

Cheerfulness in Sadhana

Second Edition

A COMPILATION FROM THE WORKS OF
Sri Aurobindo and the Mother

Compiled by Jamshed M Mavalwalla



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Sri Aurobindo Society

AUROPUBLICATIONS

POWERFUL THOUGHTS, INSPIRING VISION

Cheerfulness in Sadhana

Second Edition

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The idea for the comprehensive compilation: Vijay bhai

Compiler: Jamshed M Mavalwalla

Proofreading: Archana Udaykumar

Cover: Kavita Dutta and Uttam Mondal

E-book: Uttam Mondal

Help in preparing the second edition: Uttam Mondal

Vijaybhai's Note on Comprehensive Compilation

All over the world, there is a growing interest in spirituality and Yoga. There is a search for the true meaning and purpose of life, for deeper solutions to the problems that confront us all, and for ways in which we can contribute to evolutionary change and progress.

In this search, more and more people are turning to Sri Aurobindo and the Mother for guidance and enlightenment. But in their voluminous writings, they do not know where to find the answers they are looking for.

In this regard the Mother has said,

"It is not by books that Sri Aurobindo ought to be studied but by subjects—what he has said on the Divine, on Unity, on religion, on evolution, on education, on self-perfection, on supermind, etc., etc."

(CWM 12: 206)

On another occasion She said:

"If you want to know what Sri Aurobindo has said on a given subject, you must at least read all he has written on that subject. You will then see that he seems to have said the most contradictory things. But when one has read everything and understood a little, one sees that all the contradictions complement

one another and are organised and unified in an integral synthesis."

(CWM 16: 309–310)

While several compilations are now available, many sincere spiritual seekers have felt the need for Comprehensive Compilations from Sri Aurobindo and the Mother on specific subjects, in which the contents are further organised into sub-topics, so that one can find everything one is looking for in one place.

This compilation is an effort to fulfil this need and thus help spiritual seekers in their journey and sadhana. We hope that this compilation will help us gain greater mental clarity about a subject so that we can channel our efforts in the right direction. For Sri Aurobindo has written:

"It is always better to make an effort in the right direction; even if one fails the effort bears some result and is never lost."

(CWSA 29: 87)

We will be glad to receive suggestions and feedback from the readers.

Vijay

Preface

The tenth book in the series of comprehensive compilations on virtues and qualities prescribed by Sri Aurobindo and the Mother as necessary for doing Yoga is *Cheerfulness in Sadhana*.

The Mother emphasizes that, if one wishes always to progress, one must understand more completely what one already knows.

“For those who want always to progress, there are three major ways of progressing:

- (1) To widen the field of one’s consciousness.
- (2) To understand ever better and more completely what one knows.
- (3) To find the Divine and surrender more and more to His Will.” (CWM 16: 435–436)

The purpose of this comprehensive compilation is to help the reader gain an understanding of the virtue of cheerfulness. The headings are intended to guide the reader towards a clearer and deeper understanding. However, it is important to read the quotations themselves, for the words of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother are infused with a consciousness infinitely higher than our own. Therefore, reading these quotations will also help the reader elevate their consciousness.

The quotations in this compilation are taken from the volumes of *The Complete Works of Sri Aurobindo* (CWSA) and the *Collected Works of the Mother* (CWM), Second Edition. Each quotation is followed by the title of the book, the volume number, and the page number from which it has been taken.

While the passages from Sri Aurobindo are in the original English, most of the passages from the Mother (selections from her talks and writings) are translations from the original French. We must also bear in mind that the excerpts have been taken out of their original context and that a compilation, by its very nature, is likely to have a personal and subjective approach. A sincere attempt, however, has been made to remain faithful to the vision of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. Those who would like to read the fuller text are advised to consult *The Complete Works of Sri Aurobindo* (CWSA) and the *Collected Works of the Mother* (CWM), Second Edition.

Jamshed M. Mavalwalla

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I—Cheerfulness, a Deeper and Finer Gaiety Has a Place as One Element of the Yogic Character

1.

“As for light-heartedness and insouciance [carefreeness], the Mother never spoke of insouciance—a light don’t-care attitude is the last thing she would recommend to anybody. She spoke of cheerfulness, and if she used the word light-hearted it was not in the sense of anything lightly or frivolously [*playfully*] gay and careless—although a deeper and finer gaiety can have its place as one element of the Yogic character. What she meant was a glad equanimity even in the face of difficulties and there is nothing in that contrary to Yogic teaching or to her own practice.” (CWSA 31: 194)

2.

“Generally, all progress made on one side is set off by an attack of the adverse forces on the other. So, the more you advance, the more vigilant must you become. And the most essential quality is perseverance, endurance, and a... what shall I call it?—a kind of inner good humour which helps you not to get discouraged, not to become sad, and to face all difficulties with a smile. There is an English word which expresses this very well—cheerfulness. If you can keep this within you, you fight much better, resist much better, in the light, these bad influences which try to hinder

I—Cheerfulness, a Deeper and Finer Gaiety Has a Place as One
Element of the Yogic Character

you from progressing. That is the work. It is vast and complex. And one must never forget anything.” (CWM 8: 23)

3.

“Mental cheerfulness: it knows how to take delight in everything.” (CWM 14: 179)

4.

“Cheerful endeavour: the joy that one finds in the effort towards the Divine.” (CWM 14: 179)

II—Cheerfulness which Smiles at Difficulties and Laughs at Mistakes

1.

“But you must do it [work] like that with an intensity of will, with perseverance and that indispensable cheerfulness which smiles at difficulties and laughs at mistakes. Then everything will go well.” (CWM 4: 254)

III—Cheerfulness Is a Psychological State

1.

“This body is built up, on the one side, of a material basis, but rather of material conditions than of physical matter, on the other, of the vibrations of our psychological states. Peace and equanimity and confidence, faith in health, undisturbed repose and cheerfulness and bright gladness constitute this element in it and give it strength and substance.” (CWM 3: 89)

2.

“Therefore the mental Purusha has to separate himself from association and self-identification with this desire-mind. He has to say ‘I am not this thing that struggles and suffers, grieves and rejoices, loves and hates, hopes and is baffled, is angry and afraid and cheerful and depressed, a thing of vital moods and emotional passions. All these are merely workings and habits of Prakriti in the sensational and emotional mind.’ The mind then draws back from its emotions and becomes with these, as with the bodily movements and experiences, the observer or witness.” (CWSA 23: 352)

IV—Cheerfulness in Sadhana Does Not Mean a Cheerful Following of the Vital Life

1.

“But once the turn made, it should be to the one direction and a perpetual vairagya is not needed. Nor when we speak of cheerfulness as the best condition, do we mean a cheerful following of the vital life, but a cheerful following of the path to the Divine which is not impossible if the mind and heart take the right view and posture. At any rate if positive cheerfulness is not possible in one’s case, still one should not acquiesce in or mentally support a constant depression and sadness. That is not at all indispensable for keeping turned to the Divine.” (CWSA 31: 202)

2.

“It is an inner joy and cheerfulness that helps, but this [*light joking*] is merely a vital bubbling on the surface. It is all right in ordinary life, but in Yoga it merely expends the vital force for nothing.” (CWSA 31: 174)

V—There Is a Deeper Cheerfulness which Is the Spiritual Condition of Cheerfulness

1.

“The cheerfulness [of joking and hilarity] is vital. I do not say that it should not be there, but there is a deeper cheerfulness, an inner *sukhahāsyā* which is the spiritual condition of cheerfulness.” (CWSA 31: 174)

VI—One Can be Happy, Cheerful without Being Light or Shallow

1.

“One can be quiet, happy, cheerful without being all that in a light or shallow way—and the happiness need not bring any vital reaction. All that you need to do is to be observant and vigilant,—watchful so that you may not give assent to wrong movements or the return of the old feelings, darkness, confusion etc.” (CWSA 31: 279)

VII—In Sadhana Be Cheerful

1.

“Be more cheerful and confident. Sex and Doubt and Co. are there, no doubt, but the Divine is there also inside you. Open your eyes and look and look till the veil is rent and you see Him—or Her.” (CWSA 31: 173)

2.

“There is no real reason for discontent or dissatisfaction with yourself—since progress is being made in spite of the resistance of the lower forces. The pressure which is translated by the heaviness in the stomach has to be got rid of—it is there that there is the chief resistance still. Peace within and a cheerful confidence and gladness without is what is wanted—then this kind of nervous pressure and disorder would cease.” (CWSA 31: 60)

3.

“Cheerfulness is the salt of sadhana. It is a thousand times better than gloominess.” (CWSA 31: 173)

4.

“It is not at all the Mother’s wish or will that you or anyone should remain in grief and despair; what she likes is that you should confide in her and be happy and cheerful.

That is what the Mother wants, that you should remain near her always in an inner gladness of heart and outer happiness of the life.” (CWSA 32: 394)

5.

“What should I do so that my work becomes an offering? What should I do so that I can always be with the Mother?”

What you should do is to have confidence and try to remain always confident and cheerful. If you feel depressed call for the Mother’s Force to remove the depression. If you fall ill, call the Mother’s Force to cure you. When you work call the Mother’s Force to support you and do the work through you.” (CWSA 32: 217)

6.

“But for you what I would recommend is constant openness, a quiet steady aspiration, no over-eagerness, a cheerful trust and patience.” (CWSA 29: 275)

7.

“One can meet the Divine in speaking as well as in silence, in action as well as in physical solitude and quietude. An entire retirement can only be a personal case—and as a condition for an inward or outward work, but it is no general rule indispensable for the sadhana. In many cases, most indeed, it would do more harm than good as has been seen in many cases where it has been unduly attempted.

A cheerful and sunny life is as good an atmosphere for Yoga as any the Himalayas can give." (CWSA 29: 381)

8.

"It [*vital joy*] is much better than vital depression at any rate. What is wanted is an inner peace and upon that a constant cheerfulness and gladness." (CWSA 31: 184)

9.

"There is no reason certainly for despair. There is no reason certainly for despair. The bliss always comes in drops at first, or a broken trickle. You have to go on cheerfully and in full confidence, till there is the cascade." (CWSA 30: 20)

10.

"I do not know why working with X must make good health impossible, unless you mean that there is too much work imposed on you,—but then the work can be lessened. In fact a complete rest and relief from the work can be arranged at present and for the future we can see afterwards. If you mean that working according to somebody else's ideas makes or keeps you ill, I do not see why it should be so. 999 people out of every 1000 do that—only a few are able to carry out their own ideas and even they have to a large extent to suit their ideas to those of other people in the actual execution of their work. If you mean that to have to work under discipline, doing things in

what you consider not the best way, makes you nervous, discouraged and ill, that is a pity. It would be so much better if you could leave the responsibility of the way of doing things to the Mother and do cheerfully what you have to do. However, if you cannot bring yourself to that attitude, some other way will have to be found hereafter. But at the present, if that is the case, to take rest as a relief would seem the only way.” (CWSA 31: 571–572)

11.

“It [*the descent of the sadhana from the mind into the vital*] came by being preoccupied too much with the difficulties of the nature. It is always better to dwell on the good side of things in yourself—I do not mean in an egoistic way, but with faith and cheerful confidence, calling down the positive experience of which the nature is already capable so that a constant positive growth can help in the rejection of all that has to be rejected.” (CWSA 31: 742)

12.

“Keep faith and confidence and remain cheerful.” (CWM 14: 81)

VIII—Joy and Cheerfulness Are Necessary for the Smooth Inner Progress

1.

"In my ambition to serve the Mother, I asked for work, but now I find that I am losing the joy and cheerfulness I was enjoying before. If you think my withdrawal from the work will bring me relief, kindly grant it."

It is a pity if you have to give up the work as your work had been of great help and was very much appreciated, especially by X—but if it comes in the way of the joy and cheerfulness which is necessary for the smooth inner progress, Mother cannot ask you to continue. The necessity of the sadhana is the first thing to consider."
(CWSA 32: 418)

IX—The More One Is Cheerfully Open to the Mother, the More One Is Likely to Receive from the Mother

1.

"I have often seen that X would be quite cheerful just before coming for Pranam, but when he came in front of Mother he looked sorrowful and displeased. What was the reason?"

X is doing like many others—they are cheerful outside, but sorrowful or displeased or suffering when they come to the Mother or write to her. There is a sort of idea (which was long current in the Asram) and there is still a feeling in the vital that the more you do that with the Mother the more you will get out of her. Of course it is absurdly untrue—the truth is the opposite; the more one is cheerfully open to her and lives in the light and gladness, the more one is likely to receive." (CWSA 32: 560)

X—The Basis of the Siddhi Is to Develop the Psychic Condition of Cheerful Confidence in the Mother

1.

"All in me is proceeding towards the Mother's love, devotion and purity. Why then am I not going up in my consciousness and getting higher experience?"

The power of experience is not gone—but what is most important now is to develop the psychic condition of surrender, devotion, love and cheerful confidence in the Mother, an unshaken faith and a constant inner closeness, and also to bring down from above the peace, wideness, purity etc. of the higher Self which is that of the Mother's consciousness. It is these things that are the basis of the siddhi in this Yoga—other experiences are only a help, not the basis." (CWSA 32: 332–333) (CWSA 29: 77)

2.

"You should do your work simply in the confidence that it is accepted and appreciated by the Mother, as indeed it is,—for your work has been very good and helpful to her. Let the psychic movement express itself simply and spontaneously in action without allowing the outer mind to interfere; that would very likely release the tension and then your sadhana could proceed in a quiet cheerfulness,

X—The Basis of the Siddhi Is to Develop the Psychic Condition of
Cheerful Confidence in the Mother
confident of its own truth and the Mother's loving
acceptance." (CWSA 32: 254)

XI—Cheerfulness Puts You in the Right Condition for the Psychic to Work

1.

“This movement [*of restlessness, sadness, gloom*] is one that always tries to come when you have a birthday or a darshan and is obviously a suggestion of forces that want to disturb you and give you a bad birthday or bad darshan. You must get rid of the idea that it is in any way helpful for sadhana, e.g. makes you remember the Divine etc.—if it does it makes you remember the Divine in the wrong way and in addition brings up the weakness, also depression, self-distrust etc. etc. *À quoi bon* cheerfulness? It puts you in the right condition for the psychic to work and without knowing it you grow in just the right perceptions and right feelings for the spiritual attitude. This growth I have been observing in you for a fairly long time now and it is in the cheerful states that it is the most active. Japa, thinking of the Divine is all right, but it must be on this basis and in company with work and mental activity, for then the instrument is in a healthy condition. But if you become restlessly eager to do nothing but japa and think of nothing but the Divine and of the ‘progress’ you have or have not made (Ramana Maharshi says you should never think of ‘progress’, it is according to him a movement of the ego), then all the fat is in the fire—because the system is not yet ready for a Herculean effort and it begins to get upset and

XI—Cheerfulness Puts You in the Right Condition for the Psychic to
Work

think it is unfit and will never be fit. So be a good cheerful worker and offer your bhakti to the Divine in all ways you can but rely on him to work out things in you.” (CWSA 31: 203)

XII—Difficulties Will Be Overcome Sooner if Faced Cheerfully

1.

"It is difficult and the way long and the encouragement given meagre? What then? Why should you expect so great a thing to be easy or that there must be either a swift success or none? The difficulties have to be faced and the more cheerfully they are faced, the sooner they will be overcome. The one thing to do is to keep the mantra of success, the determination of victory, the fixed resolve, 'Have it I must and have it I will.' Impossible? There is no such thing as an impossibility—there are difficulties and things of *longue haleine*, [*long term*], but no impossibles. What one is determined fixedly to do, will get done now or later—it becomes possible." (CWSA 29: 115–116)

2.

"Dear Mother,

I think this is the last thing I shall write to You. I should like to stop writing now, as I am feeling very tired.

I know that You will not like it, but I have to say that it is better to put me aside. I am quite hopeless. Again for the last few days I have become irregular in my work. You once said that to open myself to You is my work, because Your help is always with me. But I do not know when I will open myself to You. I am as hard as a stone. If I had known

XII—Difficulties Will Be Overcome Sooner if Faced Cheerfully

before that these things are so difficult, I should never have wished to come here. Mother, I wish You would not tell me that I am rebelling, I do not like to hear that.

I do not know, Mother, why I have written all these things. Mother, please do not be angry with me, I have nobody except You.

Why this discouragement? Each one has his difficulties, yours are no more insurmountable than those of others. You have only to remain confident and cheerful." (CWM 16: 69–70)

3.

"You are putting the cart before the horse. It is not the right way to make the condition that if you get what you want you will be obedient and cheerful. But be always obedient and cheerful and then what you want will have a chance of coming to you." (CWSA 29: 192)

4.

"It seems to me that all this comes from your having taken a wrong way with yourself in meeting the consequences of your stumble. It is not by tormenting yourself with remorse and harassing thoughts and sleepless nights that you can overcome. It is by looking straight at yourself, very quietly, with a quiet and firm resolution and then going on cheerfully and bravely in full confidence and reliance,

XII—Difficulties Will Be Overcome Sooner if Faced Cheerfully
trusting in the grace, serenely and vigilantly, anchoring
yourself on your psychic being, calling down more and
more of the love and Ananda, turning more and more
exclusively to the Mother. That is the true way—and there
is no other.” (CWSA 31: 738)

5.

“It [*retracing one’s steps from the vital into the psychic*]
can be done, if you refuse to be preoccupied with the idea
of your difficulties and concentrate on really helpful and
positive things. Be more cheerful and confident. Sex and
Doubt and Co. are there, no doubt, but the Divine is there
also inside you. Open your eyes and look and look till the
veil is rent and you see Him or Her!” (CWSA 31: 742–743)

XIII—People Who Are Grateful and Cheerful Actually March Faster and More Surely

1.

“In a more deep and spiritual sense a concrete realisation is that which makes the thing realised more real, dynamic, intimately present to the consciousness than any physical thing can be. Such a realisation of the personal Divine or of the impersonal Brahman or of the Self does not usually come at the beginning of a sadhana or in the first years or for many years. It comes so to a very few; ... But to expect and demand it so soon and get fed up because it does not come and declare Yoga impossible except for two or three in the ages would be token in the eyes of any experienced Yogi or sadhaka a rather rash and abnormal impatience. Most would say that a slow development is the best one can hope for in the first years and only when the nature is ready and fully concentrated towards the Divine can the definitive experience come. To some rapid preparatory experiences can come at a comparatively early stage, but even they cannot escape the labour of the consciousness which will make these experiences culminate in the realisation that is enduring and complete. ... It is the fact that people who are grateful and cheerful and ready to go step by step, even by slow steps, if need be, do actually march faster and more surely than those who are impatient

XIII—People Who Are Grateful and Cheerful Actually March Faster
and More Surely
and in haste and at each step despair or murmur.” (CWSA
29: 112) (CWSA 35: 240–241)

2.

“To be always observing faults and wrong movements brings depression and discourages the faith. Turn your eyes more to the coming Light and less to any immediate darkness. Faith, cheerfulness, confidence in the ultimate victory are the things that help,—they make the progress easier and swifter.

Make more of the good experiences that come to you; one experience of the kind is more important than the lapses and failures. When it ceases, do not repine or allow yourself to be discouraged, but be quiet within and aspire for its renewal in a stronger form leading to still deeper and fuller experience.

Aspire always, but with more quietude, opening yourself to the Divine simply and wholly.” (CWSA 31: 701)

XIV—Pursue the Yoga with Cheerful Perseverance

1.

“... ‘Let there be no attachment to inaction,’ and the instruction to pursue the yoga always, whether we seem to advance or seem to be standing still or seem even to be going back, always with a calm faith and patient and cheerful perseverance, *anirviṇṇacetasā*.” (CWSA 13: 84)

XV—Either Cheerfulness or Equanimity

1.

“In Yoga, as in every great or serious human effort, there is always bound to be an abundance of adverse interventions and unfavourable circumstances which have to be overcome. To give them too great an importance increases their importance and their power to multiply themselves, gives them, as it were, confidence in themselves and the habit of coming. To face them with equanimity—if one cannot manage a cheerful persistence against them of confident and resolute will —diminishes on the contrary their importance and effect and in the end, though not at once, gets rid of their persistence and recurrence.” (CWSA 31: 697)

2.

“I suppose it is to teach us first that grace is more effective than tapasya and, secondly, that either equanimity or a cheerful spontaneous happy self-opening is as effective, to say the least, as the grimmest wrestling for a result. But it would be dangerous to assume from that that no tapasya and no endeavour is needful—for that might very well mean inertia. I have seen too that very often a long tapasya with doubtful results prepares the moment of grace and the spontaneous downflow. All which seem to be contradictions, but are not in a whole view of things.” (CWSA 29: 172)

3.

“My word to you is: Do not cherish suffering and suffering will leave you altogether. Suffering is far from being indispensable to progress. The greatest progress is made through a steady and cheerful equanimity.” (CWM 14: 247)

4.

“Keep a cheerful mind and a peaceful heart. Let nothing disturb your equanimity and make every day the necessary progress to advance with me steadily towards the goal.” (CWM 14: 179)

5.

“Quietly face the social difficulties with equality and cheerfulness; then you will know that my love and blessings are with you.” (CWM 13: 133)

XVI—Cheerfulness when Hostile Forces Attack

1.

“That is right [*to remain confident, cheerful and hopeful*]. The rest is the remnant of the attack [of hostile forces]—such an attack, sudden and violent, as sometimes, indeed often comes when one is making full progress to the straight and open way. It cannot permanently deflect the progress and, when it disappears, there is usually a chance of going on more firmly and swiftly towards the goal.”
(CWSA 31: 771)

XVII—In the Sunlit Path Difficulties Are Faced Cheerfully

1.

"The sunlit path can only be followed if the psychic is constantly or usually in front or if one has a natural spirit of faith and surrender or a face turned habitually towards the sun or psychic predisposition (e.g. a faith in one's spiritual destiny) or if he has acquired the psychic turn. That does not mean that the sunlit man has no difficulties; he may have many, but he regards them cheerfully as 'all in the day's work'. If he gets bad beatings, he is capable of saying, Well, that was a queer go, but the Divine is evidently in a queer mood and if that is his way of doing things, it must be the right one; I am surely a still queerer fellow myself and that, I suppose, was the only means of putting me right.' But everybody can't be of that turn, and surrender which would put everything right is, as you say, difficult to do completely. That is why we do not insist on total surrender at once, but are satisfied with a little to begin with, the rest to grow as it can." (CWSA 31: 618)

2.

"There is no contradiction between my former statements about the sunlit path and what I have said about the difficult and unpleasant passages which the Yoga has to pass through in its normal development in the way of

human nature. The sunlit path can be followed by those who are able to practise surrender, first a central surrender and afterwards a more complete self-giving in all the parts of the being. If they can achieve and preserve the attitude of the central surrender, if they can rely wholly on the Divine and accept cheerfully whatever comes to them from the Divine, then their path becomes sunlit and may even be straightforward and easy. They will not escape all difficulties, no seeker can, but they will be able to meet them without pain and despondency,—as indeed the Gita recommends that Yoga should be practised, *anirvinṇacetasā*,—trusting in the inner guidance and perceiving it more and more or else in the outer guidance of the Guru. It can also be followed even when one feels no light and no guidance if there is or if one can acquire a bright settled faith and happy bhakti or has the nature of the spiritual optimist and the firm belief or feeling that all that is done by the Divine is done for the best even when we cannot understand his action. But all have not this nature, most are very far from it, and the complete or even the central surrender is not easy to get and to keep it always is hard enough for our human nature. When these things are not there, the liberty of the soul is not attained and we have instead to undergo the law or fulfil a hard and difficult discipline.” (CWSA 31: 685)

3.

"The change noted by *X* evidently indicates a great progress in the vital and physical being. There is nothing spiritually wrong in being glad and cheerful, on the contrary it is the right thing. As for struggles and aspiration, struggles are really not indispensable to progress and there are many people who get so habituated to the struggling attitude that they have all the time struggles and very little else. That is not desirable. There is a sunlit path as well as a gloomy one and it is the better of the two—a path in which one goes forward in absolute reliance on the Mother, fearing nothing, sorrowing over nothing. Aspiration is needed but there can be a sunlit aspiration full of light and faith and confidence and joy. If difficulty comes, even that can be faced with a smile." (CWSA 31: 173)

4.

"It is that cheerfulness that we want to be always there in you. It is the happiness of the psychic that has found its way and, whatever difficulties come, is sure that it will be led forward and reach the goal. When a sadhak has that constantly, we know that he has got over the worst difficulty and that he is now firmly on the safe path." (CWSA 31: 173)

5.

The Sunlit Way of Yoga

"Peace was the very first thing that the Yogins and seekers of old asked for and it was a quiet and silent mind—and that always brings peace—that they declared to be the best condition for realising the Divine. A cheerful and sunlit heart is the fit vessel for the Ananda and who shall say that Ananda or what prepares it is an obstacle to the Divine union? As for despondency, it is surely a terrible burden to carry on the way. One has to pass through it sometimes, like Christian of *The Pilgrim's Progress* through the Slough of Despond, but its constant reiteration cannot be anything but an obstacle. The Gita specially says, 'Practise the Yoga with an undespondent heart', *anirvinn acetasa anirvinṇacetasā*." (CWSA 29: 469–470)

6.

"No, there is no obligation of gloom, harshness, austerity or lonely grandeur in this Yoga. If I am living in my room, it is not out of a passion for solitude, and it would be ridiculous to put forward this purely external circumstance—or X's withdrawnness which is a personal necessity of his sadhana—as if it were the obligatory sign of a high advance in the Yoga or solitude the aim; these are simply incidents which none is called on to imitate. So you need not be anxious; solitude is not demanded of you, for an ascetic dryness of isolated loneliness cannot be your spiritual destiny since it is not consonant with your swabhava which is made for joy, largeness, expansion, a

XVII—In the Sunlit Path Difficulties Are Faced Cheerfully

comprehensive movement of the life-force. And, as for stern gravity and the majesty of a speechless and smileless face, your transformation into that would be terrifying to think of! I may remind you that the Mother and myself always recommended to you a sunlit and cheerful progress as the best; if we were inclined to complain of anything in you—which we are not, knowing that one does not choose one's difficulties,—it would not be that you have too much gaiety but that you are not always as gay and cheerful as we would like you to be! The storm, cloud, difficulty, suffering come, but they are no part of the Yogic idea; they belong to the Nature that is now, not to the divine Nature that is to be." (CWSA 35: 680–681)

XVIII—The External Being Is to Be Dealt with Through Cheerful Perseverance

1.

“Do not allow yourself to admit any movement of vital depression, still less a depressed condition. As for the external being, it is always, not only in you but in everyone, a difficult animal to handle. It has to be dealt with by patience and a quiet and cheerful perseverance; never get depressed by its resistance, for that only makes it sensitive and aggrieved and difficult, or else discouraged. Give it rather the encouragement of sunlight and a quiet pressure, and one day you will find it opening entirely to the Grace.”
(CWSA 31: 187)

XIX—In Sadhana the Vital Must Be in a Cheerful State

1.

“Your vital needs some activity, most vitals do, and to deprive it of its outlet, an outlet that can be helpful and is not harmful, makes it sulking, indifferent and despondent or else inclined to revolt at any moment and throw up the sponge. Without the assent of the vital it is difficult to do sadhana—it non-cooperates, or it watches with a grim even if silent dissatisfaction ready to express at any moment doubt and denial; or it makes a furious effort and then falls back saying, ‘I have got nothing.’ The mind by itself cannot do much; it must have support from the vital; for that the vital must be in a cheerful and acquiescent [*agreeable*] state. It has the joy of creation and there is nothing spiritually wrong in creative action. Why deny your vital this joy of outflow?” (CWSA 31: 197)

2.

“So we get started on the path. But the road is very long. Many things happen on the way. Suddenly one thinks one has overcome an obstacle; I say ‘thinks’, because though one has overcome it, it is not totally overcome. I am going to take a very obvious instance, of a very simple observation. Someone has found that his vital is uncontrollable and uncontrolled, that it gets furious for

nothing and about nothing. He starts working to teach it not to get carried away, not to flare up, to remain calm and bear the shocks of life without reacting violently. If one does this cheerfully, it goes quite quickly. (Note this well, it is very important: when you have to deal with your vital take care to remain cheerful, otherwise you will get into trouble.) One remains cheerful, that is, when one sees the fury rise, one begins to laugh. Instead of being depressed and saying, 'Ah! In spite of all my effort it is beginning all over again', one begins to laugh and says, 'Well, well! One hasn't yet seen the end of it. Look now, aren't you ridiculous, you know quite well that you are being ridiculous! Is it worthwhile getting angry?' One gives it this lesson cheerfully. And really, after a while it doesn't get angry again, it is quiet—and one relaxes one's attention. One thinks the difficulty has been overcome, one thinks a result has at last been reached: 'My vital does not trouble me any longer, it does not get angry now, everything is going fine.' And the next day, one loses one's temper. It is then one must be careful, it is then one must not say, 'Here we are, it's no use, I shall never achieve anything, all my efforts are futile; all this is an illusion, it is impossible.' On the contrary, one must say, 'I wasn't vigilant enough.' One must wait long, very long, before one can say, 'Ah! It is done and finished.' Sometimes one must wait for years, many years...." (CWM 4: 249–250)

3.

"Another remarkable sign of the conversion of your vital, owing to Agni's influence, is that you face your difficulties and obstacles with a smile. You do not sit any more in sackcloth and ashes, lamenting over your mistakes and feeling utterly crestfallen because you are not at the moment quite up to the mark. You simply chase away depression with a smile. A hundred mistakes do not matter to you: with a smile you recognise that you have erred and with a smile you resolve not to repeat the folly in the future. All depression and gloom is created by the hostile forces who are never so pleased as when throwing on you a melancholy mood. Humility is indeed one thing and depression quite another, the former a divine movement and the latter a very crude expression of the dark forces. Therefore, face your troubles joyously, oppose with invariable cheerfulness the obstacles that beset the road to transformation. The best means of routing the enemy is to laugh in his face! You may grapple and tussle for days and he may still show an undiminished vigour; but just once laugh at him and lo! he takes to his heels. A laugh of self-confidence and of faith in the Divine is the most shattering strength possible—it disrupts the enemy's front, spreads havoc in his ranks and carries you triumphantly onwards." (CWM 3: 138–139)

4.

"The main obstacle in your sadhana has been a weak part in the vital which does not know how to bear suffering or disappointment or delay or temporary failure. When these things come, it winces away from them, revolts, cries out, makes a scene within, calls in despondency, despair, unbelief, darkness of the mind, denial—begins to think of abandonment of the effort or death as the only way out of its trouble. ... It takes time, steadfast endeavour, long continued aspiration and a calm perseverance to get anywhere in Yoga; that time you do not give yourself because of these recurrent swingings away from the right attitude. It is not vanity or intellectual questioning that is the real obstacle—they are only impedimenta,—but they could well be overcome or one could pass beyond in spite of them if this part of the vital were not there or were not so strong to intervene. If I have many times urged upon you equanimity, steadfast patience, cheerfulness or whatever is contrary to this spirit, it is because I wanted you to recover your true inner vital self and get rid of this intruder. If you give it rein, it is extremely difficult to get on to anywhere. It must go,—its going is much more urgently required than the going of the intellectual doubt." (CWSA 31: 774–775)

5.

"Don't be afraid of vital energy in work. Vital energy is an

invaluable gift of God without which nothing can be done,—as the Mother has always insisted from the beginning; it is given that His work may be done.

I am very glad it has come back and cheerfulness and optimism with it. That is as it should be.” (CWSA 32: 420)

6.

“But the very essence of endurance is that the vital should learn to give up its capricious likes and dislikes and preserve an equanimity in the midst of the most trying conditions. When you are treated roughly by somebody or you lack something which would relieve your discomfort, you must keep up cheerfully instead of letting yourself be disturbed. Let nothing ruffle you the least bit, and whenever the vital tends to air its petty grievances with pompous exaggeration just stop to consider how very happy you are, compared to so many in this world. Reflect for a moment on what the soldiers who fought in the last war had to go through. If you had to bear such hardships you would realise the utter silliness of your dissatisfactions. And yet I do not wish you to court difficulties—what I want is simply that you should learn to endure the little insignificant troubles of your life.” (CWSA 3: 136)

XX—Cheerfulness in the Physical Consciousness

1.

“Persevere quietly and let nothing discourage you. If the quietness and cheerfulness are not constant yet, that is to be expected; it is always like that at first when there is the working in the physical consciousness and its obstructions. If you persevere, they will become more and more frequent and last for a longer time, until you have a basis of peace and happiness and whatever disturbances come on the surface will no longer be able to penetrate or shake this basis or even cover it over except perhaps for a moment.” (CWSA 31: 370–371)

XXI—Cheer Up! Things Are Not So Bad as You Think

1.

"When exhibitionism seems to be more important than anything else, when all possible facilities are being given to make life easy, when everything is being given to us without any expectation of return, how can people work unless there is a change from within?—and, I am sorry to say, my eyes cannot see it within the range of sight. Life is becoming more chaotic, the Divine does not seem to be nearer, everything seems to be going topsy-turvy. In spite of all the bright promises, I wonder what is in store.

This is only a pessimistic view of things. The opposite also is true and through this apparent chaos a new and better order is being formed. But to see it one must have *faith in the Divine Grace*.

Cheer up! Things are not so bad as you think.
With love and blessings." (CWM 17: 209)

2.

"I hear that you have flu—that won't do.

You must *rest*—but a rest of *concentrated force*, not of diluted non-resistance to the adverse forces. A rest that is a *power*, not the rest of weakness.

Cheer up, my child, shake off the bad influence.
With my love and blessings." (CWM 17: 219)

3.

“Cheer up, all will be all right, if we know how to last and endure.” (CWM 17: 329)

4.

“I remember and love all my children equally even if they never write to me—and all sincere prayers are always answered even if I do not write myself. So have no pain and be cheerful.” (CWM 13: 71)

XXII—One of the Things to Be Taught to a Child Is Cheerfulness

1.

“The things to be taught to a child

1) The necessity of absolute sincerity.

2) The certitude of the final victory of Truth.

3) The possibility and the will to progress.

Good temper, fair-play, truthfulness.

Patience, endurance, perseverance.

Equanimity, courage, cheerfulness.” (CWM 12: 152)

2.

“AN IDEAL CHILD

...

IS CHEERFUL

He knows how to smile and keep a happy heart in all circumstances.” (CWM 12: 150)

XXIII—Stories by the Mother on Cheerfulness

1.

“ONE AFTERNOON, in a large town in a rainy country, I saw seven or eight vehicles full of children. That morning, they had been taken into the country to play in the fields, but the bad weather had made them return home early in the rain.

And yet they were singing, laughing and waving merrily to the passers-by.

They had kept their cheerfulness in this gloomy weather. If one of them had felt sad, the songs of the others would have cheered him. And for the people hurrying by, who heard the children’s laughter, it seemed that the sky had brightened for a moment.” (CWM 2: 189)

2.

“Amir was a prince of Khorasan, and he lived in a grand style. When he set out to war, three hundred camels would carry the pots and pans and plates for his kitchen.

One day he was taken prisoner by the Caliph Ismail. But misfortune does not exempt a man from hunger. So when Amir saw his chief cook nearby, he asked the good man to prepare him a meal.

The cook had one piece of meat left which he put in a pot on the fire. Then he went to find some vegetables to give a little taste to the stew.

A passing dog sniffed at the meat and put his nose in the pot. Then, feeling the heat of the fire, he drew back sharply. But he was so clumsy that the pot stuck on his head and he ran off in a panic, unable to get rid of it.

Amir burst out laughing at the sight.

‘Why,’ demanded the officer on guard, ‘are you laughing when you have every reason to be sad?’

But Amir showed him the dog streaking away from the camp and said, ‘I am laughing at the thought that this very morning it took three hundred camels to transport my kitchen and now one dog is enough to carry it all away!’

Amir took pleasure in being cheerful though he took no trouble to bring cheerfulness to others. However, we should give him credit for his light-heartedness. If he was able to joke in the midst of such serious difficulties, is it not in our power to smile in the face of lesser worries?” (CWM 2: 189–190)

3.

“In Persia, there was a woman who used to sell honey. She had a very pleasant manner, and customers thronged around her stall. And the poet who tells her story declares that even if she had sold poison, people would still have bought it from her as if it were honey.

A sour-tempered man saw what a great profit she made from her sweet wares and decided to take up the same trade.

So he set up a stall, but behind the rows of honey-pots his face was like vinegar. All those who came near were sullenly treated. And so everyone passed by, leaving him his wares. 'Not even a fly ventured on his honey,' says the poet. By evening he had still earned nothing. A woman noticed him and said to her husband, 'A bitter face makes bitter honey.'

Did the woman who sold honey smile only to attract customers? Let us rather hope that her cheerfulness came from her good nature. We are not in this world only to buy or sell; we should be here as comrades one to another. The good woman's customers felt that she was something more than a honey-seller: she was a cheerful citizen of the world." (CWM 2: 190)

4.

"In the next story I shall tell you, the joyous spirit bubbles up like water from a beautiful spring. The person it tells of had nothing to do with the desire for custom or gain: he was the famed and glorious Rama.

Rama slew Ravana the ten-headed and twenty-armed demon-king. I have already told you the beginning of the story. It had been the most terrible of all battles. Thousands of monkeys and bears had been killed in the service of Rama, and the corpses of their demon enemies were piled one upon another. Their king lay lifeless on the ground. But how hard it had been to fell him! Time and

again Rama had cut off his ten heads and his twenty arms, but they all grew back immediately so that he had to cut them off many times over; they were so numerous that at last it seemed as if the sky was raining down arms and heads.

When the terrible war was ended the monkeys and bears who had been slain were brought back to life, and all stood like a great army awaiting orders.

Glorious Rama whose manner remained simple and calm after the victory, looked kindly upon his faithful friends.

Then Vibhishan, who was to succeed Ravana on the throne, had a chariot-load of jewels and rich robes brought for the warriors who had fought so valiantly.

‘Listen, friend Vibhishan,’ said Rama, ‘rise high in the air and scatter your gifts before the army.’

The king did as he was told, and from his chariot in mid air strewed glittering jewels and brightly coloured robes.

The monkeys and bears tumbled over one another as they rushed to seize the falling treasures. It was a merry scuffle.

And Rama laughed heartily and his wife, the lady Sita, and his brother Lakshman laughed with him.

For those who are courageous know how to laugh like this. There is nothing more cordial than a good and hearty cheerfulness. And the word ‘cordial’ has the same

origin as the word 'courage'. In difficult moments, the cheerfulness that comes from a cordial spirit is truly a kind of courage.

Surely it is not necessary to be always laughing; but liveliness, serenity, good humour are never out of place. And how helpful they are! With them the mother makes the home happy for her children; the nurse hastens the recovery of her patient; the master lightens the task of his servants; the workman inspires the goodwill of his comrades; the traveller helps his companions on their hard journey; the citizen fosters hope in the hearts of his countrymen.

And you, happy boys and girls, is there anything your cheerfulness cannot accomplish?" (CWM 2: 191–192)

5.

"Saint Francis was an apostle of the Good Life. He did not teach in order to earn money. His life was simple and his greatest joy was to instruct the people by his example and his preaching. And he was content with whatever food he was given.

One day, as he and his companion, Brother Masseo, were passing through a town, Masseo went down one street while Francis took another. Masseo was tall and handsome, whereas the saint was short and plain-looking. People gave generously to Masseo, but Francis collected only very little.

When they met outside the gates of the town, they sat by a large stone on the bank of a clear stream that ran nearby, and put together the alms they had received.

'O Brother Masseo,' cried Saint Francis with a joyful face, 'we are not worthy of so great a feast.'

'Indeed,' replied Masseo, 'but what is there to call a feast in these few pieces of bread? We have no knife, no dishes, no cloth, no servant.'

'Is it not a feast,' replied the saint, 'to have good bread on a good table when one is hungry, and fresh water from a limpid spring to drink when one is thirsty?'

This does not mean to say that poor people should always be resigned to their miserable fare. But in any case it shows how the contentment that comes from a noble life and the cheerfulness native to beautiful souls can make up for the absence of material possessions and outer riches." (CWM 2: 205)

XXIV—Other Quotations on Cheerfulness

1.

“Cheerfulness: a joyous smile of Nature.” (CWM 14: 179)

2.

The European Temperament

Half of the cheerfulness in Europeans, I suspect, comes not so much from intrinsic joy or humour as from the discipline of having good manners

“How is it that most Europeans manage to remain cheerful, while in India there is so much gloom and moroseness in family life, and cunning, strategy and selfishness in social life?”

Half of the cheerfulness in Europeans, I suspect, comes not so much from intrinsic joy or humour as from the discipline of having good manners.

It is largely the latter—to show one’s bad moods in society is considered bad form and indicating want of self-control; so people in Europe usually keep their worse side for their own house and family and don’t show it outside. Some do but are considered as either neurasthenic or as having a ‘sale caractère’. But apart from that Europeans have, I think, more vitality than Indians and are more elastic and resilient and less nervously sensitive. There are

plenty of exceptions, of course, but generally, I think, that is true." (CWM 35: 12)

3.

"Overgrow your small egoistic personality and become a worthy child of our Mother India, fulfil your duties with honesty and rectitude, and always keep cheerful and confident, with a steady trust in the Divine's Grace." (CWM 13: 358)

4.

"The three types of examination are: those set by the forces of Nature, those set by spiritual and divine forces, and those set by hostile forces. ...

Endurance and plasticity, cheerfulness and fearlessness are the qualities specially needed for the examinations of physical nature.

Aspiration, trust, idealism, enthusiasm and generous self-giving, for spiritual examinations.

Vigilance, sincerity and humility for the examinations from hostile forces." (CWM 14: 42–43)

5.

"*The bullocks are not mischievous.* On the contrary, they are very good and peaceful creatures, but very sensitive—unusually sensitive perhaps—(of this I am not sure as I have not followed other bullocks so closely). The truth is

that they dislike and distrust the present driver, and *not without reason*. When they were working under the previous one they were happy and cheerful and worked well. Since this one is driving them they are sad and dejected and work reluctantly. I see no solution but to change the man and to find a better one.” (CWM 16: 107)

6.

“I do not know that I can say anything in defence of my unlovable marbleness—which is also unintentional, for I feel nothing like marble within me. But obviously I can lay no claims to the expansive charm and grace and lovability of a Gandhi or Tagore. For one thing I have never been able to establish a cheerful hail-fellow contact with the multitude, even when I was a public leader; I have been always reserved and silent except with the few with whom I was intimate or whom I could meet in private. ... I receive the sadhaks (not X or others) with a smile however unsatisfactory or invisible to you—but I suppose it becomes naturally a smile of the silence rather than a radiant substitute for cordial and bubbling laughter.” (CWSA 35: 49–50)

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