

QUOTABLE QUOTES

Sri Aurobindo



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Publisher's Note

We are happy to introduce the new series "Quotable quotes" from great men and women of India. It is said that a good saying is like fragrance which lingers on enthusing our lives and deeds. If we start our day with a good thought, perhaps that may give us necessary fillip which is much needed to face tension-ridden modern day life. We hope the readers will welcome the series of these mini-anthologies which are handy and can easily fit into a pocket or a purse.

Dr. S.S.Shashi
Director
Publications Division

HUMANITY

This is a miracle that men can love God, yet fail to love humanity. With whom are they in love then?

Beatitude is God's aim for humanity; get this supreme good for thyself first that thou mayest distribute it entirely to the fellow-beings.

He who acquires for himself alone, acquires ill, though he may call it heaven and virtue.

Family, nationality, humanity are Vishnu's three strides from an isolated to a collective unity. The first has been fulfilled, we yet strive for the perfection of the second, towards the

third we are reaching out our hands and the pioneer work is already attempted.

It is impossible to change humanity by political mechanism.

FAILURES

When I look back on my past life, I see that if I had not failed and suffered, I would have lost my life's supreme blessings; yet at the time of the suffering and failure, I was vexed with the sense of calamity.

Souls that do not aspire are God's failures, but Nature is pleased and loves to multiply them because they assure her of stability and prolong her empire.

Those who are poor, ignorant, ill-born or ill-bred are not the common herd; the common herd are all who are satisfied with pettiness and an average humanity.

Spirituality must be the basis; otherwise your success will be your failure.

What I cannot do now is the sign of what I shall do hereafter. The sense of impossibility is the beginning of all possibilities.

Impossibility is only a sum of greater unrealised possibles. It veils an advance state and a yet unaccomplished journey.

Work as if the ideal had to be fulfilled swiftly and in thy life time; Persevere as if thou knewest it not to be unless purchased by a thousand years yet of labour.

All is not settled when a cause is humanly lost and hopeless; all is settled, only when the soul renounces its effort.

Suffering is a sign of imperfection of nature. It is a stamp of imperfection on the individual and universal nature.

The soul is not here for suffering.

FAITH

Faith in the heart is the obscure and often distorted reflection of a hidden knowledge.

So long as a Cause has on its side one soul, that is intangible in faith, it cannot perish.

Mental faith is the anticipation of the knowledge that is coming. Vital faith anticipates the effectuation that is coming. Faith in the physical anticipates what is going to be realised. Effectuation is the work of force, realisation is a fact.

Fate is God's foreknowledge outside Space and Time of all that in Space and Time shall yet happen; what He has foreseen, Power and Necessity work out by the conflict of forces.

MIRACLE

The supernatural is that the nature of which we have not attained or do not yet know, or the means of which we have not yet conquered. The common taste for miracles is the sign that man's ascent is not yet finished.

Great saints have performed miracles; greater saints have railed at them; the greatest have both railed at them and performed them.

Thou thinkest the ascetic in his cave or in his mountaintop a stone and a do-nothing. What dost thou know? He may be filling the world with the mighty currents of his will and changing it by the pressure of his soul-state.

As the light of a star reaches the earth hundreds of years after the star has ceased to exist, so the event already accomplished in Brahman at the beginning manifests itself now in our material experience.

KNOWLEDGE

When knowledge is fresh in us, then it is invincible; when it is old, it loses its virtue. This is because God moves always forward.

Shun the barren snares of an empty metaphysics and the dry dust of unfruitful intellectuality. Only that knowledge is worth having which can be made use of for a living delight and put out into temperament, action, creation and being.

Become and live the knowledge thou hast; then is thy knowledge the living God within thee.

What men call knowledge is the reasoned acceptance of false appearance. Wisdom looks behind the veil and sees.

Reason fixes details and contrasts them. Reason divides, Wisdom marries contrasts in a single harmony.

Inspiration is a slender river of brightness leaping from a vast and eternal knowledge; it exceeds reason more perfectly than reason exceeds the knowledge of senses.

The seat of thought is not the brain. The brain is only the communicating channel.

When, O eager disputant, thou hast prevailed in a debate, then art thou greatly to be pitied, for thou hast lost a chance of widening knowledge.

To see the composition of the sun or the lines of mars is doubtless a great achievement, but when thou hast the instrument that can show thee a man's soul as thou seest a picture, then thou will smile at the wonders of physical Science as the playthings of babies.

WRITING

It is always very disappointing to read

one's own writing. One feels how ignorant one was!

Poets make much of death and external afflictions, but the only tragedies are the soul's failures and the only epic man's triumphant ascent towards godhead.

Humanity is not organised for art.

If Art's service is but to imitate Nature, then burn all the picture galleries and let us have instead photographic studios. It is because Art reveals what Nature hides that a small picture is worth more than all the jewels of the millionaires and the treasures of the princes.

Logic is the worst enemy of truth, as

self-righteousness is the worst enemy of virtue, for the one cannot see its own errors nor the other its own imperfections.

KARMA

The Law of Karma is not mathematical or mechanical.

When certain energies are put forward then certain results tend to be produced. Karma is not the fundamental law of consciousness. The basic law is spiritual. Karma is a secondary machinery to help the consciousness to grow by experience.

It is quite possible to eliminate the Karmic force; it is not absolute.

The love of inaction is folly and the scorn of inaction is folly; there is no inaction. The stone lying inert upon the sands, which is kicked away in an idle moment, has been producing its effect upon the hemisphere.

MAN

The animal is Man disguised in a hairy skin and upon four legs; the worm is Man writhing and crawling towards the evolution of his Manhood. Even crude forms of Matter are Man in his inchoate body. All things are Man, the Purusha.

For what do we mean by Man? An un-created and indestructible soul that has

housed itself in a mind and body made of its own elements.

Without the man the moment is a lost opportunity; without the moment the man is a force inoperative.

WOMEN

The mediaeval ascetics hated women and thought they were created by God for the temptation of monks. One may be allowed to think more nobly both of God and of women.

MIND AND BRAIN

The brain is not the centre of thinking. It is the mind that thinks, the brain only reacts to it. There is a parallelism

between the movements of the brain and those of the higher mind. But the brain is only a communicating channel, it is a support for the higher activity.

Wine and narcotics generally prohibit the action of the most tamasic centres in the physical brain; and the other centres in the brain get stimulated. This helps one to escape from the limitations of the physical consciousness and one may get into other places of consciousness.

It is not the medicine that cures so much as the patient's faith in the doctor and the medicine. Both are a clumsy substitute for the natural faith in one's own self power which they have themselves destroyed.

NATIONALITY

Nationality is a stride of the progressive God passing beyond the stage of the family; therefore the attachment to clan and tribe must weaken and perish before a nation can be born.

God's world advances step by step fulfilling the lesser unit before it seriously attempts the larger. Affirm free nationality first, if thou wouldst ever bring the world to be one nation.

DEMOCRACY

The gain of democracy is the security of the individual's life, liberty and goods from the caprices of the tyrant

one or the selfish few, its evil is the decline of greatness in humanity.

Dictatorship

Dictatorship is as old as the world. When there is a confusion and muddle in the affairs of men or nations, the dictator has come, set things right and pulled out the race from it.

Leadership

Help men, but do not pauperise them of their energy; lead and instruct men, but see that their initiative and originality remain intact; take others into thyself, but give them in return the full godhead of their nature. He who can do this, is the leader and the guru.

Charity

Examine thyself without pity, then thou will be more charitable and pitiful to others.

The existence of poverty is the proof of an unjust and ill organised society and our public charities are but the first tardy awakening of the conscience of a robber.

Fling not thy alms abroad everywhere in an ostentation of charity, understand and love where thou helpst. Let thy soul grow within thee.

Help the poor while the poor are with thee; but study also and strive that there may be no poor for thy assistance.

Selfishness is the only sin, meanness the only vice, hatred the only criminality. All else can easily be turned into good, but these are of obstinate resisters of deity.

The perfect cosmic vision and cosmic sentiment is the cure of all error and suffering, but most men succeed only in enlarging the range of their ego.

ELEMENTALS

Ignorant forces working on the subtle-physical plane.

There are two kinds of 'elemental', one mischievous and the other inno-

cent. What the Europeans call the gnomes come under this category.

BEGINNING AND END

The beginning and end of things is a conventional term of our experience; in their true existence these terms have no reality, there is no end and no beginning.

TRUE

Only those thoughts are true the opposite of which is also true in its own time and application; indisputable dogmas are the most dangerous kind of falsehoods.

ASURA

The Asura is really the dark side of God on the mental plane. Mind is the very field of the Asura. His characteristic is egoistic strength which refuses the Higher Law. The Asura has got self-control, tapas, intelligence; only all that is for his ego.

On the vital plane the corresponding forces we call the Rakshasas which represent violent passions and impulses.

Altruism is good for man, but less good when it is a form of supreme self-indulgence and lives by pampering the selfishness of others.

Selfishness kills the soul; destroy it. But take care that your altruism does not kill the soul of others.

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^{India}
Very usually, altruism is only the sublimest form of selfishness.

ATHEISM

Atheism is a necessary protest against the wickedness of the churches and the narrowness of creed. God uses it as a stone to smash these soiled card-houses.

The Atheist is God playing at hide and seek with Himself, but is the Theist any other? Well, perhaps, for he has seen the shadow of God and clutches at it.

SILENCE

All speech and action comes prepared out of the eternal Silence.

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VOICES

Leap not too quickly at all voices, for there are lying spirits ready to deceive thee, but let thy heart be pure and afterwards listen.

DIVINE LIFE

Turn all things to honey, this is the law of divine living.

Stride swiftly, for the goal is far; rest not unduly for thy master is waiting for thee at the end of thy Journey.

MEMORY

Even the soles of our feet have got a memory of their own.

WATCHES

Watches behave differently with different men. It is also certain they answer to man's thought and will.

GOD AND NATURE

God speaks to the heart when the brain cannot understand him.

Our country is God, the Mother; speak not evil of her unless thou canst do it with love and tenderness.

God and Nature are like a boy and girl at play and in love. They hide and run from each other when glimpsed so that they may be sought after and chased and captured.

What is God after all? An eternal child playing an eternal game in an eternal garden.

God is there not only in the still small voice, but in the fire and in the whirlwind.

If the Siddha never laughs it is an imperfection.

A God who cannot smile could not have created this humorous universe. There will always be more in the God than the thought of man has ever conceived or the tongue of man has ever uttered.

There is nothing small in God's eyes: let there be nothing small in thine.

All first awakening is an act of Grace. You are given a glimpse and then you have to work it out.

O son of Immortality, live not thou according to Nature, but according to God; and compel her also to live according to the deity within thee.

GOD AND HUMANITY

How shall I know God's will with me? I have to put egoism out of me, hunting it from every lair and burrow and bathe my purified and naked soul in His infinite workings, then He Himself will reveal it to me.

Be wide in me, O Varuna; be mighty in me, O Indra; O Sun, be very bright and luminous; O Moon, be full of charm and sweetness. Be fierce and terrible, O Rudra; be impetuous and swift, O Maruts; be strong and bold, O Aryama; be voluptuous and pleasurable, O Bhaga; be tender and kind and loving and passionate, O Mitra. Be bright and revealing, O Dawn; O Night, be solemn and pregnant. O Life, be full, ready and buoyant; O Death, lead my steps from mansion to mansion. Harmonise all these, O Brahmanaspati. Let me not be subject to these gods, O Kali.

There are two for whom there is hope, the man who has felt God's touch and been drawn to it and the sceptical seeker and self-convinced atheist; but for the formularists of all the religions and the parrots of free thought, they are dead souls who follow a death that they call living.

Genius is Nature's first attempt to liberate the imprisoned God out of her human mould; the mould has to suffer in the process. It is astonishing that the cracks are so few and unimportant.

Atheism is the shadow or dark side of the highest perception of God. Every formula we form about God, though always true as a symbol, becomes false

when we accept it as a sufficient formula. The Atheist and Agnostic come to remind us of our error.

God is infinite Possibility. Therefore Truth is never at rest, therefore also Error is justified of her children.

The Titans are stronger than the gods because they have agreed with God to front and bear the burden of His wrath and enmity; the gods were able to accept only the pleasant burden of his love and kindlier rapture.

The saint and the angel are not the only divinities; admire also the Titan and the Giant.

The old writings call the Titans the elder gods. So they still are, nor is any god entirely divine unless there is hidden in him also a Titan.

If I cannot be Rama, then I would be Ravana, for he is the dark side of Vishnu.

Only by perfect renunciation of desire or by perfect satisfaction of desire can the utter embrace of God be experienced, for in both ways the essential precondition is effected — desire perishes.

Men in the world have two lights - duty and principle, but he who has passed over to God, has done with both and replaced them by God's will. If men abuse thee for this, care not, O divine.

instrument, but go on thy way like the wind or the sun fostering and destroying.

ILLUSION

Chance is not in this universe; the idea of illusion is itself an illusion. There was never illusion yet in the human mind, that did not conceal and disfigure a truth.

LOVE

Love is a fine flower, but unity of consciousness is the root.

Love God in thy opponent, even while thou strikest him; so shall neither have hell for his portion.

When all is said, Love and Force together can save the world eventually, but not Love only or Force only.

HATRED

Hate not the oppressor, for, if he is strong, thy hate increases his force of resistance; if he is weak, thy hate was needless. Hatred is a sword of power, but its edge is always double. It is like the Kriya of the ancient magicians which, if balked of its prey, returned in fury to devour its sender.

Hatred is the sign of a secret attraction that is eager to flee from itself and furious to deny its own existence.

Men talk of enemies, but where are they? I only see wrestlers of one party or the other in the great arena of the universe.

BODY

Body has no desires, it has needs and it knows what it needs.

Disease will always return to the body if the soul is flawed; for the sins of the mind are the secret cause of the sins of the body.

PROPERTY

All property is theft.

DEATH

Death is sometimes a rude valet, but when he changes this robe of earth for that brighter raiment, his horseplay and impertinence can be pardoned.

Death is the question Nature puts continually to Life and her reminder to it that it has not yet found itself. If there were no seige of death, the creature would be bound forever in the form of an imperfect living. Pursued by death he awakes to the idea of perfect life and seeks out its means and its possibility.

Immortality is not the survival of the mental personality after death, though

that also is true, but the waking possession of the unborn and deathless Self of which the body is only an instrument and a shadow.

Chronology (1872-1950)

- 1872 Aug. 15 Born in Calcutta.
- 1879 Was taken to England.
- 1893 Feb. 6 Arrived in Bombay.
- 1893 Feb. 8 Joined service in the
Survey Settlement of the
State Government in
Baroda.

- 1894 Visited Bengal.
- 1900 Professor of English in
Baroda College.
- 1901 April Married Mrinalini Devi.
- 1902 Dec. Met Tilak at Ahmedabad
Congress session.
- 1905 March Principal of the Baroda
College.
- 1906 Organised the National-
ist Party with Bal Gan-
gadhar Tilak.
- 1906 Aug. 14 Principal of the Bengal
National College.
- 1907 June 18 Resigned from Baroda
State Service.
- 1907 August Was arrested for having
published certain articles
in the Bande Mataram.
- 1908 Feb. Returned to Calcutta.
- 1908 May 2 Arrested along with 41
other revolutionaries in
connection with the Bomb
case.

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| 1909 May | Acquitted, delivered the inspired speech at Uttarpara that made history. |
| 1909 June 19 | Started a weekly Karmayogin. |
| 1910 April 4 | Left for Pondicherry by a French Boat, under an assumed name. |
| 1918 Dec. 17 | Wife Mrinalini Devi died. |
| 1925 Jan. 5 | Lala Lajpat Rai met him. |
| 1926 Nov. 24 | Came to be known as Sri Aurobindo. |
| 1928 May 29 | Rabindranath Tagore visited him. |
| 1948 Dec. 11 | Andhra University presented National Prize to him. |
| 1950 Dec. 5 | Entered into Mahasamadhi. |