

Laugh Till the End



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Through Anandi Zhang

Inspired by many

Including you

Sri Aurobindo:

Your life on this earth is a divine poem that you are translating into earthly language or a strain of music which you are rendering into words.

*The Complete Works of Sri Aurobindo (CWSA), Vol. 12, p. 100*

The children must be educated in an atmosphere of love and gentleness.

No violence, never.

No scolding, never.

Always a gentle kindness and the teacher must be the *living example* of the virtues the child must acquire.

The children must be *happy* to go to school, *happy* to learn, and the teacher must be their best friend who gives them the example of the qualities they must acquire.

The Mother, *On Education*, pp. 194

*What if the whole Earth is a school?*

*What if each one is a teacher and a student?*

It “dawns” on me that it is our duty to make life so interesting that all the gods and goddesses want to come and join in the play—a Life Divine, isn’t it? Otherwise, we will be taxed by the inner, eternal law.

The poems in this collection each came in their own time, and flow in the sequence of Nature, Man and God.

Would you like to add a bit of your touch in it?

May we enjoy the banquet of life in all its flavours.

The sky cried so much  
Her face brightens up.

The cloud cries  
When it can no longer  
Bear the burden  
Of over-abundance.

It gives away some, in tears.  
Then it resumes its clear poise  
And smiles.

Got caught  
In the rain

Got free  
In the rhyme

## **Star-gazing**

*“Let’s look up to bright stars  
Who look down upon us  
In the dim dark.*

*Never mind  
What they think of us!”*

The snake  
Sneaks away  
On seeing man

These bugs  
Red and black  
Walk 'twined

One steps forward  
One steps backward

As a couple  
They still manage to  
Move on

A bug walks on a book  
And starts to  
Read between the lines.

A frog and I  
Stay close  
In silent wonder.

*“Shall I make a move  
And give it a kiss  
Before it hops off  
Before it turns into  
A prince?”*

A frog leapt out of the cup  
As I took it for a drink.

What a lively surprise!

A mosquito inside the net  
A humming musician that annoys  
A constant companion  
Through the night  
A relation of blood  
A hide-and-seek game of  
Life or death

Spiders  
Adept at networking

Flies  
Expert at dodging

Catch me  
If you can.

I put a hand  
Into the pond  
Not to catch fish and fry them  
But to fish for their tiny kisses.

O those soft itchinesses  
How they pluck on  
The cords of my heart!

Two pairs of eyes  
Lock gazes.

*“Will you come in?  
Or shall I get out?”*

I ask the cow  
Across gate and fence.

## **On a Cycle Path**

A white cow stepped aside  
Quietly, gracefully  
When it felt my presence.

I passed  
Quietly, gratefully  
Without ringing the bell  
Or falling into a yell.

## **Chasing Cows**

Nobody invited me  
Nobody urged me  
Nobody taught me  
Nobody paid me  
    To chase cows  
When they come  
Inside the fence.

When they come  
    Inside the fence  
It is an invitation for me  
    To put aside everything  
Important or not so much  
    To follow the inner urge  
    To chase cows.

You know, you need to use  
The right tone and pitch  
Accompanied by  
Clapping hands and  
Stamping feet.  
And yes, the pace...  
The pace matters.

You see, nobody taught me.  
It comes with intuitive practice.  
And I get paid  
From the sheer satisfaction  
Of chasing cows  
Out of the fence  
Loving them as they are  
Even if they've eaten my veggies  
Never minding the fact  
That these clever cows  
Might sneak in, again  
Soon enough.

Well, when they come  
Inside the fence, again  
I might chase cows  
Or just let them be.

And I consider this  
An indispensable service  
To our growing community  
Even if you might disagree.

Never mind!  
We can still live together  
Whether we agree or not  
On chasing cows.

## **Robes and Roles**

What robes do you wear?

What roles do you play?

What makes your eyes roll?

What makes them shine?

What makes you roar with anguish?

What makes you roll with laughter?

When will you shed robes and roles?

What makes you blush?  
What paints you with a brush?

What colours dye you?  
What do you die for?

Whisper it into my ears.  
Let's keep it a secret  
Between you and me.

Questioning drives me on wild  
Quest drives me onward

Why does a new-born  
Have to cry?

How will Laughing Buddha  
Descend into this world?

With a grin?  
I guess.

We look at the new-born twins  
Eager to know their names  
Eager to differentiate them  
In face of their likeness.

## **Contrast**

A calm and candid child  
An anxious and abrupt adult

She says,  
*“When my child gets naughty,  
It’s my motherly duty to whip her.”*

*“How can you do it?”*

I asked.

*“Yes. How can you do it, Mom?”*

Her daughter asked.

*“How can you do it?  
Now I am with your daughter.”*

*“If you are with her,  
I might whip you as well.”*

*“I will place ribbons  
Into your hands  
To replace the whip.*

*So that you will derive  
A cosmic dance  
That ties us all together.”*

All laughter  
In the end.

Nothing  
No One  
Is  
Dead  
Serious.

## Joy

I made a kite  
For a child to fly

*Who is in joy?*

*The maker  
The player  
Or the kite  
That is born  
And flies high?*

O Joy  
How contagious!

A child  
Senses everything  
He laughs and cries  
And plays mischief

To him  
I say

*You know everything  
And you are dearly loved  
This is an invitation  
To play  
In another Way*

A small smiling girl  
Wearing a cute skirt  
With curls in the hair  
Plays with cushions  
For meditation  
Busily putting them  
In rows and circles  
Or random forms  
Walking on and around  
Caring not to sit on

When carried away  
By the arms of an adult  
In the middle of the play  
She still smiles on  
She still plays on  
In the arms  
Of the adult

The adult  
And those around  
Children at heart  
Chuckle at the child  
Walk on with the child  
Who still smiles on  
Who still plays on  
  
The game is still on

All stayed indoors  
Sheltered from the rain  
Except for a little girl  
Who played and played in it.

A pool full of kids

Laughing

Splashing

Swimming

A few pairs of watchful eyes

Look on, alert for their safety

Forgetful of the youthful joy

They used to enjoy themselves

A group of three-year-olds  
Clap hands and declare  
*“We are the monsters...”*

Kids grow and group up  
Point fingers and denounce  
*“They are the monsters...”*

We play child-like games  
And disguise as adults  
Feigning innocence and maturity.

The child's eyes  
Pure and bright  
Pull my sight  
From the adult world  
Steeped in right or might.

I look into your eyes  
In a photo.

Finally, here is something  
Unblinkingly ever-lasting.

I laughed  
At myself  
So loud  
That I woke up  
From sleep  
Still laughing.

Today  
Facing the intertwined impasse  
The impossible mess  
For the first time  
I am able to laugh whole-heartedly  
Amused at the witty charm  
Of the gracious Lord  
Amazed at the infinite clues and cues  
And the key inside  
That opens all doors

I tried to be funny  
And told a joke.

Nobody laughed.

I had to laugh  
At myself  
Alone  
In a crowd.

Then  
Everyone laughed  
Including myself.

With a heavy dose of light humour  
We managed to make our friend  
Change course in the dire mire  
Of heavily soaked sullen seriousness  
And emerge with muddy mischief.

You raised your eyebrows.  
Their dancing beats  
Enlivened a face  
O so solemn!

Both of us were happy  
Just for a change.

Moonlit starry sky  
Makes me reminiscent  
Of the night we looked up  
Talked, laughed and wondered  
And refused to fall into slumber.

Lantern lights  
Swirling fans  
A plate of food  
A chat with friends  
A laugh over  
Something  
Or nothing

A moment to enjoy  
A moment in joy

That  
Magical  
Moment  
Passed.

I stubbornly search  
In the storage  
Of memory  
Only to find  
Scattered snapshots  
And flying dust.

Search by key words -  
We might catch clues  
Remember words  
Lose the key.

We each wrote a key word

Rapped

Rhymed

Relayed stories

Chatted

Chuckled

Changed the world

With a word game.

He couldn't sleep.  
Counted how many times  
The neighbour's dog barked  
In the chilly silent night.

This kept him wide awake  
While the whole world slept.

I dozed off  
Reading a book.  
No need for a pillow.

Piles of books  
No knowledge.

While she was praising me  
I chinned up so much  
That the sunglasses  
On top of the head  
Fell to the ground.

*“You see?!*  
*When the head*  
*Rises too high*  
*Something falls.”*

We both laughed  
At the scene  
And the actors.

Eyes fixed  
Fingers dancing  
On the screen

O mobile phone  
Our toy  
Playmate  
Lover

The phone fell  
Onto the ground.

My heart leaped  
Into the air.

*“Where is  
A safe landing?”*

A man marries custom  
Becomes a customer  
Behaves customary

They stick to the rule  
And measure men  
With the same yardstick.

Losing Self-control  
They dream of  
Controlling

Patients  
Lose patience  
Pretty soon

## **A meeting**

One protagonist  
A couple of  
Supporting actors  
A few silent observers  
Many a script-writer

All wanderers

Cynics cook  
Sour dishes

Inferiority complex

Super complex

Superiority complex

Even more complex

For it wants to

Be superior

Whatever

It may be

Whatever

It takes

We mix and mingle  
Into hybrids  
Believing ourselves  
A higher breed.

## **Collector**

I am a collector

Not of

Taxes, gossips or complaints

But of

Smiles, fragrances and nectars

## **Goodwill**

*“Bless you!”*

Say it, mean it always  
Not just when I sneeze.

He had his hair cut  
And left some beard  
As he figured out  
How to comb it  
With his fingers.

## **A clear-cut sense of ownership**

He shaved his hair.  
Claims no ownership  
To what's gone  
While he proudly strokes  
What's left curled up  
Above his lips.

*“No, I will not shave it  
Or share it with anyone.  
Definitely not  
With a bowl of soup.”*

I pass by a cyclist  
One hand on handle  
One holding two rows of eggs  
Perfectly peaceful  
Not likely to go astray or fall  
Or break the eggs or his heart  
For the moment.

*“Am I jealous?”*

*Oh, no, of course not  
That much  
Just a little.”*

I thought I was sick  
With stagnant monotony.

Then the next moment  
I decided to open up  
To talk with someone  
To bring in full presence.

There she came  
Inviting herself to my table.  
Conversation and laughter flowed.  
We infused so much liveliness  
That no one could stop.

One change of thought  
Made all the difference  
For a day.

*“You look so pretty in this dress.  
It really suits you so well.”*

*“Thanks. This dress has been receiving  
More compliments than myself.”*

*“Well, I meant YOU are pretty.”*

*“I know pretty well –  
A suitable dress really matters  
As if our whole Beauty and Being  
Hangs on it.”*

*“Yeah, I know what you mean.”*

*“Who really understands you  
in the whole universe?”*

*“I guess the universe itself.”*

*“Is it important for you  
that I understand you  
more and more?”*

*“It’s not important.  
It’s inevitable.”*

## Alone or lonely?

*“How do you feel  
When you are alone?”*

*“You mean,  
‘Do I feel lonely’?”*

*“Yes.  
Don’t you...  
Sometimes?”*

*“I need to be alone, sometimes.  
That’s when I am fully myself,  
Knowing that the whole wild world  
Is our playground with infinite playmates.  
In fact, I can feel like a fool,  
Alone, in a crowd, sometimes.*

*A fleeting feeling,  
But it can happen.”*

*“Yeah, it happens  
To me, too,  
Sometimes.”*

She avoided the crowd  
And became a recluse  
In the city jungle.

*“You are so sweet.”*

*“Oh, thank you.  
Actually I am  
All Spices.  
Or it is not me.  
It’s the dye  
From flavours of life.  
What about you?”*

*“Hmmm...  
What about me?”*

You dress up  
To attend a flower exhibition.

Shall we admire the flowers  
Or you?

When I see Beauty  
And don't carry a camera  
I gaze and blink my eyes  
To take a few quick shots.

*“I’m not an artist  
I can’t paint.”*

*“There is a painter in everyone.  
So says Rumi beautifully.”*

*“This makes life difficult –  
For now I have no excuse.”*

**A few white hairs...**

*“Shall I keep pulling them out  
And become bald one day?”*

*Or leave them to grow  
Into white snow?”*

O My Snow-White dream  
Of charming maturity.

I cried, again.

Not because of  
Injury or separation  
A broken heart or dream  
A chilli or an onion.

But because  
My heartstrings  
Are gently plucked  
By your Song.

I have said YES  
Before you propose.

## **Smiles**

Reveal the teeth  
Wrinkle the skin  
Ripple sweetness

A light-hearted smile  
Weighs more than  
A solemn speech.

*“Why are you always smiling?”*

*“I once fell down in my childhood  
And got up laughing.  
I have been smiling ever since.”*

*“Oh...Isn't it the longest marathon?  
No wonder your skin wrinkles.”*

His eyes winked and twinkled.  
His wrinkles deepened.

Something in me  
Smoothened.

*“Aren’t you afraid of a traffic jam  
Noisy and nerve-racking?”*

*“In some moments, yes.  
Then a question arises:  
Why should I?  
Why need we?”*

There is a rhythm  
Even in utter chaos.

Navigate through it  
With in-built GPS.

Tune to it  
As in a dance jam.

Chew it, savour it, and digest it  
As bread with jam spread.

*“I’m a treasure-hunter  
For what’s precious  
In everyone, everywhere.”*

*“My treasure, if any  
Lies deep down  
In the hard core.  
To discover it  
You’ll have to  
Dig real hard.”*

*“The treasures I hunt  
Are not fixed fossils.  
They form and flow.  
Even if I lift a corner  
Of the covering veil  
They may still spring out  
And steal the show  
Ancient and renewed.”*

*“Lemon grass  
Organic sprays  
Or Sheer Purity  
Keep off  
Mosquitoes,”*  
He says  
While waving arms  
To ward off  
Their relentless kisses.

He made a speech  
That left us speechless.

Some left the space.  
He continued the speech.

He talks about  
Being an introvert.

Words flow  
Cannot stop.

You open your mouth wide  
Not to speak  
But to yawn.

I see you draw  
A full stop  
To our conversation.

Preparing to talk with family  
Ended in hours of dialogue  
With myself.

*“Once bitten, twice shy.”*

*“I know.”*

*“Once bitten, beaten and broken?”*

*“Well, ...”*

*“Again and again?”*

*“Well, ...I don’t know.*

*Oh, I need some water*

*To knead it into a play dough*

*Once again.”*

In Her moment of humour,  
Mother names bitter gourd “*Sweetness*”.

Bitter, sweet...flavours of life  
Like or reject them, they just exist.  
Significant or not, they still pass.

I brought berries  
To share with friends.

Savouring the sour sweetness,  
They said,

*“Let’s plant the seeds.”*

*“Take me to the tree.”*

*“Don’t forget me.”*

***“Let’s Honour All...”***

Lime-light  
Shining for some  
Sour for others

With all in Thy domain  
O deathless sun-light  
So sweet, sweaty and bright!

## **The sting that spurs**

To savour soma  
We brave bees and beings  
That might sting

*Ouch! Ouch! Ouch!*  
*Wow! Wow! Wow!*  
*Aha! Hahaha...*

We cry  
Out of pain and joy  
Saluting the sting  
That spurs us  
To reverse direction  
To find honey within

Silence is palpable.

*“Got to do something about it,  
Or not?”*

Tick, tick, tick  
Rotate arms of the clock

Tick, tick, tick  
Finish items on the calendar

Another day passes.

*“Can’t you see  
How occupied I am?”*

*I attend to things  
A thousand and one.”*

Then, in one moment  
You sneak in

You hold me  
In Thy gaze eternal

I slip into the Sound of Silence  
With a smile and a sigh

Finally I arrived  
At God's one-donor store.

Like a savvy customer  
I picked, picked and picked  
What I thought I wanted to have  
Disregarding and discarding  
What dismayed and disarrayed

God burst out  
Into golden laughter  
And reminded me

*“Here I AM the Boss.  
And I sell in packs only.*

*Why do you still pick  
Yuuu picky?*

*You don't have to  
Buy into My Story  
Or buy in My Store.”*

Now I have to  
Either surrender  
Or walk away  
Empty-handed.

O God,  
What humour you extract  
Out of human life!  
If not deaf and blind  
One is bound to hear and see  
Your sheer laughter.

Men make facades.  
God makes faces  
Laughs and laughs.

No longer posing  
As familiar strangers  
God grins at me  
From every face.

God laughs in my face again  
Himself wearing another face.

God must be a homeopath  
Diluting divinity  
And know for sure  
Each will follow a path  
And arrive home.

You walk into the garden  
And become part of  
The landscape.

You gaze at fishes in the pond

I gaze at you through the window

Lord gazes at us and  
Brims with a borderless smile.