

Recent Publications

Sabta

The new book *Sri Aurobindo Ashram: The Story of the Main Building* tells the captivating story of the block of four houses where Sri Aurobindo and the Mother lived for more than fifty years. Our lead article features some photographs from the book and reminiscences from some sadhaks who settled in the Ashram in the 1920s, 1930s, and early 1940s.

The birth centenary of K. R. Srinivasa Iyengar, noted academic and author of biographies of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, is commemorated in an article by his granddaughter.



The Ashram Main Building, 1947-48

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The Story of the Ashram Main Building

One of the publications featured in this issue (see page 10) is a new book about the Ashram main building, the block of four houses where Sri Aurobindo and the Mother lived for more than fifty years. Concerned almost exclusively with the physical structures, *Sri Aurobindo Ashram: The Story of the Main Building* traces its history from the time Sri Aurobindo and the Mother moved to the Library House on 25 October 1922, paying as rent the then handsome sum of one hundred

recreation of an atmosphere from the years when the Mother's daily contact with the disciples took place within the Ashram compound. In this context we asked a few sadhaks to share some memories from those days—memories that contribute to the story of the Ashram Main Building.

First Impressions

Robi Ganguly came to the Ashram in 1941 when he was just ten years old and recalls that “my first

impression was of beautiful flowers, the fragrance of flowers. There was something wonderful as I entered the Ashram. Everything became cool; there was a very cool feeling. I loved it. As a child I didn't analyse it in my mind, but that feeling was there right from the first day.”

Tara-ben Patel, who settled in the Ashram in 1930, remembers that the Mother was very strict about only

having one gate open, and that everyone entered and left by the gate to the Library House. As soon as she passed through that gate she would “fall into meditation”—no effort was needed; the atmosphere was so peaceful, so intense.

Chitra Sen, who came to settle here in the early 1940s, when she was a young girl, remembers that when she entered the Ashram, “I used to feel something passing through me. It was something you may describe as being more dense than the atmosphere.” She went on feeling it as she passed by all the rooms where the sadhaks were working in such a concentrated state.



The Library House, Rosary House, and Meditation House

1922-29

rupees per month. Soon the Rosary House and the Secretariat were acquired and finally the Meditation House, into which they moved on 7 February 1927. Thus a small world was created within the compound walls of these now connected properties—a world that was the very centre of the lives of all the sadhaks.

While the book focuses on the renovations, reconstructions, alterations and additions to the structure of the Ashram main building through a combination of text, quotations from letters and other documents written during those early years, detailed graphic explanations, drawings and diagrams, and many old photographs, an ancillary effect is the subtle

As Chitra-di was too young at first to attend the evening meditation, she sat with her sister under the Transformation tree that used to grow under the window of Sri Aurobindo's room in the Library House, where the rockery is now. "There I used to sit while the meditation was going on. And now I understand that I had some experience. I was sitting there, but as if I didn't have a mind at all; no thoughts came. For some time I sat like that. As I was a child, these things came spontaneously." In this photo one can clearly see the Transformation tree which Chitra-di describes.



The Library House

1922-29

Darshans

Many people are familiar with the Balcony Darshan that the Mother used to give in the early morning from the balcony of Pavitra's room, but there were other opportunities later in the morning for the disciples (and for the children who roamed freely about the compound) to have darshan of the Mother. At about nine or nine-thirty the Mother would open the far right and far left windows of her room, known as the Salon, where she was spending most of the day. Robi-da remembers that when she opened the first window "someone would call out '*Victoire à la Douce Mère*'. It was usually Anilbaran, or perhaps Madangopal. Anyway, there was keen competition on who could say it first. And the moment she opened the next window they would say '*Au Divin*

Victoire', which two or three persons would then repeat. That was the Window Darshan." He also recalls seeing Shuddhananda Bharati, who stayed in the room that is now the *Bulletin* office, going each day to the Mother during Vegetable Darshan at about noon. She would come down from her room on the first floor by the staircase near Nirodbaran's room to see the vegetables that had been brought for the dining room. "The Mother would throw tomatoes to everyone. And you had to catch them!"

Beginning on page 148 of the book there is a description of the Mother's terrace walk, which took place shortly after the Window Darshan. She would come out onto the terrace south of the Salon and stand there briefly before going up the staircase to the top terrace for her walk. A diagram on page 149 clearly marks the route she sometimes took. Several photos also show disciples in the Ashram courtyard having the Mother's darshan as she took her walk. Chitra-di remembers that during this Terrace Darshan "Dilip-da [Dilip Kumar Roy] would stand there by the palm tree in front of Purani's room. As the Mother was going up the staircase she would stop at this small landing, turn, and smile down at Dilip-da. Her grace and love—everything was flowing through that smile. It was something to see. I still remember that."



The terrace south of the Salon where the Mother used to come and stand before going to the second floor for her walk. The small landing Chitra-di mentions can be seen midway up the staircase



Disciples in the Ashram courtyard during the Mother's terrace walk

Studies

Naturally the sadhaks interviewed for this article were children when they came to the Ashram in the 1930s and early 1940s, and they shared some reminiscences of the type of schooling that took place inside the Ashram main building. Suprabha Nahar settled in the Ashram in 1941, when she was eleven. There was no school as yet, so the Mother arranged for some of the Nahar children to be taught at home. Her elder sister Sujata had been assigned the work of teaching the younger siblings French. But, as Suprabha-di recalls, "at home you play and talk and hardly study at all. So one day, Didi [her elder sister Sujata] gave me an idea. I was standing in the Ashram courtyard, and Chandulal was going to his room when he asked me, 'How is your French going on?' I said, 'Not much progress, why don't you teach me?' He agreed and started taking our French class in his room on the ground floor. He used to send our notebooks to the Mother." Pavitra also taught some subjects, in the rooms that now house the Reception

Service and the Photo Section. Robi-da has described one of these study rooms: "It was a very small room, but there was a large table there, and then one, two, three, four, five, six, seven ... eight chairs were there—I still remember. On each side there were two chairs. And it was difficult to get in if you were late because near the door the chair had already been placed and the table almost filled the room." Eventually this room could no longer be used for classes as there were just too many children.

Anu Purani was educated primarily by her father A. B. Purani, who gave her classes in Gujarati, English, and maths in one of his two rooms inside the Ashram main building. "My father saw that I was extremely restless while doing my lessons, so he said, 'Why don't you learn to play the veena?' He went off into town and found one lady who was teaching the veena. It was so hard, you know, you sit cross-legged and keep the veena there and then turn your hand around—it is quite difficult. He saw that I was avoiding it, and he told me it was very easy, 'Why do you escape? See, I can do it.' For my sake he learned it and he made me do it." The symbolic name given by the Mother to Purani's room was Agni and his study, the room in which Anu-ben did her lessons and practised the veena, was called Peace in the Physical. Both these rooms are located off the courtyard which leads to the staircase going up to Sri Aurobindo's and the Mother's rooms, and perhaps they sometimes overheard Anu-ben diligently practising her music.

Studies, of course, meant that homework must be done, and we learn that these young students bent their heads over their notebooks in the most unlikely places. Robi-da said that many of the children did their homework in Dyuman's room while waiting for the Mother to come down for evening meditation in the late forties. Chitra-di remembers doing her homework while she sat in the flower room, which was then located in what later became Pujalal's room. The Mother had given her the work of keeping all the trays and dishes on which flowers had been offered and returning them to their owners. She kept them all neatly in a cupboard and, while she sat there, did

her homework and sometimes watched the younger children, like Aster and Kittu, playing in the open courtyard. By this time, in 1943, the old flower room in the centre of the courtyard had been taken down and in its place there was a long rectangular structure with fern pots on top (where the Samadhi was later built). In this photo one can see some children standing by this structure, under the branches of the Service Tree.

Robi-da remembers how they used to play hopscotch, marbles, and other games during the Terrace Darshan and that they made a lot of noise, because the number of children had grown. One day the Mother called Chandulal and told him it was becoming too noisy during the Terrace Darshan so there must be a school to keep the children occupied during the morning hours.

“That is how the school started. I don’t know how many people know about it, but that is what Chandulal told me.” And Chandulal said that the Mother had asked him to design benches for the school. One afternoon, Robi-da recalls, three different specimens of benches were kept in the courtyard just below the terrace of Dyuman’s room. He and a few others were there when the Mother came out on the terrace and asked them to sit and try the benches. “And I still remember I told the Mother, ‘This bench is very comfortable for sleeping!’ So one of the benches was chosen and Chandulal got them made for the opening of the school on 2 December 1943.”

Meditation and Pranam

At this time, during the early forties, the Mother held meditation for the sadhaks in the Meditation Hall every evening at about seven o’clock. She would come down the staircase, stop halfway, place her hand on the banister, and the meditation would begin. It would last ten to twenty minutes, sometimes longer.

People had their customary places and used to gather ahead of time; some would meditate and others would just wait quietly for the Mother’s arrival. After the meditation people were allowed to go up to the top of the staircase, to the small passage just behind the door, for pranam. People were assigned different days on which they could go up. Chitra-di describes how the Mother used to stand there: “One of the shutters

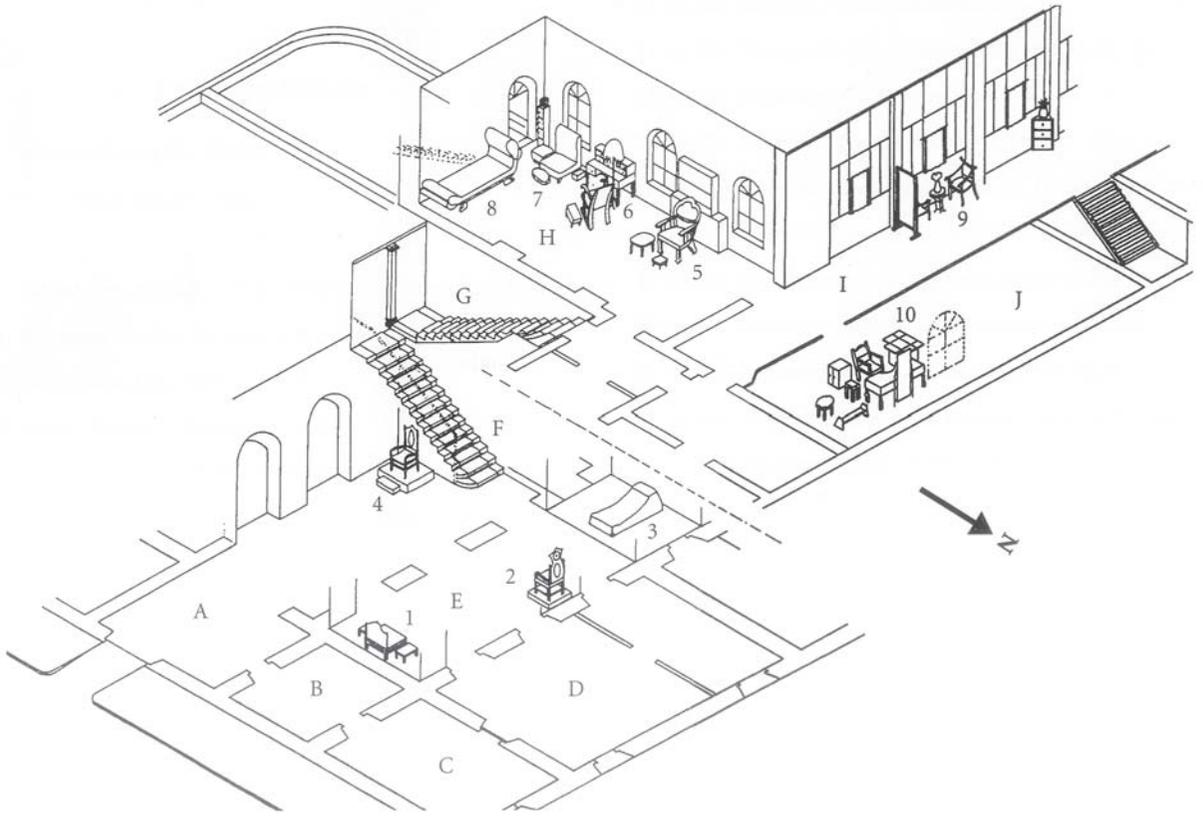


would be closed. And she stood behind it, so when we went to her it was absolutely private. Between where the Mother stood and the Salon door there was a low table with flowers on it. Champaklal would stand by the side there and help by taking or carrying the flowers.”

From 1931 to 1938, the sadhaks offered pranam to the Mother in the Meditation Hall downstairs. The Mother sat on a low chair near the door to Amrita’s room, where now the large painting of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother is kept. The sadhaks would sit where the Mother’s bed is now kept. Suprabha-di says that her sister Sumitra remembers attending this pranam quite clearly. “Everyone had to go in order to the Mother. Once, after waiting and seeing so many people going for pranam, Sumitra-di could not contain herself and just went forward out of turn and made pranam to the Mother. She got a scolding from my uncle Udaysingh, but the Mother later told my father Prithwisingh that she liked her spontaneity.”

Toward the end of the book there is a diagram showing the placement of furniture and location of rooms on the ground floor of the Meditation House and the first floor of the New Secretariat. Here you

were sitting just opposite, where they have now the washing area for flowers. I was sitting there and straight in front of me stood the Mother. What a voice—it was so overpowering! When she gave a



can clearly see the passage at the top of the staircase (marked G) where people went to the Mother for pranam as well as the seat (marked 1) used by the Mother for pranam in the Meditation Hall downstairs.

Later, when more and more people came, the evening meditation was shifted outside. The Mother would come out of the south door of the Salon, move to the front edge of the terrace above Dyuman's room, and stand there to hold meditation for those who had gathered in the courtyard. Chitra-di also remembers the day when the Mother, from this location, read out a message marking the end of the Second World War. It was 16 August 1945, and "we knew that the Mother would be reading something, so that day we

message it was always in a different voice." This was the prayer that the Mother read out on that day:

The victory has come, Thy victory, O Lord, for which we render to Thee infinite thanksgiving.

But now our ardent prayer rises to Thee. It is with Thy force and by Thy force that the victors have conquered. Grant that they do not forget it in their success and that they keep the promises which they have made to Thee in the hour of danger and anguish. They have taken Thy name to make war; may they not forget Thy Grace when they have to make the peace.

Work

Tara-ben Patel was eighteen years old when she settled in the Ashram. In those days everyone took up a work assigned by the Mother. Tara-ben and her elder sister Lila-ben were asked by the Mother if they would like to do some cooking. Lila-ben replied that they were just village girls from Gujarat and didn't know any dishes outside of their village cooking. When the Mother offered to teach them, they happily agreed, and soon took up the work in the tiled-roof kitchen that stood in the centre of the courtyard.

You can see this building in the photo here, with the branches of the Service Tree resting on its roof.

The sisters would prepare a variety of dishes after looking at the available vegetables. When once asked by the Mother to repeat a particular preparation that she had liked, Lila-ben replied that she could not at all remember how she made it. She had cooked it while in a trance-like state of inspiration, thinking only of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother.

Norensingh Nahar first visited the Ashram in 1936 when he was a boy of sixteen. After settling here, he joined the construction work at Golconde in 1939, helping to bend steel rods for the reinforced concrete. Later, in 1940, the Mother gave him a place to grow vegetables in the small Prosperity courtyard behind the Library House. He even tried to grow paddy there, without much success. Although Norensingh-da is best known for his work on the Ashram stamp collection, he relates how the Mother had also put

him in charge of the fruits, when they were being washed in Pavitra's laboratory upstairs, before the Fruit Room was built in 1948. The laboratory is a small room just to the right of the staircase on the first floor of the new Secretariat, and it was in this room that lotions, soaps, pastilles, and other items were prepared for Sri Aurobindo and the Mother under Pavitra's direction. Norensingh-da recounts:

We got papayas from Ambabhikshu's garden and from Bangalore came tomatoes and oranges.

So we used to wash them with permanganate and keep them separately.

Sri Aurobindo especially liked the papayas from a particular tree. Ambabhikshu used to write numbers on the papayas, indicating from which tree they came. So when we saw that particular number, say 36, on any papaya, we'd wash it carefully and specially keep it apart for Sri Aurobindo. In those days, in the corner near where the Samadhi now is, there was a tree with custard apples

(ramphal) that both Sri Aurobindo and the Mother liked very much. At Santal House there was a mango tree, very big. Sri Aurobindo used to like the mangoes from that tree.

In the early morning the Mother would arrange the fruits in baskets and from there the baskets were distributed to the sadhaks. When the quantity of fruit became too much to handle in the laboratory, the Mother thought of having a fruit room, which was then built on the terrace of the Cold Storage block. Eventually Norensingh-da gave up this fruit room work and Ravindra, who was already looking



after the Cold Room, where almonds, dried fruit, and other items were stored, took over. These photos show the completion of the ground floor of the Cold Storage block in 1935 and the Fruit Room in 1948.

In the photo below you can see the very long terrace of the Cold Storage block that extended to the new Fruit Room. Anu-ben recalls how the Mother had the idea to



Cold Storage block



Fruit Room

All the sections of the book, filled with old photographs, letters, diagrams, and excerpts from interviews with sadhaks, are woven into a compelling narrative that captures not just how the Ashram main building developed structurally, but also something of the special atmosphere of the Ashram in its early years. As Robi Ganguly so aptly describes his impression, “When I hold the book, I almost get back the olden days. That’s what I like about it. Apart from the research that has gone into it, it has an atmosphere of the Ashram. And one feels the spirit behind the work, the attitude with which the whole work has been carried out. It is the attitude that really counts.”

make here two rooms for Ravindra, and that she particularly wanted the construction of these rooms to be done only by Ashramites. The first floor of the Cold Storage block was completed in 1958, and the Mother attended the opening of the new rooms.

Other sections of the book recount the story of the Samadhi, the construction of the Mother’s rooms on the second floor, and the symbolic names of rooms in the Ashram main building given by the Mother during the years 1928–32. The Publication Department/SABDA’s Service branch takes its name from the one given by the Mother to its main room.

To end these recollections about the story of the Ashram main building, we have a comment from Amal Kiran [K. D. Sethna], who celebrated his 104th birthday in November 2008. He first came to the Ashram more than eighty years ago, in 1927, earlier than any other current Ashramite. When *Sri Aurobindo Ashram: The Story of the Main Building* came out in July, he was given a copy to look at. He pronounced it a “handsomely produced volume” and added, with a sense for language and history that is notable in much of his writing, that when he first came to the Ashram in 1927 [the Meditation House had only been acquired earlier that year], it was the

western wing, or the Library House, which was known as the Ashram “main building”. This observation reminds us that it was in 1922, when Sri Aurobindo and the Mother moved into the Library House, that the history of the Ashram main building began. This book tells the story.

Note: Anu Purani was interviewed for this article on 9 August 2008, less than two months before she passed away. Anu-ben was a dancer, choreographer, editor, Hindi teacher, and dedicated administrator and teacher at the Udavi village school.

Excerpt from the book

The Meditation House, where Sri Aurobindo and the Mother moved on 7 February 1927, was the last of the four houses to be taken on rent and the first one to be purchased. A letter by Barin Ghose, Sri Aurobindo’s youngest brother, describes the Mother’s inspection of the Meditation House:

Soon after coming back from Calcutta I heard that the house adjoining ours was vacant. I don’t know what impelled me to go and see it. I casually mentioned it to Mother Mirra. She wanted to see it too. We did not know at the time that this house would be Sri Aurobindo’s abode and the very centre of the Ashram buildings. Mother might have felt something of the kind but she did not give us any inkling until I actually took her there.

A Bengali young man from Hyderabad (the Nizam’s capital) was in correspondence with me at this time on Yoga and kindred matters. He mentioned one Ibrahim in his letters, a young Mahomedan idealist, who wanted to come to Pondicherry and take up Yoga. Ibrahim subsequently wrote to me and actually came for a short visit. He was stout, fair, very quiet and unobtrusive, with large lustrous eyes and a great hankering for things spiritual. He went away promising to come later, renouncing the world for good and sit down at the feet of the great Master to learn Yoga.



The Meditation House

1922-29

As soon as the key of the new house was procured, the Mother went to inspect it. So far as I remember, it was a sweet and clear morning with white fleecy clouds suspended in the blue sky. Ibrahim had returned by this time. He also accompanied us. As Mother Mirra went up the grand staircase of the new house, she fell into a trance. Gently she entered the hall, looked about in her peculiar dreamy and absorbed way. Turning to me with her luminous mystic smile, she said, “I see untold wealth here, Dara has brought it with him.” She moved about the house in a tense, indrawn state.

Ibrahim was ... renamed Dara (after the eldest bother of Emperor Aurangzeb) by the Master. She [the Mother] at once began negotiating for the purchase of the house. The owner wanted as much as Rupees 14,000, an exorbitant sum for it. Mother said money wasn’t of any consequence as this house meant so much for the future of the colony. So it was purchased and repaired for Sri Aurobindo to live in.

RECENT PUBLICATIONS

ENGLISH

Conversations with Sri Aurobindo

— Pavitra

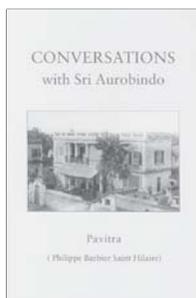
Publisher: Sri Aurobindo Ashram Publication Department, Pondicherry

165 pp., ISBN: 978-81-7058-879-5, Rs 85

Size: 14x22 cm

Binding: Soft Cover

From December 1925 to November 1926 Philippe Barbier Saint Hilaire, later known as Pavitra, held regular private conversations with Sri Aurobindo that centred on



the practice of Yoga and Pavitra's own *sadhana*. This book is a record of these conversations and some he had with the Mother toward the end of that year. It also includes several of the evening talks, in which Sri Aurobindo conversed informally with a small group of disciples, on such subjects as science and occultism which especially

interested Pavitra. The book's introduction is a talk given in 1964 by Pavitra in which he recounts his early life experiences and the events which led him to come to Pondicherry.

Sri Aurobindo Ashram: The Story of the Main Building

— Edited by Raman Reddy

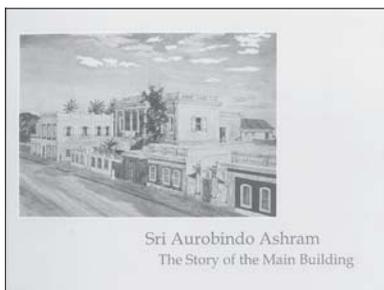
Publisher: Sri Aurobindo Ashram Publication Department, Pondicherry

184 pp., ISBN: 978-81-7058-892-4, Rs 550

Size: 28x22 cm

Binding: Hard Cover

The block of four houses that we know collectively as



the Ashram Main Building was the abode of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother for more than fifty years, from October 1922 until November 1973. This book

tells the story of how the houses – the Library House, the Rosary House, the Secretariat, and the Meditation House – were originally taken on lease, subsequently purchased,

then renovated or reconstructed over the years. Later chapters describe the construction of the Mother's rooms on the second floor in 1962 and the history of the central courtyard where the Samadhi and the Service Tree are located. The book, printed entirely on art paper, records every structural change since the time Sri Aurobindo and the Mother moved in, using detailed drawings, explanatory graphics, old photographs, extracts from letters, and notes from some of the early sadhaks as it traces the story of the Ashram Main Building.

see article on page 2

Compiled from the Mother's Works

Becoming One

The Psychology of Integral Yoga

— Compiled from the writings of the Mother

Publisher: Project Coordination Group, Auroville

406 pp., Rs 250

Size: 14x22 cm

Binding: Soft Cover

This compilation presents some of the Mother's conversations and talks on subjects of a psychological nature. The selections cover such topics as the unification of the inner being; ego, desire, and opening to the adverse forces; the play of the universal mind; using sleep, dreams, meditation, and concentration to become more conscious; and the nature of the inconscient, the subconscious, and the subliminal. In the Introduction the compiler provides a brief background to the relationship between Indian and Western systems of psychology and compares certain aspects of the work of Freud and Jung to the psychology of Integral Yoga, quoting from the work of Indra Sen in this regard. An Appendix of one hundred pages includes articles on related topics by the compiler, David Johnston, and Raymond de Becker as well as extracts from the books of Satprem, Nolini Kanta Gupta, and Kishor Gandhi.

see review on page 19

Other Authors

Eckhart Tolle & Sri Aurobindo

Two Perspectives on Enlightenment

(For sale in South Asia only)

— A. S. Dalal

Publisher: Stone Hill Foundation Publishing, Cochin

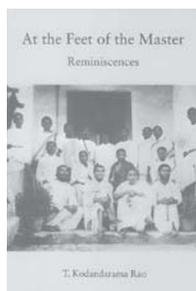
172 pp., ISBN: 978-81-89658-31-1, Rs 300

Size: 14x22 cm

Binding: Soft Cover

This book combines an account of the author's own spiritual quest that led him to the teachings of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother with the experience of reading Eckhart Tolle's book *The Power of Now* after decades of spiritual practice. It includes a long interview the author had with Tolle in 2002 followed by a comparison of Tolle's teachings with those of Sri Aurobindo's integral Yoga. The result is a scholarly yet very personally informed look at these two perspectives that eventually leads the author to new insights regarding his own spiritual practice.

see review on page 15



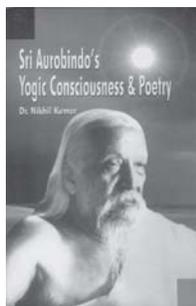
**At the Feet of the Master:
Reminiscences**

— T. Kodandarama Rao
 Publisher: Sri Aurobindo Ashram
 Publication Department,
 Pondicherry
 60 pp., ISBN: 978-81-7058-848-1,
 Rs 35
 Size: 12x18 cm
 Binding: Soft Cover

This short book provides an intimate picture of life in the early 1920s at what became the Sri Aurobindo Ashram. It traces the spiritual journey of its author from his college days in Madras to his first meeting with Sri Aurobindo in 1920. After completing his studies he returned to live near Sri Aurobindo from 1921 until 1924, and his account, written more than forty years later, includes details of the daily life of the community, reminiscences of his fellow sadhaks, and also descriptions of some of his own inner experiences attained under the guidance of Sri Aurobindo.

Sri Aurobindo's Yogic Consciousness & Poetry

— Dr Nikhil Kumar
 Publisher: Novelty & Co., Patna
 107 pp., ISBN: 978-81-86931-71-4, Rs 150
 Size: 14x22 cm



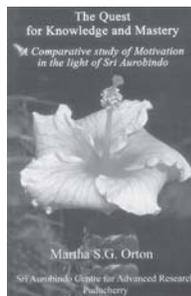
Binding: Hard Cover

The premise for this book is essentially a statement Sri Aurobindo made in one of his letters on *Savitri*, wherein he says that the poem was a “field of experimentation to see how far poetry could be written from one's own yogic consciousness and how that could be made creative”. The author attempts to explore how the higher planes of consciousness as described by Sri

higher planes of consciousness as described by Sri

Aurobindo, especially in *Savitri's* yogic journey, manifest in a sublime poetic consciousness and likewise how the writing of the highest form of poetry demands an essential change in the inner poise of the poet.

**The Quest for Knowledge and Mastery
A Comparative Study of Motivation in the Light of
Sri Aurobindo**



— Martha S. G. Orton
 Publisher: Sri Aurobindo Centre for
 Advanced Research, Pondicherry
 358 pp., ISBN: 978-81-901891-7-0,
 Rs 360
 Size: 14x22 cm
 Binding: Soft Cover

In Part One of this study the author presents one important aspect of human motivation gleaned from a detailed study of Sri Aurobindo's writings: that man is driven by an impulsion to seek the true knowledge and mastery of life; that this motivation originates from the hidden reality of a single spiritual Self that supports all the activities of mind, life, and body; and that to find the conditions under which this impulse can be fulfilled in all aspects of his being is the central problem of man's life. Part Two examines how Sri Aurobindo's view relates to other theoretical perspectives of motivation in different fields of human psychology, such as the psychoanalytic, social, personality, humanistic, and transpersonal psychologies.

**The Sun and the Rainbow
Approaches to Life through Sri Aurobindo's Light:
Essays, Letters, Poems, Short Stories**

— Amal Kiran (K. D. Sethna)
 Publisher: Clear Ray Trust, Pondicherry
 214 pp., ISBN: 978-81-87916-08-6, Rs 150
 Size: 14x22 cm
 Binding: Soft Cover

This book is a collection of essays, letters, poems, short stories, and experiences, most of which appeared previously in the monthly journal *Mother India*. Their author, who was also editor of the journal, has written widely on poetry, literature, history, and philosophy, and is well known as a poet. In the writings collected here, he presents insights into Sri Aurobindo's thought, historical perspectives, remembrances of life in the Ashram, guidance to fellow seekers, poetry, and a special supplement highlighting aspects of the Mother's relation with his wife Sehra.

This new edition has come out after many years.

OTHERLANGUAGES

GERMAN

- Meditation und Disziplin — Pavitra
ISBN: 978-3-901226-79-3 Rs 60
- Indische Geschichten 2 — Daulat Panday
ISBN: 978-3-901226-40-3 Rs 450

ITALIAN

- Rose Bianche — The Mother's messages and
correspondence with Huta D. Hindocha
ISBN: 978-81-87372-19-6 Rs 150
- Come Procedere? : Una Chiave per la Sadhana
— M. P. Pandit Rs 60
ISBN: 978-81-7509-103-0

SPANISH

- LA MADRE - UNA BREVE BIOGRAFÍA
— Wilfried Huchzermeyer Rs 770
ISBN: 978-84-936142-0-1

RUSSIAN

- Izbrannie Soneti — Sri Aurobindo
ISBN: 978-5-7938-0048-8 hc Rs 270
- Na Puty k Bessmertiyu : Fragmenti iz rabot
— Compiled from the works of Sri Aurobindo
and the Mother. ISBN: 978-5-7938-0050-1 Rs 80
- Na Puty — Perepiska Materi so Shyamom Sundarom
Rs 175

BENGALI

- Srimadbhagavadgita : Sri Aurobinder Byakhyabalambane
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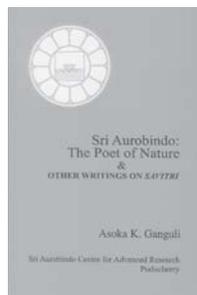
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BOOK REVIEWS

Sri Aurobindo: The Poet of Nature & Other Writings on *Savitri*



— Asoka K. Ganguli
Publisher: Sri Aurobindo Centre for
Advanced Research, Pondicherry
407 pp., ISBN 978-81-901891-6-3,
Rs 350
Size: 14x22 cm
Binding: Soft Cover

There is a growing movement to ensure that Sri Aurobindo studies soon take their rightful place as topics for graduate and postgraduate research in Indian universities. The writings of Dr. Asoka K. Ganguli will undoubtedly prove of great value in this movement, particularly in the field of literary studies. His first book, *Sri Aurobindo's Savitri: An Adventure of Consciousness*, published by the Sri Aurobindo Society in 2002, had for its stated purpose to help students and general readers to gain some sort of understanding of *Savitri* as an epic poem, and towards this end deals first with Sri Aurobindo's concept of the poetry of the future, then with the form, design, structure and technique of *Savitri*, along with its thematic scheme.

Dr. Ganguli is well qualified to offer this assistance, by his more than forty years as a teacher of English poetry to postgraduate students, first at the University of Agra and then at the University of Delhi, and by his deep devotion to Sri Aurobindo's poetry over more than fifty years.

According to the author, his second book has been inspired by his experience as a teacher of English poetry to postgraduate students over four decades. He notes that certain fields in poetry seemed to hold a special interest for his students. Taking this as a guiding principle, he has explored four such topics in relation to Sri Aurobindo's masterwork. The four sections of his book deal with Nature poetry, and the concept of Nature in poetry; imagery and figures of speech; the theme of death; and lastly the treatment of science. Each of these topics is first introduced in the context of English poetry in general, before the special characteristics of Sri Aurobindo's treatment of them

in *Savitri* are explored. While these essays are scrupulously referenced for the use of the serious student, at the same time the book is presented in a way that is accessible and interesting for the general reader.

Like his first book, this one too is far more than a literary guidebook. What is remarkable is the way in which Professor Ganguli, in each of these sections, introduces his readers to an important aspect of Sri Aurobindo's vision by a combination of lucid explanation and illuminating quotations from the poem. In the first of the essays, for example, which focuses on the treatment of Nature in *Savitri*, he points out that there are three distinct stages in the Yoga of Nature: Nature in the Inconscience, Nature in the Ignorance, and Nature on the Transcendental plane. Exemplifying these three stages by relevant quotations, he takes us on a wonderful journey through the poem, while enhancing our grasp of the theme.

Similarly in the second section, whose topic is imagery and figures of speech in *Savitri*, he points out that Sri Aurobindo creates imagery from different planes in the ascending scale of consciousness, and gives examples from various planes. He also gives examples of images connected with important movements in Sri Aurobindo's integral Yoga. In this way he illuminates our understanding not only of the literary form of the poem, but also of its content and intention.

The third section, entitled "Sri Aurobindo: His Vision and Concept of Death in *Savitri*" is the longest, 140 pages of profound exploration of one of the key themes of the poem, worth reading and re-reading repeatedly.

The fourth, dealing with the poet's treatment of science in his masterwork, covers different aspects of Sri Aurobindo's integrated view of science.

Going into these thematic explorations, one is impressed by several things: first, the way in which Dr. Ganguli succeeds in bringing out the unparalleled breadth, depth and height of Sri Aurobindo's vision when set alongside more familiar world views; then, Sri Aurobindo's extraordinary powers of poetic expression

Sensitive poetry-lovers will surely be inspired by the splendours which the author opens up to view and encouraged to delve deeper into the inexhaustible ocean of riches which is Savitri.

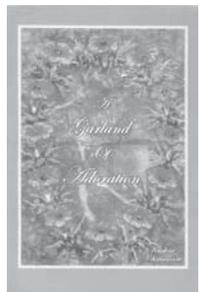
which bring these breadths and depths and heights so wonderfully close to our own view and grasp. But also we cannot help but be impressed by the breadth and depth of Dr. Ganguli's own grasp of his material and by the clarity of exposition with which he guides us through its richness and complexities. Sensitive poetry-lovers will surely be inspired by the splendours which he opens up to view and encouraged to delve deeper into the inexhaustible ocean of riches which is *Savitri*. This achievement bears witness not only to his skills as a researcher, teacher and writer, but also to his deep love for *Savitri* and his immersion in it over so many years.

The value of this book is also enhanced by its foreword, a masterly essay by Dr. Mangesh Nadkarni, which highlights the contemporary academic perspective in which Dr. Ganguli's work gains a special value and significance.

All who are interested in a deeper understanding and appreciation of Sri Aurobindo's revelatory epic can be grateful to the author, and to SACAR, the publisher, for bringing out this important work.

— Shradhdhavan

Shradhdhavan, a long-time resident of Auroville, coordinates the activities at Savitri Bhavan and edits its journal Invocation.



A Garland of Adoration

— Krishna Chakravarti
Publisher: Sri Aurobindo Society,
Chittagong
160 pp., Rs 90
Size: 14x21 cm
Binding: Soft Cover

Alternative communities such as Sri Aurobindo's ashram in Pondicherry naturally inspire curiosity. What is particularly interesting is to know what the place looks like from the inside. The yoga of changing human nature is an internal process; the best way to observe it could be to interact with sadhaks. All may not have this opportunity, and that is where a book like Krishna Chakravarti's *Garland of Adoration* comes in.

In this slender bilingual volume – about a fourth of it is written in Bengali – Krishna has used various modes – anecdotes and remembrances, prayer, and both philosophical and imaginative writing – to unfold before us her inner world. No matter what she is weaving on the loom of her musings, her constant warp is devotion, dedication, gratitude towards her gurus, a keen appreciation of the ashram they have created, and an abiding joy at participating fully in the opportunity and endeavour it represents.

Whatever she looks at – the tree, the flower, or even man-made objects such as *almirahs* and lamps – she invests with consciousness. Not only are they alive to her but they reflect her own attitudes of dedicated service and devotion. Thus she imagines the *almirah* pushing whatever Sri Aurobindo was searching “forward into his hands” to spare him the trouble of looking. The lamp glows with joy because “it could feel the spark in the child's heart”. The tree “watched in joy the Mother come to the Playground every day”. The flower spends its whole life preparing itself to be a perfect offering to the Mother.

The author uses various modes – anecdotes and remembrances, prayer, and both philosophical and imaginative writing – to unfold before us her inner world.

If one had to choose a representative piece from *Garland of Adoration* one just might pick the autobiographical retrospection on page 88. Beginning with her arrival in the Ashram in 1956 at the age of thirteen, Krishna depicts her life as a student of the Ashram school through a series of impressionistic tableaux. It was a journey from wonder to wonder. Right from day one, even without understanding much of what was going on, she was open to the thrill of the place, “in the grip of an unknown force, caught in a luminous net”. It was this spontaneous openness that kept her in the flow, as she recognises in the concluding paragraph:

This then is the Balance Sheet of the beginning of the life here, with its many liabilities – the shortcomings of one's nature – and also its one valuable asset—the aspiration for this life. What does the Balance Sheet look like now? But Lo! What a surprise! It shows not the past achievements or failures at all. No reflection of income or deficit!

It shows a march forward towards the light—more light and self-discovery. It shows glimpses of bright avenues, the sunlit path.

While taking up this book we had hoped to get acquainted with one member of Sri Aurobindo's ashram. Never did we expect to encounter an entire array of Ashramites. Krishna introduces them to us in a warm and intimate way. Still, we can't help feeling rather overwhelmed. It's not their number. They are only a dozen, but each of a rare mint: Silloo's "detached, selfless and disinterested service to the Mother", Rita, "delicate, full of grace, radiating a soft light all around her", Millie's obedience to the Mother, her dedication and her love, Dyuman's "attitude of clinging to the Mother, come what may", Satyakarma's austerity and intensity of sadhana "reflected in his entire body", Amal who reaches "endlessly higher and higher", Mona's "royal detachment and imposing authority", Priti's "মায়ের প্রতি নিবিড় ভালবাসা ও অগাধ বিশ্বাস", and Indulekha's "বাইরের নিয়মানুবর্তিতার সঙ্গে অন্তরের নিয়ন্ত্রণের বশবর্তিতা". What a collection. And yet none of them, for all their intensity, is remotely aloof. Krishna gives us a clear feeling of their warmth, their caring presence in her life. What emerges is the picture of a community well knit in its diversity, where each person is encouraged and helped to grow and progressively manifest his best. At the centre is the Mother. She is the base and the focus. All flows from her.

Garlands for special occasions are sometimes wrought in a clever way with silver twine which makes the whole piece glisten and shimmer. Krishna appears to have mastered a similar technique. Her various writings presented here all have an ethereal quality. In place of silver twine she uses, as she has confessed in her title, adoration.

— Sunam Mukherjee

Sunam reads proof at the Sri Aurobindo Ashram Press.

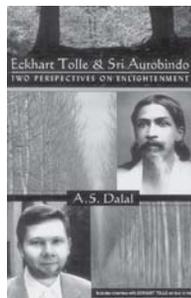
Eckhart Tolle & Sri Aurobindo ***Two Perspectives on Enlightenment*** **(For sale in South Asia only)**

— A. S. Dalal

Publisher: Stone Hill Foundation Publishing, Cochin
172 pp., ISBN: 978-81-89658-31-1, Rs 300

Size: 14x22 cm

Binding: Soft Cover



Having greatly appreciated Dr. Dalal's many excellent compilations of Sri Aurobindo's and the Mother's writings over the years, it was delightful to read his new original composition, *Eckhart Tolle and Sri Aurobindo: Two Perspectives on Enlightenment*. Eckhart Tolle is a well-known spiritual teacher who was propelled onto the international stage with his very popular 1997 book *The Power of Now*. Since then he has conducted numerous seminars and retreats around the world, and written three more books. Dalal's present book, which compares Tolle's teachings with those of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, often quotes Sri Aurobindo and the Mother and includes an interview with Tolle, but these are closely interwoven with Dalal's own comparative analysis of the two teachings. What we mainly find in this book are clear, comprehensive, and detailed explanations of the central issues in spiritual practice and experience by a profound scholar of Sri Aurobindo's and the Mother's writings, seasoned no doubt through decades of work developing the popular compilations.

I found the book well organized, cogent, and concise. It seemed to me that everything that should have been said was said, and no more. Starting in the Preface, Dalal explains his motivation for writing the book and provides a philosophical context from which to better apprehend Tolle's teachings. As Dalal mentions here, Tolle's teaching "beautifully combines elements from Zen Buddhism, Advaita (nondualist Vedanta), and Christianity.... However, in its views of the nature of Reality and enlightenment, his teaching is predominantly Buddhist." In the first chapter, Dalal expands on his motivations for writing about Tolle in the context of an interesting personal account of Dalal's own life-long spiritual search. He continues this chapter with what I felt was one of the most valuable sections of the book, an explanation of the chief lessons and psychological insights he has gained from Tolle's teachings, things which were especially helpful to him as a complement to Sri Aurobindo's and the Mother's teachings.

The second chapter is a transcript of an interview Dalal conducted with Tolle in Pondicherry in 2002. The third chapter consists of a few more questions and answers from an earlier meeting between Dalal and Tolle at the Esalen Institute in California in 2001. The first interview touches on the central aspects of Tolle's teachings, which are expressed in Tolle's relatively simple conversational style. The interview is tailored to readers of Sri Aurobindo because Dalal, coming from Sri Aurobindo's perspective, asks questions that often lead Tolle to explain his views in the context of Sri Aurobindo's concepts and terms. For example, Tolle explains how his views of enlightenment and the spiritual reality are related to such concepts as the witness consciousness, personal effort and grace, surrender, evolution of consciousness, and transformation. The questions discussed in the third chapter touch on a few other points such as whether there are degrees of spiritual presence, and the need and meaning of spiritual practice.

The fourth chapter focuses more particularly on Sri Aurobindo's concepts of the witness consciousness, the distinction between *purusha* and *prakriti*, and of the various poises of the *purusha* as detached witness, as the sanctioner of the movements of *prakriti*, and as the master of *prakriti*. One would be hard-pressed to find a more succinct explanation of these central concepts of Sri Aurobindo's Yoga. The main differences between Sri Aurobindo's and Tolle's views on these matters are briefly stated at the end and then expanded upon in the following chapter.

The long fifth chapter provides a more comprehensive comparison of Sri Aurobindo's and Tolle's teachings across a wide range of issues. It covers such concepts as the ego, the Self, Being, evolution of consciousness, mind, mental stillness, parts of the mind, personal effort and surrender, and the aim of spiritual practice. It examines each of these issues from the perspectives of both Sri Aurobindo and Tolle. This analysis provides clear and concise explanations of these important issues from both perspectives, highlighting their similarities and differences. Perhaps one reason why I found the comparisons so interesting and useful is that Tolle's views, while in certain respects unique, are in other respects representative of many spiritual teachings. Therefore, the comparisons highlight differences between Sri Aurobindo's teachings and other, widespread views of Reality and spiritual experience.

A postscript chapter brings the comparisons back to a personal level, considering the complementary aspects of the two viewpoints in the context of their value to the author's own spiritual practice and development. While the whole book has a psychological and practical emphasis, the more personal discussions in the opening and closing chapters bring out even more emphatically the practical relevance of the comparisons, as opposed to a merely abstract, conceptual exercise. To further provide a comprehensive framework in which to understand the book, Dalal includes three appendices, each containing a short essay by Sri Aurobindo—on his teaching, on the three instruments of the spiritual teacher, and on his first major spiritual experience of Nirvana. This is followed by brief biographical notes on Sri Aurobindo, the Mother, and Eckhart Tolle. The index at the back provides a convenient way to search for topics of special interest to the reader.

Like Dalal, I was impressed by Eckhart Tolle's spiritual presence, which for me had been communicated several years ago when I heard a recording of some of his talks. I inwardly sensed from his words and way of speaking that he was living in what Sri Aurobindo termed the Self, what Tolle referred to as the Now or the Presence. Tolle's teaching

Tolle explains how his views of enlightenment and the spiritual reality are related to such concepts as the witness consciousness, personal effort and grace, surrender, evolution of consciousness, and transformation.

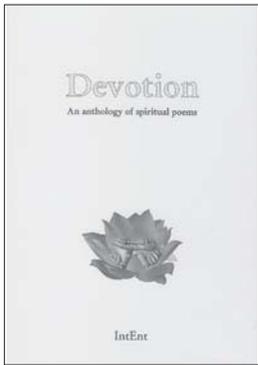
was appealing to me for its simplicity and for its evident, transparent truths. And yet, in many ways, it is distinctly different from Sri Aurobindo's and the Mother's perspective and emphases. I think Dalal was perhaps struck in a similar way and embarked

upon a deep introspective and intellectual analysis to integrate these seemingly different views and approaches. This book seems to be both a part and a culmination of this effort.

— Larry Seidlitz

Larry was formerly a research psychologist in the U.S.A.; he now works at the Sri Aurobindo Centre for Advanced Research in Pondicherry facilitating online courses on Sri Aurobindo's teachings.

Devotion: An anthology of spiritual poems



— Selected by Lloyd Hofman
and Vignan Agni
Publisher: Integral Enterprise
(IntEnt), Auroville
338 pp., Rs 400
Size: 16x24 cm
Binding: Hard Cover

If there is a mass of Aurobindonian poetry written during the past seven or eight decades, then it is time to have

a proper compilation of this impressive contribution in order to assess its impact on our creative writing and its worth in the broader context of what is expected of it, of Aurobindonian poetry. During the fruitful and awe-inspiring 1930s not only did Sri Aurobindo write a new kind of mystic-spiritual poetry drawing inspiration from the higher planes of expression, but also actively and extensively encouraged his poet-disciples to find the true poetic word in their utterances. That certainly was the golden era of Aurobindonian poetry. That does not mean that good poetry ceased to be written afterwards, after Sri Aurobindo's passing away in 1950, but it was perhaps written with less intensity and with a greater degree of uncertainty in respect to the sources of its insight and revelation. We have only to open the Ashram-connected periodicals of the past fifty years or so and we find an abundance of poetry, some of it rising to sufficiently convincing heights.

In this context we should feel happy to see a selection of this poetry anthologised in a single volume, *Devotion: An Anthology of Spiritual Poems*. There are entries from 111 poets, spanning a little more than 300 pages, plus notes and an index, with a total of 271 poems in an exquisite hardcover edition, designed by Avipro (Auroville prose editors). Considering its fine quality, it has been very reasonably priced at just Rs 400. There is no doubt that the editors have patiently and meticulously gone

through thousands of poems belonging to this genre of poetry before making their final compilation. What is not so clear is the criterion employed by them in making this impressive selection. The anthology does not seem to celebrate a landmark event in the arrival of the future poetry in any distinctive or specific way, that what Sri Aurobindo wrote in his critical essays and letters has been in some manner fulfilled, that we are assuredly moving towards the utterance of the spirit in its native tongue, of the seeing speech that is *paiúyanti vâc*. And then, to bring us closer to the creative warmth and ambiance of this genre of poetry, we should have been given some introduction to or some background of the poets represented in the anthology. They appear so distant to us that some poets are even present under two different names. Thus Minnie Sethna and Minnie Canteenwalla are the same person; so also are Gleaner and Themis. More importantly, what is sadly missing in the anthology is an introductory essay or preface setting up the milieu of the Aurobindonian brand of poetry. Different types of poems are included—occult, spiritual, mystical, lyrical, reflective, and surrealistic. A sub-grouping of the collection in these several categories

would have helped us to enter more profitably into the various domains of this wide, extensive Aurobindonian world. There are also different sources of inspiration, coming from the overhead planes all the way up to the Overmind, or from the inner recesses of our being, mostly from the inner mental, or directly from the aspiring psychic, carrying with them their characteristic swift or luminous or tranquil elements. In this connection, we may say that it was thoughtful of

Green Darkness

*The vast green darkness rolls and heaves
To the black-besmeared horizon's bound,
And with a mournful clamour cleaves
The silence of the worlds around.
It roars and rocks and breaks in vain
In a restless night of starless pain.
O ocean of bewildered force,
Surrendered pray to the firmament light
And learn to gain thy peaceful source
In motionless depths of might.*

— Nishikanto

the editors to have included Sri Aurobindo's comments on a half-dozen poems, those of Arjava, K D Sethna, and Nirodbaran. Finally, there are a few poets who have not found a place in this voluminous anthology; at least two missing names which immediately come to mind are Debashish Banerji and Goutam Ghosal. However, let us look briefly, although in the manner of a review, into the contents of the anthology.

The anthology makes a perceptive beginning with two brief but significant and apposite quotations from Sri Aurobindo's *Savitri*. If inspiration has the power to bring out the "rhythmic sense of hidden things", then it becomes possible for language to give us the joy of the ever-living, ever-creative Word. Or else a wideness is felt in the wonders of calm and rapture. That is what poetry is expected to achieve. The magic of this poetry is such that it can catch "the moon-pale soul of roses" "in a mesh of sound", as Arjava does; or else, à la Nirodbaran, our days get encircled with dreams of the creator's endless mysteries. Oh, that sunshine! Be it spring or winter, be it day or night, there is all the while and everywhere, the effulgence of beauty, the sweetness and love that radiate from the Mother-heart, as poignantly conveyed in the poems by Dilip Kumar Roy. The mystery becomes more mysterious when we cannot tell why we pick up the lyre and, while playing on it, for what we cry. But Nishikanto has an answer because he cannot choose but love, just love, without raising any doubt, without any question, the way the river simply thrills to join the shoreless, endless sea. And then there is the remarkable imperative in the poet's soul; Sethna assures us in a most forceful way that his warrior spirit darts across the terrible night of death and conquers immortality. This was poetry written directly under the gaze of the Sun of Poetry that was Sri Aurobindo. Has that continuity of poetic excellence and inspiration been maintained in the second and third generations of Aurobindonian poets? That is what *Devotion* should bring home.

"The essential power of the poetic word is," writes Sri Aurobindo, "to make us see, not to make us think or feel; thought and feeling must arise out of the sight or be included in it, but sight is the primary consequence and the power of poetic speech."

We have a mass of poetry, but very often it looks as though the poet is absent. In *The Future Poetry* Sri Aurobindo makes a reference to Keats's phrase that a poet should be "a miser of sound and syllable, economical of his means, not in the sense of a niggardly sparing, but of making the most of all its possibilities of sound". I wonder whether we are such misers, such desirable, such marvellous misers. We are not quite conscious of the power

of the rhythmic word. Such a word is born deep in the womb of the omniscient Hush, but we are in a terrible hurry, very often busy with mental creations. The urge to discover the point at which the "three highest intensities of poetic speech meet and become indissolubly one, a highest intensity of rhythmic movement, a highest intensity of interwoven verbal form and thought-substance, of style, and a highest intensity of the soul's vision of truth" is an aspect of our own growth, and we do not seem to be aware of it. "The poet-seer sees differently, thinks in another way," says Sri Aurobindo, "voices himself in quite another manner.... The poet shows us Truth in its power of beauty, in its symbol or image, or reveals it to us in the workings of Nature or in the workings of life, and when he has done that, his whole work is done."

Such great things may be done by poetry and the question is: are we doing them? Let us look for some examples in the present anthology.

When Maggi Lidchi writes that

There is a tender pulsing in the heart of life
A hidden meaning that escapes our mind,
That hums and glows in great and littlest
things but for which

The tongue no words can ever find

we feel behind it "a power that emanates a thousand rays". And it is there everywhere, all-pervasively: "It chimes at root of rock and sea | Of earth and sky | It sings in flower, fern and fire". When Narad (Richard Eggenberger) sees behind this world of forms a beauty breaking upon the subtle sight, there certainly is the assuring possibility that this world is not an illusion, that it's not a dream through which we wander, but is for the habitation of the supreme Lord himself, *īśāvāsyam idam sarvam*. The divine glory bursting everywhere, in every name and form, *nāma* and *rūpa*. Georgette Coty's bird of blue sings on the bough with a strange sound of strings crossing the sphere—and she tells us to listen to it, asks why it is calling us. The call goes so deep that her soul becomes her eyes in this most magical night. These are indeed fine lines of poetry that describe inner states, or soul experiences.

Lawyers may know the law of the land but, says Nani Palkhivala, they know not

Why honey is the food of bees,
Why winter comes when rivers freeze,
Why faith is more than one sees,
And hope survives the world's disease,
And charity is more than these.

Sailen Roy describes himself as a vagrant soul:
Erratic tramp I may well seem,
Yet where I go is known;
Enamoured with a golden dream
My faith's gigantic grown.

For Ashalata Dash "Lame words leap | And hesitant hands | Compose a poem" when the heart vibrates to the call of poetry already written "in the womb of Time". And for Damodar Reddy it is time for the world to break forth into the dance the timeless Ancient had ordained now that the celestials are here, even as the Master steps alive to embrace this earth. In her poem "Seeking" Themis finds a "hidden Sun within my night, | Moon-nectar in my breast, | Star-eye within my inward sight" and bids them turn outward "Till everywhere I see | The Love that dwells within my eyes | Feed all things secretly".

Chandresh Patel has weathered tempests and ridden strong waves in a storm; indeed, he has passed the test in flying colours and the reward is the surprise, the disclosure of the form that is behind them all. Akash Deshpande tells us of the hushed miracle of silver light bestowing sight on vaster sight, and there's the enormous peace with a fulfilling joy. Suresh Thadani saw with "other eyes" Vishnu of antiquity pervading the air and transcending time and stone, stone that enshrined him and time that bound him in its movement.

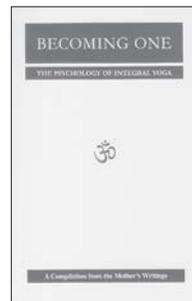
What we have in the present anthology is excellent promise. There are often wonderful snippets, with authentic inspiration and expression, but they do not constitute a total poetic experience. Hardly is there a poem which can be said to be a "success", with the power of vision, rhythm and movement, and substance, all coming together and creating a poetic spirit in its full authenticity. Often one senses the poets are in a rush to write out the poem without allowing it to express itself with its native inspiration. A kind of calm, a spiritual calm, a luminous spiritual poise with its receptive silence has to be the support for that to happen and seldom is it present. Yet the aspiring soul of poetry must aspire and the new birth of poetry must take place. How is this going to be?

The anthology concludes with a few excerpts on poetry from Sri Aurobindo, and these could provide the needed guidance. In poetry that aims at perfection there has to be the eternal true substance which is not a product of mental manufacture but comes with the "eternal spirit of Truth and Beauty through some of the infinite variations of

beauty, with the word for its instrument". Then, through the personality of the poet speaks the impersonal spirit of Truth and Beauty. "The essential power of the poetic word is," writes Sri Aurobindo, "to make us see, not to make us think or feel; thought and feeling must arise out of the sight or be included in it, but sight is the primary consequence and the power of poetic speech.... There must be a deeper and more subtle music, a rhythmical soul-movement entering into the metrical form and often overflowing it before the real poetic achievement begins." There has to be the "direct call of three powers, inspiration, beauty, and delight", and if poetry can bring them to the reader through the rhythmic word, then its essential work is done. If this anthology can urge us towards that then it will have served its purpose well, fulfilling genuinely the condition of what "spiritual poems" should be, the Word expressing itself under the five suns of poetic Truth, Beauty, Delight, Life, and the Spirit.

— R. Y. Deshpande

Deshpande-ji, a research physicist and currently a professor of physics at SAICE, is a published poet and the author of several book-length studies of Savitri, in addition to other prose works. He also served as associate editor of Mother India for several years.



Becoming One
The Psychology of Integral Yoga
— Compiled from the writings of the Mother
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As the title indicates, *Becoming One: The Psychology of Integral Yoga* is about psychology as practical yoga, more specifically, integral psychology as practical integral yoga. The book begins with a sound description of Sri Aurobindo's system of psychological classification; the principal focus is a thoughtful selection of commentaries by the Mother on the psychological nature of being, along with counsel about the need for progressive individualization, its meaning and significance. There is, in addition, an interesting appendix with provocative material on Freudian and Jungian psychology and the

nature of the Shadow, an often misunderstood and undervalued concern that is common to both the yoga of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother and Jungian psychology.

In Western cultures and modern and post-modern cultures everywhere, there is considerable pressure, subtle or otherwise, to seek human meaning in the objective external world where, in fact, it does not exist. What is normally overlooked is the unique, authentic subjectivity of the individual, which is the true location of human meaning and creative renewal of culture. Individualization first requires developing a solid sense of “I”-ness through the development of the thinking and/or feeling ego [function] and reason while becoming an effective center of proactive power, either through ego-centric individualism or individualism with social interest. The development of the true individual, however, surpasses both forms of individualism, and its development requires that one’s energy is directed towards the integration of disparate aspects of one’s nature around the Self or psychic being.

Inasmuch as yoga is practical psychology, integral yoga can be viewed as integral psychology with practical value that, although based on metaphysical truth, is concerned about hard, realistic, day-to-day issues of life. In comparison to the integral psychology of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, other philosophies and paths of yoga and, with one notable exception, psychologies, have not developed a complete and valid classification of the nature of the psyche. In some older traditions such as Advaita, in the world of Ignorance [Avidya], an emerging Knowledge and Consciousness, however imperfect, was either not clearly acknowledged or the implications were not fully developed.

Even if there is now a belief in the reality of the world, either through a new-found path or a re-definition or revision of these traditions, the in-depth understanding of the significance of individuals and their importance for the transformation of society and culture is typically understated and ill understood. There is one psychology of an integral nature from the West that has, in fact, developed into a practical yoga, empirically determining that the psyche is centered on the Self, and that is the psychology of C.G. Jung. In fact, Jung’s psychology is

grounded in metaphysical truths that, although not as well differentiated as the metaphysical position of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, have many points in common. Most importantly, there is in common a cosmic centre that includes both unity and multiplicity, which in the end proves that matter and psyche are based on a transcendent unitary reality. Sri Aurobindo and the Mother referred to it as the Supermind, the experiential reality of which has far-reaching implications for the transformation of being. Jung referred to it as the *unus mundus* which, from his observations, has enormous implications for the nature of day-to-day psychological reality and the practice of psychology based on the primacy of the non-dual laws of synchronicity, an acausal connecting principle, while allowing for the secondary truth of causal laws. Not only are individuals the source of creative renewal, they are the source of expressing destructive forces as well. According

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to both the Mother and Jung, the individual human psyche consists of an equal amount of light and dark forces, as does the manifest Deity. The Mother saw the need of separating the shadow from the light and forcefully rejecting the shadow, although allowing for the possibility of its eventual

transformation. For her, the shadow represents unacceptable formations and emotions that contradict one’s spiritual ideals. Sri Aurobindo referred to the Evil Persona as the being that attaches itself to a sadhak, which contradicts the spiritual work to be done when one takes up integral yoga.

In the West, Christianity had already forced a radical separation of good and evil to the point that there developed considerable repression and moral intolerance. Thus, the shadow, for Jung, represents inferior qualities that are unadapted, repressed, or forgotten, which do not harmonize with conscious ideals and beliefs about the nature of one’s personality. The first task of individuation, as he defined it, is conscious assimilation of the shadow, which leads to accepting some hitherto repressed qualities along with more conscious self-discipline. Repression leads to perversion and destructive behaviour, while conscious assimilation releases vital energies that can be harnessed for the good.

Sri Aurobindo’s and Jung’s systems of classification of the psyche are comparable, with the former’s earth-centred,

fourfold division into mental, vital, physical, and psychic beings being more conceptually differentiated, the latter's being more imagistic and practical in terms of psychological immediacy. In addition to the shadow, with Jung, there is the psychological problem of assimilation of the anima and animus, the female aspect of the male psyche and the masculine aspect of the female psyche, each of which has its peculiar perversions and difficulties. Consciousness of the anima for men brings greater sensitivity towards women and increases values of relatedness and feeling sensibilities, and artistic creativity. A more conscious relationship to the animus for women brings purpose, strength and courage, spiritual meaning, and differentiated thinking, as well as the ability to relate better to men.

In order to genuinely participate in the creative transformation of the community, there is a need to become conscious of a deepened and heightened relationship to the personified Self, what Jung referred to as the *anthropos*, the symbol that unites the opposites of unity and multiplicity as well as all levels of being from the ordinary person to the spiritually and culturally differentiated. Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, as the avatars of our age, are the most complete embodiments of the *anthropos* and the meaning of evolutionary life in our time. As such, they personify the instinctual and spiritual basis and foundation for creative social interrelatedness in the unfolding new world.

For Jung, the royal road to the unconscious requires relating to the complex, with its archetypal core, and he put prime importance on active imagination for the purpose of engaging this aspect of the psyche for in-depth personality transformation, as did Sri Aurobindo and the Mother with regard to dynamic meditation. He also highly valued dream work and recognized the wisdom of the dream. Dreams, he realized, show the situation as it is from the point of view of the unconscious. According to his empirical findings, their importance lies in that they reveal the compensatory nature of the unconscious vis-à-vis consciousness and can, when understood, add to conscious awareness.

Becoming One: The Psychology of Integral Yoga plays the invaluable role of presenting a differentiated picture of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother's integral psychology and what they mean when they said that yoga is practical psychology. Fully recognizing that the integral yoga is practical integral psychology is an important reminder of

the need to sincerely understand who and what one is and the actual state of one's psychological development. The book has the great merit of not only differentiating Sri Aurobindo and the Mother's integral yoga, but Paulette Hadnagy, the compiler, has also judiciously chosen passages from the Mother's works that are a treasure of practical psychological understanding and food for the soul. She has also made an important contribution to integral psychology by presenting writings on the nature of the Shadow, as well as considerations on the two main fathers of Western psychology, Sigmund Freud and C. G. Jung, especially the latter, by different authors and disciples of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother.

Hadnagy let the Mother speak for herself, with the exception of offering a long clarification on her comments concerning the nature of Freud's superego. She interwove other people's opinions on Jung in relationship to integral yoga and she herself did not hesitate to express her own view on Jung in relationship to Advaita. This format recognizes the value of individuals and their search for understanding, even if they are sometimes contradictory, as well as allowing her to express her devotion to the Mother and Sri Aurobindo. The search for truth is a concert of many voices and individuals play an exceptionally important role in its unveiling.

Although, in general, I am in essential agreement with the different commentators on Jung and his psychology, I did not always find myself in full agreement with the sentiments and expressed opinions. That does not mean that I do not appreciate their comments but rather take any disagreement I might have as an invitation to further refine my personal understanding of integral psychology and Jung's potential contribution to it. Let this book then serve as an important catalyst for individuals in their progressive search for understanding the nature of the requirement for the transformation of both the individual and the community.

— David Johnston, Ph.D.

Dr Johnston has been a psychologist in Canada for the past 17 years. He lived at the Ashram from 1970 to 1974 and has recently visited Auroville on three occasions, making several presentations on Jungian psychology. He has written many essays referring to Jung as well as Sri Aurobindo and the Mother.

In this issue we commemorate the birth centenary of K. R. Srinivasa Iyengar, one of India's noted authors and academics, whose meticulous and thoughtful biographies of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother have long been standard reference works. In the following article, his granddaughter Bhuvana Nandakumar evokes the man, the writer, and the sadhak—and his influence on her life.

Bhuvana, who lives in North Carolina with her family, has a master's degree in physics and an M.B.A. in Non-profit Management. She serves on the board of trustees of the Matagiri Sri Aurobindo Centre in New York and as president of the Foundation for World Education.

My Thatha, K. R. Srinivasa Iyengar

When people in the United States ask me how and when I “came to the Yoga”, I say, “It happened many many years before I was born”. I feel strongly about this because many decades ago, my grandfather, K. R. Srinivasa Iyengar was chosen by Sri Aurobindo and the Mother to follow their path. For me, it “just happened”.

For the world of scholarship in general, and Aurobindonians in particular, K. R. Srinivasa Iyengar was perhaps an overwhelming personality. For my siblings and me he was just our dear Thatha, who could always be seen reading something or scribbling away in his notebook while counting syllables on his fingers. If we did draw close to him, he would give us his time happily and draw little pictures of cats and mice on cards for us or help us find words to rhyme when we had dreams of becoming poets. He would express delight if we brought home a school prize won for reciting lines from Shakespeare or Sri Aurobindo.

As I grew up, I realized that he was more than an elderly person usually seen typing, hunched over his rosewood table. From what he told me about the Sri Aurobindo Ashram in Pondicherry, a great desire blossomed in me that I should study in the school there. My mother wrote to Parubai Patil, then the Registrar, but Parubai dissuaded her, saying the high

school years were not the right time to get integrated into the Ashram system and that I should instead wait till I had finished college and then join. A chance visit to the Sri Aurobindo Ashram Delhi Branch eventually led to my joining there as an Ashramite in 1991, immediately after I completed my studies. Thatha was delighted about this move and strongly encouraged me to make the best use of the resources available there to develop my individual personality. I visited my grandparents several times while I was an Ashramite and they were always eager to hear of news from there. Thatha also shared with me information on the lives of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother and their great disciples like Nolinida, Amal Kiran and Surendra Nath Jauhar (Chachaji). These stories inspired me to follow their path.

One day I asked him: “How did you come to write about the Master and the Mother?” “Paru’s father was the original cause”, he replied and remained silent for a while. Then the words came out in a torrent. Originally, he did not know much about Sri Aurobindo except that he had written poetry, led the nationalist faction of the Congress in the first decade of the century, had been jailed and acquitted for his role in the independence movement, and moved to Pondicherry to live in seclusion. Thatha was teaching English at Lingaraj College, Belgaum, and wished to write about Sri Aurobindo



Professor K. R. Srinivasa Iyengar
with his family

as part of his new book, *Indo-Anglian Literature*. He knew Parubai's father Shankargauda Patil from his work at the college and requested him to provide some information about Sri Aurobindo. In answer he received a copy of Sri Aurobindo's *Collected Poems and Plays* and was quite overwhelmed. "I set to work at once on my assessment of Sri Aurobindo and whereas I had originally intended to give a line or two, at the most a paragraph to Sri Aurobindo, now I devoted a whole chapter to 'Aurobindo Ghose'." Shankargauda Patil sent the chapter, titled "Renascent Bengal", to Sri Aurobindo, who read it and permitted its publication.

Thatha was then inspired to write a full-scale biography of the Master. Sri Aurobindo went through two versions of the manuscript, in 1943 and 1944, made corrections and comments and gave his approval. Most of his comments were published in

Sri Aurobindo on Himself and on the Mother in 1953, reprinted in *On Himself: Compiled from Notes and Letters* in 1972, and are now included in *Autobiographical Notes and Other Writings of Historical Interest* (2006). Thatha's biography *Sri Aurobindo* was first published in 1945 and gained him wide recognition. Twenty-five years later, he made massive revisions to his work while staying at the Sri Aurobindo Ashram Delhi Branch. The biography was republished as *Sri Aurobindo: A Biography and a History* on 15th August, 1972. Later on when I joined the Ashram, it was a great privilege to see the tiny room in which Thatha had lived and worked and been looked after with loving care by dear Chachaji. I have always marveled at his description of Sri Aurobindo:

His Sun-like effulgence shot out in many directions and made its mark everywhere,

K. R. Srinivasa Iyengar was born on April 17, 1908, at Sattur in Ramanathapuram District of Tamil Nadu and had his high school education at M. D. T. College, Tirunelveli, and his collegiate education at St. Xavier's College, Palayamkottai. His postgraduate study was at the University of Madras (M. A., 1932; D. Litt., 1939). In a teaching career spanning more than fifty years, he taught at Chithambara College, Vavettiturai, Sri Lanka; Lingaraj College, Belgaum; Basaveshvar College, Bagalkot, and was University



Professor and Head of the Department of English at Andhra University from 1947 to 1966. In 1959 he was Visiting Professor of Indo-Anglian Literature at the University of Leeds. He also held numerous positions of importance in diverse fields, as Vice-Chancellor, Andhra University (1966–1968); Vice-President (1969–1977) and Acting President (1977–1978) of the Sahitya Akademi, New Delhi; *Adhistatha*, Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Delhi Branch (1969); Member, Executive Committee of Sri Aurobindo Society,

Pondicherry (1976–1986); President, All India English Teachers' Conference, Jaipur (1963); Member, Governing Body, Central Institute of Advanced Study, Simla (1970–1979); and Chairman, Madras Chapter, World Conference of Religion for Peace (India). Professor Iyengar wrote extensively on British, American and Commonwealth literatures, comparative aesthetics and the spiritual heritage of India. He was also a poet in English, choosing his themes mainly from India's great heritage of classical heroes and heroines. Author of more than forty books and hundreds of essays, he was also well known for his authentic biographies of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother.

The following books by K. R. Srinivasa Iyengar are available from SABDA:

Sri Aurobindo: A Biography and a History (Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education, Pondicherry, Fifth edition 2006, 843 pp., Rs 400)
On the Mother: The Chronicle of a Manifestation and Ministry (Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education, Pondicherry, Third edition 1994, 924 pp., Rs 375)

clearing the mists, cleansing, destroying, revitalising, transfiguring, and what was brick before now became charged with new life and what was mere tinsel came to be alchemised into gold. The period of his active participation in politics was but a few years; but both before and after, Sri Aurobindo sent out creepers of influence far and wide, not the less effective although this action was not open, or was encompassed only through means other than material.

The biography was reissued for the fifth time in 2006 and we are increasingly realizing that somewhere in the depths, Sri Aurobindo is influencing the world to prepare for the next future. I am not surprised at the book's popularity. Thatha's style is easy to read even though it is packed with information and analysis.

I remember my grandmother saying that it was a difficult time for Thatha when he lost vision in one eye. He still insisted on doing all the reading, writing and typing on his own. But his faith in the Mother was total when he took up the project of revising his biography of the Mother, which was first published in 1952 as *On the Mother*. In 1973 he wrote to Nolinida praying for the Mother's permission and blessings to start the revision. Nolinida conveyed the Mother's blessings and wrote: "It is more difficult (than writing the biography of Sri Aurobindo), to be sure; but with the Mother's Grace, you will come out of it brilliantly." I am glad to add here that my mother has given me this letter and the *prasad* sent on that day as a precious gift of guardian grace. *On the Mother: The Chronicle of a Manifestation and Ministry* (1978) has been widely acclaimed as a perfect companion volume to his biography of Sri Aurobindo. Thatha was awarded the Sahitya Akademi Prize for the book. In those days, movies in theaters would be preceded by



newsreels. I clearly remember us going – not once but twice – to a theater in Visakhapatnam, where I was growing up, to see the newsreel that pictured him receiving the prize. The book has been a great help to me personally, drawing me deeper into the Aurobindonian world. The Mother has been a living guardian for me thanks to Thatha's biography. Moments of despair or frustration, which we cannot escape living in today's world, are chased away if I sit with this book.

I recall the excitement over the publication of his three long poems – *The Epic Beautiful* (a translation of the Sundara Kanda of the Ramayana), *Sitayana* (the story of Rama from Sita's view) and *Sati Saptakam* (the saga of seven mothers in Indian mythology). However, for Thatha, his poem *Krishna Geetam* was very special. He had read what seemed like an endless number of books on Krishna: books in Tamil, Sanskrit and English. He had also discovered much about Krishna and Radha from the writings of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. It was fascinating to hear him speak of his poem and how he was going to link Krishna's times with Andal, Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. Sadly, by the time it was published, Thatha had lost his eyesight completely. I remember the day the book came from the publisher and I was honored to read the first few pages aloud to him. This was to be his last work.

As we remember him in this year of his birth centenary, I am very grateful to the Mother that she gave him to us for so many years so that we could learn by observing his simple and dedicated way of life. Whenever I am introduced as the granddaughter of K. R. Srinivasa Iyengar, I feel like a "dwarf standing on the shoulders of a giant", raised up by his distinguished stature.