

# Excerpts

**“On the roads all are equal. Thus you are forced to pass through a system on roads where there are several categories of other road users, having different attitudes towards road safety or traffic rules. You have to mix up and compromise with all other categories of road users. Even if you have the best intention to follow safe driving, you may be the victim of other's rash driving or rage. You cannot avoid road traffic howsoever big you may be in your status in the country.”**

“No doubt, accidents are the most important aspect of traffic related problems, but the problem goes much beyond the phenomenon of accidents. If we consider other problems pertaining to road traffic, we see that traffic congestion and pollution come probably next to accidents. Both these two problems have a common denominators i.e. volcanic expansion of vehicles and a severely lagging road infrastructure.”

## **The accidents . . . . .**

“India has the largest number of deaths in road accidents in the world. On an average, there is one serious accident every minute and a death every five minutes in road accidents.”

**“It is an irony that in India a severely injured road accident victim lying in a pool of blood may fail to attract the attention of even a single person among the commuters or the spectators standing barely a few feet away, while on the contrary a struggling human life 70 feet deep in the bore well, may attract the attention of the whole nation. I don't see any example worse than this to see such a discrepancy in attention and attitude of the Indian society as well as of the government towards human life.”**

“It is true that in 80-90% cases human error is directly or indirectly responsible for road accidents. We frequently blame the hardware or the machine we are driving in, but the fact is that it is the software, the driver's brain that is the real culprit behind the majority of such cases. You would be surprised to know that vehicular faults, pedestrian's fault and defective roads are responsible only for 3-4%, 2-3% and 1-2% of total accidents respectively.”

**“It is true that deaths occurring at the spot or within few minutes, that are largely due to severe impact, are at present not under control even in the developed countries. However, it is very very sad to find that even among those who are reaching alive to the hospitals, a significant number dies during the hospital stay. In developed countries, only one out of 200 seriously injured accident victims dies in hospital while in India one out of every six seriously injured victim dies after reaching the hospital.”**

“When we compare it with other types of violent deaths, we find that the number of deaths owing to road accidents is significantly high. For example, in India, deaths in road accidents are 3.5 times more than the total number of deaths occurring owing to homicide. Similarly, in 2007 only two people died every day in terrorist related activities in India while in the same year road accidents claimed 314 casualties everyday. As regards war, it is not a common phenomenon, but as per the world average, death rates in road accidents are seven times bigger than those occurring owing to wars. So you can very well understand where the actual war is raging, on our borders or on our roads.”

**“We fail to do our best. When an accident occurs to your close one, often either you do not know or come to know very late. There is a horrifying possibility that the person/your close one might be having very severe injuries and may be struggling for his life at the accident site and quite likely there may not be any close one by his side or he may not be able to get even primary aid. You may be completely unaware of this fact and comfortably watching television at home. You may regret this fact lifelong that in spite of being able to afford the best treatment in the world, you could do nothing for him/her. Contrarily, if someone in your family is sick at home, you ensure immediate medical aid. For example, if someone has a heart attack, you would promptly rush him to the nearest cardiac I.C.U. and provide the best of treatment. Even if he does not survive the heart attack, you have the satisfaction of knowing that you did all you could.”**

## **The vehicles . . . . .**

***“The number of motorized vehicles is increasing in India at a phenomenal rate. Up to March 2009 there were about 12 crore motorized vehicles on Indian roads. Every year approximately 1 crore vehicles are coming on roads. The attitude of the government at present appears like that of a manager of a circus or a cinema hall, where, in spite of knowing the fact, virtually there is no space inside, but he continues to sell ticket saying ‘go and enjoy the show’. There is already flowing a flood of vehicles on Indian roads. The government is probably waiting this flood to take the shape of a tsunami on the roads”***

“In India at present only about 10% of population have personal vehicles. However, in contrast to developed countries, the number of vehicles in India is growing very fast [about 10%/year], that is, about 10-12 times faster than in developed countries. In India just imagine, if the present 10% of vehicular ownership is sufficient to cause the collapse of the present road infrastructure, what would happen when we will approach the figures of developed countries [i.e. 50-60%] and that too, with a rate that is 10-12 times faster than those countries?”

***“The two MOST important problems responsible for traffic congestion and also the MOST difficult for the government to tackle are the increased number of vehicles and that of road encroachments. In cities, unlike highways, money alone will not solve the problem, no matter how much of it is pumped in. Instead, it would call for a strong political will and bureaucratic action.”***

“We spent a significant proportion of our income on vehicles for their purchase and maintenance. Most of us consider daily fuel consumption to be the running cost of vehicles. However, the actual daily running cost of the vehicle is quite different. To understand the actual daily running cost, in addition to daily fuel consumption, we have to take in to account the daily depreciation and the daily maintenance cost as well.”

## **The roads . . . . .**

“Road is also one of the biggest employers in our country, providing livelihood right from a labourer to the minister. Except grassroots workers, who earn for the job done, most of the other persons in the series above them probably get disproportionate payment for their jobs.”

***“There are clearly two groups that is working on roads, one belongs to road-makers while the other to road-diggers. Both work in ‘close in coordination’. It is very common to find that once the road is complete, the very next week you see people from another department start digging it again. In India, roads are being raped repeatedly and we all observe it silently without any concern.”***

“The situation of the Indian road is in no way different from a poor woman who has just got the new clothes to wear, but the very next week someone tore it. Only God knows in a poor country like ours when she would get the next chance for new clothes and till then she has to continue to wear this repaired one.”

***“In India there are two important areas for political somersaults. One is inside Parliament and State assemblies and the second is on the road. I may not be wrong in saying that the road to Parliament starts from the ‘road’ itself. Traffic jam is often used as a weapon by political parties to show their power or nuisance value.”***

## **The traffic police . . . . .**

"I must say that traffic policemen take harsh decisions only after giving a sufficient time to the commuters and not from day one. People take undue advantage of this or consider their leniency for signs of weakness or incompetence. In this regard the role of the traffic police should be clearly defined. What do we expect from the traffic police? Do we want the traffic police to behave like a mother or as a perfect law-enforcing agency? Should it ask the commuter 'Beta helmet pahan lo, otherwise you may suffer head injury' in a way as if mother says 'Beta sweater pahan lo' otherwise you will catch cold' and nothing beyond this. Instead, I hold that we should consider traffic police a perfect law-enforcing agency"

**"If you stand at some moderately busy crossing and start counting total number of the vehicles passing from all four directions in his duty hours, you will find that their number is anywhere between 1-2 lakhs or even more. The white uniform that was crisp and shining in the morning acquires thick black coating by the time he finishes his duty. Though he can wash this coating from the clothes easily, he can hardly do anything for coating that he is accumulating on lung surface daily due to passive smoke emanating from petroleum products."**

*"What is the harm if someone pays for his bad habits? None but the concerned person has landed himself in this situation. The imposition of fine is fully justified and, in fact, this is also a part of educating the people as some people don't like to be educated free of cost and want to pay for it."*

**"The duty of a traffic policeman is among the few jobs that involves a lot of physical exertion and stress. I consider the traffic policeman the busiest person in any job. The reason is being that impact of his absence even for a few minutes is easily noticeable at a crossing."**

## **The public. . . . .**

**"We**, the conscious citizens, often make a lot of hue and cry about chaotic traffic conditions, but when it comes to observing rules, they are always meant for others? What should we call ourselves, hypocrites or something else? Why do we tend to follow traffic rules only when asked to do so, or under pressure of law? If we really think ourselves as part of a civilized society, then why do we not understand that our role really matters a lot. If we are honestly and sincerely committed to safe driving or follow traffic rules meant for our safety, we would be able to reduce the traffic-related burden to a great extent."

"Is traffic violation a social issue? It may not be out of place to discuss the problem of traffic violations as one of the other social issues, like dowry, female feticide, domestic violence, etc. Why was there a need to make laws against such social evils? It is because education and social awareness failed to curb them and the government had to intervene by making laws. Similarly, the issue of traffic violation is related more to the attitude of society rather than lack of knowledge. It is also true that laws alone cannot completely eliminate any social evil, but only help to keep them in check. If such incidences occur still, it does not mean that the laws are not effective, but try to imagine the situation if there are no laws at all. I believe if the law can bring about a change in majority it has enough justification for its utility. Bad habits die hard and the desired behavioral changes may be brought about only after effective law-enforcement."

## **The pedestrians . . . . .**

“Pediatricians vote, they contribute to revenue, they have equal rights on the road and equal right to government’s budget for infrastructure, but what they get in return is thick smoke, splashes of mud and a threat to their lives”

**“In some commercial areas, frequently one has to zig-zag one’s way by jumping over some shoe rack, underneath some paintings, through hanging night gowns and lingerie on the pavements. This experience is in no way less adventurous than that of the ‘trekking through the dense forests of the Amazon’.”**

*“Modernization of infrastructure and traffic reforms should benefit all types of commuters on roads. After all, it is public money and all commuters on the road contribute to infrastructure. However, the present equation is that in India only 10% population has motorized vehicles, but the cost of the total infrastructure, the air pollution and the risk of road accidents are shared by the whole society. Any enhanced facilities for the motorized vehicles adversely affect the safety of non-motorized vehicle-owners or pedestrians.”*

**“Please don’t drive your vehicle like a train, otherwise the mother would say to kid “look child, this is called a car but in no way it is different from a train, you have to cross the road only when it goes away from you.”**

## The Government . . . . .

*“At present this grave problem is receiving much less attention than it deserves. Whatever measures are being taken, are going well behind schedule. Will it be true to say that Indians getting rich means India is also getting rich? Certainly not. On one hand, it is the rich and desperate people who are responsible for the volcanic expansion in the number of vehicles in the country, while on the other hand, there is government machinery that is responsible for providing and maintaining the infrastructure for smooth road traffic in the country. I believe the country’s economy is not keeping pace with that of its people with the result it is unable to provide timely and adequate infrastructure. Another possibility could be that the country might be having adequate funds but traffic hazards and good infrastructure are not accorded priority.”*

**“In cities, unlike highways, money alone will not solve the problem, no matter how much of it is pumped in. Instead, it would call for a strong political will and bureaucratic action.”**

“There are so many ‘serious discussions’ and conferences going on at government and NGO levels from time to time. People come to such meetings bubbling with knowledge that really impresses the gathering and the media, but the fact is that no serious action is taken beyond paper work or recording of minutes or updating their website. Thus road traffic continues to remain in its dismal condition.”

**“The government is very active only in making some committees for the detailed study on traffic related problems. It appears that the guidelines prepared by these committees are basically recommendatory, or just a suggestion and not mandatory for the government to follow. Sometimes the proposal is so extensively and slowly churned through committees and sub-committees on planning, finance, etc, causing a considerable delay in implementation or making it too late.”**