

The Joys of Maya

A Non-Dual Journey from Laughter to Silence

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Chapter 1 — Maya’s Joke: When Even God Laughs at Us

Maya is not a terrifying force; she is a divine magician. She makes a rope look like a snake and then sells us techniques to survive the snake. We run, cry, and consult remedies, while somewhere God smiles: “Child, light the lamp first.” Maya means both “not” and “measure.” That which is not separate becomes the very thing we measure - status, love, spiritual progress, inner peace. But who is the one measuring?

**Daivi hyesha gunamayī mama maya duratyaya.
Mam eva ye prapadyante mayam etam taranti te.
(Source: Bhagavad Gita 7.14)**

Meaning: This divine Maya of Mine, made of the three gunas, is difficult to cross; those who take refuge in Me cross it.

Krishna calls it “My Maya,” not an enemy’s Maya. The play is divine, the player is divine, the audience too is divine. Yet we make every problem private: my insult, my fear, my story. Who is this “my”? Is it real, or has Maya handed you a role and said, “Now begin crying”? Surrender is not escape; it is the end of arguing with the magician.

**Tribhir gunamayair bhavair ebhīh sarvam idam jagat.
(Source: Bhagavad Gita 7.13)**

Meaning: The world, deluded by the three gunas, does not recognize the imperishable.

Tamas says, “Sleep.” Rajas says, “Run.” Sattva says, “Become spiritually refined.” The human being calls all this personality. Are you the gunas, or the awareness that knows them?

**Rajjv-ajnanāt kshanenaiva yadvat rajjau hi sarpa-dhīh.
(Source: Vivekachudamani, rope-snake teaching)**

Meaning: Ignorance of the rope produces the idea of a snake.

The fear felt real; the snake was not. How many snakes in life are made of rope - public opinion, failure, rejection, the future? Knowledge does not kill the snake. It lights the room.

**Nasato vidyate bhavo nabhavo vidyate satah.
(Source: Bhagavad Gita 2.16)**

Meaning: The unreal has no being; the real never ceases to be.

The joke is that we put permanent labels on temporary things. The body changes, moods change, relationships change, but we announce, "This is me." God smiles, we cry. Freedom begins when you can see even your tears from a little distance.

Chapter 2 — Ego: The Greatest Comedian

The ego is less a villain and more a comedian. It enters every scene and appoints itself the hero. It wants to be central in devotion and visible in silence. “I am very humble,” it says, while secretly hoping everyone notices. When did this “I” begin? Who hired it? By what authority does it sit inside as manager of existence?

Janaka uvacha: Katham jnanam avapnoti katham muktir bhavishyati.

(Source: Ashtavakra Gita 1.1)

Meaning: Janaka asks: How is knowledge attained and how does liberation happen?

A king with everything asks how to be free. That is the joke. The one with all outer wealth knows the essential thing is missing. Has your “just one more thing” ever finally ended?

Muktim icchasi chet tata vishayan vishavat tyaja.

(Source: Ashtavakra Gita 1.2)

Meaning: If you desire liberation, abandon sense objects like poison.

The object is not poison; the grip is. Do you hold the phone, or does the phone summon you? Do you want respect, or has respect trained you?

Na prithvi na jalam nagnir na vayur dyaur na va bhavan.

(Source: Ashtavakra Gita 1.3)

Meaning: You are not the elements; you are the witness of them.

The body is a rented house of five elements. Ego moves in and declares ownership: my face, my age, my image. The one who sees the body - does that one age?

Yadi deham prithak kritya chiti vishramya tishthasi.

(Source: Ashtavakra Gita 1.4)

Meaning: Rest in Consciousness apart from the body, and even now you are free.

“Even now” offends the ego. It wanted a long journey, retreats, certificates. But truth is not a future appointment. Laugh at the ego; do not fight it. Seen clearly, it leaves the throne.

Chapter 3 — The Circus of the World: Relationships, Status, and the Race

The world is a circus. We perform for others who are themselves performing for someone else. Relationships become contracts: “I love you, if you play the role my story requires.” Status is an invisible ladder, but nobody asks what wall it rests against.

Yatha dipo nivata-stho nengate sopama smrita.

(Source: Bhagavad Gita 6.19)

Meaning: Like a lamp in a windless place, the yogi's mind is steady.

Our lamp sits under the fan of social media, comparison, markets, and relationships. No message, no praise, no like - the flame shakes. Is this sensitivity, or dependency?

Chittam eva hi samsarah tat-prayatnena shodhayet.

(Source: Yoga Vasistha tradition)

Meaning: Mind itself is the world; purify it.

The event lasts three seconds; commentary lasts three days. Are you troubled by the world, or by your interpretation? The respect you seek - in whose eyes is it?

Na vittena tarpaniyo manushyah.

(Source: Katha Upanishad 1.1.27)

Meaning: A human being cannot be satisfied by wealth.

Nachiketa rejects wealth before Death. We are defeated by discount coupons. Wealth, fame, status may give convenience, not completion.

Shreyas cha preyas cha manushyam etah.

(Source: Katha Upanishad 1.2.2)

Meaning: The good and the pleasant both approach a person.

The pleasant gives quick comfort; the good shows truth. The circus runs on glitter and applause. The good sells no tickets, but it alone leads home.

Chapter 4 — Devotion as Drama and Practice as Performance

Modern spirituality can become so beautiful that truth stands in the corner. Perfect light, soft clothes, a caption saying surrender - and the old anxiety remains: “Did people see?” The issue is not retreats, teachers, yoga photos, or mantra. The issue is the little actor inside who wants a sacred role.

Na me bandho na moksho me bhitasya eta vibhishikah.

(Source: Avadhuta Gita 1.47)

Meaning: For me there is neither bondage nor liberation; these are fears of the frightened mind.

The Avadhuta laughs at spiritual bureaucracy: my level, my progress, my liberation. Is practice happening, or spiritual-image insurance?

Na tvam vipradiko varno nashrami naksha-gocharah.

(Source: Ashtavakra Gita 1.5)

Meaning: You are not social category, stage, or sensory object; you are formless witness.

The mind loves labels: householder, renunciate, tantric, non-dualist. Does the sky need a visiting card?

Patram pushpam phalam toyam yo me bhaktya prayacchati.

(Source: Bhagavad Gita 9.26)

Meaning: Even a leaf, flower, fruit, or water offered with devotion is accepted.

God wants sincerity, not expensive decoration. If even a leaf is enough, for whom is the show?

Yatroparamate chittam niruddham yoga-sevaya.

(Source: Bhagavad Gita 6.20)

Meaning: Through yoga the mind comes to rest and the Self is satisfied in the Self.

Meditation is not a press release. True devotion needs no audience. Where drama decreases, God has space.

Chapter 5 — The Joke of Sorrow: When Crying Begins to Laugh

To laugh near sorrow requires tenderness. Pain must not be mocked. But the root of sorrow can be seen gently. Much suffering comes from the mind's private law: "This should not have happened to me." Who wrote that law? Did life sign it?

Shreyas cha preyas cha manushyam etah.

(Source: Katha Upanishad 1.2.2)

Meaning: The good and the pleasant both come before a person.

Sorrow often comes when the pleasant breaks. What was lost - love, habit, security, or ego's comfortable chair?

Na samparayah pratibhati balam pramadyantam vitta-mohena mudham.

(Source: Katha Upanishad 1.2.6)

Meaning: The deluded, intoxicated by wealth, do not see the beyond.

Wealth means every imagined security: image, body, relationship, even spiritual progress. We are shopping for permanence in a temporary market.

Shvobhava martyasya yad antakaitat.

(Source: Katha Upanishad 1.1.26)

Meaning: These pleasures are fleeting; keep them.

Nachiketa tells Death to keep the chariots and songs. We would ask for the model. What turns you away from truth - pleasure, fear, loneliness, praise?

Matra-sparshas tu kaunteya shitoshna-sukha-duhkha-dah.

(Source: Bhagavad Gita 2.14)

Meaning: Pleasure and pain come and go.

Let tears come, but let knowing be present. Ramana's question is a lamp: "To whom is this sorrow?" When sorrow is fully seen, it leads to what cannot break.

Chapter 6 — The Joke of Knowledge: Ashtavakra and Janaka

Now laughter becomes thin. Janaka is a king, yet asks how to be free. The joke is clear: the one who has everything knows the real thing is missing; the one who has little thinks everything will bring peace.

Janaka uvacha: Katham jnanam avapnoti katham muktir bhavishyati.

(Source: Ashtavakra Gita 1.1)

Meaning: Janaka asks how knowledge and liberation are attained.

This is a question tired of decoration. Does such a question remain in you after pleasure, worship, success, and travel?

Muktim icchasi chet tata vishayan vishavat tyaja.

(Source: Ashtavakra Gita 1.2)

Meaning: If you want freedom, leave objects like poison.

Poison is not the object; poison is unconscious grip. Does pleasure come, or the hunger to preserve pleasure?

Na prithvi na jalam nagnir na vayur dyaur na va bhavan.

(Source: Ashtavakra Gita 1.3)

Meaning: You are not the elements; you are their witness.

Body, thought, feeling appear. You are the one to whom they appear. If anger appears, are you anger?

Yadi deham prithak kritya chiti vishramya tishthasi.

(Source: Ashtavakra Gita 1.4)

Meaning: Rest in Consciousness and you are free now.

Now - not later. If freedom is now, what are you waiting for?

Aho niranjanah shanto bodho 'ham prakriteh parah.

(Source: Ashtavakra Gita 2.1)

Meaning: Ah! I am stainless, peaceful awareness beyond nature.

Janaka's "Ah!" is the last soft laugh. So long he was lost. Awareness was always here.

Chapter 7 — Non-duality: When Even Laughter Becomes Still

Now laughter dissolves into silence. The laughter at Maya was not mockery; it was recognition. Like waking from a dream and smiling at one's fear. Maya seemed real enough for love, fear, practice, and seeking - then it is seen that the knower was never bound.

Brahma satyam jagan mithya jivo brahmaiva naparah.

(Source: Shankaracharya tradition, Vivekachudamani essence)

Meaning: Brahman is real; the world is mithya; the individual is Brahman.

Mithya does not mean hatred of the world. It means the world has no independent final reality. "I am Brahman" is not an ego slogan; it is the ego's dissolution.

Yatha rajjau sarpa-buddhir bhramad bhavati nanyatha.

(Source: Vivekachudamani tradition)

Meaning: Through error, the rope appears as a snake.

Now the snake is no longer merely funny. It was a doorway. Could the rope have been recognized so deeply without the snake?

Ayam atma brahma.

(Source: Mandukya Upanishad 2)

Meaning: This Self is Brahman.

No future state. The very light of knowing is That. The mind asks how; the sentence stays silent.

Naham deho na me deho jivo naham aham hi chit.

(Source: Ashtavakra Gita 2.22)

Meaning: I am not the body; I am Consciousness.

Life continues, but ownership softens. Joy and sorrow come; something remains untouched.

Na me bandho na moksho me bhitasya eta vibhishikah.

(Source: Avadhuta Gita tradition)

Meaning: For me there is no bondage or liberation; these are fears of the mind.

The final joy of Maya is that when the joke is understood, no laughter remains. Magician, audience, stage, and illusion are waves of one Consciousness. Silence is the final laughter.