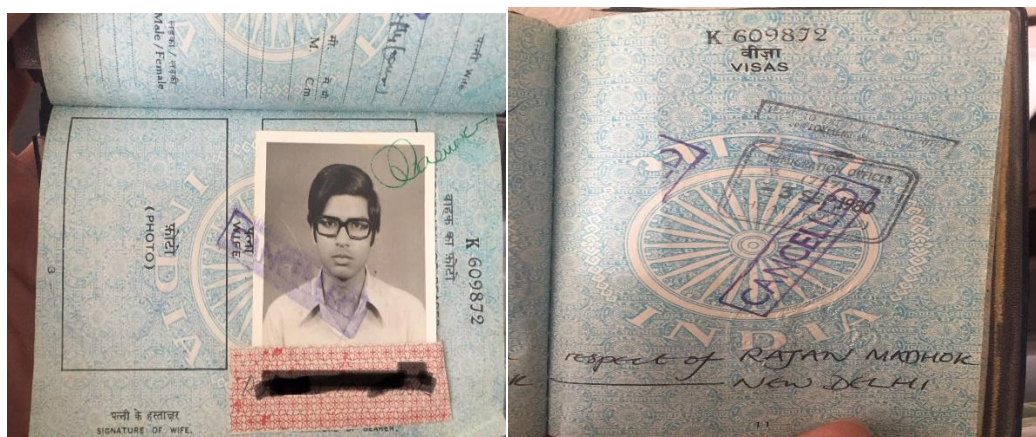
*“Hope your road is a long one.
May there be many summer mornings when,
with what pleasure, what joy,
you enter harbors you’re seeing for the first time;
may you stop at Phoenician trading stations
to buy fine things,
mother of pearl and coral, amber and ebony,
sensual perfume of every kind—
as many sensual perfumes as you can;
and may you visit many Egyptian cities
to learn and go on learning from their scholars.*

*Keep Ithaka always in your mind.
Arriving there is what you’re destined for.
But don’t hurry the journey at all.
Better if it lasts for years,
so you’re old by the time you reach the island,
wealthy with all you’ve gained on the way,
not expecting Ithaka to make you rich.*

*Ithaka gave you the marvelous journey.
Without her you wouldn’t have set out.
She has nothing left to give you now.*

*And if you find her poor, Ithaka won’t have fooled you.
Wise as you will have become, so full of experience,
you’ll have understood by then what these Ithakas mean.”*

C P Cavafy



INTRODUCTION

In 2010 with my seventh reorganisation of the NHS looming I decided to 'bail out'. As I mentioned in the Compendium (see About Me section later) I became disillusioned with the organisation and management of the NHS. I had chosen to work in the NHS, being from India, and which I thought was the best healthcare system in the world but struggled with the constant political and managerial interferences and the inability to review and address the major design and operational challenges to realise the vision of the worldclass system. I was no stranger to reorganisations and indeed had benefitted from the changes in the past, but something had gone wrong this time. The self-questioning made me wonder whether my approach needed to change- the world was, is and will be, complex, unjust, unequal and one must find a way to be effective. Rather than expect the world to change I had to change myself and not be frustrated. Accordingly, having raised my concerns with the authorities, and having seen the fate of many whistleblowers and knowing I did not have the 'courage' to follow through I signed the Confidentiality Agreement (yes), took redundancy and left in my mid 50s. Not something I had planned or considered and to be honest I was gutted, having worked hard in the NHS despite challenges and having achieved certain positions I felt I was finally at the peak of my career and capable of doing more, but the circumstances and the way things were in the NHS left me little choice.

But what to do then? Having lived to work – with punishing commutes and workloads life had passed me by- and with no extracurricular interests I was not ready for 'retirement'. So I worked on various projects to see how to remain busy and to add value including undertaking the 300 mile Jarrow protest march to save the NHS. All this further confirmed to me the need for changing self – to understand the world as it is, not as it should be, and work and live accordingly. Ultimately what I needed was to find the new meaning and purpose for my life.

As part of my journey I also interacted with colleagues/friends and discovered that I was not alone - to small and large extents many others were also preoccupied with the 'Existential' questions (this is very apt given that I am writing this introduction during the COVID 19 crisis – the poems were written over the last few years). So what I am sharing with you is the distillation of my learnings over the last ten years. I chose to present this in verse- see later for my poetic credentials! – as I (re) discovered the love of poetry.

Poetic cures

*A pill for every ill
but what if a poem also
to give way to feelings
grief, anger, disappointment
joy, happiness and peace
to provide solace and celebrate*

*Words hurt but also heal
try it for self and others*

One of the criticism of this volume would be the 'Nostalgia/Wishfulness' tone and which I submit is inevitable since most of the time when people start their journey of self-discovery they dwell on what was lost and how things could have been different. In my case the reason for putting these thoughts down was to get stuff out of my system so that the 'negative' can no longer be a part of me. I read extensively and eclectically to understand life and self and though this has been very useful the bottom line is that such analysis does not by itself provide answers. So if you are looking for one then I will disappoint you; I am not going to list the 'best' books or 'prophets' – there is no shortage of examples of such but everyone is different and has to find their own way. More than anything else it is the process of inquiry not the content *per se* that helps. I can not now locate the source of the following quote (apologies to the author) and which just about summed it up for me– in essence you should only embark on such a self- analysis if you are prepared:

“ Okay, fine; that’s a form of painful self-consciousness that would be worthwhile – the kind that leads ultimately to deep happiness. But the kind I got from evolutionary psychology was the worst of both worlds: the painful self-consciousness without the deep happiness. I had both the discomfort of being aware of my mental afflictions and the discomfort of being ruled by them. “

Life with its vast inequalities, selfishness, cruelty, tyrants is hard to understand and any one who is not already 'mad' is frankly suspect! At the human level we all want to live decent and happy lives with our near and dear ones but somehow this is not always possible and rather than a win:win we have a win:lose mindset at the societal level. The world does not make sense and life itself has no meaning. And my solution to this has been not to keep digging deeper, there are no answers inside; instead one has to come outside, rejoin the world and do one's best - essentially you have to create meaning.

So, there is all to play for and the break for self-reflection and re-charging is useful but not the 'Nirvana' – life must be lived not squandered. I do not want to make this a religion issue and I respect all religions, and on my part the upbringing, and the life I have led, which exposed me to Hinduism, Islam esp Sufism, Buddhism, Sikhism, and Christianity helped me, and I now practise my own mixture of all these! In addition, two things helped: one, I found Stoicism quite useful in dealing with the sorts of frustrations I had encountered and which helped me with my journey and two, I realised that in the final analysis what really matters is love and laughter; the more you love yourself and others around you and the more you laugh the happier and peaceful you become. Here is my poem on this theme:

Life is too short

*Sod preachy stuff
show me by example
and make me laugh instead*

An anthology of poeTRY

This anthology is self-indulgence and as part of my personal development – as has been all my reflective writing; do not try and read more into it than is intended. It is not comprehensive as there are many other things one could write about, nor is it academic or an answer to the existential questions. It is what it is and worked for me. I offer it as thanks to the people, and organisations, who helped me, including many poets whose work I have ‘plagarised’, and as a ‘gift’ to others who may benefit. I feel that whilst there is no shortage of advice/encouragement on how to be ‘successful’ in the medical profession not much attention is paid to how to be a decent and caring human being and lead a good and balanced life. Often it is just assumed that one will do the right things somehow, I certainly learnt by hit and trial, and wish I knew then what I know now, and friends helped. It is in this spirit that I offer this compendium. .

Healing me, healing you

*What makes you think
I am doing you a favour
it is just the opposite*

Rajan Madhok

LLanbedr Dyffryn Clwyd

NOTE

Poetry is a growing interest even though I have little 'knowledge', training or talent, and I keep dabbling as ideas come to mind, and here is one example.

How's that?

m

Me We

Adam had 'em

Can you beat that

Beauty in brevity

Beyond me

u

About this poem:

I have been curious about concrete/geometric poetry and mixing it with visual art and as a newcomer to poetry wanted to know more about shortest poems. Having found

m by Aram Saroyan, Mohammed Ali's Me We, and Strickland Gillilan's Fleas – Adam had 'em, I wondered how poets came up with such things. The poem is my attempt in this regard; I have tried to go beyond Saroyan and created the letter u (in a different font, and as in you, and also as a phoenitic you hoo – as in expressing joy, just as some say that Mohammed Ali actually meant Me Whee – as irony/bragging –being who he was!).

THE REASON

Moksha

Your life flashes before you
in the final moments
as soul leaves the body
they say.
But what do you say?

Sorry for
not being yourself
not chasing your dream
spreading misery
not loving enough?

Or, thank God for
great company and support
a good life lived well
not hurting others
finishing your bucket list?

Aspiring to latter
but doing the former,
do we ever learn
or doomed to endless
cycle of birth and rebirth.

THE PLACE

North Wales

Place to rest and recuperate
fresh air, natural beauty
time to reflect and review
remembering good times, counting blessings
chance to re-energise for the future
practise mindfulness, meditation, morality
Just what is needed
for the body and soul
Cymru am byth

THE MEANS

As they come

Do not look for logic
 No rhyme nor themes
 Some personal
 Others observational
 Sad and glad
 Reality and wishful thinking
 Catharsis, apology, promise, diary
 few good, mainly bad
 Its a jumble
 Just like life
 Here, there and everywhere
 Up one minute down next
 Take them as they come
 What works is what matters
 And if it helps you too
 Then even better

Is this poetry

I just write what comes into my head
 Never having studied poetry in college
 Can not even make the lines rhyme
 Am sure to some this is sacrilege

I seek no reward nor applaud
 I leave those for the proper bard
 I just write for me
 And you if you like

Literary peasant

Acquired taste I say to hide my ignorance
 about certain authors, hard work, big words, complex writing
 fall into the trap, try to read them to show sophistication
 finally able to confess do not get them
 Why write inscrutably
 more rule of four type myself
 four letters to word
 four words to sentence
 four sentences to para
 four paras to page
 less is more, simple is better
 But maybe missing something
 join the book and poetry club

An anthology of poeTRY

learn beauty of language
to appreciate, not deprecate

THE PROMISE

Be

Be yourself
Be here
Be thankful
Be kind
Be happy
Be all and end all
Of being
Now and always

BACKGROUND

The immigrant

Leaving on that jet plane
 for the distant shores
 dream come true
 going to Britain
 new start, new life
 excited and daunted
 Will I make it
 Will it be worthwhile
 Will I miss folk back home
 Will they miss me
 Fast forward four decades
 neither Indian nor British
 pulled by both
 resentful of both
 India of youth gone
 Britain has changed too
 Or is it me
 unable to adapt
 rootless and restless
 the first generation immigrant

Slow realisation

No different to many in my generation
 climbing out of 'ghettos'
 of "post-partition" circumstances
 going to do better and
 conquer the world

Rich, famous and have it all
 solve world hunger and restore peace
 threw self at things full steam
 hustling, hurtling and focussed
 on achievements and recognition

Only to discover too late
 in saving others had lost myself
 finally to admit that love and inner peace
 do not just happen
 but have to be worked on

To save one person is to save mankind
 true, but start by saving self

Epiphany

The b#&^!%s
finally got me in Mumbai
as I tripped and crashed
into the glass door of building gym

Over the water tank cover
with its protruding handle
next to the treadmill
as one steps off

Just one of hundreds of small but
lethal unthinking everyday things
everywhere with everyone oblivious
to what to me were dangers obvious

The over-hanging power cables
the rickety ceiling fans
the uneven pavements
the list was endless

And no amount of ranting
had any effect
it was not solvable
had to be made liveable

So I was trying
to make do and
concentrate on bigger things
like sorting out my life

Who am I
Why am I
How to be better
Can I write poetry

But now it was going to end
with shards of glass cutting
letting precious lifeblood out
with no one to witness nor to help

And immense sadness
at the unfinished business
having to burn in eternal hell
with not having made peace

Lo, the glass held
was it design or providence
but does it matter how
since life could begin now

FRIENDSHIPS

Lunch with a friend

Meandering down memory lanes
 random recollections of events, people
 comfortable being together
 talking only when necessary
 no need to fill silences
 shared quietness with own charm
 no point scoring, no rush
 helping each other cope and enjoy
 truly living in the moment
 making most of time together
 Blessed are those with long friendships

Ruby class reunion (1)

Do you remember....
 And then he said....
 I can not believe that
 But you forgot that bit....
 Oh boy, that was the best
 And by the way where is she
 That's how get togethers go
 As you get older
 And start reminiscing
 With mates
 Tales getting wilder
 As evening goes on
 With spirits higher
 That is how it should be
 Laughing, having fun
 Giving thanks

Ruby class reunion (2)

Is it time already
 40 years since graduation
 It seems only yesterday
 When we were in college supposedly
 Bunking classes
 Watching morning shows
 Trying cheap XXX rum
 And practising 'chat up' lines

And then we scattered
 Across the globe
 Making our destinies

In our own ways
 How has it been for you
 Hope things worked out
 Did you get what you wanted
 Are you at peace

Come and sit by my side
 And tell me all
 Where have you been
 What did you do
 Who have you got
 Did you have fun
 Bring the photos and songs
 And let the party begin

College years

The best years of one's life
 Not just for the good times then
 but also for the lessons
 Many (sadly) only learnt later
 on reflection
 That quiet guy and gal
 nose in the book
 but look what they achieved
 Do not judge things
 by their looks
 Do not underestimate
 the seemingly meek
 who actually have steel inside
 Keep an open mind
 be thankful
 for the chance to observe and learn
 and form friendships
 You never know
 when and how it may pay off

Home

Studied in the college and then worked there till retired
 lived in the same neighbourhood where born till the end
 with occasional forays aside but always the fixed point
 same city, same circle of friends and colleagues
 used to feel sad for them, big world and small existence
 so much to see, do and enjoy and they are missing out
 But now when I look back after life time of wandering
 wish I had never left that place.....

Friends (1): Count your blessings

How are you, not in perfunctory greetings way
 but concerned, serious, eager to hear
 and paying attention to long story
 interjecting, asking questions
 are you sad, how do you cope
 somehow do not seem intrusive from him
 gentle chastisement adds value not resentment
 Fortunate to have his ear, shoulder and counsel
 makes the pain bearable, gives hope
 Talking helps but how much and with whom
 delicate balance, lucky to have such friends
 compassion, empathy personified

Friends (2): The wise one

The lowest point in life and how recovered
 and his story sounds familiar
 well I never
 So calm and wise now
 guess happens to many, if not all
 not alone then and things do pass
 not easy during though but friends help
 stay strong and positive, there is hope yet

Friends (3): Help me

And then it comes out
 skirting around, lingering
 prolonging the call
 just have to wait
 they have to be ready to tell
 before you can help
 too quick and you lose them
 and live in regret

Hindsight can be foresight
 if aware and prepared
 not all forthright
 and it is not easy
 to confess to struggling
 needing help
 as usually on other side
 dispensing advice and support

It can happen to any one

today's strong, tomorrow's weak
 life's ups and downs
 no shame, no triumph
 help and be helped
 roles easily reversed
 based on trust and
 friendships, and with patience

Friend (4): Win: win

Pray for me, says she
 ofcourse and I do
 Why not
 she believes and
 it is no extra effort
 Both better for it
 What else are friends for

Friends (5): If only

That moment when it happened
 should have spoken, reached out
 knowing how much they wanted
 to be seen and heard, valued
 and you turned away, walked off
 not on purpose but unconsciously
 not being alert to clues
 hearts broken, lives changed
 Why did not you ask
 Why did they not say
 Do not drop hints
 leaving other to guess
 be open, drop bricks if necessary
 momentary pain to avoid lifelong suffering

Friends (6): Hypocrite

But you never said that
 except I did in so many ways
 You did not hear me
 believing I was waving not drowning
 Ofcourse you would have been there for me
 if only you knew

Humanity

Just one look or touch
 can make all the difference
 at the right time
 but when and how
 is what defeats most
 as prisoners to own rules
 just being human
 can be difficult
 or easy?

Life's pleasures

Proper breakfast to plan the day
 Lunch with short siesta to recharge
 Leisurely evening meal to unwind
 and the most important of these
 the afternoon tea on weekends
 with scones, cakes and sandwiches
 which must be white bread
 with corners cut off and in triangles
 egg and cress, cucumber, salmon and cheese
 and pots of tea with strainer, milk jug and sugar bowl
 tea cosy optional and all with fine china
 taken with friends, how civilised

Happy New Year (1)

Why such a big deal
 just another day
 like all the others
 before it and yet to come
 why not treat everyday same
 and make it special
 enjoying, giving thanks
 friends and family
 living for the moment
 I do not remember you once a year
 you are in my heart forever
 how can I forget our happy times
 Travel safely through life, my friend
 and may peace be with you
 today, everyday and always

Happy New Year (2)

Blink and the year is gone
and its that time again
No problem it comes around quickly
for it reminds me to get in touch
but the speed does make me wonder
with to do list getting longer and time shorter
but heyho, what matters is how its used
and therein I am grateful
for your company on life's journey
Happy for chance to remember good times
and to wish you and yours
a very merry Christmas and happy new year

FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS

Your parents

They are who they are
good or bad
love or loath them
how you see them
will shape your life
what you do with them
will return to you
you cannot outrun them
they live in you

Same but different

Frustrated at having to repeat
again and again about going away
as elderly mum sits there unable to comprehend
making him sad

Asking again and again about the car
the only word he knows
as the year old grandson toddles around
making him glad

Birth

Another soul arrives
into the big world
Wonder what goes through its mind
howling, pushed out of comfort
where am I? who are these people?

Know what goes through their minds
as parents laugh holding tiny bundle
job done, lineage preserved
An unbreakable bond formed
as each molds the other

No matter what happens later
just remember that first moment
of immense joy and fulfilment
You give them life but
they give you birth

No second chance

Blink and they are grown up
babies one day and adults next
where did time go
Career, money and fame
no substitute for love
the language kids know
Only one childhood
be there or live in regret

Partner (1)

The older you get
The more time you have
To savour, to enjoy
By lingering over small things
Eating, walking, listening
Not winning but losing
At mindless arguments
For the look on other's face
Is what it is about
His heart bursts when she laughs

Partner (2)

Leave room for both to flourish
one yet separate
sharing whats right
not demanding
but accepting with grace
and giving without strings

OLD AGE AND MORTALITY

Body count

And the count keeps rising
 are more people dying or
 am I becoming more aware
 after all I have reached that age
 with reports from friends and family
 mostly old but not that much older
 of course matter of time
 but not fair, some too soon
 all over just when getting the hang
 of life, loving and living
 sad but glad of reminders
 forcing one to stop worrying
 making best use of every moment
 for who knows when its time
 the Grim Reaper will come calling

Death

Why is it so morbid when
 birthdays are celebrated
 marriages are party time
 even divorces are raves
 but no one wants to talk
 or plan for the one thing
 that happens to all
 some get it early
 others later
 But why measure life in time
 Was the deceased happy
 were you happy with them
 that is all that matters
 and if not, then surely
 better that misery has ended

Living will – living well

I may not wear purple with a red hat
 but guess there will be quirks
 I will forget things and to do my chores
 repeat the stories and ask same questions
 develop tics and pull faces
 eat noisily, slurp and splash
 dress sloppily even worse than now
 lose control and break wind loudly

This will be the new me as I get older
 Will you be able to cope or be disgusted
 will you be sad, angry and tired
 Not sure about you but tell you what
 I will be unhappy to lose my mind
 be a nuisance, to be pitied
 alive but not living not for me
 do me one last favour
 when the time comes
 put me out of my misery
 remember me as I was, not as am
 and I will bless you from on high

Euthanasia

Sitting in his lonely chair
 wonder what goes through his mind
 looking back on life, lived well or regrets
 see him everyday on the verandah
 of the nursing home, as I walk past
 with never any company
 well fed, cared for physically
 but for what reason
 his choice or societal norm
 not a fate I want but how to ensure this
 Who said life is sacred and
 must be preserved at all cost
 do not forget who is paying
 for the cruelty masked as caring

Just rewards

Decomposed body found by police
 after terrible smell for days
 nice person, friendly and quiet
 no visitors, led dignified life
 said the neighbours

And then they appeared
 professing love, strong bonds
 happy memories, kindness
 long lost kith and kin
 attracted by the loot

Little did they realise
 he knew them well
 forgiving but not forgetting

what they did and
not rewarding anymore

Never had the full room
emptied so fast
as when his will was read out
the collective groan
and one surprised face in tears

You know what is coming next

You will slow down, get older
fall ill, bedridden and if lucky just die
you will exit the stage
like all before you
making way for others
yet to come
nothing you can do to stop it
one certainty in life

There is another certainty
you can choose to be
depressed or delighted
selfish or selfless
laugh or cry
work hard or be lazy
seek pleasure or true happiness
time would drag or fly

Do not say you do not know
what lies in the future
you know exactly and
you are in control

Old age

Nice young man
say I to his father
after chat at party
very smart and
will go far

Funny man your friend
says he to his father
asked me about
the same things
as last time again

After the party father and I
 remembering our times
 are we losing marbles
 have we become they
 how time flies

Only the lonely

Another day starts after restless night
 give up at six and get out of bed
 cuppa – boiling water, making tea, drinking
 what next, 1400 minutes to fill still
 atleast 'Ivan Denisovitch' had a routine
 here time stretches, one damn day after another
 different gulag – same result
 free yet prisoners, lonely old folk
 does anyone care, has time, patience
 modern suburbia is the new Siberia
 harsh, brutal, pitiless and no escape

Living dead

He was sixty five
 the usual suspects came
 said the right things at his wake
 as if it would have comforted
 He may have survived to that age
 but he did not live

Do you know who is alive
 laughing, having fun
 making the best of life and
 who is just getting on
 biding time, clutching at things
 to give existence credence

Do you talk about life and meaning
 with your friends and near ones
 do you have any, do they tell you
 or are we all lost in this farce
 having more and more and
 yet less and less

Preparing for the Grim Reaper
 Are you ready
 for the day
 when he will come for you
 just as happens to everyone

Read all the books
 and the advice
 about the biggest regrets
 expressed by those at deathbed

Living each day as if last
 working each day as if will live forever
 sleep easy at night
 wake up excited every morning

Have you cracked it
 How did you do it
 Let me in on the secret and
 Good luck to you

Never say die

Loong time
 what news
 Two courses already
 in remission now
 she says
 Leaving you gobsmacked
 How to react
 Drink, she pipes up
 breaking awkwardness
 at the crowded party
 and dancing
 with abandon
 Why not
 Looking into the abyss
 an eye opener
 even liberating
 Who knows about tomorrow
 let us live today
 nothing is over
 until it is over
 till then, enjoy

Life goes on

When I am gone
 promise me not to waste time on
 you wish you had done this or that
 You did what you did and I did what I did
 some times things worked, other times not
 And that is how life is and there is no going back
 the only way is forward, you owe it to yourself and to me
 to keep on living, aiming higher, doing with others the things
 you wish you had done with me, and this will be more than enough
 to make up, not that there is any need but just so that you can feel good
 and we both shall have peace, for it comes from gratitude, forgiveness and love

Why be afraid

Been there, done that
 why look for more work
 Because how else to fill days
 got to do something
 When is enough enough
 Maybe we got it wrong
 no need to stop but divert
 from looking outside to inside
 from doing to being
 from having to giving
 from teaching to learning
 from body to soul
 from I to we
 one with the universe
 Welcome the extra time
 use it wisely
 keep working on self
 get in the flow
 Life is a continuum
 death is just another stage
 you can not prepare for birth
 but you can for death
 and it will be wonderful
 believe it and it will be

Setting example

Maybe old but there is life still
 full of curiosity, passion, laughter
 keen to explore new places, people
 need to love and be loved

to help and receive in gratitude
to make a difference, albeit small
doing what we can with what we have
not complaining but setting example
of not getting defeated, living well
and dying with dignity when time comes

PEARLS OF WISDOM

Retirement

Another day, life inching to the inevitable end
 needing meaning, hobbies, friends to pass time
 hard when caught up in the rat race
 hit the brick wall on retirement, sixty to zero
 nothing else to do and no one waiting for you
 A day is a loong time
 or it can pass in a jiffy if well planned
 How to live wild, happy and free ever after
 takes time, be aware, start early

Same to same

You want to change the world
 I want to change myself
 You want fame and glory
 I want anonymity and insignificance
 You want to be rich and
 so do I, gotcha
 except my wealth is not like yours
 inner, unmeasurable, invisible, non-quantifiable
 but let us not argue
 outwardly different, same inside
 we are highly ambitious
 let both find peace and good luck

Daring greatly

Be not the critic but the puglist
 to whom the world belongs and remembers
 moaners dime a dozen doers few

Be not afraid but be bold
 Do not vacillate but jump in
 As good a time as any

Too early, need planning
 are these reasons or excuses
 look inside and then at mirror

Like what you see or look away
 Only you know and can decide
 Choose wisely dare greatly

Carpe diem

That moment when it became all clear
 to leave past for the new shore
 focussed, determined, purpose in life
 Has it happened to you
 How did you know this was it
 Did you grab the chance
 Where did you get the courage
 And did it work out
 Or was it only in hindsight
 you had the flash and
 have been living coulda, shoulda since
 Better safe than sorry or
 better sorry than safe
 You only live once
 trust yourself, leap

Kindness of strangers

How to give and receive
 what would help
 when to offer
 and to whom
 But is not that the problem
 It is about spontaneity
 no motive nor expectations
 whoever can use it if struggling
 can read too much into things
 forgetting to be human
 Even if gimmicky make a start
 the only way to form the habit
 create peace and happiness
 Not because they need it
 but because you do

Musturbation

Resist urges to act
 when deeply hurt
 Inaction is not giving up
 time and place for everything
 sometimes better to wait
 and stay with the feelings
 to conquer them and be reborn
 workarounds leave you broken
 reliving pain again and again
 Donot stand there do something

or donot just do something stand there
 Your choice but remember
 nothing worth having is easy

Surrender

Not to a deity
 Neither to a dogma
 Nor to a tyrant and
 Never to pleasure
 Only to doing your best
 whatever you choose to do
 do what you enjoy and
 enjoy what you do
 as one with the work
 focussed in the moment
 no past no future
 only the act and the present
 truly in the flow
 and see the wonder

The search goes on

Why not commit suicide
 asks the logotherapist
 not rhetorically but seriously
 trying to get you to find purpose in life
 what you should live for
 everyone here for a reason
 find yours and that will set you free

You matter

There must be a reason
 why still alive
 taking up space
 using vital resources
 then became clear
 stranger opening up
 thankful for listening
 and whatever advice
 You can make a difference
 Guess who is more grateful

Do not take the easy option

Live not because of fear of death
 Live instead to beat it
 Lose not a moment to push self
 not taking no for an answer
 upwards, onwards, discovering joys
 so much to see, feel, do
 like any sport, life can be fun
 if trained hard to play well
 No matter what age
 you can start any time
 to defy the Grim Reaper

Blind spot

Everyone has them
 something or someone
 when all reasoning lost
 oblivious to obvious
 keep repeating due to
 duty, devotion, selfishness
 wishful thinking disguised as love
 whilst the exact opposite
 Do you know your blind spot
 and what are you going to do
 Not knowing is not an excuse
 not doing something not an option
 sooner or later it will catch up
 never too late to confront it

Meaning of life

The answer really is 42
 Atleast if you do not want to go mad
 scriptures, philosophy, psychology
 may be good at diagnosing
 but no help practically

Hanging between depression
 looking at the past
 Or anxiety
 concerned with the future
 forgetting to live now

And which is what matters
 Do not tie your self

up in knots finding meaning
 Better to tie up in knots
 laughing at the farce

Worthwhile life

What would you want to be in next life
 if you had the choice, do you have a view
 Human again, man or woman
 rich or poor and where and doing what
 Would it be better to be an animal
 may be a dog or a cat, well loved
 or a lion, the king of the jungle
 Might it be even better to be a plant
 a rose or perhaps an oak, strong and tall
 in a dense forest or a Christmas tree
 short but happy life, well dressed and cared
 remembered everafter in family photos
 Tell you what I want to be
 a nice juicy mango, with one condition
 to be eaten by a young boy sitting on floor
 with his mum looking on lovingly
 on a hot afternoon in an Indian village hut
 Ah, to be able to bring such joy

Gratitude and hope

Giving thanks for the past happiness
 And hoping for better times in the future
 Nothing gained by despair, sadness
 when struck with seeming tragedy
 Do not narrate the sob story
 it wont help you, and the other is bored
 reliving is not relieving
 Been there, done that, does not work
 better think of it as between good times
 need lows to appreciate highs
 see it as preparation for joys to come
 This too shall pass

If I could turn the clock back

I would laugh in any circumstances
 use whatever I had and do my best
 spend quality time with family and friends
 enjoy the moment, do things then not later

love and be loved and live a fuller life

I would not live to work, to accumulate
to keep up with Joneses, to show off
crave praise, be jealous of others' successes
make the same mistakes, procrastinate
be miserable and have an unlived life

Que sera sera

Alive in the present moment
one task at a time
no other thought
sitting and sensing
walking and watching
eating and tasting
reading and feeling
If only
Easier said than done
proud to be multitasker
juggling, organising, planning
forgetting that life is about
noting, living, enjoying
now and here
not then and there

In Search of Meaning

Assign it purpose
And then work at it
No wavering
Life *per se* has no meaning
But you can give it one
By creating beauty
And spreading joy

Their Life

Infuriating to see
talent unnurtured, unvalued
takes the gift for granted
whilst lesser ones rewarded
He could not care less
gives him joy and peace
which fame may rob

Donot Confuse Things

Out of your control but fight
If you seek justice
Up to you and take flight
If you seek peace
Decide what is important

Whatsup

One man's time wasting
another's life saving
Who are you to judge
how he lives his life

Self love

Better alone
than
lonely in company

You are important

Do not over analyse
nor over please
just be
only change if you want
not for others

Root Cause

Over thinking

Solution

Action not words

Anger

Hurting self

for mistakes of others

Love

Giving unconditionally
receiving gratefully
Not zero sum

Money

Essential if do not have it
but burden otherwise
robbing one of joys
Be afraid, very afraid

All that matters

Do you take time
to visit yourself
to smell the roses
to stand and stare
to linger over meals
to laugh with friends
to make love with partner
to say thank you
to forgive and forget
to live in the moment
If not then why not
start now

Let your hair down

“Let me die a youngman’s death”
“Wearing purple with a red hat”
That would fool them all
Who bet that I had no sense
Of adventure nor humour
Life can start at sixty
Or at any age, if one chooses
To listen to their heart’s core
And let out the real you

Forgiveness

Forgive not because they deserve it
 but because you need the peace.
 Easier said than done.
 Oh what fun to be angry
 yell, let off steam
 how dare they, will show them
 shaking fists, swearing.
 Is it, really
 Watch someone harbouring grudge
 hate and anger
 Do you want to be like them
 You do not need that baggage
 guilt, regret, anger, sadness
 what happened, did
 forgive yourself and others
 learn and move on

Secret of happiness

Time, health, money and partner
 together make for a happy life
 But lucky is the person
 who has them all at any one time

Rest of us have to make do
 But rather than regret
 use whatever you have
 and live to your best

The sweetest

Laughter of little children
 running around, playing, joyful
 Smell of fresh flowers
 in the park, morning walk
 Sight of the destination
 after the hard, long journey
 Touch of the beloved
 lightly on cheek, gazing into eyes
 Taste of hot bread
 straight out of oven
 Life's simple things
 happiness and peace

I believe

I believe individuals are good
 but masses are asses
 I believe people want work not dole
 but media calls them lazy
 I believe workers want to put in effort
 but bosses are fools
 I believe citizens know what is best for country
 but politicians take them for idiots
 I believe communities can live in harmony
 but war is good business
 I believe everyone can find love
 but few are so lucky
 I believe all religions are important
 but ofcourse their God is best
 I believe life is beautiful
 but for most it is drudgery
 Much as I want to hope
 I do not believe things will change soon

Impotent rage

Every day another travesty
 poor workers sold out by management
 women targeted by sexual molesters
 children sent to factories not schools
 public being fooled by politicians
 the list goes on ad nauseum
 Outrage, vigils, songs, commentaries
 and praise for the resilient
 shall overcome, will never be broken
 Then real life kicks in
 hustling to make a living
 put food on table, shoes on feet
 doctors appointments, school runs
 Yesterday's news today's fishwrapper
 Living in parallel universes and
 never the twain shall meet
 Was ever thus and will be
 only oppressors and oppressed
 prey and predators
 no let us all be happy together
 This is one ultimate puzzle
 beyond the ken of most intelligent life form
 Where is that meteor when you most need it
 or may be the earth is the reality TV

for the celestial race
 everybody needs a laugh
 human life the longest run soap opera

The good life

If you can smile while all around you are upset
 but make allowance for their anger too
 If you can look at big picture
 and not get distracted with detail
 If you can be happy whatever the circumstances
 knowing stuff happens and this too shall pass

If you can remember that poor have always been with us
 and power corrupts and its dog eat dog world
 But you do not have to stoop to that level
 you can have a good life being decent to others
 Then you will be wise persons, my children
 and more importantly, peaceful and contented

Imagine

If trees could talk especially the giant ones
 like that outside my window in countryside
 stood for decades, tall, wide canopy, mighty
 sheltering people from sun and rain
 offering privacy for courting couples
 or some quarrelling ones wanting
 quiet place out of others ear shots
 children climbing, hanging swings,
 playing hide and seek, running tag
 providing firewood from broken branches
 or wanton cutting sometimes
 even the odd drunk motorist crashing into it
 and ofcourse sheep and cows out of rain and snow
 I think they will say this too shall pass
 we have seen them come and seen them go
 there was life before you and will be after
 there was pain and pleasure
 some had it better than you others worse
 but it all evened out in the end
 they all exit the stage, empty handed
 as they came so they went
 stay upright, go with the changes
 help others to help self
 to stay alive and to grow

Stupid man

Never met anyone
who enjoyed their first
cigarette or drink
acquired the taste
with great perseverance

Born free, happy, laughing
curious and honest
worked hard to become
cynical and miserable
in later life

Why this urge
to go against nature
Why be sad or ill when
can be glad or healthy
Life's eternal mystery

Supposed to be wiser with age
only to discover
it is the other way
at peak at birth
and downhill from there

Best gift

Precious and rare
with short spans
wandering attention
Do not donate money
give time instead, listen
to alleviate loneliness
restore confidence
rest they will manage

Time

That old faithful
mends hearts
unites lovers
gives peace
even though
tough going in between

Biding time

The only thing to do someday
is to go back to bed and wait

Hear ye, hear ye

The following need not apply
grief, sadness, anger, hate, envy
doubt, disappointment, shame, fear, laziness
you are not welcome in my heart
if you sneak in I will
ignore, ridicule and get rid of you

However, my heart is always open for
love, happiness, curiosity, excellence,
caring, sharing, achievement, hard work, play
come in often and stay long
nothing will be too much
that I will do for you, now and always

Being human

How did you know what to do
I did not
I just did what made sense
what I would have wanted
if tables were turned

In case

Do not give up hope
but also be prepared
things do not change easily
especially long time habits
Not judging, just practical

Chasing recognition

Feel like screaming
So ephemeral
Today's headline
Tomorrow's fishwrapper
What is important

Is not winning
But peace
By doing right thing
And giving in if necessary
Great things happen
If not after credit

Life's Journey

Do not take my burden
You have yours
Just walk with me
As you shed yours
So will I
Lighter we go far

Slow or fast

Stay in the layby
doing own thing
Pull out into motorway
no longer in control
Wanting both
get run over
Good to rest
but rejoin the world
life must be lived

Here and Now

Imagine this
Am away in that distant place
Where you cant reach me
Leaving you unconsolable
For not doing what you should have

Now look around
Am right here next to you
Where you can reach me
So why not be happy
By doing what should be done

BEING WITH NATURE

Seasons of the sun

I love them all
 summer for warmth
 rain for rejuvenation
 autumn for mortality
 spring for new life
 and today winter
 glued to the window
 watching falling snow
 yes it will be dreadful later and
 for those stuck in cold homes, traffic
 but let me be selfish for now
 and enjoy this time

Childhood joys

Red hoody furry coat
 matching flowery wellies
 clutching mum's hand
 on the pavement
 walking through falling snow
 with her tongue out
 to catch the flakes
 that concentration, the bliss
 on her face with rosy cheeks
 Tried it down the road
 when alone no one watching
 tasty and jolly good fun
 I can see why
 older folk want birthdays
 with ice-cream, jelly and clowns
 and I just might hang
 a musical mobile over my bed

Carrying on

Parks his car, puts on backpack
 and sets off for his walk
 on the canals, roadways
 pounding miles, day after day
 varied routes but always there and back
 as views different coming and going
 till tired then heads for home

and the waiting wife
 retired life, kids gone.
 Made me think when met him
 some time ago and chatted for a while
 though he was not much of a talker
 and walked fast
 sad for him, life stretching ahead.
 Few years later
 wondering where is he now
 and looked in the mirror

Got you black dog

Boots on, sling the backpack
 get out in the country
 even though weighed down
 And slowly mood starts lifting
 exchanging pleasantries, passing time
 with strangers on the walk
 do not even have to say much
 many just keen to talk
 Are they all happy people anyway
 or making effort like me
 May be it is the fresh air
 So you are not alone
 and can beat that black dog
 Come back tired and peaceful
 One day at a time

Walking on New Year's day

Holy schmoly, goes the leader
 looking at turn out
 for first walk of new year
 probably the largest ever
 Guilt from over-indulgence
 mince pies and wine, tv and films
 Watch for crowds in parks, beaches and hills
 and it will be empty pubs and restaurants
 but life will return to normal in February
 the wise ones say
 How about you
 Will you stay on the road less travelled

Home

The car turns off the motorway
 bringing me back from the airport
 down winding minor roads
 and before long the hills appear
 overlooking home down in the valley
 the heart soars, tiredness of journey gone
 pelting rain only adds excitement
 oh, how do I miss thee
 the green green Vale of Clwyd

Walking on hills and moors

Nature's bounty, beautiful hills
 Heather and brooks
 Deep snow and
 Scattered sheep, eyeing you
 As you pass, questioning
 Your presence in their country
 Hope come to enjoy
 Not destroy
 This heaven on earth
 Take memories and litter home
 Leave as found
 Let others enjoy
 Tranquility and solitude
 Away from bustle of everyday life

In the woods

Whose woods these are I do not know
 carpeted with leaves, some fallen trees
 and wanton logging but not today
 quiet, sun breaking through in parts
 excellent for respite and repast
 out in the countryside
 recharged for the next stage
 over the rolling hills and tracks
 as you do on walks
 if you are lucky and keen
 and enjoy the nature's bounty

The best meal, ever

Forget Michelin star

Or even 'Chef at Home'
 Not to mention
 The white tablecloth
 Fine china
 Silver and goblets
 Candlelight and soft music
 And waiters at attention

You have not lived
 Until you have tried
 That cheese and pickle sandwich
 Made of 'doorstep' slices
 In blistering wind
 During the long hike
 On the hills and moors
 Washed down with cold water

Let off by snow

Snowflakes, light dusting
 building up fast
 trees laden, roofs covered
 roads blocked
 Was going to do outside chores
 now have to stay indoors
 Sitting by fire
 looking out of the window
 wee dram besides
 reading my book
 Its a hard life!

Hill walking

Physical and mental
 Joys of walking
 Making me fit
 Keeping me sane
 On hills and moors
 Alone often
 Company sometimes
 Pounding miles
 Breathing deeply
 Thinking clearly
 Talking infrequently
 Just being
 With elements
 The call of outdoors
 Hard to resist

Mother Nature's bounty
Get out there
As long and as often
And feel for yourself

Fellowship of strangers

Committed or desperate to turn out
on this bleak day, pouring rain
for the walk in Conwy
faithful who turn up every time
rain or shine, part of the group
or those afraid to be alone
their weekly contact, lifeline
Whatever their reason
worked out well, great views
mixed weather and muddy
good banter, laughing
just what was needed
Thanks for turning up and
company on hills and vales

AND FINALLY

Life is beautiful

Believe me its a wonderful world
 just open your eyes and mind
 and be amazed with the goodness
 and goodwill from seemingly strangers
 That piano teacher, that pilot on the walk
 the journalist in pub and the bartender
 the music on youtube, that film
 just in one day of your life
 its not chance, but a reminder
 of the delights waiting for you
 if only you would take the time
 everyday, everywhere
 Find yourself before its too late
 I wish I was young again
 life is a gift, make the most of it
 its not too late for you

Moving on

Hope and fear two dacoits
 on journey to joy
 hoping the other will realise
 afraid not to upset more
 robbing you in bad relationships
 Somethings are not meant to be
 clinging on makes it worse
 Let go and make new start

This too shall pass

And
 then what
 Does it matter
 what happens once dead
 You wont feel anything anymore
 they will not remember
 Life goes on
 Get real
 Enjoy

We are all philosophers now

Outdoing each other
 With wise words
 Outpourings about life
 Yoga, poetry and families
 Lessons learnt
 How to do things
 How not to do them
 Borne out of long experiences
 Worth paying heed
 But
 Do not stop partying yet
 There is life still
 Miles to go....
 Pints to drink....
 Tall tales to tell....
 Dance to the music ...
 and put the world to right

Joy

It does not get better than this
 so be in the present
 savour the moment
 one at a time
 and which is what life is
 a series of moments
 Only way to eat the elephant
 in bite sized chunks

Seeking joy

You do not pursue, it ensues
 from doing well all you do
 work or pleasure to best of abilities
 not for reward but the act itself
 immersed, focussed, curious
 and before you know it
 you are whistling, smiling
 infecting others and it multiplies
 stop "if this then that" mentality
 this is it and make the most of it, now

Talisman

Find one thing, daily, just one
 normal everyday stuff
 that bird, squirrel, flower, tree
 child unwrapping chocolate bar
 lovers gazing in each other's eyes
 elderly stirring tea sitting with friends
 even the shape of stone, cloud or puddle
 whatever, wherever, whenever
 savour it and let it be your saviour that day
 look for joy and it will come looking for you

Digital sabbath

Not easy to give up all
 life and machine so inter-related
 how do the 'Amish' manage
 Start with day off computer and phone
 big ask, testing patience, itching
 what if, could be urgent, just one peek
 hard to resist, just made it
 But.....
 did you get up early next morning
 to hungrily check
 and.....
had the world ended

Silence is golden

How can people talk so much
 what is there to say and why listen
 can not stand quiet or being alone
 I talk therefore I am problem
 incessant noise, all around
 in person or social media
 Why not take a pause
 visit yourself, rejoice in inner light
 its all there if you only take trouble
 I am all talked out but sit with me
 in silence and we can grow together

Talking is over-rated

No need for words
 for true communion

just being is enough
heightened senses
natural sounds backdrop
and all is crystal clear
when sitting in silence

EPILOGUE

The end or new beginning

So, is this it
Nothing more to say
Maybe that's all I am good for
Perhaps not a bad thing
To spare everyone my writings
Who would miss these any way
Would you?

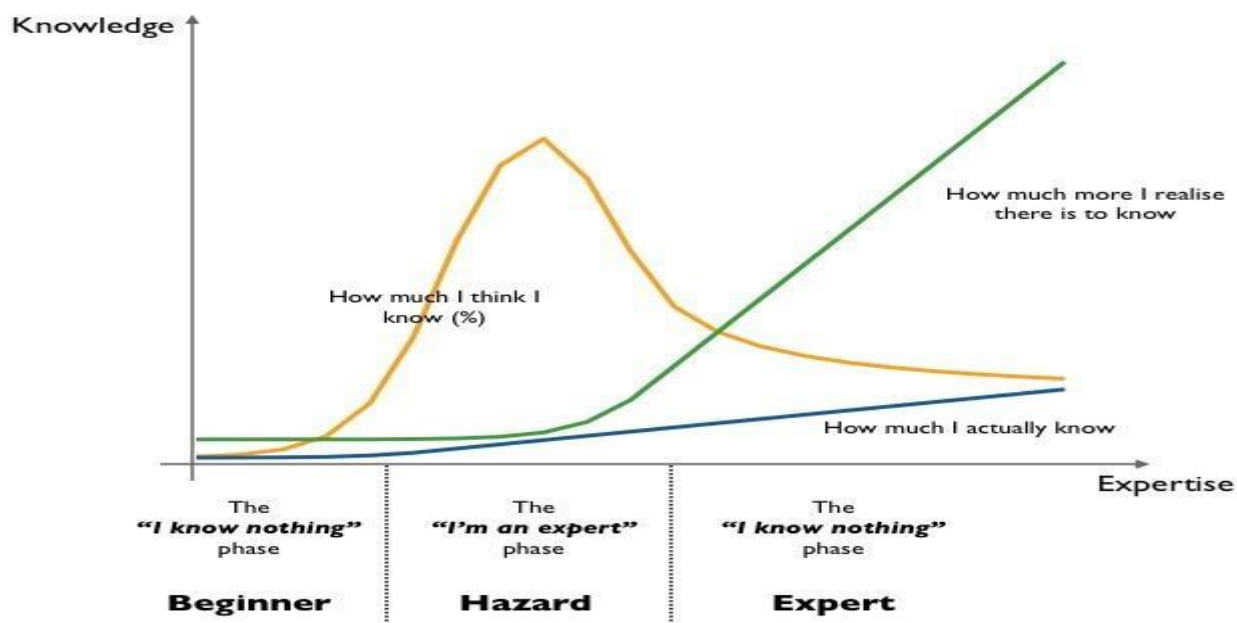
Legacy

Do you worry about your legacy
What is it and how does it work
why leave one and for whom
what is in it for you afterwards
Forget all this nonsense
whether invoked as virtuous or
to scare children to make them obedient
revered or reviled
will be up to those left behind
and they will decide on the basis
of how you live now
show what you are made of
and do the right thing

ABOUT ME

Brief details of my professional life are available at <https://www.peoples-uni.org/content/trustees> ; the Compendium of my reflective writings over 25 years in the NHS is available to download at this site. (Note: it is a large file and takes time to download).

What do I know- I am still learning and aspiring to become an 'Expert', and doing what I can: <https://ruthinindiaculturalexchange.com/>



NOTE: Source of above diagram unknown (my apologies and thanks to whom so ever created it)

*History says, don't hope
On this side of the grave.
But then, once in a lifetime
The longed-for tidal wave
Of justice can rise up,
And hope and history rhyme.*

*So hope for a great sea-change
On the far side of revenge.
Believe that further shore
Is reachable from here.
Believe in miracle
And cures and healing wells.*

Seamus Heaney



miles to go.....