

*Low buffoonery and mocking
laughs reverted him to a baboon.*



*Abstract and train of thoughts*¹

On laughter and sobs, smiles and tears.

Laughter is the physical manifestation of a sudden and excessive recognition of one's own superiority. 4

What the orgasm of Laughter is to pleasure, that of Sobs is to pain.

As Laughter is the abrupt expansion of body and mind, so Sobbing is the sudden and spasmodic contraction of the same. 5

The ego-feeling takes shape as self-Complacency in Laughter, and as self-Pity in Sobbing. 5

Laughter is egoistic, always, but the young have a right, almost a duty, to be egoistic, otherwise they would not grow, and growing is always at the expense of someone else. 6

Human beings smile for joy and smile sadly; they weep in gladness and they weep in pain. 6

Loud laughter and talk should be shunned.

There are more grounds for sorrow than for laughter in our present world. The great teachers laugh seldom but smile often, in tenderness and sadness; sad to see another's pain, tender to relieve it. 8

The violent physical laugh is the laugh of the coarse sense of moreness of the egocentric man, while the quiet, tender smile is the smile of the subtle sense of moreness of the unselfish man. 8

Mockery is the fume of little hearts, noble manners are the blossoms of the noble heart. 9

Golden silence is the only antidote to self-assertion. 9

Bhagavan Das' annotations on Henri Bergson's analysis of Laughter.

There is nothing benevolent in laughter, its purpose is to return evil for evil and to intimidate by humiliating. 10

Because laughter is self-assertive, conceited, presumptuous, and impertinent, even when it is merely playful, its fruit turns to ashes in the mouth of the philosopher who, being aware of the underlying egotism, is appalled by its pettiness and paltriness. 11

It doesn't take long for the puffed up self-esteem to break out in laughter. 11

¹ Frontispiece by Chaz Cartier.

Let us pray to be spared from low buffoonery and mocking laughs.

Vex not thou the poet's mind with thy shallow wit.

By Alfred, Lord Tennyson.

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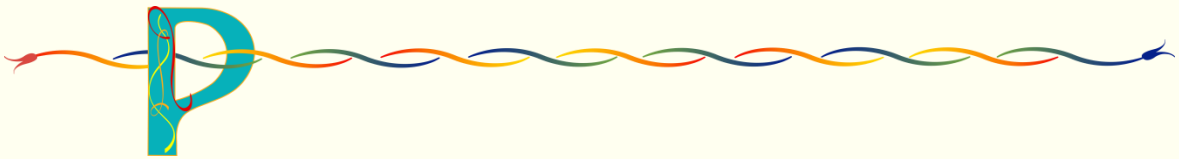
Suggested reading for students.

On the soul of the spiritual man lit by its own light.

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Other works by Bhagavan Das.

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On laughter and sobs, smiles and tears.

Laughter is the physical manifestation of a sudden and excessive recognition of one's own superiority.

From Bhagavān Dās,¹ *The Science of the Emotions*. Adyar: Theosophical Publishing House, 1st ed. 1900, 2nd ed. 1908.. Our selections here are from the 3rd edition of 1924, pp. 226-37, 510-13.²

Laughter, as has been generally recognised by psychologists, is the physical manifestation of a sudden and excessive recognition of one's own superiority.³ Where this consciousness is accompanied by Repulsion, the laugh becomes "the laugh of ridicule." Where the [227] repulsion and the sense of superiority are strong, we have "the laugh of scorn," the beginning of which is the Sneer. Where the ridicule is light-hearted, not deep-rooted, only chaff and banter, where it is moreover openly and unmistakably pretended and make-believe, "the laugh of jest and joke," of "fun and good humour and good company" results.

But we very seldom find the loud laugh combined with genuine, deep-seated, real, earnest Benevolence. The smile is the nearest approach to laughter there.

It may be noted that while the sense of superiority is a necessary factor in laughter, an excessive degree of it, or certain special kinds of it, defeat risibility. Thus when

¹ Dr. Bhagwan Dās was born at Varanasi on 12th January 1869. After a brilliant career as a student, he joined government service as a deputy collector. But he was too great a man to remain a relatively minor government official for long. Learning, more especially of religions and philosophy, was of absorbing interest to him. For a time he came under the influence of Dr. Annie Besant in collaboration with whom he founded the Central Hindu College. This institution developed in time into the Benares Hindu University. Later, he founded the Kashi Vidya Pith, a national university and was its head for a number of years.

He was not only a philosopher, but a prominent public figure as well. He was an esteemed member of the Central Legislative Assembly of undivided India. He presided at a number of social and political conferences. He was associated with the Hindustani Culture Society and was president of the National Committee on Communal Riots. As a fighter for national freedom, he courted imprisonment.

An erudite scholar in Sanskrit, he coined a large number of Hindi words. He wrote no less than 30 books, a number of them in Sanskrit and Hindi. A majority of his works concern philosophy and ancient Indian lore. He studied other religions, as also diverse subjects like psychology and socialism. He wrote books on these subjects as well. He was thus a many-sided personality with achievements to his credit in several fields. His pre-eminently distinguished position in the country was recognised when the highest national award of Bharat Ratna was conferred upon him. He passed away on 18th September 1958, rich in years and in honours.

Dr. Bhagwan Dās will be chiefly remembered as a thinker. He tried to bring the West nearer to the east and made the old intelligible in terms of the modern. He wrote:

. . . the thoughts, the ideals, the ways of human communities require exogamous alliances . . . for a new lease of richer life. Any honest exchange of commodities spiritual, as well as material, is profitable to both the parties concerned.

He was a great believer, in synthesis. To quote him again,

In essentials, in principles, in great things, unity; in non-essentials . . . liberty; in all things, charity; this should be our guiding star.

This great son of India is no more, but the ideas which he expounded live on. The Indian P & T Department is happy to issue a special postage stamp in memory of the great philosopher on the occasion of his birth centenary. — [Indian Post](#)]

² [A searchable PDF of the 2nd edition can be found in our Constitution of Man Series. — ED. PHIL.]

³ Bain, *Mental and Moral Science*, pp. 257, 315; Herbert Spencer's *Essays*, Vol. I, "The Physiology of Laughter"; Harald Høffding, *Outlines of Psychology*, pp. 291-294.

Dignity has passed into Pomposity, or circumstances have given to it the shade of Solemnity, or even Gravity, laughter becomes as impossible as in the case of an excessive Humility, or of deadly Earnestness, or Seriousness, Dourness, Sourness, Melancholia, or dogged Pugnacity, which all result in what is known as the lack of a sense of humour.

What the orgasm of Laughter is to pleasure, that of Sobs is to pain.

As Laughter is the abrupt expansion of body and mind, so Sobbing is the sudden and spasmodic contraction of the same.

Ordinarily the superiority which is most accountable for loud laughter is that of physiological vitality, high animal spirits, physical strength in respect of the elemental appetites of hunger and sex, whence “horseplay” and “broad jokes.”

As Laughter may be said to be the abrupt expansion, and therefore in jerks, of the physical body, in correspondence with, and as an expression of, the [228] sudden expansion of the mind,¹ the individual ego, in consequence of an instantaneous gain of a sense of superiority; so Sobbing may be said to be a sudden and spasmodic contraction of the same, for the opposite reason. What the orgasm of Laughter is to pleasure, that of Sobs is to pain.

Although Sobbing appears to be the exact and opposite counterpart of Laughing, it does not seem to have been noticed by psychologists.

It has been thought by some that Laughter is peculiar to the human being and is not observable in animals. This has been contradicted by others who have pointed out that “even monkeys smile and laugh,” and also that “that which man expresses by laughter may be expressed by animals in other ways, *e.g.*, by wagging the tail.”² Yet we may well say that laughter and sobbing are more prominently observable in human beings and are a specific characteristic of them.

The ego-feeling takes shape as self-Complacency in Laughter, and as self-Pity in Sobbing.

This seems to be so because of the self-consciousness, the ego-feeling involved, which is obviously more developed in man. This ego-feeling takes shape as Self-Complacency in Laughter, and as Self-Pity in Sobbing. This self-consciousness and the [229] accompanying sense (incipient or developed) of difference between ego and body, and the implied control of the latter by the former, (very manifest in the dignified or the pompous person who must not behave like common folk), causes, so to say, the restraint and the confinement of the expansive or the contractive energy to the throat and chest in the human being, and the rest of the organism is inhibited from movement. In the animal, the child, and the uncontrolled adult on the other hand, the energy becomes freely diffused over the whole body, and the entire organism responds to the feeling, and manifests it either in capers, friskings, rushes, and

¹ Compare the expression in *Chhândogya*, VI, i, 2, “thou lookest great-minded, large-minded, elate-minded, with thy acquirements in learning.”

² Höffding, *Psychology*, p. 292

screamings of joy, or in writhings, rollings, crouchings, rushings about, and shriekings of pain and grief. It may be noted that caperings and laughter do not occur simultaneously, nor writhings and sobs.

Even in the case of ordinarily self-controlled adults, we find, on occasions of extreme stimulation, behaviour like that of children and animals; though ordinarily, while the children are capering about, the elder looks on with a broad smile; or where they lament loudly, he sheds silent tears.

Laughter is egoistic, always, but the young have a right, almost a duty, to be egoistic, otherwise they would not grow, and growing is always at the expense of someone else.

But whatever may be right and proper for the elders to do, in the matter of keeping up long and grave faces,¹ it is certainly quite correct and very good for the youngers to have a hearty [230] and even noisy laugh now and then. For them, the counsel to “laugh and grow fat” holds good. But, of course, moderation must not be forgotten, here as elsewhere; nor should actual positive hurt and harm to another be made the occasion for unholy cachinnation.

Laughter is egoistic, always, without a doubt; but the young have a right, almost a duty, to be egoistic (to a carefully regulated extent only, though); otherwise they would not grow, physically and also mentally, in a certain sense. And growing is always at the expense of some one else. For the youngers, it is, and ought to be, at the expense of the elders — so the elders should feel, willingly and gladly, to strengthen them in their self-denial for the sake of the growth of their younger generation. But the youngers should feel — at least grateful and reverent towards their elders while so growing at their expense! Such are the paradoxes of human psychology and human relations.² [231]

Human beings smile for joy and smile sadly; they weep in gladness and they weep in pain.

Smiles and tears require some examination. Jīvas³ smile for joy and smile sadly; they weep in gladness and they weep in pain. What is the meaning of this? [232]

The “smile of joy” has already been incidentally and briefly explained in connection with Kindness. The [233] essential, psychological meaning of “the expansion of the features in a smile” is a consciousness of “moreness,” of “superiority.” The receiver of a gift smiles [234] after the receipt; or, when before, then at the assured prospect of it. The giver smiles before the gift; or, when after, then by sympathy and feeling of oneness with the recipient. In the first case the recipient becomes “more” than he was before. The giver feels that he is more than the object of his charity and kindness and has the power to relieve [235] his want. This last smile, the tender smile of Benevolence, is very nearly allied to and always [236] ready to pass into the tears of pity. The “smile of sadness” also expresses the sense of superiority of [237] him who smiles at

¹ And we shall deal with this question in the last chapter of this work.

² [Please refer to Dr. Dās’ insightful annotations upon Bergson’s analysis of Laughter on page 10 of this study. — ED. PHIL.]

³ [Jīva-Prāna is second principle in the septenary constitution of man. Consult “Jīva and Jivatman,” in our Confusing Words Series. — ED. PHIL.]

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the cause of his sadness, but without Repulsion, rather with patience, with resignation, with hope of future Love. The “cynical smile,” “the smile of bitterness,” is, of course, a near relative of the “laugh of scorn.”

“The tears of joy,” like the “tears of pity,” may mean either only an overflow of the superfluous possessions of the self — but without a definite object as in the other case, and only as a general expression of goodwill to all and readiness to give to any that need; or they may really be, as they often are, tears of pity for one’s own past self, weak and worthy of pity before the cause of joy made it large and strong.



Loud laughter and talk should be shunned.

There are more grounds for sorrow than for laughter in our present world. The great teachers laugh seldom but smile often, in tenderness and sadness; sad to see another's pain, tender to relieve it.

Do not let us laugh very often or very loud. There are more grounds for sorrow than for laughter in our present world. The great Teachers have laughed but seldom or not at all. Laughter *means* a sudden and excessive feeling of superiority and [510] moreness, as explained before. People often laugh in Scorn. We should no longer be actuated by Scorn.

“But they laugh in Joy and pure Good-humour too, as it is called. May we not laugh with them?”

Let us analyse *that* Joy and *that* Good humour, and then determine for ourselves. Very often that Joy means the Joy of gain at the expense of another. “Even in jest?” we ask. Yes. The laughter of jesting consists in this: that one person *makes believe* that he himself is superior and another is inferior; this is done to bring out fictitious points of his own superiority and those of the other's inferiority, and so to secure a laugh. This “laugh a another's expense” is harmless, or supposed to be harmless, only so long as it is understood that the whole is a make-believe, and that there is no real superiority or inferiority on either side. But, apart from the merits or otherwise of so making-believe, and approaching falsehood even in jest, we see how often jest passes into earnest, and why? In trying to bring out the points of inferiority of others, [511] people too generally pass from the fictitious to the real, and touch sore parts; and the result is that the laughter rapidly changes from the humorous into the bitter. Let us not go near such dangerous shallows. What sad mistakes arise in life between the nearest friends! Expressions and gestures of Sympathy and Goodwill are mistaken for the very opposite. How great the danger, then, of the self-assertion involved in even the laughter of jesting becoming hurtful.¹

The violent physical laugh is the laugh of the coarse sense of moreness of the egocentric man, while the quiet, tender smile is the smile of the subtle sense of moreness of the unselfish man.²

The great teachers laughed seldom.³ But they have smiled very often; smiled in tenderness and sadness; sad to see another's pain, tender to relieve it; smiling because of their ability to do so, or at the unreality of the pain and its fleetingness; and in any

¹ See an illustrative story, that of Mankanaka, in the *Kūrma Purāna*, II, xxxv; and the verse quoted at p. 235, *supra*, from the *Bhāgavata*.

² [Consult “Higher Self and Higher Ego,” in our Confusing Words Series. — ED. PHIL.]

³ See, for instance, the descriptions of the Buddha in Āsvaghoṣa's [of Sāketa] *Buddha-charita*, in Edwin Arnold's *The Light of Asia*, and in Karl Gjellerup's story, *The Pilgrim Kamanita*.

case, smiling because of the increased “moreness” of the Self in themselves instantly acquired by the recognition of its identity with the Self in the person before them. As a general rule, the violent outward physical laugh is the laugh of the gross sense of the moreness of the material separated self, while the quiet, tender, inner, “spiritual” smile is the smile of the subtle sense of moreness of the spiritual united self. And yet there is inevitably a touch of comparison [512] in the purity of the latter also, a comparison of the strength of the united self which has overpowered and transcended the strength of the not-self, the separated self, and it is this comparison which — being misinterpreted naturally as invidious by the evil natures in which the separate self is strong — causes the hatred of “spiritual faces” which is unhappily not an uncommon phenomenon amidst materialistic present humanity.

Mockery is the fume of little hearts, noble manners are the blossoms of the noble heart.

Let us distinguish well between this smile of tenderness and the smile of bitterness or of despair wherein the self snatches, it may be, a fictitious consolation for actual present loss, from its own imagined greatness and another’s littleness. And so distinguishing, we shall see why

Mockery is the fume of little hearts,
and

Manners are not idle, but the fruit
Of loyal nature and of noble mind.¹

Golden silence is the only antidote to self-assertion.

And for reasons similar to those which make jesting and laughing dangerous, are also much talking and discussion dangerous. Let us ask a question when we really require some information; let us [513] listen attentively to the reply, ponder it carefully, and ask again, if necessary. But why should we expound our own views uncalled for? The danger of self-assertion is there. But, if we are desired to state our views on any question, then we may certainly do so, if we can help another thereby, giving our statements in the way of the answers we ourselves would seek if putting questions. Because of the danger of self-assertion and *ahamkāra*² hiding within much speech is silence golden.³

¹ Tennyson, *Guinevere*. Compare: *Uttara-Rāma-Charitam*:

“The sages name ‘demoniac’ the speech of the inebriate and the arrogant; it is the very womb of wars, it is the death of the world.”

And, *per contra*:

“The speech which milks the auspicious mother-goddess of Wealth, which drives away the witch of sordid Poverty, which brings good name and nullifies all sins, that good cow-mother of all things fortunate, is known to the wise as *Sūnrtā vāk*, the gentle and courteous speech.”

² [I-ness or me-ness, the false individuality. — ED. PHIL.]

³ *Manu*, vi, 47:

“Speak when asked, and asked in the right manner.”

“Where you desire friendship, avoid three things — controversy, business-relations, private visits to the spouse.”

“Learning, wealth, power — in the hands of the wicked lead to wrangling, to arrogance, and to oppression; — in the hands of the good, to wisdom, to charity, and to the protection of the weak.”

Bhagavan Das' annotations on Henri Bergson's analysis of Laughter.

There is nothing benevolent in laughter, its purpose is to return evil for evil and to intimidate by humiliating.

Bergson¹ has written a very interesting monograph on *Laughter*, an English translation of which was first published in 1911.² He discusses what he regards as the various predominant types of the Comic, and makes a number of generalisations as to these, *viz.*, the Comic in General, in Forms, in Movements, in Situations, in Words, and in Character.

The last pages of the work show that at bottom his view is the same as that of the other psychologists, as regards the egoistic, self-glorifying, and non-benevolent nature of laughter.

“Evidently there is nothing very benevolent in laughter. It seems rather inclined to return evil for evil . . . Laughter is, above all, a corrective. Being intended to humiliate, it must make a painful impression on the person against whom it is directed . . . It would fail in its object if it bore the stamp of sympathy or kindness . . . In this sense, laughter cannot be absolutely just. Nor should it be kind-hearted either. Its function is to intimidate by humiliating. Now, it would not succeed in doing this, had not nature implanted for that very purpose, even in the best of men, a spark of spitefulness or, at all events, of mischief. Perhaps we had better not investigate this point too closely, for we should not find anything very flattering to ourselves. . . . We should see that this movement of relaxation or expansion is nothing but a prelude to laughter, that the laughter immediately retires within himself, more self-assertive and conceited than ever, and is evidently disposed to look upon another's personality as a marionette of which he pulls the strings. In this presumptuousness we speedily discern a degree of egoism, and, behind this latter, something less spontaneous and more bitter, the beginnings of a curious pessimism which becomes the more pronounced as the laughter more closely analyses his laughter . . . The billows clash and collide with each other as they strive to find their level. A fringe of snow-white foam, feathery and frolicsome, follows their changing outlines.

¹ [Henri-Louis Bergson, 1859–1941, eminent French philosopher, influential in the tradition of continental philosophy, especially during the first half of the 20th century until the Second World War. Bergson is known for his arguments that processes of immediate experience and intuition are more significant than abstract rationalism and science for understanding reality. He was awarded the 1927 Nobel Prize in Literature “in recognition of his rich and vitalizing ideas and the brilliant skill with which they have been presented.” In 1930, France awarded Bergson its highest honour, the Grand-Croix de la Legion d'honneur. — Cf. *Wikipedia*.]

² [H-L Bergson, *Laughter: An Essay on the Meaning of the Comic (Le rire*, 1900). Originally appeared in a series of three articles in the “*Revue de Paris*.” Authorised translation by Cloudesley Brereton and Fred Rothwell. New York: The Macmillan Co., 1911]

From time to time, the receding wave leaves behind a remnant of foam on the sandy beach. The child, who plays hard by, picks up a handful, and, the next moment, is astonished to find that nothing remains in his grasp but a few drops of water, water that is far more brackish, far more bitter than that of the wave which brought it. Laughter comes into being in the self-same fashion. It indicates a slight revolt on the surface of social life. It instantly adopts the changing forms of the disturbance. It, also, is a froth with a saline base. Like froth, it sparkles. It is gaiety itself. But the philosopher who gathers a handful to taste may find that the substance is scanty, and the after-taste bitter.”

Because laughter is self-assertive, conceited, presumptuous, and impertinent, even when it is merely playful, its fruit turns to ashes in the mouth of the philosopher who, being aware of the underlying egotism, is appalled by its pettiness and paltriness.

This full quotation has been made from Bergson, a philosopher of much influence in the West at the present time, in order to support the statement in the text, that laughter is not compatible with real benevolence. In Bergson’s own words, it is self-assertive, conceited, presumptuous, egoistic (elsewhere he uses the adjective impertinent also), even when it is merely playful and relaxative; in other cases, it tries “to intimidate by humiliating” others, which is certainly not a benevolent process, even though it may be necessary in certain circumstances. Because of this, does its fruit of pleasure turn to ashes in the mouth of the philosopher who looks before and after and analyses the egoism underneath and sees its pettiness and paltriness; and in the mouth of the non-philosopher, by the natural reaction and revulsion which is the result of the working of the Unconscious before it has become Conscious, before the Self has found and known it-Self.

“All actions, good and bad, ever done in the past by the *jīva* are known to the Self, and remain stored up in it. When it sees that the time is ripe for the fruition of any, then this Inner Self inspires the *budhhi*, the (conscious and unconscious) mind of the *jīva* so that the latter brings about the proper fruit for itself.”¹

It doesn’t take long for the puffed up self-esteem to break out in laughter.

But these excellent remarks with which Bergson concludes his book seem to be inconsistent with some others which he makes at its outset. Thus,

“Here I would point out, as a symptom equally worthy of notice, the *absence of feeling* which usually accompanies laughter. It seems as though the Comic could not produce its disturbing effect unless it fell, so to say, on the surface of a soul that is thoroughly calm and unruffled. Indifference is its natural environment, for laughter has no greater foe than emotion.”

If by feeling and emotion, he means deep or serious or sad or sympathetic feeling or emotion only, then his remark is obviously right. But, then, it would amount to a truism. Surely the self-assertiveness and conceit and presumptuousness, which he

¹ [Quoting *Mahābhārata*, Shanti Parva, ch. 304]

admits at the back of laughter, are also feelings or emotions in the broad sense. Scornful laughter has even a *deep feeling* of pride behind it. As Høffding¹ also has remarked,

“Strong and suddenly excited *self-esteem* suddenly breaks out in laughter.”

This mood of conceit or self-esteem can scarcely be called “thoroughly calm and unruffled,” or one of “indifference.”

Good humour, high spirits, self-satisfaction (such as results from a good meal, or a successful financial gamble, or a triumphantly bloody victory over a hated enemy) all equally mean that elated and inflated state of “superiority” which is the indispensable condition of laughter.

The “fifty-one kinds” of laughter, referred to in a Hindi farce (in contrast with as many varieties of weeping), and all the varieties of the laughable that are discussed by Bergson and others, the “mechanical inelasticity,” the inability to respond with living quickness and adaptability to changing circumstances, which Bergson discerns as the principal feature running through all varieties of the Comic — all mean that someone has, suddenly and unexpectedly, “made an ass of himself,” has done or said something silly, has “made a fool of himself” or been “made a fool of by another,” made less than, made inferior to, what he appeared or was supposed to be. All jesting and joking imply this. To laugh over a witticism is to laugh *with* the utterer of it, and *at* the butt of it. But the gods of Homer laugh consumedly, not at Hephæstus’ wit, but at his lameness; and children and uncultured minds have continued to imitate these surprising gods all along. Indra’s court, in the Purānic heaven, has a famous pair of low comedians on its permanent establishment; they are appropriately named Hā-hā and Hū-hū; and their function is to make jokes at the expense of newcomers. Ahamkāra, egoism, the seat of the sense of power, the feel of superiority, in its dual form of Shiva-Rudra, Love-Hate, Lust-Wrath, indulges in the *atta-hāsa*, the guffaw, in Purānic symbology, on occasions of the triumph of lust over its victim, or of wrath over its object. Always laughter implies the degradation of someone, as Bain rightly points out; and the laughter is either the degrader himself, or in sympathy with him.



¹ [Harald Høffding, 1843–1931, Danish philosopher and theologian. He was strongly influenced by Søren Kierkegaard in his early development, but later became a positivist, retaining and combining with it the spirit and method of practical psychology and the critical school. The physicist Niels Bohr studied philosophy from and became a friend of Høffding. The philosopher and author Ágúst H. Bjarnason was a student of Høffding. — Cf. *Wikipedia*.]

Let us pray to be spared from low buffoonery and mocking laughs.

A Sanskrit verse embodies a prayer to be saved

“ . . . from recklessness and loud laughter of dire quality,”

and other verses suggest that:

“ . . . to counteract the proud elation and sense of one's own greatness which result from the contemplation of those below us in life, we should realise our smallness by looking at those who are above us.”

“When in joy, turn your eyes to those in greater joy; when in sorrow, look at those in greater sorrow”;

so may undue elations and depressions, laughs and sobs, be both avoided.¹

It may be noted that if laughter is corrective, as Bergson reiterates, surely it is so only incidentally, and not purposively, not by the intention of the laugher. Few, if any, laugh with the deliberate object of administering correction thereby to the butt.

Another interesting point referred to by Bergson may be discussed here. He says:

“In a society composed of pure intelligences, there would probably be no more tears, though perhaps there would still be laughter; whereas highly emotional souls, in tune and unison with life, in whom every event would be sentimentally prolonged and re-echoed, would neither know nor understand laughter.”²

This is only saying in other words what has been said more powerfully and also more accurately by someone else, viz., that “To the man of thought, the world is a comedy; to the man of feeling, a tragedy.” The inaccuracy lies in Bergson's supposition of even the possibility of the existence of a society in which there may be laughter but no tears. Metaphysically, such a state of things is impossible. The world-process is always and everywhere dual, ambivalent. It is not possible that there should be light only, and no darkness; pleasure only, and no pain. Also “pure intelligence,” without any affective and without any conative quality is another impossibility by the nature of things. And if there is any affective element present, then risibility and lachrymosity must both be present.

Bergson goes on to say:

“Try, for a moment, to become interested in everything that is being said or done; act, in imagination, with those who act, and feel with those who feel; in a word give your sympathy its widest expansion; as though at the touch of a fairy wand, you will see the flimsiest of objects assume importance, and a gloomy hue spread over everything.”

Now, if this is so, why is it so? Is it not because the disinterested spectator for feels “superior” to the whole show? “I am not affected by all this,” “it does not touch any

¹ [Cf. *Bhāgavata*, VI, viii, 16]

² p. 4

weak point in me.” But the sensitive sympathiser at once becomes the *locus* and focus of all the woes of the world, which press upon him much more heavily than its rejoicings.

But here we ought to remember that the disinterested spectator is of two kinds,

- 1 The selfish, egoistic, self-complacent, “superior” person with *some other* interests than those involved in the scene he is beholding; and
- 2 The wise philanthropist and philosopher who is *all*-interested, is equally benevolent to all interests, sees that all, laughter as well as tears, are ways of self-realisation of the Universal Self.

The former regards the particular scene before him, in the fate of the actors of which he is disinterested, as show and fun and comedy; his own private and personal affairs are not such at all, to him. The latter regards the whole world-process, including the affairs of the body he is incarnate in, with all its tears and all its smiles, as one vast and incessant *Līlā*, Play, Drama, Comedy if you like, but better Tragi-Comedy; and his smile is an ambivalent sad smile, his laugh a tearful laugh, his innermost mood a laughless and tearless Peace,

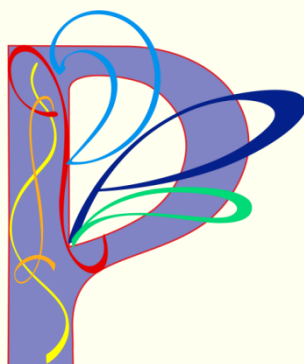
“All is well,”

“Thy [*i.e.*, *My*] Will be done [and is being done],”

“Everything has its own place in the Universe,”

“Every fact is its own justification”;

But the activities of his body are always more in sympathy with the tears than with the smiles.



Vex not thou the poet's mind with thy shallow wit.

By Alfred, Lord Tennyson.

A companion poem to "The Poet" (1830), entitled "The Poet's Mind." The first seven lines have been omitted from subsequent editions.

Clear as summer mountain streams,
Bright as the inwoven beams,
Which beneath their crisping sapphire
In the midday, floating o'er
The golden sands, make evermore
To a blossom-starred shore.
Hence away, unhallowed laughter!

1

Vex not thou the poet's mind
With thy shallow wit:
Vex not thou the poet's mind;
For thou canst not fathom it.
Clear and bright it should be ever,
Flowing like a crystal river;
Bright as light, and clear as wind.

2

Dark-brow'd sophist, come not anear;
All the place is holy ground;
Hollow smile and frozen sneer
Come not here.
Holy water will I pour
Into every spicy flower
Of the laurel-shrubs that hedge it around.
The flowers would faint at your cruel cheer.
In your eye there is death,
There is frost in your breath
Which would blight the plants.
Where you stand you cannot hear
From the groves within
The wild-bird's din.
In the heart of the garden the merry bird chants,
It would fall to the ground if you came in.

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VEX NOT THOU THE POET'S MIND

In the middle leaps a fountain
Like sheet lightning,
Ever brightening
With a low melodious thunder;
All day and all night it is ever drawn
From the brain of the purple mountain
Which stands in the distance yonder:
It springs on a level of bowery lawn,
And the mountain draws it from Heaven above,
And it sings a song of undying love;
And yet, tho' its voice be so clear and full,
You never would hear it; your ears are so dull;
So keep where you are: you are foul with sin;
It would shrink to the earth if you came in.



Suggested reading for students.



On the soul of the spiritual man lit by its own light.

Insights to our divine ancestry and human nature may be gleaned from the following titles in the same series:

- A CONGENITAL PREPONDERANCE OF FIRE ELEMENTALS
- ANCIENT BELIEFS IN THE IMMORTALITY OF SOUL
- ANCIENT OPINIONS UPON PSYCHIC BODIES
- APOLLONIUS COMFORTS A BEREAVED FATHER
- ASTRAL BODIES OR DOPPELGÄNGERS
- ATMAN IS A RAY FROM A SPARK OF UNCREATED RAY
- BLAVATSKY ON AETHROBACY AND FAKIRS
- BLAVATSKY ON OCCULT DEVELOPMENT
- BLAVATSKY ON THE DUAL ASPECT OF WISDOM
- BLAVATSKY ON THREE ESSAYS BY É. LÉVI
- BLOOD IS THE FIRST INCARNATION OF UNIVERSAL FLUID
- CHINESE BELIEFS ABOUT THE HUMAN SOUL
- CICERO'S DREAM OF SCIPIO AND MACROBIUS' COMMENT
- CLASSIFICATION OF THE PRINCIPLES IN MAN
- COMMON-MISCONCEPTIONS-OF-THEOSOPHICAL-DOCTRINES
- CONCERNING THE DOCTRINES OF THE THEOSOPHISTS
- CONSTITUTION OF MAN - DRAWING
- CONSTITUTION OF MAN - ESOTERIC
- CONSTITUTION OF MAN - OVERVIEW
- COSMOS AND DEITY IN MAN - DRAWING
- DAS' SCIENCE OF THE EMOTIONS (1908)
- DEATH AND IMMORTALITY
- DEATH AND POST-MORTEM STATES
- DEATH HAS NO TERRORS

CONSTITUTION OF MAN SERIES
SUGGESTED READING FOR STUDENTS

- DEVACHAN, DREAM REALM WHERE PURE SOULS ARE REWARDED
- DREAMLESS SLEEP
- ELIPHAS LEVI ON DEATH AND SATAN
- EMOTIONS' TRIUNE NATURE
- EVOLUTIONARY TRANSMIGRATION OF MATERIAL PARTICLES IN NATURE
- FACING SEVEN VIRGINS IN THE HALL OF JUDGMENT
- FROM THE STRONGHOLD OF YOUR SOUL, CHASE ALL YOUR FOES AWAY
- HAIR IS THE RETAINER OF PRANA
- IN DEEP SLEEP WE DREAM NO MORE AND CONFABULATE WITH THE STARS
- IS SUICIDE A CRIME
- JUDGE ON THE INNER CONSTITUTION OF MAN
- JUDGE ON THE OCCULT NATURE OF MAN
- LÉVI ON DEATH BEING THE BIRTH-PANG OF LIFE
- LIFE IS AN INDESTRUCTIBLE UNIVERSAL FORCE
- LYMPH IS A MASQUE FOR NYMPH
- NEED OF A SPIRITUAL VOCABULARY
- NO NEED FOR EXPENSIVE FUNERALS
- NOUS AUGOEIDES OF THE NEOPLATONISTS
- NOUS MOVES MAN
- OEDIPUS AND SPHINX UNRIDDED
- OSIRIS AND TYPHON, HIGHER TRIAD AND LOWER TETRAD
- PLATO ON THE APPLE OF THE EYE
- PLATO'S TWO HORSES
- PLUTARCH COMFORTS APOLLONIUS
- PLUTARCH COMPARING PASSIONS AND DISEASES – TR. WHITE
- PLUTARCH ON BOASTED WISDOM, FORTITUDE, MAGNANIMITY, AND TEMPERANCE
- PLUTARCH ON EXERCISES PROPER FOR A SCHOLAR
- PLUTARCH ON PLATO'S PROCREATION OF THE SOUL
- POST-MORTEM WANDERINGS OF THE WICKED SOUL
- PREMATURE AND PHENOMENAL GROWTHS
- PSYCHOLOGY LACKS ENTIRELY KNOWLEDGE OF THE SOUL
- PSYCHOMETRY IS THE NATURAL BUT LATENT FACULTY IN US
- REAL DREAMS ARE ACTIONS OF THE TRUE SELF

CONSTITUTION OF MAN SERIES
SUGGESTED READING FOR STUDENTS

- RELEASING THE ASTRAL SOUL FROM ONE'S ASHES
- SEPTENARY IS THE CONSTITUTION OF MAN
- SIXTH SENSE IS REASON OVER INSTINCT
- SPECULATIONS ABOUT REINCARNATION AND MATERIALIZED SPIRITS
- SPIRIT AND PERISPIRIT
- SPIRIT PHOTOGRAPHS ARE OBJECTIVE COPIES FROM SUBJECTIVE IMAGES
- SUBBA ROW ON KAMA-LOKA
- SUBBA ROW ON THE SEVENFOLD PRINCIPLE IN MAN
- SUBBA ROW ON THOUGHT TRANSFERENCE
- SYNESIUS CONCERNING DREAMS
- THE AQUILINE NOSE IS ROYAL AND NOBLE
- THE DEVOTIONAL LOVE AND NOBLE ASPIRATIONS OF LOWER MANAS
- THE ESOTERIC PHYSIOLOGY OF MAN
- THE HEART IS THE ORGAN OF SPIRITUAL CONSCIOUSNESS
- THE IMAGE-MAKING POWER
- THE KARMIC EFFECTS OF INVASION, CIVILIZATION, AND VULGAR SPECULATION
- THE LIFE PRINCIPLE
- THE MOON REGULATES THE PRANA OF NATURE AND MAN
- THE OCCULT INFLUENCE OF MAN'S ACTIVE WILL
- THE PERISPIRIT OF ALLAN KARDEC
- THE PROPHECY OF GENERAL YERMOLOV
- THE SUTRATMAN OF THE UPANISHADS
- THE TWO VOICES OF LORD TENNYSON
- THE VOICE OF THE WILL IS THE ATOMIC POINT
- THEOSOPHICAL JEWELS - MAN, THE JEWEL OF THE UNIVERSE
- THEOSOPHICAL JEWELS - SEPTENARY ANTHROPOS
- THEOSOPHICAL JEWELS - THE CYCLE OF LIFE
- THEOSOPHICAL JEWELS - THE PATH OF ACTION
- THEOSOPHICAL JEWELS - THE PATH OF RENUNCIATION
- THEOSOPHICAL JEWELS - THE SUTRATMAN OF THE UPANISHADS
- THREE CUBITS OF THE EAR, FOUR OF THE STALK
- TIBETAN TEACHINGS ON AFTER-DEATH STATES
- TROUBLES FROM UNDISSOLVED EX-DOUBLES

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SUGGESTED READING FOR STUDENTS**

- TWO SPIRITS UNITED IN THE ELYSIAN FIELDS
- WHEN INNER AND OUTER MAN ARE OFF-KILTER
- WHEN THE GREEN IS OVERCOME WITH AZURE
- WHEN THE SERPENT SLOUGHS OFF HIS SKIN
- WHY SECLUDING WOMEN DURING THEIR MENSTRUAL PERIOD
- WOE FOR THE LIVING DEAD



Other works by Bhagavan Das.

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