

## **PART 6 WRITING SKILLS**

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# CHAPTER 19

# The Art of Condensation

## Learning Objectives

After reading this chapter, you will be able to

- understand the purpose and significance of the art of condensation
- know the major forms of condensation such as précis, summary, abstract, and synopsis
- develop adequate knowledge of précis writing techniques
- learn tips to condense a given text

## 19.1 INTRODUCTION

Just as it is difficult to be simple, it is difficult to be precise in what we speak and write. In fact, it is difficult to be elaborate for those who struggle with language in the sense of not having enough words, expressions, and ideas. But for those who have a good number of words at their disposal and have no dearth of expressions and ideas, it is difficult to be precise and brief. Therefore, at times, you see some of the people around you complaining that *it was not possible for them to deliver a two-minute speech though they could fairly well deliver a ten-minute talk!* However, in professional situations, one must be in a position to express oneself not just elaborately but also briefly.

Just to illustrate the view—imagine that you are a marketing executive in your company. The chief of the marketing division has called for a meeting. You have recently read an article in a business magazine which speaks about latest innovations in the field of marketing. You want to discuss some of these innovations in the meeting. Now what would you do? Will you carry the article to the meeting and read it aloud to the other members in the meeting? Or will you take down important ideas, make a summary, and highlight each of the points one by one? Obviously, it is only the second method that would work. Doing so, however, will require some skills of precision and condensation and this is what we propose to help you learn in this chapter.

However, before we understand how to condense, we need to get acquainted with the major forms of condensation that are frequently used by us in our academic and professional life. Given below are the major forms of condensation demanded from and composed by a professional:

- Précis
- Summary
- Abstract
- Synopsis
- Paraphrasing

## 19.2 PRÉCIS

Among all the major forms of condensation, the précis is most commonly required to be read and written, both by a student and a professional. It is a short and concise account of some text which gives all its important points but none of its details. Since the purpose of a précis is to briefly restate the idea expressed in the original write-up, it does not include any superfluous or illustrative material which may be a part of the original. A précis follows and maintains the view of the author.

## 19.3 SUMMARY

A summary is often written and included in the reports prepared by professionals. Summaries are also written to briefly present the main findings of a study, a journalistic article, or a geographical survey. Whatever may be the purpose, a summary is quite useful as it presents the entire matter in a nutshell. While writing a summary, the author does not add, develop, or delete any idea. A summary is often shorn of examples and illustrations, and emphasizes the main arguments and conclusions of the original. More often than not, it follows the sequence of the ideas as expressed in the original and detailed work.

## 19.4 ABSTRACT

Shorter than a summary, an abstract is written to highlight the purpose, scope, and significance of a work. It is often preferred to a summary in technical and specialized forms of communication. Therefore, you often come across an abstract published along with a research article in journals and magazines. In order to understand the features of the abstract and the summary and to figure out the differences between them in detail, please refer to Chapter 23 on *report writing*.

## 19.5 SYNOPSIS

A synopsis is a condensed and shortened version of an article, research paper, the chapter of a book, a report, or a book itself. It highlights in brief all the essential features of the original document. Normally, a synopsis is required to be submitted to universities when research proposals, dissertations, and theses are proposed to be written by researchers. In a synopsis, the researcher is required to highlight the purpose, scope, and significance of the research. It also includes a reference to the methods adopted for data collection and the research gap that determines the objective of the research.

## 19.6 PARAPHRASING

Although paraphrasing is not necessarily a condensed form of the original document, it is often believed to be one. Therefore, it is advisable to understand the nature and purpose of a paraphrased text. The purpose of a paraphrase is to reproduce the author's ideas in your own words. So, you may employ as many words as the author has chosen to express himself/herself. Paraphrasing of write-ups is done in order to convey to the reader in simpler terms an idea which, otherwise, appears to be too ambiguous, arcane, philosophical, or poetic to follow. Many times, you come across a paraphrased text of a classic. It is meant to bring the texts written in different times and languages to readers who can only follow a simpler and familiar version of it.

Despite the differences all such firms of writing, hence, require the original message to be expressed more precisely, briefly, and succinctly. Let's therefore learn the important tips for condensation.

## 19.7 ART OF CONDENSATION—SOME WORKING PRINCIPLES

In this section, we will look at some principles of the art of condensation.

**Be brief and precise** Writing a précis is like reproducing the soul of the matter. Therefore, it needs to be concise, precise, and focused. Normally, the length of the original passage is reduced to a one-third in its précis version.

**Be complete** While reproducing an idea, we cannot leave out any of its vital aspects. Therefore, before we launch ourselves into writing a précis, we must carefully read the passage, notice all the important points, and incorporate all of them in our précis. A précis should, in fact, be as complete and comprehensive as the original one, albeit it should be expressed in a less number of words.

**Be choosy** Although it is not possible for us to leave out any important idea from the original, it is required that we carefully choose only the material that is an indispensable part of the whole argument. In order to achieve a good précis of the original, we need to discard all the extraneous and superfluous material present in the form of examples, illustrations, instances, quotations, citations, anecdotes, parables, and any other such material that is included in the original to substantiate the basic idea.

**Be original** A good précis is both creative and original. Of course, while writing a précis, you are not expected to distort or modify the author's view. You are also not expected to add any idea of your own or leave out some important idea of the author, but at the same time, you are required to express the author's views in your own words. Therefore, try to use your own expressions while rewriting what the author has expressed in the original.

**Be coherent** Normally, while writing a précis, we follow the order the author has chosen to arrange his/her ideas. However, since a précis is not a pale imitation of the original, a good précis always has a coherent structure of its own. In any case, it should not look as though some unrelated and disjointed sentences have been yoked together. Remember, the purpose of a précis is to help the reader gather the whole idea in a compact, complete, and coherent way. An incoherent or incomplete imitation of the original would, therefore, be of little worth to the reader.

**Be clear** Just like completeness and coherence, clarity too is an important attribute of a well-written précis. At times however, while writing a précis, it is lost as we tend to overemphasize the need to compress the ideas expressed in the original. Since the précis has to serve as a substitute for the original, we cannot afford any type of vagueness to punctuate the reader's comprehension of our précis.

## 19.8 SEVEN-STEP LADDER TO WRITING AN EFFECTIVE PRÉCIS

Having learnt some essential features and principles that characterize a good précis, let us focus on the process of writing a précis. Writing a précis has some steps and stages. Follow a seven-step ladder, as discussed below, to be able to produce an effective précis.

**Read and comprehend** Read the original piece of writing as many times as you require, ensuring that you have understood what the author has expressed in his/her words.

**Prepare a skeleton of the main ideas** Having read and understood a passage, identify all main and subordinate ideas and jot them down one by one. This gives you a clear view of all the ideas that are to be incorporated while writing the précis.

**Assimilate the essentials** Writing a good précis is to recapture the soul of what the author has said in your own words. For this, you need to not only understand the original passage and jot down its main points, but also assimilate the whole thought embedded in it. To achieve this, you need to focus on each of the points noted down by you and rephrase them in your words. This will help you reshape the overall idea of the original passage in your words without distorting or losing its sense.

**Think of a title** Once you have understood the passage, focus on the central idea and think of a suitable title based on it. Thinking of a title and assigning it to a passage is essential as it keeps your thoughts focused on the core of the issue.

**Prepare the first draft** While preparing the first draft, remember to neither delete any important idea nor add anything of your own. Focus on the ideas observed and assimilated thus far and try to capture the spirit of the original in as few words as possible.

**Review and compare** Having written it once, read your version with a view to observing whether it matches the original. While doing so, ask yourself questions such as—Does my précis capture the essence of the original passage? Does my précis include all the important ideas expressed in the original? Has any idea been unnecessarily added, repeated, or deleted? Does it follow a coherent structure? Does it have clarity and compactness of expression? Does it use linkers and punctuation marks correctly?

At this stage, you can also count the number of words used in your précis. Compare the length of your passage to that of the original. See if you can manage to do away with some more words or add a few more, depending upon whether it sounds redundant or obscure.

**Edit and revise** Having reviewed your first effort critically, you can now revise your draft and shape it as the final version of your précis. At this final step of précis writing, incorporate all the alterations, modifications, and changes you thought of while reviewing your first draft.

## 19.9 WRITING PRÉCIS OF GIVEN PASSAGES

Having learnt the principles of writing a précis, let us practise by working out a few passages given below:

### Passage I

A growing number of scientists are going where politicians fear to tread by calling for a wider public debate on the sensitive issue of the global human population, which is set to rise from the present 6.8 billion to perhaps 9 billion by 2050.

Lord Rees, the president of the Royal Society, brought the subject up in his excellent Reith Lectures; Sir David Attenborough has become a champion of those who believe population has been relegated as an environmental issue; and more recently Prof. Aubrey Manning, presenter of the BBC's Earth Story, has stated that the sheer number of humans on the planet is the greatest menace the world faces.

Scientists have a reputation for saying things as they are, not as they should be. Politicians, forever looking for short-term solutions to keep them in office, do not, as a rule, look further than the middle distance. Yet population is one of those over-the-horizon threats without enemies, as Lord Rees put it. It is a disaster in slow motion, and all politicians seem to do is provide the sort of platitudes articulated by Michael Heseltine, who recently fielded a question on Radio 4 by saying that the problems associated with population never turn out to be as bad as predicted—which is probably true if you can enjoy your own Oxfordshire arboretum.

No doubt Heseltine and his fellow politicians who are in favour of doing nothing about population will hardly cite the words of John P. Holdren, President Obama's science adviser, who wrote these

words in 1969 when he was a young ecologist: 'If the population control measures are not initiated immediately, and effectively, all the technology man can bring to bear will not fend off the misery to come.'

Misery, what misery? You can, of course, imagine the political class arguing that scientists have consistently got it wrong about overpopulation. But the next 40 years are going to be very different to the previous 40 years, and many scientists fear that there will indeed be extreme misery to come if the world does not take population more seriously.

The facts speak for themselves. The UN estimates that the global population will rise from 6.8 billion in 2009 to 8.3 billion by 2030, with much of the increase in the poorest countries, notably sub-Saharan Africa, which is set for a 51 per cent increase in the same period—four times that of the UK.

World food production will have to increase by 50 per cent to meet rising demand; water availability will have to increase by 30 per cent; and global energy demands by 50 per cent. Politicians may think that science and technology will provide what is needed, as it has done in the past at a cost to the environment, but many scientists are not so sure.

Holdren himself came up with a simple equation to try to quantify the sustainability of a given population level:  $I = P \times A \times T$ —where  $I$  represents the impact on the environment,  $P$  the population size,  $A$  the affluence or level of consumption per head, and  $T$  the technology that determines how efficiently resources are used. The equation simply says that the impact on the environment is a factor of the number of people, how much they consume, and how efficient the consumption is.

It is a crude equation, but the aim was to show how we can limit the impact on the environment by intervening at any of these three levels. What is clear is that a continuing increase in human numbers makes everything else we do to reach sustainability far more difficult. As David Attenborough says: 'I've never seen a problem that wouldn't be easier to solve with fewer people, or harder, and ultimately impossible, with more.'

Just in case anyone thinks that this is just a problem for poor countries in Africa, they should read last week's report on population by the 'Forum for the Future'. Official statistics show that the UK population grew by 2 million between 2001 and 2008, its fastest rate of growth since the post-war 'baby boom'. Over the period from 2008 to 2033, the British population is set to grow from 61.4 m to 71.6 m, with 2029 being the year when there will be 70 million people living officially in Britain—there could be another 1 million or so living here illegally.

That means we will have to accommodate another city the size of Bristol every year. About two thirds of this projected increase is expected to be either directly or indirectly due to future migration, according to 'Forum for the Future'. Politicians should be forced to debate this issue, rather than relying on people being cowed by suggestions that to do so is somehow pandering to illiberal, xenophobic and racist elements who have hijacked the subject for their own nefarious ends. (No. of words: 810)

Source: <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/science/steve-connor-we-need-a-global-debate-on-population-1999538.html>, accessed on 12 December 2010.

Supposing you are required to prepare a précis of this passage, what would you do? Of course, you would read it carefully. Then, you would mark the important ideas and prepare the skeleton of the passage. Therefore, let us have a look at the important ideas of the passage as given above:

1. Population increase is one of the most serious problems of the world today.
2. Studies conducted in this field suggest that the world population is further likely to increase by a few more billions.
3. According to many environment scientists, ecologists, researchers, and other intellectuals, the rise in population will lead to several unpleasant consequences.
4. Most significantly, more number of people will require more water, more food, and more energy resources to survive.

5. Much of this increase in population is likely to take place in the poorest countries of the world.
6. However, it is not just the poor countries but also the developed ones which are set to see an increase in their population.
7. Ecologists and environmentalists the world over fear that this increase will have a direct bearing on the environment as the population size, their affluence level, the appropriate consumption of resources, and the effective utilization of technology by people are inter-linked phenomena.
8. However, with the increase in population, the other three factors also become difficult to control and effectively balance.
9. Therefore, many scientists and other intellectuals regard population growth to become the greatest menace in the years to come.
10. Despite the gravity of the situation, politicians have been trying to downplay the population menace, owing to their parochial and personal objectives.
11. However, they need to be brought round to discuss the issue rather than appeasing some equally parochial groups who divide the world on small issues for their personal gains.

If we conscientiously work on the given passage therefore, this is how one of the condensed versions may look like:

Population increase is one of the most serious problems of the world today. Studies conducted in this area suggest that the world population is further likely to increase by a few more billions. According to many environment scientists, ecologists, researchers, and other intellectuals, the rise in population will lead to several unpleasant consequences. Most significantly, the increasing number of people will require more water, more food, and more energy resources to survive. Much of the population increase is likely to take place in the poorest countries of the world. However, it is not just the poor countries but also the developed ones which are set to see an increase in their population. Ecologists and environmentalists the world over fear that this increase will have a direct bearing on the environment as the size of population, their affluence level, the appropriate consumption of resources, and the effective utilization of technology by people are interlinked phenomena. Therefore, all concerned intellectuals regard population growth to emerge as the greatest menace in the years to come. Despite the gravity of the situation, however, politicians have been trying to downplay the population menace owing to their parochial and narcissistic objectives. Keeping in view the seriousness of the matter though, they need to be brought round to discuss the issue rather than appeasing some equally parochial groups who divide the world on small issues for their personal gains.

*Suggested title: Menace of Population*

No. of words: 249

#### Passage II

Stilettos are an apt metaphor. They give the illusion of heights reached. Their name derives from the stealthy, deadly knife favoured by the Mafia. They are associated with those who can walk the talk, and talk their way through even when they have no walk. But they are also precarious. It takes a brave woman to slip into them. And a braver one to kick them off—not for a night of being bad, but for good. Stilettos are never put away voluntarily, only with a reluctant sigh. This is the nature of these sexy shoes. And of the profession that struts the ramp in them.

Viveka Babajee's short life and sad end is chilling testimony to the fact that stilettos flatter to deceive. She's not the first victim. She won't be the last. Ugliness is built into the beauty trap.

(Contd)

Why shouldn't the media have gone to town on this story? It is couturier-made for the Velcro-effect on eyeballs. With its lowdown on high life, the shadows behind the spotlight, the tarnish after the glitter, it packed a double whammy of a punch, pandering to both our salivating voyeurism and our prim sanctimoniousness. Clearly a model's life and a model life are two very different entities. We lap up one while paying lip service to the other.

It has taken yet another suicide to reveal the dark, tortured, hateful world behind the insouciant sashay down the ramp, lit by a million megawatts of adoration—and envy. And it has forced its besotted followers to face up to the cruel question: should the glamorous model believe she is a genuine high-end product entitled to all its aura, or is she just a knock-off? 'Between the idea and the reality... falls the Shadow.' Which is why T.S. Eliot's next line does not follow. There is little 'Shanti, Shanti, Shanti', only an unsettling disillusionment. And as in the case of Viveka Babajee, a fatal disintegration.

Liberalization's laissez-faire has unleashed a revolution quite unknown in the 70s when Jenie Naoroji's swish of models, led by the ethereal Shai, glided smilingly and barefoot down the ramps, barefoot instead of today's arrogant stomp. True, the profession was always sequined by glamour, but in its early days it only flirted timorously with the entertainment, and it certainly wasn't souped up by celebrity. More significant, the big-bucking broncos of global brands, lassoing the market and upping the ante for the cowboys of Indian industry, hadn't yet arrived to make this into the high-stakes game it is today. Nor had the Big Bad Wolf of Bollywood gatecrashed into everybody's party. Modelling was always about dog-eats-dog-and-everybody-bitches, but as Brand India got into stride by the turn of the millennium, a nuclear-grade mutation seems to have hit this world of canines in corsets.

India-with-a-designer-label has opened up undreamt-of opportunities for every young girl to turn her face into her fortune, and her body into her wealth manager. But it has also sharpened the competition into a killing machine. It has savaged an industry notorious for its disposable culture. Reduce? You must. Recycle and Re-use? Never! Careers increasingly have a shorter life-span than mascara wands, and there is no fairy godmother to stop their returns to rags. A godfather would be better, but he's chasing the taller girl in the shorter skirt who is thinner and younger.

The former model and Page 3 habitué Queenie, recalls, 'Back in the 1980s and early 90s, we were a small, loyal, close-knit fraternity, more like a family. Today, it is all about fierce competition and back-biting. You get sucked and drawn deeper into it, like quicksand. Not just models, today's entire younger generation is under terrible pressure to be part of the glam crowd, they are exposed to booze, drugs, and competitiveness earlier and in a greater degree than ever before.'

The Queenie Bee astutely puts her bejeweled finger on the latest Culprit No. 1: Bollywood, which seems to be responsible for more damage than we feared. 'Today, the concept of a supermodel doesn't exist. Modelling has become an open-ended industry with Bollywood on one and a sea of faces on the other. There is no longer any sense of professional identity.'

The society columnist, Simi Chandoke, endorses this concern. 'Modeling in itself is no longer enough; there is the additional pressure to make it big in Bollywood too. Because B. Town is now the object of worship, and the fashion frat has been elbowed out of that niche. This wasn't the case a decade and a half ago. Back then, models were more respected. But today the tables have turned and everything from brand endorsements to shows falls in the lap of film stars.'

Chandoke goes on to the hazardous fall-out. 'Once ousted from the scene, the girls have no education or job to fall back on, and when they don't find an anchor in a financially stable man, they break and turn to drugs and drinking. Short-lived romances and flings and keeping the wrong company are also part of the culture. It's a vicious circle. Bollywood, on the other hand, is more grounded and surrounded by family and a strong circle of friends. There is less scope for loneliness.' (No. of words: 866)

Source: Bachi Karkaria, Nicole Dastur, and Diya Banerjee, 'Not a Model Life'  
*The Times of India: The Crest Edition, 3 July 2010, p. 2*

Let us try to understand the main points in the above passage:

1. Modelling is a glamorous profession but not without an ugly side to it.
2. A model's real life is far from being what it seems.
3. Liberalization has changed the face of modelling.
4. Today, models have to perform in trying circumstances.
5. With competition increasing, models have shorter careers but a lot at stake.
6. In order to achieve success, models try to use their physical beauty.
7. The promoters however are always interested in new models.
8. Because of ruthless competition around, the profession of modelling has lost its sense of fraternity that characterized it in the 1980s and 90s.
9. Moreover, because of the entry of film stars into this profession, modelling has lost the distinctive identity and respect the profession once enjoyed.
10. Rather than a profession in itself, modelling is now seen as a gateway to filmdom.
11. Since modelling is both extremely demanding and also short-lived a profession, it does not allow the aspiring models to prepare for any alternative.
12. The models with inadequate educational competence find themselves nowhere once out of modelling.
13. Lack of alternatives and a sense of rejection makes them resort to drugs, drinking, and unstable relationships.
14. The immanence of suicides in modelling not only establishes its cruel sordidness but also brings to the fore our own hypocrisy.

**Précis** The much envied profession of modelling actually conceals beneath its apparent charm a world of darkness, hate, torture, exploitation, and loneliness. Though once a respectable profession, modelling in a post-liberalization world is marked with ruthless competition, loss of identity, and a sense of alienation. Today, models have to perform in trying circumstances. With competition increasing, models have shorter careers but a lot at stake. In order to achieve success, models try to use their physical beauty. The promoters however are always interested in new models. Because of ruthless competition around, the profession of modelling has also lost its sense of fraternity that characterized it in the 1980s and 1990s. Moreover, because of the entry of film stars into this profession, modelling has lost its distinctive identity as well. That is why the profession no longer has the respect it once enjoyed, as most of the products earlier advertised only by models are also being advertised by Bollywood stars. Today, models enter this profession with an aspiration to become a Bollywood star one day. Since modelling is both extremely demanding and also ephemeral, it does not allow models to prepare for any alternative. The models with inadequate educational competence find themselves nowhere once out of modelling. Lack of alternatives and a sense of rejection makes them resort to drugs, drinking, and unstable relationships. The immanence of suicides in modelling not only establishes its cruel sordidness but also brings to the fore our own hypocrisy, as by watching a glamorous model on the romp we seek to gratify our senses and at her fall express our shock at the absence of morality in the world of modelling.

Suggested title (Besides the one suggested in the article):

- *Modelling: Problems and Perspectives*
- *Modelling: Not a Model Ramp to Stomp*

No. of words: 275

**Passage III**

The right kind of education consists in understanding the child as he is without imposing upon him an ideal of what we think he should be. To enclose him in the framework of an ideal is to encourage him to conform, which breeds fear and produces in him a constant conflict between what he is and what he should be; and all inward conflicts have their outward manifestations in society. Ideals are an actual hindrance to our understanding of the child and to the child's understanding of himself.

A parent who really desires to understand his child does not look at him through the screen of an ideal. If he loves the child, he observes him, he studies his tendencies, his moods, and peculiarities. It is only when one feels no love for the child that one imposes upon him an ideal, for then one's ambitions are trying to fulfill themselves in him, wanting him to become this or that. If one loves, not the ideal, but the child, then there is a possibility of helping him to understand himself as he is.

If a child tells lies, for example, of what value is it to put before him the ideal of truth? One has to find out why he is telling lies. To help the child, one has to take time to study and observe him, which demands patience, love, and care; but when one has no love, no understanding, then one forces the child into a pattern of action which we call an ideal.

Ideals are a convenient escape, and the teacher who follows them is incapable of understanding his students and dealing with them intelligently; for him, the future ideal, the what should be, is far more important than the present child. The pursuit of an ideal excludes love, and without love no human problem can be solved. If the teacher is of the right kind, he will not depend on a method, but will study each individual pupil. In our relationship with children and young people, we are not dealing with mechanical devices that can be quickly repaired, but with living beings who are impressionable, volatile, sensitive, afraid, affectionate; and to deal with them, we have to have great understanding, the strength of patience and love. When we lack these, we look to quick and easy remedies and hope for marvellous and automatic results. If we are unaware, mechanical in our attitudes and actions, we fight shy of any demand upon us that is disturbing and that cannot be met by an automatic response, and this is one of our major difficulties in education.

The child is the result of both the past and the present and is therefore already conditioned. If we transmit our background to the child, we perpetuate both his and our own conditioning. There is radical transformation only when we understand our own conditioning and are free of it. To discuss what should be the right kind of education while we ourselves are conditioned is utterly futile.

While the children are young, we must of course protect them from physical harm and prevent them from feeling physically insecure. But unfortunately we do not stop there; we want to shape their ways of thinking and feeling, we want to mould them in accordance with our own cravings and intentions. We seek to fulfil ourselves in our children, to perpetuate ourselves through them. We build walls around them, condition them by our beliefs and ideologies, fears and hopes—and then we cry and pray when they are killed or maimed in wars, or otherwise made to suffer by the experiences of life. (No. of words: 609)

*Source: J. Krishnamurti, 'The Right Kind of Education,' *Education and the Significance of Life*, London: Victor Gollancz Ltd, 1966, pp. 26-28.*

Let us try to understand the main points in the given passage:

1. The right kind of education for a child cannot be without love, care, and understanding.
2. We try to condition the child to our ideals mostly through education.
3. We make efforts in making the child fall in consonance with our own desires and aspirations.
4. Demanding conformity thus, we force a child to fit into a frame desired and devised by us.
5. Conformity however instills in the child fears, conflicts, and confusions.
6. True education, thus, is not governed with a tendency to conform a child to our ideals.

7. It requires a great deal of time, patience, and effort on the part of the parent and teacher.
8. Moreover, only those who are conditioned to chase certain ideals can intelligently and freely understand the child and help him get true education in life.

**Précis** Imparting true education to a child is one of our major challenges. Mostly, in the name of education, we tend to condition a child to our expectations, ideals, desires, and wishes. Education induces thus, demands conformity which hardly helps the child, for such coercion only induces in him a sense of insecurity, fear, conflict, and confusion. Through such kind of education, we can only perpetuate ourselves, which is of little worth to the child in understanding himself or the life around him. True education for the child is the one based on love, care, and an understanding of him as an individual. This requires a great deal of patience, love, and creativity on the part of the parent and the teacher. More significantly, those who aspire to teach true education, must themselves be truly educated. Therefore, the educator has to free himself from all the conditioning, and then focus on the child as he is and not as he should be according to some ideology, hope, fear, or expectation. However, it does not usually happen as we try to automate a child to a particular system, impose on him our own wishes, thoughts, beliefs, and aspirations and lament the loss incurred by them on our account.

Suggested title (Besides the one suggested in the write-up):

- *True Education*
- *Education: The Process of Deconditioning*

No. of words: 206

#### Passage IV

Ever wondered what keeps people happy all the time? An underlining factor in every happy person's life is that he/she tends to have supportive relationships. The American author Lois Wyse said, 'A good friend is a connection to life—a tie to the past, a road to the future, the key to sanity in a totally insane world.'

Social networking sites are one of the best ways to stay connected with friends and family. They have changed the way people socialize. Rahul Kulkarni, Product Manager, Google India, says, 'Being socially connected has a definite positive effect on your well-being.' Namrata Aswani, PR consultant, says, 'I feel connected to the world—it's so far, yet so near. You can share photos and videos with a click. Chat with your old friends and the happiness just flows. It is a relief from a boring day.'

A recent study shows that social media is now our favourite online pastime, beating email by a wide margin. According to research, if you have a supportive social network, you may add years to your life. Says Dr Harish Shetty, Mumbai-based psychiatrist, 'Friends provide emotional nourishment and tangible social support. The feeling of having access to someone during those dark hours accelerates hope. Hopelessness leads to loss of confidence.'

Many who blame the world for not having friends are those who don't trust anyone with their feelings or confidences. Good emotional contact causes networks to be built. Even studies suggest that we need close relationships that involve understanding and caring.

Prahasitha, senior faculty at One World Academy, Chennai, feels, 'Our work and the way we live is so structured that it isolates people from each other. Social networking sites fulfill a primal need in all of us.'

Social networks seem to be the same as conventional networks but bigger and more casual. They may not match up to the physical presence of a friend, but are reliable during those dark, depressing times.

**Précis** Supportive relationships in life add to our happiness. Studies reveal that staying connected to family and friends has a positive effect on a person's sense of well-being. In modern times, when people lead a busy and isolated life, social networking emerges as one of the best forms of socialization. It can help people stay in touch with one another despite physical distance, through mails, chatting, and sharing photographs online. The relationships developed through social networking, though appear to be casual and may not be as effective as the physical presence of a person, can help people during sadness and depression.

Suggested title:

*Social Networking: Happiness unlimited?*

(No. of words: 101)

#### Passage V

For many centuries, India embraced a unique culture—a culture that invested most of its resources in meeting the needs of the soul rather than fulfilling cravings of the flesh. The sages, who were the founding fathers of this great culture, stressed that the world we live in has its source in a higher reality which is divine, eternal, and intrinsically beautiful. This reality is the Lord of the Universe, the Lord of Life. It is the primordial pool of intelligence, existence, and bliss. In this ever expanding universe, everything blossoms because the world is intrinsically connected to a source of boundless nurture. Knowledge of this truth grants us freedom from bondage, and ignorance of it robs us of the gift of a joyful life.

All living beings have their rightful place here on earth, and we all have the right to enjoy its bounties. But as soon as we attempt to possess them while denying others their share, we invite misery into our lives. Work hard and collect worldly possessions if you wish, but consume judiciously so that you yourself do not get consumed. And do not waste your energy preventing others from collecting the objects of their desire. There is no need to place yourself in the position of a priest or a policeman. Simply set an example. That will send a message a million times clearer and more powerful than all the messages broadcast by all preachers and policemen combined. This is the message of the sages, the message from which our Vedic culture evolved: the world consisting of numberless forms is rooted in a single reality, one that is all-pervading, beginningless, and endless. This understanding was the backbone of the lifestyle embraced by the people in Vedic times.

The founding fathers of Indian culture also introduced a social system that rewarded the use of one's own conscience. Their social, moral, and ethical laws rested on the basic principles of spirituality—life is sacred; hurting and harming anyone is a spiritual offence; therefore, do not do to others what you do not want others to do to you. Complying with the voice of one's conscience was the driving force behind all moral action. According to Vedic sages, refraining from hurting others out of fear of punishment is the hallmark of a low-grade person. Attending to one's own well-being and the well-being of others constituted the core of spirituality. As this core principle of spirituality infuses everything with lasting life, the sages called it dharma, the law of sustainability. They also called it *sanatana dharma*, the perennial or original dharma of mankind.

This law is eternal and unalterable. Regardless of who you are and what you wish to become, practising this dharma is an absolute necessity. The law of sustainability communicated by dharma constitutes the principles of duty, for such principles are charged with power to lift the human spirit from a base existence to a key role as a member of civil society. Without the principles of sustainability as a foundation, we cannot define right and wrong, good and bad, just and unjust. Unless we embrace the fundamental principles of dharma—sustainability in its broadest and purest sense—we cannot

(Contd.)

prevent our personal tastes and interests, our whims and ambitions from colliding with those of others. And unless we see things in the light of this higher dharma, we cannot decide whose desires, goals, and ambitions are valid and whose are not. It is only in the light of dharma that we can do justice to ourselves without being unjust to others. It is the understanding of this dharma, therefore, that will bring the fight for justice to an end, for this dharma sheds light on our relationship with ourselves, with others, and with the world of nature.

Source: Pandit Rajmani Tigunait, 'Dharma for All the Ages', *The Times of India: The Speaking Tree*, 26 September 2010, p. 4.

**Précis** What characterizes ancient Indian culture is its emphasis on addressing the needs of the soul rather than those of the flesh. To Indian sages, the absolute reality was divine, eternal, and intrinsically beautiful. This reality was believed to be all-pervading, beginningless, and endless. That we are a part of this single reality was to have true sense of knowledge which set people free from bondage, while an absence of it brought misery and pain into one's life. In this sense of boundless togetherness, all living beings were supposed to have their rightful existence on earth and any form of unnatural possession, coercion, or usurpation was not advocated. In this form of religion, conscience had a great role to play. It was believed that one's conscience was a part of the divine force and following one's conscience was a sacred way of life. Since life itself was considered sacred, hurting and harming others was considered sinful. Listening to the inner voice prevented people from doing anything irreligious or sinful. What thus constituted the core of our ancient religion was the dharma or sustainability which emphasized on attending to the well-being of all. This religious sustainability hence formed the core of our civil society and emphasized on a sense of religion, which rather than focusing on the selfish and parochial choices, ambitions, and desires brought into view an all-encompassing sense of universality and commonality of existence.

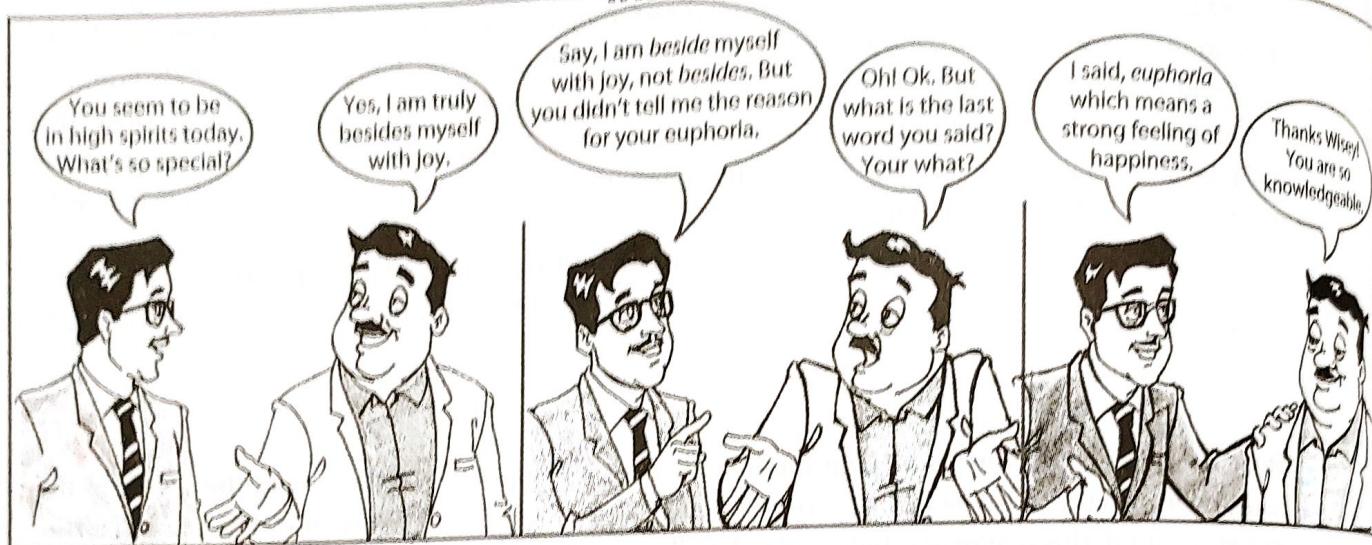
Suggested title:

*True Religion*

(No. of words: 234)

## RECAPITULATION

- ✓ Many a time, in our academic and professional life, we are required to put the ideas expressed by others in a condensed form. The art of condensation, therefore, becomes an important part in our writing skills.
- ✓ There are four major forms of condensation, namely précis, summary, abstract, and synopsis.
- ✓ Précis is the form of condensation that is most commonly used.
- For writing a good précis, one needs to observe the principles of exactness, conciseness, completeness, coherence, and clarity.
- ✓ While preparing a précis, examples, anecdotes, quotes, and references are not included. Only their gist is assimilated in the text.
- ✓ Writing a good précis requires careful reading and comprehension of the passage, taking down all the important points, arranging them in a coherent order, maintaining clarity and conciseness in expressions, and above all assimilating the essence of the original without getting into the lengthy details and substantiation of key issues.
- ✓ A good précis has a suitable title and reduces the length of the original piece of writing to its one third.

**WISEWELL QUIPS****EXERCISES**

1. Define a 'précis' and discuss its characteristic features.
2. 'Writing a précis does not mean resorting to a pale imitation of the original, but involving yourself in a creative process! Do you subscribe to the view? Discuss and substantiate.
3. What is the seven-step ladder to writing an effective précis? Discuss and illustrate with appropriate examples.
4. Distinguish each of the following in about 200 words:
 

(a) Summary	(b) Abstract
(c) Précis	(d) Synopsis
5. 'The art of condensation is an essential element in our writing skills.' Discuss and substantiate.
6. What are the necessary tenets for writing an effective précis? Discuss and exemplify.
7. Condense each of the following small passages retaining the main idea and using a minimum number of words:
  - (I) When one does not really understand the true purpose of life, one is not in a position to really figure out how to focus on the actions to be carried out. That's what happens to most of us. We live and keep involving ourselves in actions which may not necessarily define us. Such a life is like a rudderless drift in a dark, befuddling ocean where you sail and sail, and still don't know where to shore up.
  - (II) 'We pine for what is not there,' says Keats and thus, like an enlightened soul, captures the cause

behind perennial human suffering. Throughout our lives, we keep chasing a falling star; running after a goal, the completion of which should give us a sense of fulfilment and achievement. However, the misery lies in the fact that what is chased and achieved becomes immediately tasteless and redundant. No longer interested in what we possess, we hurtle ourselves into achieving what we don't have.

- (III) Despite all our claims to be able to cobble up an educated and intellectual society, it seems we are hardly inching closer to one. There could be various reasons, ways, and instances to vouchsafe a view like this. One of the quickest ways to figure out the pulse of the nation: It won't be a bad idea to watch the most favoured and popular serials that swarm hundreds of channels on your television screen. Look at the lurid content, the slipshod presentation, the melodrama, the abundance of gimmicks, vulgarity, and cheapness that characterize most of these programmes. And then you realize, with a gasp of sigh, that we are hardly headed towards any awareness, education, or enlightenment.
- (IV) One of the dubious distinctions of our society surely is to be one of the most corrupt countries in the world. Corruption today has become an integral part of our system. If you want to get anything done, you need to bribe a person. It doesn't matter whether the matter is right or

wrong, small or special; you need to grease a bureaucratic palm in order to get a file moving off its blocks. For those who cannot afford to fall in line in with such unsaid expectations, there hardly is a ray of hope. After all, their wishes may soar but the files won't register a budge unless sufficiently winged on currency notes.

(v) Adults are scared of death, as children are scared of darkness, so says Bacon, the legendary Renaissance English essayist. It is, however, just not children who are scared of darkness. After all how many of us can claim that darkness does not frighten us? Imagine yourself being caught in the darkness of night with no one around you! Even if you are trapped within your own house that you have lived in for years and years together, you don't really enjoy seeing your large, lonely shadow against your own walls. Similarly, not many of us feel like walking alone in long streets with no light around. And even if the grown ups choose to watch late night horror movies in big theatres, a realization that they have to cross a long, unknown, dark street all alone after the show is over, can give them a cold shiver down their spines.

(vi) Superstition is one of the peculiar features of human life. Normally, the word is conceived, viewed, and interpreted in ancient terms and with the rise of the scientific spirit and a general sense of awareness all around, one would imagine that its tentacles on us are ebbing away. A closer look into the behaviour of even the most educated, affluent, and respected though hardly endorses such surmises. On the contrary, there is a spurt of superstitious beliefs all around us. No marriages are solemnized today without the matching of 'gunas' of the girl and the boy. Nobody is prepared to believe that it is a 'kundli' generated through an engineered software after all that is actually calling the shots. We would love to see 'the hand of God' in all the things that happen around us. If, by chance, the Gods fail to win matches for us, it is an octopus or a parakeet that can decide the matter.

(vii) Whether science is a friend or a foe has been one of the raging debates for many decades now.

Gradually, however, the debate is giving way to the belief that it does not matter whether it is a friend or a foe. We all now understand that it is not just difficult but almost impossible for us to conceive of a world without the machines, motors, and computers that do not just make our life much more comfortable but almost define our existence. At the same time, we are also aware of the damage that the proliferation and advancement of science and technology has caused to the environment. The real issue for us today, therefore, is not whether to see science as a friend or a foe but to be able to survive without science and still not leave it.

(viii) Looking at the variegated shades and hues of Indian cinema in Hindi, one wonders what happened to the stream of 'parallel cinema' that characterized many movies made in the 1970s and early 1980s. Those were the days when you could see directors such as Shyam Benegal, Sai Paranjpe, Aparna Sen, Basu Chatterjee, Basu Bhattacharya, Gulzar, Saeed Mirza, Ketan Mehta, and the likes of them raising pertinent socio-political issues, capturing realities in an intense, artistic manner, and attempting to redefine the codes and ethos that always tormented the creative souls. In retrospect, they seemed much like a ruthless continuation of cinema as a means of expression of self conceived reality and propagation of ideas, an experiment that was almost poetically presented in the 1950s and 60s by movie makers such as Bimal Roy, Hrishikesh Mukherjee, Gurudutt, Mehboob, K. Asif, and Raj Kapoor.

(ix) Whether humanity would survive global warming or not is only a matter of speculation for us. The depleting water resources, the rising temperature, the melting glaciers and strange climatic phenomena recorded in the last couple of decades however, does not augur well. Besides, the burgeoning population, the staggering amount of inventions, and growing consumerism, have only been adding many more twists and turns to the plot that now looks increasingly tragic. Of course, predictions have always been made about the catastrophe striking us, and since

most of these have not materialized, we tend to believe that what is doing rounds in the media is just an unfounded and exaggerated projection of the whole situation. We may choose the position we may like to but we must know that though ignoring a rumour is judicious, ignoring reality is no wisdom.

- (x) One of the toughest things to do today is to be a child. These days, children are expected to be mature, disciplined, focused, sensible, assiduous, competitive, and above all successful. So, they are supposed to be all, but not a child. Childhood today is devoid of innocence; they cannot expose their ignorance in the quizzes they have to participate in. They cannot score poor marks in exams because they were charmed by a particular sport and followed it both in their congested streets and on a television screen. Whether willing or not, they all have to live upto one single dream of their parents—they have to be successful. One really wonders what has happened to all our intelligence. By making a child chase his tail in a rat race, we are hardly making him successful. Though in an effort to do so, we ourselves are being hopelessly petulant and childish.

8. Read the following passages and write a précis for each of them. Also assign a suitable title to every passage and write the number of words you have used in making a précis of the original:

## Passage I

It was the cold midnight of 2 and 3 December 1984. The people of Bhopal were sleeping in the warmth of quilts as the mercury dipped, with the sounds of police vehicles assuring them 'all is well'. Suddenly, they started coughing and sneezing incessantly.

They wondered what was wrong. Those who came out of their homes discovered that hell had broken loose. People were running in panic. Sunil Singh, a grocer, recalls the nightmare: bodies strewn all over, and the air irritating the eyes, throats, and lungs. 'I was unable to see properly, but I ran until I collapsed in a pond meant for pigs and buffaloes,' he says.

The next morning, the people of Bhopal woke up to the news of the world's worst industrial disaster. About

8,000 people had perished and 5 lakh were left with multi-systemic injuries, as over 40 tonnes of deadly methyl isocyanate gas leaked from the multinational Union Carbide India Ltd's (UCIL) plant.

Twenty-five years on, the survivors struggle with cancers, pain, breathlessness, and other problems. Every month, about 30 people die because of the after effects of the gas. Children, who were born after the tragedy, too, are exposed to the toxic waste.

The environment watchdog Greenpeace recently declared the defunct UCIL plant as a 'global toxic hotspot'. It found heavy concentrations of carcinogenic chemicals and heavy metals such as mercury, which have been found at 20,000 to 60 lakh times the permissible levels.

Over 40 per cent of the women who were exposed to the gas have had abortions. Also, many women have not found grooms because of the fear of deformed babies. Femida, a survivor, was just four during the mishap. Unmarried and scarred, she wanders in slums, and often tears up her clothes in a fit of madness.

Activist Rachna Dhingra, who runs the Sambhavana clinic, says that many women who were toddlers at the time of the mishap are now suffering from menstrual problems. Nazma (name changed) was just a year old at the time of the mishap. Now, her menstrual cycle is erratic. And she is yet to get married. 'I have been suffering for the last 10 years,' says Nazma. 'I do not know when I would become a normal woman' (No. of words: 374)

Source: Deepak Tiwari, 'Murder at Midnight,' *The Week*,<sup>31</sup>

January 2010, p. 45

## *Passage II*

In a saturated marriage market, the matrimonial data—that business-like document brandished by aunties and local matchmakers—is worth its weight in gold. But Gaurav Agarwal knew that M/28/Wheatish/Garment Exporter could not sum up the chutzpah he wanted to sell. So, he decided to hand out VCDs instead.

Those who dare to press 'play' can see Agarwal in an embroidered shirt, thick-rimmed glasses and goatee tapping away at his laptop, strumming the guitar, doing a salsa shimmy and showing off his beatboxing skills for eight long minutes. Then, in Bollywood style, he cruises down the streets of Lucknow, wind blowing through his hair, as he confesses what he is looking for in a partner: someone who 'maintains her figure, is from the same

caste, and works from home'. Later there is a sneak peek into his room and even an introduction to his parents for prospective brides. 'Nowadays, if you want to get married, you need to advertise yourself', he says, 'I thought, why not do it with a *dhamaka*?'

Agarwal is not the only one trying to cut through the clutter of dull matrimonial biodata with a '*dhamaka*'. From video clips to PowerPoint presentations to mini feature films, several prospective brides and grooms are making sure their pitch is memorable. So you have eligible bachelors cooing at pups, in the hope that bachelorettes will sense their sensitivity; prospective brides walking down imaginary ramps in their living rooms to show their 'open-mindedness', and girls putting their multifacetedness on display by smashing a tennis ball over the net in one shot and demurely making rotis in the next.

Meghna Chitalia, a wedding planner who has recently added making new age biodata to her work profile, had one Mumbai girl change 11 outfits in her matrimonial commercial. 'She got into a sari, salwar kameez, mini skirt, and jeans and sported different looks. I guess she wanted to show that she could be traditional and modern too,' she says. In another case, the planner helped a bride make a short feature film about her life. The video, interspersed with grabs from home videos of her childhood, interviews with members of her family and accounts of her favourite hobbies, were woven into a storyline. In yet another case, a prospective groom actually did a spoof of Amitabh Bachchan in *Deewar*.

Excessive as it may seem to many, Chitalia says the idea is to make a lasting first impression. 'You have a few minutes to say everything about yourself and the idea is to say it in the best way possible,' she says, adding that a professional video shoot could set a client back by anything between ₹15,000 and ₹1 lakh. Not everybody outsources the video profiles though often they are handycam jobs or a mix of the amateur and the professional, like in the case of singer Vikram Sachdev who chose to begin with a clip of herself participating in a musical reality show. (No. of words: 490)

Source: Mansi Choksi, 'The Shaadi Screen Test', *The Times of India: The Crest Edition*, 29 May 2010, p. 13.

was a channel's choice for a New Year Eve special movie: *The Titanic*. 'They are welcoming the new century on a sinking note.' He guffawed, little knowing that the movie, the accident it was based on, and his one-liner, all were going to be a metaphor for the 21st century. For when American Airlines Flight 11 and United Airlines Flight 175 flew into the twin towers, it was but a morbid parallel to the *Titanic* crashing into the iceberg. After that day, the world was never the same again.

It is a decade the world wants to forget, especially the west—marred as it has been with bloodshed, extremism, bankruptcy, and unrest. The party for the 21st century, it seemed, had ended even before it began. But the story was slightly different for India; indeed it seemed as if someone forgot to tell us that bad times were afoot. Like the lone drummer marching to his own beat, India plugged in her iPod and swayed gaily, sometimes stumbling, but always managing to get back on her two feet, through the decade that ends in a few days.

It was the decade of *desi*-ism, the era when we finally came into our own. The early promise of liberalization led to the high that only money and success give, and with these two guests, every other good time followed. It was okay to be Indian, heck it was cool to be us!

In literature, we learnt to look beyond Salman Rushdie and Vikram Seth, and Bollywood with all its over the top movies was fun once again. In soaps we left behind *The Bold and the Beautiful* for *Kyunki Saas Bhi Kabhi Bahu Thi*, and when hitting the dance floor we preferred to jive to *Desi Girl* rather than *Single Ladies*.

India, at least for the Indians, was shining as one of us got his daughter married at the Versailles and another pocketed British car giants. We lived well, ate, drank, drove, and wore the best of what the world had, worked hard, partied harder, and looked better than we had ever done before. Our women were taking over the workplace and the bar, but it was also becoming important to have someone escort them home while our men were trying to decide whether they were metro or retrosexuals.

Where there is light, there is also darkness, and our chickens did start coming home to roost with the Naxal problems raising their heads. In politics, the more the things changed, the more they remained the same; but what did not budge from its decades old position was the distrust and anger our politicians aroused in us.

Pakistan, we reduced to a mere footnote, both in our history and present times, but sometimes at our own peril. We now look at China, wondering if we dare take it on openly.

Amid all this upheaval, a small section of India discovered its conscience and made itself heard, time and again. It is still a trickle, this awareness that the world does consist of others besides you and me but it has all the makings of becoming a gushing river one day. We still continued to subjugate our women even more so because now they asserted themselves but we also realized that 'our head in the sand' approach to alternate sexuality did indeed belong to the Victorian era. And while our torrid love affair with cricket continues, we learnt to appreciate other forms of sport, too, from tennis to shooting to golf and even hockey, even though that love affair lasted only till *Chak De India* was in the theatres.

It is a decade in which we laid the foundation for India to be a completely different nation from the one that we inherited. We tried to make her cooler and hipper though we did not always succeed. The next 10 years will give us plenty of opportunities to take this effort further, learn from our mistakes, and perhaps one day finally arrive at an India which we can be proud to have created.

(No. of words: 702)

**Source:** Nikita Doval, 'AD 2019', *The Week*,

3 January 2010, p. 25.

#### Passage IV

The Indo-Pak border in Punjab is foreboding and romantic, untouched for most parts, except by the footfalls of BSF men and a sparse population. The Rodanwala Khurd village here is serene and pristine.

The landscape stretches endlessly, with fields of knee-high paddy or wheat crop, punctuated by tracts of fresh earth, and the border fencing broken only by iron gates every half a kilometer or so and electrified at night. The fence has made all the difference in the lives of the villagers. 'We are sandwiched between the gun-wielding Pakistani Rangers and our own BSF men because we farm our land beyond the fence,' says former sarpanch, Daljinder Singh.

At the ceremonial retreat, 4 km away, Pakistani and Indian soldiers lower their national flags in marching

style that is a barometer of Indo-Pak relations. Anger on the soldiers' faces and ferocious thumping of boots indicate all is not well. If the gates are banged shut and bolted, it means Pakistan is not taking India's complaints seriously. In good times, a deadpan expression pervades the ceremony and visitors are allowed close to the Zero Line between the gates. There is a healthy competition about which side has more viewers to cheer and whose patriotic songs are louder. Fridays go to the team across the fence, and Sundays are ours.

Some villagers have benefited from this spectacle that gives the patriotic types goose pimples. Farmer Puran Singh's relatives have tea stalls near the venue. A couple of people plying taxis between Amritsar and Attari are doing well thanks to tourists. 'But most tourists hire taxis in Amritsar. And most of our khokas (kiosks) were dismantled when the government undertook development of the area,' says Puran. He feels the ceremony has not benefitted people in the area.

But Rodanwala has its own show twice a week. The Delhi-Lahore Samjhauta Express halts here for around four hours. Customs officials carry out checks, and two heavy iron gates open to allow the train across the border. Children throng to see the train. 'We have only one government primary school. Most people prefer to send their children to private schools in Attari as private education is better and English is taught,' says farmer Sukha Singh.

A good school and hospital remain a dream. But sarpanch Manjit Kaur dare not demand it, as the border is a potential war zone and, hence, to be kept without buildings that could obstruct view of enemy movement. 'Even in terms of agriculture, we cannot go beyond paddy and wheat because of the height. We cannot have trees. We cannot grow fodder for cattle, as it would grow into a thicket that could be a hiding place for the enemy,' says Daljinder.

The border fence passes through 500 acres belonging to 120 farmers in Rodanwala. They require border fence gate passes to go to their lands across the fence. 'Getting this pass is difficult and depends on the whim of the BSF commandant. They ask us to apply again, and we have to run to wherever they tell us, including Jalandhar. Even with a pass, the guards won't let us cross on a day when the weather is bad, or some reasons we don't know,' says Sukha. 'The power supply is at night, but we cannot

igate our land. If our tube-well pump gets spoilt, the electrician cannot enter,' he says. For Puran, wild boars from Pakistan ruin his wheat crop. 'One farmer was killed by wild boar,' he says, 'We cannot chase them into Pakistan as we may be shot.'

Farming holds no charm for the sons of farmers. Surjeet Singh, 19, has cleared his Class 12 and dreams of joining the BSF. 'Promises are made that the BSF will recruit us, but nothing happens. Money seems to work, and we don't have that. Lots of my friends are like me, doing nothing,' he says.

Recently, women from farmer families with gate passes have been allowed to work in their fields across the fence as the BSF has posted women along the fence. The lot of most women is pathetic. A 'polio nurse' who comes every fortnight is their only access to health service. The dispensary building, which has been there for 15 years, has no doctors or staff. When Paramjeet developed labour pains in the middle of the night in December, a villager who owns a taxi drove her to hospital in Attari, from where the doctor referred her to Amritsar, 30 km away.

But Paramjeet is luckier than people in the Dera Baba Nanak sector, where Pak rockets landed recently. 'In Dera Baba Nanak, the Ravi river is the border. There is no fence. When it floods, it devastates our village,' says Daljinder. And if there is shelling on the border, our movements are restricted. When we see unusual troop movement, we abandon the villages and flee to relatives in Amritsar, Chandigarh or Ludhiana.

(No. of words: 815)

Source: Vijaya Pushkarna, 'Pristine, Yet Perilous', *The Week*, 7 March 2010, pp. 18–19.

#### Passage V

An insomniac city breeds nightbirds, who have cocked a snook at nature by liberating their body clocks from the confines of the circadian rhythm. They thus work nights in brightly illuminated offices or party till day-break in the garish neon of night-clubs, sleep by day, and snack whenever it suits their fancy.

Tejal Rajyagor, 25, for instance, lives in Mumbai, but keeps GMT timings. She works for a UK-based company that has outsourced offices to the subcontinent, starting her working day at 1.30 p.m. IST, which is 8 a.m. in London. Office hours are till 11.30 p.m., but work generally spills

over to 1.30 a.m. So by the time I reach home, it's usually 3 a.m.' The area outside her office, which has many BPOs, comes alive post midnight, when employees step out for an 'evening' snack. 'There are chaiwalias, the idli-vada man, traffic zipping past. You would never know it was so late in the day unless you checked your watch,' Tejal says.

Tejal earns big money. But she is aware that she is paying a heavy price. 'Socially, I don't exist to the outside world, as I have barely attended a do in the last two years. Worse, I feel so disconnected, and cannot get my body back to Indian timings on weekends,' she says. Already reed thin, she has lost over five kilos in the past few months because of erratic meals. 'Most colleagues have the opposite problem, they are piling up weight, many having notched up to 10 extra kilos.'

Not so long ago, only a skeletal staff worked the graveyard shift—nurses, resident doctors, journalists, railway and airlines staff, cops, and some factory workers. With darkness no longer a restricting factor, the after-sunset workforce has burgeoned. While on the one hand, the business process outsourcing industry emerged, on the other, people are working later and later even in traditional sectors.

There aren't many India-specific studies done on the effects of the new work culture. But health experts point out that there are reasons why humans were created as diurnal beings, and tampering with this rhythm could open the door to a host of health troubles.

Manvir Bhatia, Chairperson of the Department of Sleep Medicine at Delhi's Ganga Ram Hospital, notes that hormones such as Growth Hormone (GH) and melatonin spurt at night. 'In adults, GH is associated with the body's repair mechanism. Its deficiency leads to the fatigue and low immunity that we see in those who stay awake at night.' A day's sleep cannot compensate for a night's rest. 'Melatonin is secreted after the onset of sleep, in the dark. It has a vast role in anti-ageing, and cancer prevention. The traditional concept of beauty sleep has a scientific basis here.' Cortisol, the stress hormone, too, is related to the circadian rhythm. Its disruption is manifested in the increased stress levels, high blood pressure, and obesity.

While India, where manpower is not a shortage, may be in denial of these studies, Denmark has already taken the lead. It is paying compensation to women who developed breast cancer after working in late night shifts, after

a World Health Organization study concluded that altering sleep patterns suppressed the production of melatonin, thus escalating the risk of cancer. So far 40 women have got compensation.

'The effects build up over a period of time. They are not immediately evident,' says Bhatia. 'I'm seeing memory loss in younger people, in their 30s and 40s. There's also an increase in the Type A personalities hyperstimulated people, for which one reason could be exposure to a lot of light for long hours.'

It is not just about staying awake beyond traditional bedtime. the quality of darkness is as important. A US study showed that infants who slept in rooms lit by night lamps had increased chances of developing myopia later.

**@ Please refer to the Online Resource Centre for more exercises on precis writing.**

A decade ago, Mumbai resident Ashwin Jajal went to the Bombay High Court with the complaint that the blinking neon hoardings at Marine Drive, which invaded his fifth floor apartment, were hurting his health and sensibility, not allowing him a good night's rest. A subsequent state government committee found that these lights were not just bad for the eyes, but affected sleep, appetite, and caused psychological problems. The court ordered the lights be switched off after 11 p.m. A small battle was won in the war against light pollution. (No. of words: 729)

**Source:** Rekha Dixit, 'Let There be Night', *The Week*, 17 January 2010, pp. 18-20.

**Please refer to the Online Resource Centre for more exercises on precis writing.**