

Denis Diderot

*The anonymous libertine novel by
the famous French philosopher*



Diderot The
Indiscreet Toys

The Indiscreet Toys : The anonymous libertine novel by the famous French philosopher Denis Diderot

[Les Bijoux Indiscrets, or, The Indiscreet Toys, by Denis Diderot](#)

[Fifth Trial of the Ring.](#)

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[Prodigious events of the Reign of Kanaglou, Mangogul's Grand-father.](#)

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Les Bijoux Indiscrets.

OR, THE

Indiscreet Toys.

Translated from the

CONGÈSE LANGUAGE

Printed at MONOMOTAPA.

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Adorned with Copper-Plates.

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By

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***TOBAGO:*
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TO ZIMA.

Zima, embrace the moment. The Aga Narkis entertains your mother, and your governess is upon the watch in a balcony for your father's return: take, read, fear nothing. But even tho' the *Bijoux indiscrets* should be found behind your toilet, do you think it would be a matter of wonder? No, Zima, no; it is well known, that the *Sopha*, the *Tanzai*, and the *Confessions* have been under your pillow. Do you hesitate still? Know then, that Aglaé has not disdained to set her hand to the work, which you blush to accept. "Aglaé," say you, "the sober Aglaé!"—The same. While Zima was straying with, or perhaps contriving how to get rid of the young Bonza Alleluia; Aglaé amused herself innocently, by relating to me the adventures of Zaide, Alphana, Fannia, &c.—furnished me with the few strokes, which please me in the history of Mangogul, revised it, and pointed me out the means of making it better: for if Aglaé is one of the most virtuous and least edifying women in Congo; she is likewise one of the least jealous of wit, and one of the most witty. Can Zima now think, that it becomes her to play the scrupulous? Once more, Zima, take, read, read all; even

without excepting the narrative of the *Rambling Toy*, which may be interpreted to you, without any expence to your virtue, provided the interpreter be neither your spiritual director nor your lover.



The Indiscreet Toys.

CHAP. I.

Birth of Mangogul.

Hiaouf Zeles Tanzai had already reigned long in great Chechianea, and this voluptuous prince still continued to be the delight of his subjects. Acajou king of Minutia had undergone the fate predicted by his father: Zulmis was no

more: the Count De —— was still living: Splendidus, Angola, Misapouf and some other potentates of the Indies and Asia were carried off by sudden deaths. The people tired of obeying weak sovereigns, had shaken off the yoke of their posterity; and the descendants of those unfortunate monarchs rambled unknown, or not regarded, in the provinces of their empires. The grandson of the illustrious Scheherazad was the only one who maintain'd his throne: and he was obeyed in Indostan by the name of Schach Baam, at the time when Mangogul was born in Congo. Thus it appears, that the death of several sovereigns was the mournful epoch of his birth.

His father Erguebzed did not summon the Fairies round the cradle of his son; because he had observed, that most of the princes of his time, who had been educated by these female intelligences, were no better than fools. He contented himself with ordering his nativity to be calculated by one Codindo, a person fitter for a portrait than an acquaintance.

Codindo, was head of the college of Soothsayers at Banza, the ancient capital of the empire. Erguebzed had settled a large pension on him, and had granted to him and his descendants, on account of the merit of their great uncle, who was an excellent cook, a magnificent castle on the frontiers of Congo. Codindo was appointed to observe the flight of birds, and the state of the heavens, and to make a report thereof at court: which office he executed very indifferently. If it be true, that they had at Banza the best theatrical pieces, and the worst play-houses in all Africa; in return they had the most beautiful college in the world, and the most wretched predictions.

Codindo, informed of the business for which he was summoned to Erguebzed's palace, set out much embarrassed; for the poor man could no more read the stars than you or I. He was expected with impatience. The principal lords of the court were assembled in the

apartment of the great Sultana. The ladies, magnificently dress'd, stood round the infant's cradle. The courtiers were hurrying to congratulate with Erguebzed on the great things, which he was undoubtedly on the point of hearing concerning his son. Erguebzed was a father, and thought it quite natural, to discern in the unform'd lines of an infant, what he was to be. In fine, Codindo arrived. "Draw near," says Erguebzed to him: "as soon as heaven had granted me the prince before you, I ordered the instant of his birth to be exactly registered, and without doubt you have been informed of it. Speak sincerely to your Master, and tell him boldly the destiny which heaven has reserved for his Son."

"Most magnanimous Sultan," answered Codindo, "the prince, born of parents equally illustrious and happy, can have no other than a great and fortunate destiny: but I should impose on your highness, if I plumed myself with a science which I do not possess. The stars rise and set for me as for the rest of mankind; and I am not more enlightened in futurity by their means, than the most ignorant of your subjects."

"But," replied the Sultan, "are you not an astrologer?"

"Magnanimous prince," answered Codindo, "I have not that honour."

"What the devil are you then?" says the old, but passionate Erguebzed. "An Aruspex! By the heavens I did not imagine, that you had so much as thought of it. Believe me, Seigneur Codindo, suffer your poultry to feed in quiet, and pronounce on the fate of my son, as you lately did on the cold of my wife's parrot."

Codindo immediately drew a glass out of his pocket, took the infant's left ear, rubb'd his eyes, turn'd his spectacles again and again, peep'd at that ear, did the like to the right ear, and pronounced, "that the young prince's reign would be happy, if it proved long."

"I understand you," replied Erguebzed: "my son will do the finest things in the world, if he has time. But, zounds! what

I want to have told me is, that he will have time. What matter is it to me, after he is dead, that he would have been the greatest prince upon earth, had he lived. I have sent for you to cast my son's horoscope, and you make me his funeral oration."

Codindo assured the prince, that he was sorry he was not more knowing; but beseeched his highness to consider, that his knowledge was sufficient for the little time he had been a conjurer. In effect, the moment before, what was Codindo?

CHAP. II.

Education of Mangogul.

I will pass lightly over Mangogul's first years. The infancy of princes is the same with that of the rest of mankind; with this difference, however, that princes have the gift of saying a thousand pretty things, before they can speak. Thus before Erguebzed's son was full four years old, he furnished matter for a volume of Mangogulana. Erguebzed, who was a man of sense, and was resolved that his son's education should not be so much neglected as his own had been, sent betimes for all the great men in Congo; as, painters, philosophers, poets, musicians, architects, masters of dancing, mathematicks, history, fencing, &c. Thanks to the happy dispositions of Mangogul, and to the constant lessons of his masters, he was ignorant in nothing of what a young prince is wont to learn the first fifteen years of his life; and at the age of twenty he could eat, drink, and sleep, as completely as any potentate of his age. Erguebzed, whose weight of years began to make him feel the weight of his crown, tired with holding the reins of the

empire, frightened at the disturbances which threatened it, full of confidence in the superior qualifications of Mangogul, and urged by sentiments of religion, sure prognostics of the approaching death or imbecility of the great, descended from the throne, to seat his son thereon: and this good prince thought he was under an obligation of expiating, by a retirement, the crimes of the most just administration, of which there is any account in the annals of Congo.

Thus it was, that in the year of the world 15,000,000,032,000,021, of the empire of Congo 390,000,070,003, began the reign of Mangogul, the 1,234,500 of his race in a direct line. Frequent conferences with his ministers, wars carried on, and the management of affairs, taught him in a very short time what remained for him to know at getting out of the hands of his pedagogues; and that was somewhat.

However, in less than ten years Mangogul acquired the reputation of a great man. He gained battles, stormed towns, enlarged his empire, quieted his provinces, repaired the disorder of his finances, restored arts and sciences, raised edifices, immortalized himself by useful establishments, strengthened and corrected the legislative power, even founded academies; and, what his university could never comprehend, he executed all these great things, without knowing one word of Latin.

Mangogul was not less amiable in his Seraglio than great on the throne. He did not take it into his head to regulate his conduct by the ridiculous customs of his country. He broke the gates of the palaces inhabited by his women; he drove out those injurious guards of their virtue; he prudently confided in themselves for their fidelity: the entrance into their apartments was as free for men as into those of the canonesses of Flanders; and doubtless their behaviour as decent. Oh! how good a Sultan he was! There never was his equal, but in some French romance. He was

mild, affable, chearful, gallant, of a charming figure, a lover of pleasures, cut out for them, and contained more wit and sense in his head, than had been in those of all his predecessors put together.

'Tis easy to judge that, with such uncommon merit, a number of the sex aspired to make him their conquest: Some few succeeded. Those who miss'd his heart, endeavour'd to console themselves with the grandees of the court. Young Mirzoza was of the number of the former. I shall not amuse myself with detailing the qualities and charms of Mirzoza: the work would be without end, and I am resolved that this history shall have one.

CHAP. III.

Which may be regarded as the first of this history.

Mirzoza had already fixed Mangogul for some years. These lovers had said, and a thousand times repeated, all that a violent passion suggests to persons who have the most wit. They were got as far as confidences, and they would impute it to themselves as a crime, to conceal the most minute circumstance of their lives from each other. These singular suppositions, "If heaven, which has placed me on the throne, had given me an obscure low birth, would you have deign'd to descend down to me, would Mirzoza have crown'd me?" "Should Mirzoza happen to lose the few charms which she is thought to have, would Mangogul love her still?" These suppositions, I say, which exercise the fancy of ingenious lovers, which sometimes make tender lovers quarrel, and frequently oblige the most sincere lovers to tell untruths, were quite worn out between our pair.

The favorite, who possess'd in a supreme degree, the necessary and uncommon talent of making a good narrative, had drained the scandalous history of Banza. As she had not the best constitution, she was not always disposed to receive the Sultan's caresses, nor he always in the humour of offering them. In short, there were some days, in which Mangogul and Mirzoza had little to say, hardly any thing to do, and in which, without any diminution of love, they amused themselves but indifferently. Those days were rare indeed, but there were some; and this was one of them.

The Sultan was carelessly stretch'd on a sofa, opposite to the favorite, who was knotting in silence. The weather did not permit them to take a walk. Mangogul would not venture to propose a party of piquet; and this posture had lasted near a quarter of an hour, when the Sultan, yawning several times, said, "It must be allowed, that Geliotta sung like an angel." "And that your highness is tired to death," answered the favorite. "No, Madam," replied Mangogul, endeavouring to smother a yawn, "the minute that one sees you, is not that of tiresomeness." "If that is not a polite compliment, 'tis no body's fault but your own," rejoin'd Mirzoza: "but you ponder, you are absent, you yawn. Prince, what ails you?" "I know not," said the Sultan. "But I guess," continued the favorite. "I was eighteen, when I had the good fortune to please you. It is full four years since you began to love me. Eighteen and four make twenty-two. Therefore I am now very old." Mangogul smiled at this calculation. "But if I am no longer worth any thing for pleasure," added Mirzoza, "I will at least demonstrate that I am very good for advice. The variety of amusements which attend you, has not been able to secure you against disgust. You are disgusted. Prince, there is your disease." "I do not allow, that you have hit it off," says Mangogul: "but supposing you have, do you know a remedy?" Mirzoza answered the Sultan, after a moment's pause, that his

highness seem'd to take so much pleasure at the narratives she made him of the gallantries of the town, that she was sorry she had no more to relate to him, or that she was not better informed of those of the court; that she would have tried that expedient, till she thought of somewhat better. "I think it a good one," says Mangogul: "But who knows the stories of all those fools; and tho' they were known to any, who could relate them like you?" "Let us learn them however," replied Mirzoza. "Whosoever it be that tells them, I am certain that your highness will gain more by the matter, than you will lose by the form." "I shall join with you, if you please, in fancying the adventures of the court ladies very diverting," says Mangogul: "but tho' they were to be a hundred times more so, what does that avail, if it be impossible to come at them?" "There may be a difficulty in it," answers Mirzoza, "but in my opinion, that is all. The Genius Cucufa, your relation and friend, has done greater things. Why do you not consult him?" "Ah, joy of my heart!" cried the Sultan, "you are an admirable Creature. I make no doubt but the Genius will employ all his power in my favour. This moment I shut myself up in my closet, and invoke him."

Accordingly Mangogul arose, kissed the favorite on the left eye, pursuant to the custom of Congo, and departed.

Evocation of the Genius.

CHAP. IV.

Evocation of the Genius.

The Genius Cucufa is an old hypochondriac, who fearing lest the concerns of the world, and dealings with the rest of

the genii, might prove an obstacle to his salvation, took refuge in the Void; in order to employ himself quite at leisure on the infinite perfections of the great Pagoda, to pinch, scratch and make notches in his flesh, to fret himself into madness, and starve himself to death. In that place he lies on a straw mat, his body tuck'd up in a sack, his flanks squeez'd with a cord, his arms crossed on his breast, and his head sunk into a hood, which suffers nothing to issue but the end of his beard. He sleeps, but one would think him in contemplation. All his company is an owl which nods at his feet, some rats which gnaw his mat, and bats which hover round his head. The manner of evoking him, is, by repeating, to the sound of a bell, the first verse of the nocturnal office of the Bramins: then he lifts up his hood, rubs his eyes, puts on his sandals, and sets out. Figure to yourself an old Camaldolian Monk carried in the air by two large horn-owls, which he holds by the legs. In this equipage it was, that Cucufa appear'd to the Sultan. "May the blessing of Brama be within these walls," says he, bowing. "Amen," answered the prince. "What do you want, my son?" "A very small matter," says Mangogul; "to procure me some pleasure at the expence of the court ladies." "Oh, my son!" replied Cucufa, "you have a larger appetite than a whole monastery of Bramins. What do you pretend to do with this troop of extravagants?" "To learn from themselves their present and past adventures, that is all." "But that is impossible," says the Genius. "To have women confess their adventures, is a thing that never was, nor ever will be." "Yet it must be," added the Sultan. At these words, the Genius scratching his ear, and combing his long beard with his fingers, fell to thinking. His meditation was short. "My child," said he to Mangogul, "I love you, you shall be satisfied." Instantly he plunged his right hand into a deep pocket made under his arm-pit on the left side of his frock, and, together with images, bless'd beads, little leaden pagoda's, and musty sweatmeats, drew out a silver ring,

which Mangogul at first took for one of St. Hubert's rings. "You see this ring," said he to the Sultan, "put it on your finger, my child: every woman, at whom you shall level the stone, will relate her intrigues in a plain, audible voice. Do not imagine however, that 'tis by the mouth that they are to speak." "By what then will they speak?" says Mangogul. "By the frankest part about them, and the best instructed in those things which you desire to know," says Cucufa; "by their Toys." "By their Toys," replies Mangogul bursting into laughter; "that is particular. Talking Toys! That is an unheard extravagance." "My son," said the Genius, "I have performed many greater prodigies for your grandfather: therefore depend on my word. Go, and may Brama bless you. Make a good use of your secret, and remember that there are ill-placed curiosities." This said, the old hypocrite nodded his head, pull'd his hood over his face, took his horn-owls by the legs, and vanish'd in the air.

CHAP. V.

Mangogul's dangerous Temptation.

Scarcely was Mangogul in possession of Cucufa's mysterious ring, when he was tempted to make the first trial of it on the favorite. I forgot to mention, that besides the vertue of obliging the Toys of those women, on whom he turn'd the stone, to speak, it had that also of rendering the person invisible, who wore it on the little finger. Thus could Mangogul transport himself in the twinkling of an eye to a thousand places where he was not expected, and with his own eyes see many things, which are frequently transacted without witnesses. He had nothing more to do than to put on his ring, and say "I desire to be in such a

place," and he was there in an instant. Behold him then in Mirzoza's bed-chamber.

Mirzoza, who gave over all hopes of the Sultan's company, was in bed. Mangogul approach'd her pillow softly, and saw by the glimmering light of a night taper, that she was asleep. "Good," say he, "she sleeps, let us quickly shift the ring on another finger, resume our natural shape, turn the stone on this fair sleeper, and awake her Toy a little while. —But what stops me?—I tremble.—Is it possible that Mirzoza?—No, it is not possible, Mirzoza is faithful to me. Fly from me, injurious suspicions, I will not, I ought not to heed ye." He said, and put his fingers on the ring: but taking them off as hastily as if it had been fire, he cried within himself. "What do I do, wretched man! I insult Cucufa's advice. For the sake of satisfying a silly curiosity, I am going to run the hazard of losing my mistress and my life. If her Toy should be in the humor of talking extravagantly, I should never see her more, and I should dye of grief. And who knows what a Toy may have in its soul?" Mangogul's agitation made him in some measure forget himself: he pronounced these last words pretty loud, and the favorite awoke. "Ah, Prince," said she, less surprized than charmed at his presence, "you are here. Why did you not send me notice? Must you condescend to wait for my awaking?"

Mangogul answered the favorite by relating the success of his interview with Cucufa, shew'd her the ring, and did not conceal one of its properties from her. "Ah! what a diabolical secret has he given you!" cry'd Mirzoza. "But pray, Prince, do you intend to make any use of it." "How," said the Sultan, "do I intend to use it? I shall begin by you, if you argue with me." At these terrible words the favorite turn'd pale, trembled, recover'd herself, and conjured the Sultan by Brama, and all the Pagoda's of the Indies and Congo, not to try the experiment on her of a secret power, which indicated a diffidence of her fidelity. "If I have been

constantly honest," continued she, "my Toy will not speak a word, and you will have done me such an injury as I shall never forgive. If it happens to speak, I shall lose your esteem and heart, and that will make you run distracted. Hitherto you have, in my opinion, found your account in our connection; why would you run the risk of breaking it off? Prince, believe me. Follow the advice of the Genius; he has had great experience, and advices of Genius are always good to follow."

"This is exactly what I was saying to myself," answered Mangogul, "when you awoke. And yet if you had slept two minutes longer, I cannot answer for what might have happened."

"What would have happened," says Mirzoza, "is, that my Toy would have given you no information, and that you would have lost me for ever."

"That may be," replied Mangogul; "but now that I have a full view of the danger which I incurred, I solemnly swear to you by the eternal Pagoda, that you shall be excepted from the number of those, on whom I shall turn the ring."

At these words Mirzoza brightened up, and fell to joking at the expence of the Toys which the Prince should hereafter interrogate. "Cydalisa's Toy," said she, "has many stories to tell, and if it be as indiscreet as its mistress, it will not require much intreaty. Haria's Toy is no longer of this world, and your highness will obtain no tales from it of fresher date than the days of my grandmother. As for that of Glauce, I believe it is a proper one to be consulted. She is a coquet and pretty." "And for that reason precisely it is," replied the Sultan, "that her Toy will be mute." "Why then," said the Sultana, "apply to that of Phedima, she is ugly, and loves gallantry." "Yes," continued the Sultan; "and so ugly, that one must be as ill-natured as you, to accuse her of gallantry. Phedima is sober; 'tis I who say it, and who know something of the matter." "As sober as you please," replied the favorite, "but she has a sort of grey eyes that speak the

contrary." "Her eyes belye her," said the Sultan warmly. "You tire my patience with your Phedima. Might not one say, that there is no other Toy but this to examine." "But may I presume, without offending your highness," added Mirzoza, "to ask which is the first you intend to honour with your choice." "We shall see anon," said Mangogul, "in the circle of the Manimonbanda, (the Congese name of the great Sultana). We shall have a good deal of work upon our hands and when we happen to be tired of the Toys of my court, we may chance make a tour thro' Banza. Possibly we may find those of the city women more reasonable than those of dutchesses." "Prince," said Mirzoza, "I have some acquaintance with the former, and can assure you, that they are only more circumspect." "We shall soon hear from them: but I cannot refrain from laughter," continued Mangogul, "when I think on the confusion and surprize of these women at the first words of their Toys, ha, ha, ha! Remember, delight of my soul, that I shall expect you at the great Sultana's, and that I shall make no use of my ring till you are come." "Prince," said Mirzoza, "I rely on the promise you have made me." Mangogul smiled at her allarm, reiterated his promise, sealed them with kisses, and retired.

CHAP. VI.

First Trial of the Ring.

Alcina.

Mangogul arrived before her at the great Sultana's, and found all the ladies very busy at cards. He survey'd all

those, whose reputation was established, fully resolved to try his ring on one of them, and his only difficulty was in the choice. While, he was in suspence by whom to begin, he spied a young lady of the household of the Manimonbanda in a window. She was toying with her husband; which appear'd singular to the Sultan, inasmuch as they had been married above eight days. They had made their appearance in the same box at the Opera, in the same coach at the Bois de Boulogne, they had finished their visits; and the fashion of the times exempted them from loving or even meeting each other. "If this Toy," says Mangogul, "is as silly as its mistress, we shall have a diverting soliloquy." At this instant the favorite appear'd. "Welcome," said the Sultan to her in a whisper. "I have cast my lead, waiting for you." "And on whom?" ask'd Mirzoza. "On that couple which you see sporting in that window," answer'd Mangogul with a wink. "Well set out," replied the favorite.

Alcina, for that was the young lady's name, was sprightly and pretty. The Sultan's court had few women more amiable, and not one of a gayer disposition. One of the Sultan's Emirs had filled his head with her. He was not left in ignorance of what the chronicle had published concerning Alcina: the report alarm'd him, but he followed the custom: he consulted his mistress about it. Alcina swore, that it was pure calumny invented by some coxcombs, who would have been silent, if they had had any reason for talking; but however, that there was no harm done, and that he was at full liberty to believe it or not, as he thought proper. This answer, delivered with an air of confidence, convinced the amorous Emir of his mistress's innocence. He closed the affair, and assumed the title of Alcina's husband with all its prerogatives.

The Sultan levelled his ring at her. A loud burst of laughter, which seized Alcina at some comical saying of her husband, was suddenly cut short by the operation of the ring; and immediately a murmuring noise was heard under her

petticoats. "Well, now I am titled. Truly I am glad on't. Nothing like having a rank. If my first advices had been heeded, I should have been provided with something better than an Emir: but yet an Emir is better than nothing." At these words all the ladies quitted the game, to seek from what quarter the voice issued. This movement made a great noise. "Silence," says Mangogul, "this deserves attention." They obeyed, and the Toy continued. "One would be apt to think, that a husband is a guest of great importance, by the precautions which are taken to receive him. What preparatives! What profusion of myrtle water! Another fortnight of this regimen would have demolished me. I had disappear'd, and the Emir might have sought lodgings elsewhere, or have shipped me off for the island Jonquille." Here my author says, that all the ladies grew pale, look'd at each other in deep silence, and grew vastly serious; which he ascribes to their fear, lest the conversation should grow warm, and become general. "Yet," continued Alcina's Toy, "in my opinion the Emir did neither require nor stand in need of so many formalities: but I must still acknowledge the prudence of my mistress. She guarded against the worst, and I was treated for the great lord as for his little page."

The Toy was on the point of continuing its extravagant harangue, when the Sultan, observing that this strange scene shock'd the modest Manimonbanda, interrupted the orator by turning off the ring. The Emir had vanish'd at the first words of his wife's Toy. Alcina, without being disconcerted, pretended to take a nap: mean while the ladies whispered that she had the vapours. "Yes," says a *Petit-maitre*, "— Vapours: Ch—y calls them hysterics, as much as to say, things which come from the lower region. For this case he has a divine elixir; it is a principle, principiating, principiated, which revives—which—I will propose it to the lady." The company laugh'd at this gibberish, and our Cynic resumed. "Nothing more true,