

Gaylord Brewer

## BEGINNING NEW YEAR'S DAY WITH SWAMI KEERTI'S LAUGHING MEDITATION

*So, when you wake up in the morning, the first thing to do is to start laughing consciously. Though you as well as others may not think very highly of your mental sanity, do not allow these perceived notions of madness to impede laughter.*

—Swami Keerti

The science feels soft—laughter healthier than jogging—but who would argue against “regulated hormones” or a “strengthened immunity”? Swami’s been good for me, so I part curtains, lock doors and windows, start laughing my ass off. I am standing, so to enable unimpeded breath-flow in the body, and pad the room in crazy-eights, honking like a sick duck of some soon-extinct species, maybe, say, the blue-necked Tibetan booby. All this distracting movement, I decide, is generating too much extraneous thought, so I drop to my floor pillow, cross my legs between a few buttery fingers of sun. Still, the effect falls short of utter joy, closer to that diesel Volkswagen from graduate school, hacking through every morning below 40° F. Then the racket in my throat morphs into a noise of crying—mournful, stifled hiccups. I try to conjure an absurd image and come up with this: me sitting on a floor in India forcing maniacal stutters, a few select, hungover friends watching and shaking heads. Osho maintained laughter is the highest spiritual quality, lacking from most religion, so I sputter along, try to crank the motor to ignition, raise the booby in a splashy ascent, keeping just a little lid on the ruckus so the girl who cleans my room won’t hear.



She's newly eighteen and out there somewhere.  
At last, the effort peters out into sudden  
and I hope meditative silence. I close eyes  
and enter my being, barge right in. I feel alright,  
tight in the abs, light-headed, foolish in the sense  
of amused fool and seeker. I'm going home,  
Swami Keerti, and however your lessons travel,  
I thank you. And wish you much laughter.

