

ALL
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DIVINE LAUGHTER

Cover page: Mount Kailasa

Kalidasa says in a daring image that the snowrocks of Kailasa are Shiva's loud world-laughters piled up in utter whiteness and pureness on the mountain-tops. It is true; and when their image falls on the heart, then the world's cares melt away like the clouds below into their real nothingness.

Sri Aurobindo

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Divine Laughter

Matter shall reveal the Spirit's face. — Sri Aurobindo

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Editorial note: Humour is the capacity to laugh at life. It is a gift of Grace to mankind to go through its 'difficult evolutionary passage' through the journey of life. It is indeed a divine quality that keeps us cheerful and spreads joy in the world even when the going is tough. We find in Sri Aurobindo the manifestation of this quality in sublime and divine proportions. It runs as a sparkling thread through almost all His writings including Savitri. In His Letters, particularly to some intimate disciples it shows out prominently bringing them and to us the gifts of light and laughter. Much of this has been published in Sri Aurobindo's Correspondence with Nirodbaran as well as brought out in the wonderful book 'The Smiling Master' by Jugal Kishore Mukherjee. Here we have selected few from these vast collection and others. It reveals an aspect of Sri Aurobindo that is often missed out by the casual readers which yet is necessary to the completeness of His Divine Personality.



Sri Aurobindo has told us many times already that the Supreme has a sense of humour, that we are the ones who want to make Him into a grave and invariably serious character — and He may find it very amusing to come and embrace an unbeliever. Someone who has only the day before declared, “God does not exist. I do not believe in Him. All that is folly and ignorance...”, He gathers him into His arms, He presses him to His heart — and He laughs in his face.

CWM 10: 33

The Mother

Light and Laughter

Sense of humour

Sense of humour? It is the salt of existence. Without it the world would have got utterly out of balance — it is unbalanced enough already — and rushed to blazes long ago.

*

I am not aware that highly evolved personalities have no sense of humour or how the person can be said to be integrated when this sense is lacking; “looseness” applies only to a frivolous levity without any substance behind it. There is no law that wisdom should be something rigidly solemn and without a smile.

CWSA 31: 174

If men took life less seriously, they could very soon make it more perfect. God never takes His works seriously; therefore one looks out on this wonderful Universe.

CWSA 12: 432

Sri Aurobindo

As soon as the atmosphere becomes grave you can be sure that something is wrong, that there is a troubling influence, an old habit trying to reassert itself, which should not be accepted. All this regret, all this remorse, the feeling of being unworthy, of being at fault — and then one step further and you have the sense of sin. Oh! To me it all seems to belong to another age, an age of darkness...

So, it is agreed, we shall try to learn how to laugh with the Lord.

CWM 10: 156–57

The Mother

Laugh with Lord

This delight, this wonderful laughter that dissolves every shadow, every pain, every suffering! You only have to go deep enough within yourself to find the inner Sun, to let yourself be flooded by it; and then there is nothing but a cascade of harmonious, luminous, sunlit laughter, which leaves no room for any shadow or pain....

And this Sun, this Sun of divine laughter is at the centre of all things, the truth of all things: we must learn to see it, to feel it, to live it.

And for that, let us avoid people who take life seriously; they are very boring people.

CWM 10: 156

One must always laugh, always. The Lord laughs, and He laughs, and His laugh is so nice, so nice, so full of love. It is a laugh that envelops you with an extraordinary sweetness.

This too men have deformed – they have deformed everything (*Mother laughs*).

CWM 11: 56

The Semites¹ have afflicted mankind with the conception of a God who is a stern and dignified king and solemn judge and knows not mirth. But we who have seen Krishna, know Him for a boy fond of play and a child full of mischief and happy laughter. (CWM 10: 344)

CWSA 12:490

1. A member of any of various ancient and modern peoples originating in southwestern Asia, including the Akkadians, Canaanites, Phoenicians, Hebrews, and Arabs.

Greatness and Grimness of God

It is your old error of the greatness and “grimness” of God, Supramental etc. which was used to bring back the wrong ideas and the gloom. All this talk about grimness and sternness is sheer rot— you will excuse me for the expression, but there is no other that is adequate. The only truth about it is that I am not demonstrative or expansive in public — but I never was. Nevinson seeing me presiding at the Surat Nationalist Conference — which was not a joke and others were as serious as myself — spoke of me as that most politically dangerous of men — “the man who never smiles” which made people who knew me smile very much. You seem to have somewhere in you a Nevinson impression of me. Or perhaps you agree with X who wrote demanding of me why I smiled only with the lips and complained that it was not a satisfactory smile like the Mother’s. All the same, whatever I may have said to Y or Y may have said to you, I have always given a large place to mirth and laughter and my letters in that style are only the natural outflow of my personality. I have never been “grim” in my life—that is the Stalin-Mussolini style, it is not mine; the only trait I share with the “grim” people is obstinacy in following out my aim in life, but I do it quietly and simply and have always done. Don’t set up some gloomy imaginations and take them for the real Aurobindo.

CWSA 35:48-49

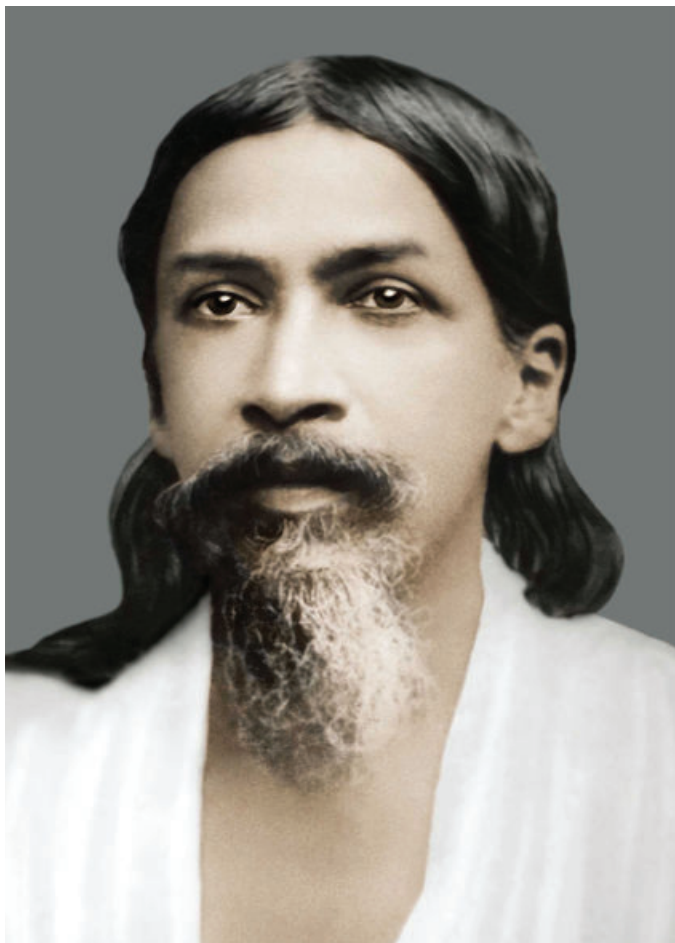
Sri Aurobindo

Disciple : Has the sense of humour a place in spiritual perfection ?

Sri Aurobindo : If the *siddha* never laughs it is an imperfection.

Evening Talks: p.243

Sri Aurobindo



Did you not retire for five or six years for an exclusive and intensive meditation?

I am not aware that I did so. But my biographers probably know more about it than I do.

CWSA 35:745

Sri Aurobindo

Wit and Wisdom

Guru and a father

You refuse to be a Guru and decline to be a father, though ladies especially think of you as father and call you so. If they come to know of your refusal, I'll have to run with smelling salts from one lady to another!

Father is too domestic and Semitic — *Abba* Father! I feel as if I had suddenly become a twin-brother of the Lord Jehovah. Besides, there are suggestions of a paternal smile and a hand uplifted to smite which do not suit me.

Let the ladies "father" me if smelling salts are the only alternative, but let it not be generalised.

Nirodbaran: Correspondence with Sri Aurobindo, p. 126

Vishwarup of Sri Aurobindo

Why should you stupefy me? Good Lord! Have you forgotten how Arjuna was stupefied, horrified, flabbergasted by seeing the Vishwarup of Krishna whom he had thought of as his friend, guru, playmate? Could I, for a moment, play all these pranks on you if I saw your Vishwarup?

But that was because the Vishwarup was enjoying a rather catastrophic dinner, with all the friends and relations of Arjuna stuck between his *danstrāni karālāni*. But my viswarupa has no tusks, Sir, none at all. It is a pacifist vishwarup.

Nirodbaran: Correspondence with Sri Aurobindo, p. 479-80

Intelligent and interested

Very strange. Sir, that you don't have a single intelligent chap in the species of your Supramental race to be! On what do you build your hopes, please?

Excuse me, you said intelligent and interested.... You might find one of these separately, but how do you hope to get them combined together? Anyhow, we can't hunt for the kind of animal you want, you yourself should take up the chase.

Sri Aurobindo's Humour, p. 13

Why the Path to the Divine is difficult

Why are we made of so many contradictory elements?

It takes many ingredients to make a nice pudding.

Is it that the path to the Divine can't be made easy lest all leave the ordinary world?

Perhaps it is to prevent the world from coming to a sudden end by a universal rush into beatitude.

Sri Aurobindo's Humour, p. 19

Weeping machine

Today P came for her eyes. All on a sudden she burst out into sobs — God knows why!

God doesn't.

P is a sort of weeping machine — touch a spring even unintentionally and it starts off.

Sri Aurobindo's Humour, p.72-73

Why are you so afraid of P's screams? Surely yogis ought to be able to bear a little suffering and you ought to encourage or allow it. Sir!

She is not that kind of Yogi. She would only scream and get as wild as Durvasa and stop going to the dispensary — apart from copious weeping etc.

Nirodbaran: Correspondence with Sri Aurobindo, p. 456

Feminine and masculine women

What is meant by feminine women or masculine women?

Feminine is not used in opposition to masculine here, but means only a wholly unrelieved feminine woman—capricious, fantastic, unreasonable, affectionate—quarrelsome, sensual—emotional, idealistic—vitalistic, incalculable, attractive—intolerable, never-knows-what-she-is or what-she-isn't and everything else kind of creature. It is not really feminine, but as the woman as man has made her. By the way, if you like to add some hundred other epithets and double epithets after searching the Oxford dictionary you can freely do so. They can all be filled in somehow.

Sri Aurobindo's Humour, p. 21

Cold and the Maya realisation

My cold has given me the quick realisation that everything in this world — including the Divine — is Maya. What Shankara and Buddha realised by sadhana, I realise by a simple cold!

No need of sadhana for that — anybody with a fit of the blues can manage that. It is to get out of the Maya that sadhana is needed.

Nirodbaran: Correspondence with Sri Aurobindo, p. 273

The painful saga of the blessed boil

*Again a blessed boil inside the left nostril — painful, feverish.
A dose of Force, please.*

As the modernist poet says —
O blessed blessed boil within the nostril,
How with pure pleasure dost thou make thy boss thrill!
He sings of thee with sobbing trill and cross trill,

O blessed, blessed boil within the nostril.

I hope this *stotra* will propitiate the boil and make it disappear, satisfied.

*

I couldn't make out one word. Is it bows thrill?

I thought you'd boggle over it. "Boss", man, "boss"=yourself as owner, proprietor, patron, capitalist of the boil.

*

*Guru, My head, my head
And the damned fever—
I am half dead!*

Cheer up! Things might have been so much worse. Just think if you had been a Spaniard in Madrid or a German Communist in a concentration camp! Imagine that and then you will be quite cheerful with only a cold and headache. So Throw off the cold, Damn the fever, Be sprightly and bold And live for ever.

*

Boil paining, what to do? Suffer with a smile?

Smile a while.

Sri Aurobindo's Humour, pp. 63-64

Again a boil on my left cheek, good Heavens! No improvement.

As René's doctor says "Tut tut tut! Tut tut tut!"

*

Punishment for too much talking or eating or subconscious welling out?

Probably.

Boil a little ripe, but still — Hard and big as hazel-nut, In

spite of your tut, tut, tut! Give one more dose at the least. Or I howl M like a. beast!

Tut nut tut not nut tut tut! Hope this will have the effect of a Tantric mantra which it resembles. So if you like OM ling bling hring kring! Just try repeating either of these 15000 times concentrating on your boil (bling) at the time.

Did you really want me to chant that mantra? I took it as a big piece of joke.

You couldn't realise that Tut Tut Tut was a serious mantra with immense possibilities? Why, it is the modern form of तत् and everybody knows that ॐ तत् सत् is a mantra of great power. Only you should as a penance for not having accepted at once, do it not 15,000 but 150,000 times a day—at a gallop, e.g. Om Tut or Tut Tut a Tut, Tut a Tut and so on at an increasing pace and pitch till you reach either Berhampur (Famous mental asylum) or Nirvana.

By Jove, that handwriting of yours is a brilliantly unique specimen! So I have to send back the note-book! Well, but what's the cure? That impossible mantra [10.4.36] which you gave me, I am trying by fits and starts!

Good Lord! What mantra? OM Tut a tut to to to whit tu-whoo? Man! But it is to be recited only when you are taking tea in the company of four Brahmins pure of all sex ideas and 5 ft. 7 inches tall, with a stomach in proportion. Otherwise it can't be effective.

Nirodbaran: Correspondence with Sri Aurobindo, pp. 553-54, 562, 572

Don't imitate me

S has profuse "whites" . . .

What on earth is this word? Winter? wintes? It may be profuse but it is not legible. For God's sake don't imitate me.

The word you tumbled upon is 'whites' meaning leucorrhoea. But I thought it should be our ideal to imitate you!

Good Lord, what an hi I could not do worse myself.

Sri Aurobindo's Humour, pp.69-70

The whole confounded family

I am thrown out of joint at two miracles, Sir: (1) R's treatment or yours; (2) N K's English poetry, though Madam Doubt still peeps from behind. Anyhow, no chance for me¹ Sir! What to do?

Why out of joint? It ought to strengthen your joints for the journey of Yoga.

Not at all sir. Mind, sir, mind. Madam Doubt, sir, Madam Doubt! Miss Material Intellectualism, sir! Aunt Despondency, sir! Uncle Self-distrust, sir! Cousin Self-depreciation, sir! The whole confounded family, sir!

Nirodbaran: Correspondence with Sri Aurobindo, p. 423

Fierce and firebrand doctor

Well, I don't know why, but you have the reputation of being a fierce and firebrand doctor who consider it a crime for patients to have an illness. You may be right, but — Tradition demands that a doctor should be soft like butter, soothing like treacle, sweet like sugar and jolly like jam. So!

Nirodbaran: Correspondence with Sri Aurobindo, p. 489

Heartless brutes and darling doctors

*Couldn't touch the patient without making her shed tears.
The ladies are thinking, "What heartless brutes these doctors
are!"*

Much safer than if they think, "What dears these doctors
are, darlings, angels!"

Twelve years with Sri Aurobindo, p. 241

Nature of physical transformation

*What will be the nature of the physical transformation? Change
of pigment? Mongolian features into Aryo-Greek? Bald head
into luxuriant growth? Old men into Gods of eternal youth?*

Why not seven tails with an eighth on the head - everybody
different colours, blue, magenta, indigo, green, scarlet, etc.;
hair luxuriant but vermilion and flying erect skywards;
other details to match? Amen!

Twelve Years with Sri Aurobindo, pp. 242

Seer and Superman

*O Guru, Mr. Effusive, who is an admirer of yours has just
sent me a Bengali poem which he implores me to sing to you
'without fail'. But I wonder how you would react to it if I com-
plied, for he has in effect sounded the death-knell of Rishihood,
calling you virtually the last of the Romans. I will translate
into English only the opening couplet so that Mother may
also know, just to be forewarned:*

*Glory to thee, O wistful India's last and lingering seer!
Let me expire with thee, my Lord, who never more shalt appear.*

*One hardly knows, Guru, whether one should be laughing or
whether weeping here is de rigueur? What do you say? And
he wants your blessings, too, remember!*

Dilip, you don't understand! What he means is that my shishyagan [disciples] will all become supermen; ergo, there can be no possible chance of any such small thing as a Rishi [seer] appearing again — I am positively the last of the crowd! All the same, you may send him my blessings — he deserves it richly for giving us such a gorgeous prospect.

Sri Aurobindo's Humour, p.81

Queer fellow

God, alas! What a queer fellow your Supramental will be!

Can't be queerer than the mental human! But I suppose he will seem queer to the queer mental human just as the queer human seems queer to the queer vital monkey and the queer monkey to the queer material jelly-fish. All queer together! and to each other!

Sri Aurobindo's Humour, p.93

Long Rope

To add to all this, you hardly take an initiative and ask people to do this or that. Your principle is to give a long rope either to hang oneself or have a taste of the bitter cup.

I am to put everybody into leading, strings and walk about with them — or should it be the rope in their nose? Supermen cannot be made like that — the long rope is needed.

Nirodbaran: Correspondence with Sri Aurobindo, p. 93

The supramental being the absolute of all good things, must equally be the absolute of humour also.

Sri Aurobindo and Humour, p.15

Sri Aurobindo

Tea and talk

Tried to argue with Sri Aurobindo on some sadhana matter. His reasoning was all fallacious. This is how Sri Aurobindo counter-argued:

[tea and talk] were granted by me as a concession to D's nature, because by self-deprivation he would land himself in the seas of despair — not as a method of reaching the Brahman. ... Is it so difficult to understand a simple thing like that? I should have thought it would be self-evident even to the dullest intelligence.

Because I allowed him to talk and objected to his making an ostentatious ascetic ass of himself does it follow that talk and tea were given as part of his Yoga? If the Mother allowed butter or eggs to Y for his physical growth does it follow that butter and eggs are the bases of the Brahman? If somebody has a stomachache and I send him to the Dispensary, does it follow that stomach-ache, the Dispensary, Dr. Nirod and allopathic drugs are the perfect way to spiritualisation?

Don't be an a I mean a ... logician!

Sri Aurobindo's Humour, p.111

Bad Logic

I would like to know something about my "bad logic" before I write anything further to you.

Helps to finding out your bad logic. I give instances expressed or implied in your reasonings.

Bad logic No 1. Because things have not been, therefore they can never be.

2. Because Sri Aurobindo is an Avatar, his sadhana can have no meaning for humanity.

3. What happens in Sri Aurobindo's sadhana cannot happen in anybody else's sadhana (i.e. neither descent, nor realisation, nor transformation, nor intuitions, nor budding of new powers or faculties) — because Sri Aurobindo is an Avatar and the sadhaks are not.

4. A street beggar cannot have any spirituality or at least not so much as, let us say, a University graduate — because, well, one doesn't know why the hell not.

5. (and last because of want of space) Because I am a doctor, I can't see a joke when it is there.

Hit or miss

Do the successful doctors get it by plenty of experiences, treating, curing, killing, etc.?

Well, there are some who after killing a few hundreds, learn to kill only a few. But that is not intuition; that is simply learning from experience.

The Smiling Master, pp.129-30

...I feel a great responsibility. It is bad luck for me to have to tackle such a difficult case... My prestige is also involved.

It is a test case, I suppose. But why so strong on prestige? I should have thought everybody knows that doctors have to be guessing all the time and that cure is a matter of hit or miss. If you hit often, you are a clever doctor — or if you kill people brilliantly, then also. It reduces itself to that.

Nirodbaran: Correspondence with Sri Aurobindo, pp. 129-30, 119

Aspirin and Aspiration

Krishna Ayyar has cold and slight fever. Given aspirin. Requires Divine help.

One tablet of aspirin and another of aspiration might do.

The Smiling Master, pp.128-29

A recipe for cure

I am plunged in a sea of dryness and am terribly thirsty for something. Along with it, waves of old desires. Any handy remedy?

Eucharistic injection from above, purgative rejection below; liquid diet, psychic fruit juice, milk of the spirit.

Nirodbaran: Correspondence with Sri Aurobindo, p. 231

Please ask Mother to give some blessings to this hopeless self.

R/

Vin. Ashirv. m. VII

Recept. Chlor. gr. XXV

Aqua jollity ad. lib.

Tine. Faith m. XV

Syr. Opt. Zss

12 doses every hour

What's this second item in your prescription, Sir? Too Latin for my poor knowledge.

Chlorate of Receptivity.

And I would put Aqua at the end to make it an absolutely pucca academical prescription.

Yes, but I thought of the two last ingredients afterwards.

And 12 doses every hour - these tinctures and vinums?

12 doses — every hour (one each hour. Plagiarised from your language, sir.)

Where is the cost to be supplied from?

Gratis - for the poor."

Sri Aurobindo's Humour, p.80

Feeding the Divine

Friend C has sent a rupee to buy something for you. But your needs are so few and you are so strict about hygiene. At times I wonder why the Divine is so meticulously particular as regards contagion, infection. Is he vulnerable to the viruses, bacilli, microbes, etc.?

And why on earth should you expect the Divine to feed himself on germs and bacilli and poisons of all kinds? Singular theology yours!

Nirodbaran: Correspondence with Sri Aurobindo, pp.540-41

Innocent dangerous smile

X calls me now and then in the afternoon to taste something she has prepared. So I spend about 15-20 minutes on my way to hospital. I like X 's smile. It's innocent, childlike - nothing coquettish or sophisticated or trying to captivate.

Very dangerous! especially if you begin to luxuriate in the idea of her unsophisticated simplicity. Unsophisticated or not, if once the vital attachment is made, she will hold you as tightly as the other and with a greater violence of dabi [claim], abhiman [injured feelings] and the rest of it and, finally when the connection is cut, she will say and think that it was all your fault and that you are a very wicked person

who took advantage of her foolishness and innocence. Well, well, you know about as much of women as a house-kitten knows about the jungle and its denizens and it is you who are in this field amazingly naive.

Sri Aurobindo's Humour, p.332

Three ways of bringing down the force

I am getting more and more disappointed, still more in Yoga since I hear that you are now trying more for the transformation of nature than for experience.

Because without transformation of nature, the blessed experience is something like a gold crown on a pig's head — won't do. Picturesque perhaps, but —

What to do? How to bring down the Force?

HOW? is there a how?

You call, you open, it comes (after a time).

Or, you don't call, you open, it comes.

Or, you call, don't open, it doesn't come.

Three possibilities. But how -? Well, God he knows or perhaps he doesn't!

You call, you open, you don't call, you open, you call, you don't open — no profounder mystery can there be than these your phrases!

Not at all, plain as your nose. Excuses to the nose! I gave you three different cases, — don't mix them up together.

Sri Aurobindo's Humour, p.339-40

Advanced sadhaks

I understand your protesting against “great” or “big” sadhaks, but why against “advanced” sadhaks? Is it not a fact that some are more advanced than others? If we speak of X as an advanced sadhak, we don’t mean anything else.

Advanced indeed! Pshaw! Because one is 3 inches ahead of another, you must make classes of advanced and non-advanced? Advanced has the same puffing egoistic resonance as “great” or “big”. It leads to all sorts of stupidities—rajasic self-appreciating egoism in some, tamasic self-depreciating egoism in others, round-eyed wonderings why X, an advanced sadhak, one 3 inches ahead of Y, should stumble, tumble or fumble while Y, 3 inches behind X, still plods heavily and steadily on, etc. etc. Why, sir, the very idea in X that he is an advanced sadhak (like the Pharisee, “I thank thee, O Lord, that I am not as other unadvanced disciples”,) would be enough to make him fumble, stumble and tumble. So no more of that, sir, no more of that.

CWSA 35: 671

Each time somebody leaves the Asram, I feel a kick, a shock, a heartquake.

May I ask why? People have been leaving the Asram since it began, not only now. Say 30 or 40 people have gone, 130 or 140 others have come. The big Maharathas, X, Y, Z departed from this too damnable Asram where great men are not allowed to do as they like. The damnable Asram survives and grows. A and B and C fail in their Yoga—but the Yoga proceeds on its way, advances, develops. Why then kick, shock and heartquake?

CWSA 35: 624

Serious sadhana

All thought that he was doing serious sadhana.

Serious? You mean not to sleep and all that sort of thing? Well, it is just that kind of seriousness which brings these attacks — Earnestness of this sort does call down that kind of Purushottama or rather call him in — for it is a horizontal [and] not a vertical descent.

Purushottama descended in consequence of the earnest sadhana and hence he was calling Sri Aurobindo to come and bow to him! What next?

Next? Perhaps he will want you also to come and bow to him and pummel you if you don't.

Makes me shake to the bones!

Only the bones?

Sri Aurobindo's Humour,p.347

A conscious Ass

Interest in poetry and reading has dwindled, and now I'm on the way to be a "subconscient ass".

Why not become a conscious one?

Sri Aurobindo's Humour,p.305

A Chinese Sage

When Paul Brunton saw you, he had the impression of you as a Chinese sage.

Confucius? Lao-Tse? Mencius? Hangwhang-pu? Don't know who the last was, but his name sounds nice!

CWSA 35: 56

Old and new labels

Please don't mind our pungent remarks. We don't look upon you as a Bengali father but as an English one — who is a father and a friend.

That you is who? I decline the adhyaropa¹ of an English or any father on me!

Nirodbaran: Correspondence with Sri Aurobindo, p. 123

But what is the relation you won't decline? Is it something besides the recognised ones in spiritual history ?

I don't know. I always prefer something new to the old labels. I will see the Supramental and perhaps find something.

Nirodbaran: Correspondence with Sri Aurobindo, p. 126

Doctors and the Dream of a New Millennium

You have made them believe that medicines and doctors are no good, but at the same time could not infuse into them sufficient faith in you. Result — they have fallen between two stools!

Well, T and S used both to get cured without need of medicines once on a time. The later development has evidently come for your advantage, so that you may have elementary exercises in samata [equanimity]. I have had a lot of schooling in that way and graduated M.A. Your turn now.

I dreamt that the Mother was building a very big hospital in which I would be a functionary... Dream of a millennium in advance?

It would be more of a millennium if there were no need of

1. Adhyaropa: Transpose

a hospital at all and the doctors turned their injective prodding instruments into fountain-pens — provided of course they did not make misuse of the pens also.

But why the deuce are those instruments to be replaced by fountain-pens? Want doctors to be poets or clerks? Or is it a hint to me to write more than prescribe?

I was simply adopting the saying of Isaiah the prophet, "the swords will be turned into ploughshares", but the doctor's instrument is not big enough for a ploughshare, so I substituted fountain-pens.

Sri Aurobindo's Humour, pp.358,361

The Joy of *Paraninda*¹

I have again become the victim of people's tongue. I came to know that someone was imputing most abject motives to some of my actions, without my giving any cause of offence.

Do you think people need a "cause" for criticising others? It is done for the heavenly Ananda of the thing in itself. *Paraninda* [criticism of others] is to the human vital sweeter than all the fruits of Paradise.

Can you explain why these poisonous shafts of criticism are thrown at me, without any reason at all?

Imagination + inference + joy of the perspicacious psychologist + joy of fault-finding + several other vital joys + joy of communicating to others, usually called gossip. Quite enough to explain. No other reason wanted.

Nirodbaran: Correspondence with Sri Aurobindo, p.233

1. *Paraninda*: Dreaming others

Teaified and deified

Lack of interest and energy, disinclination to go to the hospital — this is my condition for the last few days. Curiously enough, whenever I take a cup of tea in the morning, these symptoms disappear. The whole system seems to buck up and I can do my work with full vigour. But if one has to rely on tea for such results!

Sympathise with you. There was a time when I was like that. Teaified cells — instead of deified..

Nirodbaran: Correspondence with Sri Aurobindo, p.549

A luxury denied for Ages

Another letter from my friend Jatin. He has asked for the reply to his previous letter. Please do write something tonight, Sir. I request you, I beseech you, I entreat you, I pray to you. Do find out the letter from your heap — I can see it from here — and just a few marks and remarks will do. That's like the Divine!

Sorry, but your luck is not brilliant. Had a whole night i.e. after 3 no work — was ready to write. Light went off, in my rooms only, mark— tried candle power, no go. The Age of Candles is evidently over. So "requests, beseeches, entreats" were all in vain. Not my fault. Blame Fate! However, I had a delightful time, 3 hours of undisturbed concentration on my real work, — a luxury denied to me for ages. Don't tear your hair. Will be done another day with luck.

Nirodbaran: Correspondence with Sri Aurobindo, p.548

Happy-go-lucky fancy-web-spinning" sadhaks!

With your silence, consciousness, overmental, partly supra-mental, etc., etc., it should be possible to draw from the highest plane, at the slightest pull, and it should tumble down, Sir,

but it doesn't. Why not? We wonder and wonder! Could you send Alice to Wonderland and ask her to discover and divulge the secret to us - not in hints, but at length?

The highest planes are not so accommodating as all that. If they were so, why should it be so difficult to bring down and organise the supermind in the physical consciousness? What happy-go-lucky fancy-web-spinning ignoramuses you all are. You speak of silence, consciousness, overmental, supramental, etc. as if they were so many electric buttons you have only to press and there you are. It may be one day but meanwhile I have to discover everything about the working of all possible modes of electricity, all the laws, possibilities, perils, etc., construct roads of connection and communication, make the whole far-wiring system, try to find out how it can be made fool-proof and all that in the course of a single lifetime. And I have to do it while my blessed disciples are firing off their gay or gloomy a priori reasonings at me from a position of entire irresponsibility and expecting me to divulge everything to them not in hints but at length. Lord God in omnibus!

Nirodbaran: Correspondence with Sri Aurobindo, p. 544-45

The cataract of correspondence

My system has been rather supersaturated with medicine and reports. If you could release that type-script document without any inconvenience to your eye, I can recharge the battery.

Release? I am seeking for mukti¹ myself.

Nirodbaran: Correspondence with Sri Aurobindo, p.184

1. Mukti: Used here in the sense of release from the excess of correspondence.

What has happened to my typescript? Hibernating?

My dear sir, if you saw me nowadays with my nose to paper from afternoon to morning, deciphering, deciphering, writing, writing, writing, even the rocky heart of a disciple would be touched and you would not talk about typescripts and hibernation. I have given up (for the present at least) the attempt to minimise the cataract of correspondence; I accept my fate like Ramana Maharshi with the plague of Prasads and admirers, but at least don't add anguish to annihilation by talking about typescripts!

CWSA 35: 470

The Avatar getting frightened!

It may be a "comfortable doctrine" but that's my philosophy of sadhana. What is the good of the Avatar if we do everything by ourselves? We have come to you and taken shelter at your feet so that you may deliver us from all sins...

But what if the Avatar gets frightened at the prospect of all this hard labour and rushes back scared behind the veil?

After all what's the use of so much austere sadhana?

The supramental is bound to come down and we shall lie flat at the gate and he can't pass us by?

Why not? Why can't he float easily over you and leave you lying down or send for the supramental police to chivy you out and make you pass through a hard examination in an Epicurean austerity before you are allowed inside?

Nirodbaran: Correspondence with Sri Aurobindo, p.197

Penal servitude for the Avatars!

I should say that Avatars are like well-fitted, well-equipped Rolls Royce machines.

All sufficient to themselves - perfect and complete from the beginning, hey? Just roll, royce and ripple!

CWSA 35: 413

... the rest of humanity is either like loose and disjointed machines or wagons to be dragged along by Avatars and great spiritual personages....

Great Scott! What a penal servitude for the great personages and the Avatars! And where are they leading them? All that rubbish into Paradise? How is that any more possible than creating a capacity where there was none? If the disjointed machines cannot be jointed, isn't it more economical to leave them where they are in the lumber-shed?...

Nirodbaran: Correspondence with Sri Aurobindo, p.149

Common sense sent flying sky-high!

The Overmind seems so distant from us, and your Himalayan austerity and grandeur takes my breath away, making my heart palpitate!

O rubbish! I am austere and grand, grim and stern! every blasted thing I never was! I groan in an un-Aurobindian despair when I hear such things. What has happened to the common sense of all of you people? In order to reach the Overmind it is not at all necessary to take leave of this simple but useful quality. Common sense by the way is not logic (which is the least commonsense-like thing in the world), it is simply looking at things as they are without inflation or deflation — not imagining wild imaginations — or for that matter despairing "I know not why" despairs."

CWSA 35: 48

Rose-leaf princess sadhaks!

S asked for meals at home. Because of the rainy weather he says he feels unwell.

What delicate people all are becoming! A feather will hunch them down. Can't bear this, can't stand that! Evidently they are approaching the heights of supramental Yoga!

Sri Aurobindo's Humour, p.365

A tale of woes and the Lord's Compassion

Friend C again, with his woeful tale!

What a fellow! He blunders through life stumbling over every possible or impossible stone of offence with a conscientious thoroughness that is unimaginable and inimitable.

Nirodbaran: Correspondence with Sri Aurobindo, p.540

One thing is clear that he requires your protection. Well?

Difficult to protect such an erratic genius. However.

But C seems to have made a lot of progress, hasn't he?

Can't certify so long as the brothel walks about with him.

Sri Aurobindo's Humour, pp.23, 414

***There is laughter in the Kingdom of Heaven,
though there may be no marriage there.***

The Smiling Master, p. 438

Sri Aurobindo

Do you really mean that till 7 a.m. your pen goes on at an aeroplanic speed? Then it must be due more to outside correspondence. I don't see many books or envelopes now on the staircase. Is the supramental freedom from these things not in view?

Your not seeing unfortunately does not dematerialise them. Books are mainly for the Mother and there is sometimes a mountain, but letters galore. On some days only there is a lull and then I can do something.

CWSA 35: 469

Sri Aurobindo

Creation leaped straight from the hands of God;
Marvel and rapture wandered in the ways.
Only to be was a supreme delight,
Life was a happy laughter of the soul
And Joy was king with Love for minister.
The spirit's luminousness was bodied there.
Life's contraries were lovers or natural friends
And her extremes keen edges of harmony:
Indulgence with a tender purity came
And nursed the god on her maternal breast:

Savitri: p.124

Sri Aurobindo



As for me, I must confess to you that I feel much more essentially myself when I am joyful and when I play—in my own way—than when I am very grave and very serious—much more. Grave and serious—that always gives me the impression that I am dragging the weight of all this creation, so heavy and so obscure, whereas when I play — when I play, when I can laugh, can enjoy myself—it gives me the feeling of a fine powder of delight falling from above and tinting this creation, this world with a very special colour and bringing it much closer to what it should essentially be.

CWM 9: 13

The Mother

A Dream of Surreal Science

One dreamed and saw a gland write Hamlet, drink
At the Mermaid, capture immortality;
A committee of hormones on the Aegean's brink
Composed the Iliad and the Odyssey.

A thyroid, meditating almost nude
Under the Bo-tree, saw the eternal Light
And, rising from its mighty solitude,
Spoke of the Wheel and eightfold Path all right.

A brain by a disordered stomach driven
Thundered through Europe, conquered, ruled and fell,
From St. Helena went, perhaps, to Heaven.
Thus wagged on the surreal world, until

A scientist played with atoms and blew out
The universe before God had time to shout.

CWSA 2: 614

Self

He said, "I am egoless, spiritual, free,"
Then swore because his dinner was not ready.
I asked him why. He said, "It is not me,
But the belly's hungry god who gets unsteady."

I asked him why. He said, "It is his play.
I am unmoved within, desireless, pure.
I care not what may happen day by day."
I questioned him, "Are you so very sure?"

He answered, "I can understand your doubt.
But to be free is all. It does not matter
How you may kick and howl and rage and shout,
Making a row about your daily platter.

To be aware of self is liberty,
Self I have got and, having self, am free."

CWSA 2: 620

Sri Aurobindo

Humorous and Satirical Portrayals

The multi-purpose plate and bowl

Such was the place where we were lodged.¹ As for fittings our generous authorities had left nothing to be desired so far as our hospitable reception was concerned. One plate and bowl used to adorn the courtyard. Properly washed and cleansed my self-sufficing plate and bowl shone like silver, was the solace of my life. In its impeccable, glowing radiance in the 'heavenly kingdom' in that symbol of immaculate British imperialism, I used to enjoy the pure bliss of loyalty to the Crown. Unfortunately the plate too shared in the bliss, and if one pressed one's fingers a little hard on its surface it would start flying in a circle, like the whirling dervishes of Arabia. And then one had to use one hand for eating while the other held the plate in position. Else, while whirling, it would attempt to slip away with the incomparable grub provided by the prison authorities. But more dear and useful than the plate was the bowl. Among inert objects it was like the British civilian. Just as the civilian, *ipso facto*, is fit and able to undertake any administrative duty, be it as judge, magistrate, police, revenue officer, chairman of municipality, professor, preacher, whatever you ask him to do he can become at your merest saying, — just as for him to be an investigator, complainant, police magistrate, even at times to be the counsel for defence, all these roles hold a friendly concourse in the same hospitable body, my dear bowl was equally multipurpose. The bowl was free from all caste restrictions, beyond discrimination, in the prison cell it helped in the act of ablution, later with the same bowl I gargled, bathed, a little later when I had to take my food,

1. *The Alipore Jail*

lentil soup or vegetable was poured into the same container, I drank water out of it and washed my mouth. Such an all — purpose priceless object can be had only in a British prison. Serving all my worldly needs the bowl became an aid in my spiritual discipline too. Where else could I find such an aid and preceptor to get rid of the sense of disgust? After the first spell of solitary imprisonment was over, when we are allowed to stay together my civilian's rights were bifurcated, and the authorities arranged for another receptacle for the privy. But for one month I acquired an unsought lesson in controlling my disgust. The entire procedure for defecation seems to have been oriented towards the art of self-control.

Bengali Writings, pp.272-73

The luxury of an attached bathroom

Solitary imprisonment, it has been said, must be counted among a special form of punishment and its guiding principle the avoidance of human company and the open sky. To arrange this ablution in the open or outside would mean a violation of the principle, hence two baskets, with tar coating, would be kept in the room itself. The sweeper, *mehtar*, would clean it up in the morning and afternoons. In case of intense agitation and heart-warming speeches from our side the cleaning would be done at other times too. But if one went to the privy at odd hours as penance one had to put up with the noxious and fetid smell. In the second chapter of our solitary confinement there were some reforms in this respect, but British reforms keep the old principles intact while making minor changes in administration. Needless to say, because of all this arrangement, in a small room, one had throughout to undergo considerable inconvenience, especially at meal times and during night. Attached bathrooms are, I know, often times a part of western culture,

but to have in a small cell a bedroom, dining room and w.c. rolled into one — that is what is called too much of a good thing! We Indians are full of regrettable customs, it is painful for us to be so highly civilised.

Bengali Writings, 273-74

The three-in-one gruel

Next morning at four-fifteen the prison bell rang, this was the first bell to wake up the prisoners.... The bars were removed at five, and after washing I sat inside the cell once again. A little later *lufsi* or the prison gruel was served at my doorstep. That day I did not take it but had only a vision of what it looked like. It was after a few days that I had the first taste of the 'great dish'. *Lufsi*, boiled rice, along with water, is the prisoner's little breakfast. A Trinity, it takes three forms. On the first day it was *lufsi* in its Prajna or Wisdom aspect, unmixed, original element, pure, white *Shiva*. On the second, it was like Hiranyagarbha aspect, boiled along with lentils, called *kedgerie*, a yellowish medley. On the third day *lufsi* appeared in its aspect of Virat, a little mixed with jaggery, grey, slightly more fit for human consumption. I had thought the Wisdom and the Hiranyagarbha aspects to be beyond the capacity of average humanity and therefore made no efforts in that direction; but once in a while I had forced some of the Virat stuff within my system and marvelled, in delightful muse, about the many-splendoured virtues of British rule and the high level of Western humanitarianism. It should be added that that *lufsi* was the only nutritious diet for the Bengali prisoners, the rest were without any food value. But what of that? It had a taste, and one could eat this only out of sheer hunger; even then, one had to force and argue with oneself to be able to consume that stuff.

Bengali Writings, 280-81

Anandrao's character-trait

I suppose you have got Anandrao's letter; you ought to value it, for the time he took to write it is, I believe, unequalled in the history of epistolary creation. The writing of it occupied three weeks, fair-copying it another fortnight, writing the address seven days and posting it three days more. You will see from it that there is no need to be anxious about his stomach: it righted itself the moment he got into the train at Deoghur Station. In fact he was quite lively and warlike on the way home. At Jabalpur we were unwise enough not to spread out our bedding on the seats and when we got in again, some upcountry scoundrels had boned Anandrao's berth. After some heated discussion I occupied half of it and put Anandrao on mine. Some Mahomedans, quite inoffensive people, sat at the edge of this, but Anandrao chose to confound them with the intruders and declared war on them. The style of war he adopted was a most characteristically Maratha style. He pretended to go to sleep and began kicking the Mahomedans, in his "sleep" of course, having specially gone to bed with his boots on for the purpose. I had at last to call him off and put him on my halfberth. Here, his legs being the other way, he could not kick; so he spent the night butting the upcountryman with his head; next day he boasted triumphantly to me that he had conquered a foot and half of territory from the intruder by his brilliant plan of campaign.

CWSA 36:143-44

Dronacharya in the British Court

In course of giving evidence he said that at the time of the Midnapore Conference when Surendrababu had asked from his students devotion to the teacher, *gurubhakti*, Aurobindo babu had spoken out: "What did Drona do?"

Hearing this Mr. Norton's eagerness and curiosity knew no bounds, he must have thought "Drona" to be a devotee of the bomb or a political killer or someone associated with the Manicktola Garden or the Student's Store. Norton may have thought that the phrase meant that Aurobindo Ghose was advising the giving of bombs to Surendrababu as a reward instead of *gurubhakti*. For such an interpretation would have helped the case considerably. Hence he asked eagerly: "What did Drona do?" At first the witness was unable to make out the nature of the (silly) question. And for five minutes a debate went on, in the end throwing his hands high, Mr. Karan told Norton: "Drona performed many a miracle." This did not satisfy Mr. Norton. How could he be content without knowing the whereabouts of Drona's bomb? So he asked again: "What do you mean by that? Tell me what exactly he did." The witness gave many answers, but in none was Dronacharya's life's secret unravelled as Norton would have liked it. He now lost his temper and started to roar. The witness too began to shout. An advocate, smiling, expressed the doubt that perhaps the witness did not know what Drona had done. At this Mr. Karan went wild with anger and wounded pride, *abhimāna*. "What", he shouted, "I, I do not know what Drona had done? Bah, have I read the *Mahabharata* from cover to cover in vain?" For half an hour a battle royal waged between Norton and Karan over Drona's corpse. Every five minutes, shaking the Alipore judge's court, Norton hurled his question: "Out with it, Mr. Editor! What did Drona do?" In answer the editor began a long cock and bull story, but there was no reliable news about what Drona had done. The entire court reverberated with peals of laughter. At last, during tiffin time, Mr. Karan came back after a little reflection with a cool head, and he suggested this solution of the problem, that poor Drona

had done nothing and that the half-hour long tug of war over his departed soul had been in vain, it was Arjuna who had killed his *guru*, Drona. Thanks to this false accusation, Dronacharya, relieved, must have offered his thanks at Kailasha to Sadashiva, that because of Mr. Karan's evidence he did not have to stand in the dock in the Alipore bomb conspiracy case. A word from the editor would have easily established his relationship with Aurobindo Ghose. But the all-merciful Sadashiva saved him from such a fate.

Bengali Writings, pp. 305-06

Nature of Man

Man has been defined sometimes as a political animal and sometimes as a reasoning animal, but he has become still more pre-eminently a literary animal. He is a political animal who has always made a triumphant mess of politics, a reasoning animal whose continual occupation it is to make a system out of his blunders, a literary animal who is always the slave of a phrase and not the least so when the phrase means nothing. The power of the phrase on humanity has never been sufficiently considered. The phrase is in the nostrils of the vast unruly mass of mankind like the ring in the nose of a camel. It can be led by the phrasemaker wherever he wishes to lead it. And the only distinction between the sage and the sophist is that the phrases of the sage mean something while the phrases of the sophist only seem to mean something. Now Mr. Morley is an adept in the making of phrases which seem to mean something.

CWSA 7:754

Mr. Archer's amazing inference:

The Indian ideal figure of the masculine body insists on two features among many, a characteristic width at the

shoulders and slenderness in the middle. ... Indian poets and authorities on art have given in this connection the simile of the lion, and lo and behold Mr. Archer solemnly discoursing on this image as a plain proof that the Indian people were only just out of the semi-savage state! It is only too clear that they drew the ideal of heroic manhood from their native jungle, from theriolatry, that is to say, from a worship of wild beasts! I presume, on the same principle and with the same stupefying ingenuity he would find in Kamban's image of the sea for the colour and depth of Sita's eyes clear evidence of a still more primitive savagery and barbaric worship of inanimate nature, or in Valmiki's description of his heroine's "eyes like wine", *madirekṣaṇā*, evidence of a chronic inebriety and the semi-drunken inspiration of the Indian poetic mind. This is one example of Mr. Archer's most telling points.

CWSA 20: 256-57

The Disciple's proposal and the Guru's disposal

O Guru, so be it. Since I have been hanging too long in mid-air and must land somewhere somehow, anyhow — therefore I propose — subject to your approval — a drastic prescription for my long-suffering unconvalescing self.

Number one. I will give up tea: I love it.

Number two. I will do without cheese: I like it.

Number three. I will bid adieu to tasty dishes and start periodic fasts.

Number four. Will forswear hair-oil and shave my head.

Number five. I will sleep on only one sole blanket, pillowless.

Number six. I will sleep without the mosquito-curtain which, I fear, will be the most difficult of all feats because I have never been able to hail the crooning of the mosquito as a lullaby.

Only believe me when I say that although I move this resolution in a language that may sound unparliamentary, my heart is re-

ally heavy and tearful, since I can see no shorter cut to salvation. So, in the circumstances, will you and the Mother ratify my resolution, or amend, please?

I stand aghast as I stare at the detailed proposals made by you! Fastings? I don't believe in them, though I have done them myself. You would really eat like an ogre afterwards.

Shaved head? Have you realised the consequences? I pass over the aesthetic shock to myself at Darshan on the 24th November from which I might never recover — but the row that would rise from the Cape Comorin to the Himalayas! You would be famous in a new way which would cast all your previous glories into the shade. And just when you are turning away from fame and all the things of the ego! NO: too dangerous by half.

Sleep without the mosquito-net? That would mean no sleep, which is as bad as no food. Not only your eyes would become weak, but yourself also - and, to boot, gloomy, grey and gruesome — more gruesome than the Supramental of your worst apprehensions! No and no again. As for the rest, I placed some of them before the Mother and she eyed them without favour....

I have noticed about ascetics by rule that when you remove the curb they become just like others — barring a few exceptions, of course - which proves that the transformation was not real. A more subtle method used by some is to give up for a time, then try the object of desire again and so go on till you have thoroughly tested yourself; e.g., you give up your potatoes and eat only the Ashram food for a time — if the call comes for the potatoes or from them, then you are not cured: if no call comes, still you cannot be sure till you have tried potatoes again, and seen whether the desire, attachment or sense of need revives. If it does not and the po-

tatoes fall away from you of themselves, then there is some hope that the thing is done.

However, all this will make you think that I am hardly fit to be a Guru in the path of asceticism and you will probably be right. You see, I have a strong penchant for the inner working and am persuaded that if you give the psychic a chance it will rid you of the impediments you chafe at without all this sternness and trouble....

But how in the earthly did you get this strange idea that we were pressing asceticism on you? When? How? Where? I only admitted it as a possibility after repeated assertions from you that you wanted to do this formidable thing, and it was with great heart-searchings and terrible apprehensive visions of an ascetic Dilip with wild weird eyes and in loin-cloth, eating ground-nuts and nails and sleeping on iron-spikes in the presence of a dumbfounded Lord Shiva! I never prescribed the thing to you at all: it was you who were clamouring for it, so I gave in and tried to make the best of it, hoping that you would think better of it. As for the Mother, the first time she heard of it she knocked it off with the most emphatic 'Nonsense!' possible.

In fact what you proposed was even more formidable than my vision - a shaven-headed and mosquito-bitten Dilip in loincloth and the rest (not that you actually proposed the last but it is the logical outcome of the devastating shave!). Conquest of attachment is quite a different matter - one has to learn to take one's tea and potatoes without weeping for them or even missing them if they are not there....

So your subtle interpretation of our intentions or wishes was a bad misfit. However, all is well that ends well and... I will consider the danger over.

Sri Aurobindo: Letter to Dilip, pp.313-15

Sweetness and Smile

A cure for stomach ache

I knew a doctor who was a neurologist and treated illnesses of the stomach. He used to say that all illnesses of the stomach came from a more or less bad nervous state. He was a doctor for the rich and it was the rich and unoccupied people who went to him. So they used to come and tell him: "I have a pain in the stomach, I cannot digest", and this and that. They had terrible pains, they had headache, they had, well, all the symptoms! He used to listen to them very seriously. I knew a lady who went to him and to whom he said: "Ah! your case is very serious. But on which floor do you live? On the ground floor? All right. This is what you have to do to cure your illness of the stomach. Take a bunch of fully ripe grapes (do not take your breakfast, for breakfast upsets your stomach), take a bunch of grapes; hold it in your hand, like this, very carefully. Then prepare to go out—not by your door, never go out by your door! You must go out by the window. Get a stool. And go out by the window. Go out in the street, and there you must walk while eating one grape every two steps—not more, yes, not more! You will have stomach-ache! One single grape every two steps. You must take two steps, then eat one single grape and you should continue till there are no more grapes. Do not turn back, go straight on till there are no more grapes. You must take a big bunch. And when you have finished, you may return quietly. But do not take a conveyance! Come back on foot, otherwise the whole trouble will return. Come back quietly and I give you the guarantee that if you do that every day, at the end of three days you will be cured." And in fact this lady was cured!

CWM 5: 122 – 123

Wife and the favorite model

I remember a very amusing story that Rodin told me. You know Rodin—not the man but what he has done? Rodin put a question to me one day; he asked me, “How can one prevent two women from being jealous of each other?” (*Laughter*) I said to him, “Ah, here’s a problem indeed! But won’t you please tell me why?” Then he told me, “It’s like this: most of my work I do in clay, at least much of it, before sculpting it in stone or casting it in bronze. And so this is what happens: at times I go away for a day or two or more. I leave my clay models covered with wet cloth because if it dries up it cracks and all the work is lost, I have to do it over again.” All sculptors know this. And this is what happened to that poor man: he had a wife, and he had his favourite model who was quite... very intimate in the house, she came in when she liked—she was the model he used for his sculptures. Now, the wife wanted to be the wife. And when Rodin was absent, she came early every morning to the studio and sprinkled water on all the cloths, all the heads or bodies, everything. It was all covered up, wrapped in wet cloth. Water is sprinkled upon it as on plants. So she came and sprayed them. And then, after a while, two or three hours later, there came the model who had the key to the studio. She opened the studio and she sprayed them. She saw very well that it was all wet, but she had the privilege of looking after the sculpture of her sculptor— and so she sprayed it. “And so,” said Rodin to me, “the result is that when I return from my travels, all my sculpture is melting and nothing of what I had done is any longer there!”

He was an old man, already old at that time. He was magnificent. He had a faun’s head, like a Greek faun. He was short, quite thick-set, solid; he had shrewd eyes. He was remarkably ironical and a little... He laughed at it, but

still he would have preferred to find his sculpture intact!

And what was your reply? (Laughter)

I don't remember now. *(Laughter)* Perhaps I answered by a joke. No, I remember one thing, I asked him, "But why don't you say: this one will sprinkle the water?" He then pulled at the little hair that was left on his head and said, "But that would be a fight with knives." *(Laughter)*

CWM 6: 72 – 73

Eat your desire

One day arose a great desire in me to eat a few things and I was quite unable to resist it. The mind was busy trying to find some pretext or other. In the end I wrote "Mother, I feel extremely greedy today. Do you know that I would like to eat? — eggs, lobsters and some kind of sardines. Either you remove this desire from me or permit me to eat them with your protection." Sri Aurobindo wrote an answer next day! "Certainly not! You can eat up your desire — that is the only fish or flesh that can be given to you! It is an old *samskara* rising from subconscious — these things have never to be indulged, they rise in order to be dismissed." A banter replete with laughter! But strange to relate, soon after sending the letter all that inclination to eat had completely gone— this filled me with an unalloyed joy and satisfaction. The joy one feels to be able to rise above desire was first brought home to me on that day.

Sahana Devi: Forty years Ago, p.123

Too serious to be danced over

I can hardly check myself from mentioning here two humorous remarks of Sri Aurobindo. When the idea of showing the dance to the Mother was first mooted, we asked her

to allot a particular room for practising, but in the room below resided a sadhak. Sri Aurobindo wrote in answer to our request: "He is too serious to be danced over"—while later when asked where could one practice the 'Radha dance', he indicated that very room. Much astonished I wrote mentioning about the sadhak: "You had written to say, 'He is too serious to be danced over'". He replied at once: "Perhaps before long he will cease to be too serious."

Sahana Devi: Forty years since: 162

The Wise Yogi and the Foolish Ass

Once upon a time. Guru, there was a foolish ass who lived in the neighbourhood of a wise Yogi. One day a sudden flood burst the banks of a river nearby and flooded the countryside. The wise Yogi, being wise, ran up till he reached the safe top of a hill at the foot of which he used to meditate day and night in a cave. But the ass — being foolish, not to say unmeditative — was swept away by the rushing tides. "Alas!" he brayed, "the world is being drowned!" "Don't be an ass," reprimanded the Yogi in high scorn from up the hill-top. "It's only you who are being drowned—not this big world." "But Sir," argued the idiot, "if I myself am drowned how can I be sure that the world will survive?" And the Yogi was struck dumb and wondered, for the first time, which was the deeper wisdom—the human or the asinine! And I too have started wondering on my own. Guru! So I appeal to you to adjudicate: tell me whose is the more pitiable plight: the Yogi's or the ass's? And incidentally, tell me also if my mind is going off the handle because I find the foolish ass's argument nearly as rational as the wise Yogi's?

Your wise but not over-wise ass has put a question that cannot be answered in two lines and today is Monday when

people take their revenge for Sunday's forced abstinence. So I postpone the reply till tomorrow. Let me say however in defence of the much maligned ass that he is a very clever and practical animal and the malignant imputation of stupidity to him shows only human stupidity at its worst. It is because the ass does not do what man wants him to do even under blows that he is taxed with stupidity. But really the ass behaves like that first because he has a sense of humour and likes to provoke the two-legged beast into irrational antics and secondly, because he finds that what man wants of him is quite a ridiculous and bothersome nuisance which ought not to be demanded of any self-respecting donkey. Also the ass is a philosopher. When he hee-haws, it is out of a supreme contempt for the world in general and for the human imbecile in particular. I have no doubt that in the asinine language "man" has the same significance as ass in ours. These deep and original considerations are however by the way — merely meant to hint to you that your balancing between the wise man and the wise ass is not so alarming a symptom after all.

Letters to Dilip: pp.28-29

God's explanation to Anatole France

*I so much enjoyed Anatole France's joke about God in the mouth of the arch-scoffer Brotteaux in his book *Les Dieux ont soiff* [The Gods Are Thirsty] that I must ask you to read it.*

He addresses Father Longuemarre thus: "Either God would prevent evil, but could not, or he could but would not, or he neither could nor would, or he both could and would. If he would but could not, he is impotent; if he could but would not, he is perverse; if he neither could nor would, he is impotent and perverse; if he both could and would, why on earth doesn't he do it Father?"¹

I wonder what God might answer to it supposing he should have ever felt inclined to ?

Anatole France is always amusing whether he is ironising about God and Christianity or about that rational animal Humanity (with a big H) and the follies of his reason and his conduct. But I presume you never heard of God's explanation of his non-interference to Anatole France when they met in some Heaven of Irony, I suppose,—it can't have been in the heaven of Karl Marx, in spite of France's conversion before his death. God is reported to have strolled up to him and said:

"I say, Anatole, you know that was a good joke of yours; but there was a good cause too for my non-interference. Reason came along and told me: Look here, why do you pretend to exist? You know you don't exist and never existed or, if you do, you have made such a mess of your creation that we can't tolerate you any longer. Once we have got you out of the way, all will be right upon earth, tip-top, A-1: my daughter Science and I have arranged that between us. Man will raise his noble brow, the head of creation, dignified, free, equal, fraternal, democratic, depending upon nothing but himself, with nothing greater than himself anywhere in existence. There will be no God, no gods, no churches, no priest craft, no religion, no kings, no oppression, no poverty, no war or discord anywhere. Industry will fill the earth with abundance. Commerce will spread her golden reconciling wings everywhere. Universal education will stamp out ignorance and leave no room for folly or unreason in any human brain; man will become cultured, disciplined, rational, scientific, well-informed, arriving always at the right conclusion upon full and sufficient data. The voice of the scientist and the expert will be loud in the land and guide

mankind to the earthly paradise. A perfected society; health universalised by a developed medical science and a sound hygiene; everything rationalised; science evolved, infallible, omnipotent, omniscient; the riddle of existence solved; the Parliament of Man, the Federation of the world; evolution, of which man, magnificent man, is the last term, completed in the noble white race, a humanitarian kindness and uplifting for our backward brown, yellow and black brothers; peace, peace, peace, reason, order, unity everywhere.' There was a lot more like that, Anatole, and I was so much impressed by the beauty of the picture and its convenience, for I would have nothing to do or to supervise, that I at once retired from business,—for, you know that I was always of a retiring disposition and inclined to keep myself behind the veil or in the background at the best of times. But what is this I hear?—it does not seem to me from reports that Reason even with the help of Science has kept her promise. And if not, why not? Is it because she would not or because she could not? or is it because she both would not and could not, or because she would and could, but somehow did not? And I say, Anatole these children of theirs, the State, Industrialism, Capitalism' Communism and the rest have a queer look—they seem very much like Titanic monsters. Armed, too, with all the powers of Intellect and all the weapons and organisation of Science And it does look as if mankind were no freer under them than under the Kings and the Churches! What has happened — or is it possible that Reason is not supreme and infallible even that she has made a greater mess of it than I could have done myself?" Here the report of the conversation ends; I give it for what it is worth, for I am not acquainted with this God and have to take him on trust from Anatole France.

Sri Aurobindo : Letters to Dilip: p.228 -30

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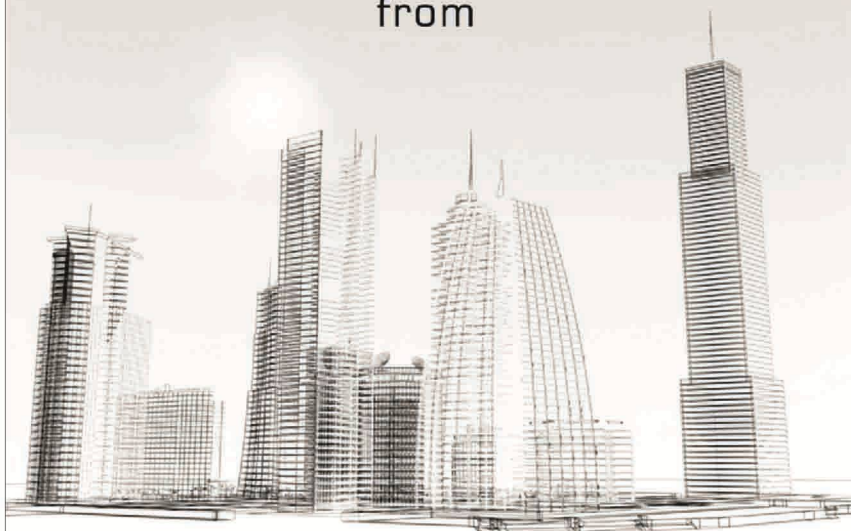
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