

# Sabda Newsletter

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Number 18

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## Krishna

O immense Light and thou, O spirit-wide boundless Space,  
Whom have you clasped and hid, deathless limbs, gloried face?  
Vainly lie Space and Time, "Void are we, there is none."  
Vainly strive Self and World crying, "I, I alone."  
One is there, Self of self, Soul of Space, Fount of Time,  
Heart of hearts, Mind of minds, He alone sits, sublime.  
Oh, no void Absolute self-absorbed, splendid, mute,  
Hands that clasp hold and red lips that kiss blow the flute.  
All He loves, all He moves, all are His, all are He!  
Many limbs sate His whims, bear His sweet ecstasy.  
Two in One, Two who know difference rich in sense,  
Two to clasp, One to be, this His strange mystery.

— Sri Aurobindo

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## EDITORIAL

## E-PUBLISHING AND BOOKS

These days the buzz-word — or buzz-letter — in publishing circles, as in all fields of activity, is “e”, for electronic. Simply put an “e” in front of common terms such as publishing, book, catalogue and magazine and somehow people seem to sit up and take note. It sounds so much more savvy and state-of-the-art — “hi-tech” as they say. Or so the perception lies.

On a more serious note, every day one is swamped by articles describing how with the advent of the internet and e-books and multi-media CD-ROMs, offering audio and video clips as well as great flexibility of use, the demand for books could wane. Such is the hype that the expression “the death of the printed word” is already a cliché. Conventional publishers fight back gallantly, dishing out impressive statistics to show that the sales of printed books is not being affected by the electronic onslaught. On the contrary, they say that with internet-based marketing and commerce book sales can actually increase. And so the debate rages on.

The other day an article in *The Hindu* about the London Book Fair (the world's second largest book fair) caught the eye. It spoke of the presence of a “climate of optimism about the future of publishing and the printed word” and how “there was a sense that conventional publishing had finally come out of its (electronic publishing's) shadow”. It went on to say, “At a seminar, the mood was one of quiet acceptance of each other's presence, an acknowledgement that reports of the death of the printed word in the wake of e-publishing were not only exaggerated but based on wrong assumptions.” Most interesting was, “A more detached view, heard in the corridors of the Olympia grand hall, was that in the end, e-publishing would create its own niche — basically academic and reference books — without necessarily displacing the printed word.”

All will agree that the ease and comfort with which one can read a book cannot be matched by reading on a computer screen. After all a computer or even a laptop is not ideally suited to bedside reading and does not have the intimate feel of a book. The e-buffs counter by pointing out that apart from the electronic versions' obvious advantage of being able to store enormous amounts of text and images and the powerful options available for their viewing and manipulation, in the near future light and easily portable “digital books” with flat screens will be widely available which will offer all the benefits of a book and much more. Eye strain? The latest technology, with radiation-free screens, will take care of that too, and reading on them will be as soothing as on paper, they say.

Only time can tell the extent to which these innovative gadgets will replace books. Are practical convenience and comfort the only reasons why books are still preferred? Is there really any possibility of “the death of the printed word” if in the future a digital book can offer every conceivable advantage of a physical book? Perhaps, if the printed word is merely that — the printed word. In other words is a book just a collection of words printed on paper?

When one gathers oneself in quiet concentration and takes a copy of *Savitri* in one's hands, the answer is clear. This “material envelope” of what the Mother described as “The supreme revelation of Sri Aurobindo's vision” can hardly be looked upon as an inert fragment of matter. One can feel the book charged with a power and a presence, perhaps without even reading a word. An unearthly glow radiates from the pages. One is already in the atmosphere of *Savitri*. For words are not merely words. The Mother has said:

Do not take my words for a teaching. Always they are a force in action...

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She elaborates on this theme in a conversation of 6 June 1956:

For, in books of this kind (Mother shows *The Synthesis of Yoga*), books of revelation, there is always an accumulation of forces — at least of higher mental forces, and most often of spiritual forces of the highest knowledge. Every book, on account of the words it contains, is like a small accumulator of these forces. People don't know this, for they don't know how to make use of it, but it is so. In the same way, in every picture, photograph, there is an accumulation, a small accumulation representative of the force of the person whose picture it is, of his nature and, if he has powers, of his powers. Now, you, when you are sincere and have an aspiration, you emanate a certain vibration, the vibration of your aspiration which goes and meets the corresponding force in the book, and it is a higher consciousness which gives you the answer.

Everything is contained potentially. Each element of a whole potentially contains what is in the whole. It is a little difficult to explain, but you will understand with an example: when people want to practise magic, if they have a bit of nail or hair, it is enough for them, because within this, potentially, there is all that is in the being itself. And in a book there is potentially — not expressed, not manifest — the knowledge which is in the person who wrote the book. Thus, Sri Aurobindo represented a totality of comprehension and knowledge and power; and every one of his books is at once a symbol and a representation. Every one of his books contains symbolically, potentially, what is in him. Therefore, if you concentrate on the book, you can, through the book, go back to the source. And even, by passing through the book, you will be able to receive much more than what is just in the book.

The Mother often spoke of the consciousness of material objects. The physical apparatus we call a book is the base and material support for the action of the higher knowledge contained in the words of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. Bathed in their Light, the very paper cannot but absorb the Consciousness, partake of the Presence, as it were, thus contributing to enhance the concreteness of the perception on the material plane. A book provides a permanent focal point on this plane for the concentration of the Rays of Light, a centre to house the Spirit. The perception of this characteristic seems to be most striking with old books — as if the constituent matter has absorbed that much more with the passage of time. The hand made paper of the Sri Aurobindo Ashram appears to lend itself especially well to this quality — with its porous nature it seems to take in more than just the elements.

As the Mother states in her conversation, every book carries something of the personality of the author, becomes a repository of his vibrations. Behind all external communication there is an occult exchange of forces. The Mother has said that thoughts are much more potent than what we believe them to be, they are concrete forces that tend towards realisation on the material plane. Thus a book can project the thought and personality of an author much more effectively than the aggregate of the words in it might suggest. Perhaps this is the hidden truth at the root of the perception of a book's "intimate feel", mentioned earlier. After all, surely, there is much more to the Sikh tradition of worshipping the Holy Book, the Guru Granth Sahib, than meets the eye.

What can we say *a propos* of electronic publications? True, this is fundamentally a matter of subjective experience, beyond the scope of rational analysis. Whereas in either form of publishing the words themselves are the same, the framework within which they are fixed in the physical is entirely different. We might say that in a book the content and the physical medium through which the content is perceived by the senses are inseparable, exclusively and inextricably tied to each other. To what extent can the same apply to the various kinds of electronic publications? Is the nature of the electronic form conducive to the same qualities ascribed to books? Or could it be, in a manner of speaking, too temporary, too fleeting, too unstable, too artificially contrived by human

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ingenuity, too dependent on complex ancillary phenomena for its materialisation, simply too flexible, to allow the supporting physical media to play the role of an inanimate *adhara*, so to speak? Or are our "terms of reference" too subjective and too relative to judge the matter at all? The reader may arrive at his own conclusions — let us not split hair on the issue. After all, who knows what the future holds, what forms and means the Spirit will employ to reflect itself in matter. Let it suffice to say that books in their sheer simplicity will always have a unique power to act as instruments for the dissemination of knowledge. And so we come full circle back to our article in *The Hindu*: observers at the London Book Fair may have hit the nail on the head when they referred to e-publishing, with its enormous power and flexibility, creating "its own niche — basically academic and reference books".



### **The Destiny of the Body**

(By Jugal Kishore Mukherjee; Published by  
Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education;  
Price: Rs.150/-, pp.419)

*"The Destiny of the Body" was first published in 1975. The third impression of the book has just been issued in March this year. It is felt appropriate and timely to reproduce here the foreword to Jugal-da's work, for nothing brings out more comprehensively its essence and spirit.*

### FOREWORD

As the Editor of *Mother India*, Monthly Review of Culture, published from the Sri Aurobindo Ashram, I was happy to bring out most of the essays that make up this book. It is not always that an editor comes across plentiful evidence of an

understanding that grows bright  
Gazing on many truths.

Reading the series of studies contributed by Jugal Kishore Mukherjee I could not help being exhilarated not only by the scholarly thoroughness of its knowledge but also by the wide-ranging vitality of its insight.

The theme is one of the most challenging that the mind of man has faced: the evolutionary prospects of the human body. The human body is a bundle of opposites. It combines an ingenious system of interrelated life-serving functions with a fragility of overall balance seeming to invite death through many doors. It has an in-built process of growth, maturity and decline

on the one hand while on the other it has the instinct of an interminable existence as if it wanted to wage constant war against its own mortality. Often it has harboured the mood in which

Life is a long preparedness for death,

but with equal frequency it has sought for an elixir which would banish all frailty from the flesh. Again, although its brain is only one of its numerous organs, it has a concentrated poise there by which it can ponder and affect its own organic processes as well as look behind or beyond them. This curious detachment and freedom shows it to be both subject and object at the same time and therefore the symbolic expression of some truth of physical being which is not exhausted by the present possibilities of living and conscious matter.

There is here a sense of

Infinite riches in a little room –

riches that could transfigure the limited-looking composite of solids, liquids and gases that ordinarily passes as the human body. Philosophers have attempted to understand the self-view and world-view from the brain-box as the result of a presence other than physical within the confines of that composite. They have also tried to explain away the search for the elixir of eternal youth as a misplacement of extra-terrestrial longings within a terrestrial context. "Not here and now but elsewhere and afar is your fulfilment": such has been the refrain of accredited wisdom. And indeed the masters of spirituality have found and revealed the Immortal who abides in the mortal and can fight free of his trammels. But a persistent voice rises from what appears to be mortal, crying: "I too am a god waiting to be found and revealed. Who shall free me from the disguise that disfigures my immortality?"

Jugal Kishore Mukherjee brings the legitimacy of this utterance home to us by various interesting and illuminating routes. His exposition is a reminder to the champions of the spiritual life that the inner divinity is meant not to tear away from the outer form but to awaken that form to a natural kinship with it. It is also a reminder to the champions of the physical life that the ultimate source of this life's full flowering lies in that inner divinity and its awakening touch on matter.

Mukherjee's double reminder catches in a fine crystallisation of the intellect the light which Sri Aurobindo sheds in the closing couplets of two sonnets: *The Guest* and *The Inner Sovereign*. As I have said in the course of some notes on Sri Aurobindo's poems, these couplets –

He hears the blows that shatter Nature's house:  
Calm sits he, formidable, luminous  
and  
Nature in me one day like Him shall sit  
Victorious, calm, immortal, infinite –

summarise most pointedly, by a technique of varying sound-patterns and a few repeated expressions, the two-fold movement necessary to the Aurobindonian Yoga: first the discovery of what the one poem calls "my deep deathless being" which is absolutely independent and then the forceful extension of the inner immortality to what the other poem terms "the blind material sheath" which has so long been accepted as a thrall to limitation and imperfection, mutability and death.

The titles of the paired sonnets are very significant. *The Guest* indicates that the Divine is a grand sojourner, safe by the power of His eternity, in a house not His own, as it were. He lives and acts in it but is yet aloof as well as immune from its gradual break-down at the hands of Time. *The Inner Sovereign* suggests that this same mighty resident is also a master of the house, capable of rebuilding and transforming it into a Nature-image of the perfect Spirit-reality.

Mukherjee's book should serve to carry to the all-scrutinising mind typical of our scientific age the conviction of the body's divine destiny.

Pondicherry, 19.10.1975

K.D.SETHNA  
(Amal Kiran)

## REVIEW

### SEARCH FOR HISTORICAL PRECISION

**Problems of Ancient India** (By K.D.Sethna; Published by Aditya Prakashan, New Delhi; Price: Rs.500/-, hard cover, pp.306)



History, as E.H.Carr has pointed out, is an unending dialogue between the past and the present. Probably this interaction of the past with the present is the cornerstone for sustaining interest in History. *History* is to the society what *memory* is to one's head. It is a generally accepted fact that such knowledge of the past is the foundation for the edifice

of the present as well as for the future. The present book under review, *Problems of Ancient India*, by K.D.Sethna, is thus an example to show as to how the debates on historical themes are never ending streams and they go on by throwing up new insights and new perspectives depending on the contemporary understanding of the past.

Sethna's book, *Problems of Ancient India*, is an interesting enquiry into some significant aspects in the ancient period of Indian History. The author has made some random selection of eleven such aspects and each one is assigned a separate chapter. The topics, though varied, generally revolve round geographical and chronological themes. The book starts with a chapter on the location of Kamboja, in which several theories

connected with the place in the historical setting are discussed. To drive home his point, the author asserts: "D.C.Sarkar is right about his Kamboja on this side of the Hindukush. Agarwala is right about his Kamboja on the other side of the mountain. Both are wrong in ruling out each other's Kamboja. The historical truth is that there were two Kambojas." (p.4)

The question of domesticating of animals by the Aryans is in itself an interesting enquiry. The second chapter of the book is on the domestication of the horse and the use of the spoked wheel-chariot by the Aryans. The author has shown different perspectives in the understanding of the original home of the Aryans, their migrations and the evolution of the wheeled cart they used. He speculates that the sledge carriage must be the prototype of the cart that the Aryans have used. In the chapter on 'Search for Soma', the author demystifies the theory of Mr.Wasson that the divine plant Soma, from which the ancients brewed wine, was a mushroom. Here he has profusely quoted Sri Aurobindo's interpretation of some hymns, to disprove Wasson's theory. In establishing the time of Kalidasa, the author has thoroughly analysed the writings of scholars like R.C.Majumdar, R.D.Bhandarkar, A.S.Altekar, A.D.Pulaskar, B.P.Pande and a host of others. He convincingly connects Kalidasa to the period of Vikramaditya and establishes the latter's reign to start with 57 B.C. The knowledge of metals like iron, copper, etc. in deciding the chronology finds place in the chapter on Rama-Ravana-Lanka.

The author's familiarity in reading into the published inscriptions and journals connected with publication of ancient inscriptions, like *The Indian Historical Quarterly*, etc. is very clear in the chapters like: To Panini's time from Panini's place; The Greco-Aramaic Inscription of Kandahar; etc.

With regard to the veracity of the Ceylonese chronology, the author wants to make litmus tests on the issues like date of the death of the Buddha and comes to the conclusion that the chronicles do not correspond to the prominent contemporary Indian sources. A number of examples are given in support of this view. The way the Imperial Gupta rulers and their times are mentioned in the *Travels of Hiuen Tsang* forms the subject matter of another chapter, in which the dates of Baladitya, Narasimha Gupta and Chandra Gupta I are debated. A large number of Chinese sources are also cited to prove the point of view of the author. In the chapter *The Indica of Megasthenes*, Sethna appears to have declared a virtual wordy war on the opinions expressed by R.C. Majumdar in relation to the observa-

tions made by Megasthenes in his book, *Indica*. He finds fault with Majumdar who was of the opinion that Megasthenes lacked powers of keen observation and therefore his testimonies should not be accepted in their totality.

The entire book, *Problems of Ancient India*, is laced with strong arguments supported by varied sources. K.D.Sethna, who already has to his credit several publications on Ancient India, handles all the "Problems" that he has chosen with great dexterity. The author's urge to arrive at the 'truth' on such problems is also evident. He has commitment to his convictions and this clearly comes up in his work while refuting others' opinions. It should also be said in this context that factual contents in history, more particularly in the ancient period of Indian history, are shrouded in controversies. Diagonally opposite views have been expressed and debated on issues like chronology and geography. These aspects do contribute to the correct understanding of historical occurrences. But historiography in recent decades has undergone a welcome change by underscoring the need to analyse the socio-economic forces which were at work rather than drifting towards mere chronology and things connected to geographical details alone. In other words, we generally tend to search in history the factors which we consider today as the most important ones in society. Therefore, the exercise which K.D.Sethna has undertaken in his book, if only it included such aspects like Society, Economy, Administration, etc., his labour must have yielded much more dividends, as a larger audience would have been benefited by his book.

Though the problem areas chosen by the author and the way his arguments run in defending his line of thinking appear to be quite traditional, his approach is not fanatical. He looks at these issues with an open mind but comes down heavily on the scholars and their views whenever he scores over them. Sethna exhibits his strong loyalty to his own views which he zealously guards with commitment. The entire book, *Problems of Ancient India* is packed with meaningful debates on the issues which the author must have been ruminating for a very long period even before reducing them to writing in the present form. The entire book is well documented. The tenor and the high tide with which the author takes the reader through his work, is sure to evoke interest among the academics as well as the general public.

— K.S.S. Seshan

Professor of History, University of Hyderabad

## RECENT PUBLICATIONS

**Compiled from the Works of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother**

**Reprints from All India Magazine:  
Yogic Equality — The Foundation of Sadhana**  
72 pp., Rs.15.00, ISBN 81-7060-164-9  
**Catastrophes and Accidents**  
40 pp., Rs.15.00, ISBN 81-7060-165-7

**Other Authors****Christalis — A Saga of the Future**

— Georgette Coty  
258 pp., Rs.200.00

A spiritual novel told with vivid imagery to inspire, in young people in particular, a vision of a spiritualised life on earth. Christalis is a boy of light who appears before a woman devoted to the care of homeless children. He offers her his help and shows her “the future of a more harmonious and enlightened existence for earth” and “reveals the vision of a united universe and forecasts the coming of a New Age.” The work is written out of the author’s “sincere desire to offer the gift of hope and trust in the future’s good.”

**Bonne Fête (Janmadin)**

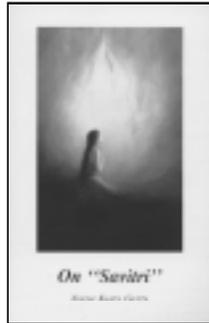
— Nishikanta  
30 pp., Rs.15.00

An English translation of the long poem of Nishikanta in Bengali, “Janmadin”, written in the 1930s.

**On “Savitri”**

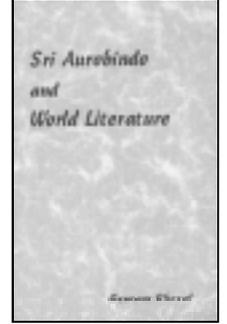
— Nolini Kanta Gupta  
40pp., Rs.40.00  
ISBN 81-7058-628-3

A collection of 6 essays on “Savitri”: Savitri, God’s Debt, Readings in “Savitri”, Notes on “Savitri”, The Opening Scene of “Savitri” and The Human Divine, with a preface by Dr. M.V. Nadkarni.

**Sri Aurobindo and World Literature**

— Goutam Ghosal  
138 pp., Rs.70.00  
ISBN 81-86413-19-7

This book is “another effort to show how Sri Aurobindo may be studied with reference to the great Western writers, most of whom are romantics in a special sense.” These short comparative essays “seek to clarify the Western tradition behind Sri Aurobindo who is returning again to the West, after a hundred years, not just through his philosophy, but also through his poetics...”. The comparative studies cover a wide range of Western poets such as Blake, Wilde, Emerson, Poe, Baudelaire, Petrarch among others.

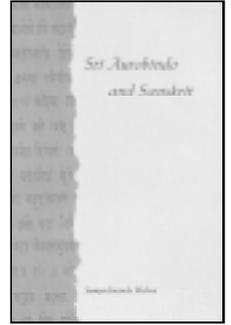
**Sri Aurobindo and Sanskrit**

— Sampadananda Mishra  
118 pp., Rs.50.00  
ISBN 81-7060-159-2

The foreword states, “very little is known about Sri Aurobindo’s knowledge of Sanskrit language and literature, the new insights he has given into its origins, and about his original contributions to it. Though these may not be very large, in comparison to his other writings, they are sufficiently extensive and reveal his great mastery of the Sanskrit language.”

“This book is an attempt to provide a first introduction to this significant but not sufficiently explored topic.”

An overview of Sri Aurobindo’s insight into the Vedas, the Upanishads, the epics and classical Sanskrit literature, as well as of his own original Sanskrit writings, is provided. Selections from Sri Aurobindo’s translations of Sanskrit texts are also included.

**Reprints****The Destiny of the Body — The Vision and the Realisation in Sri Aurobindo’s Yoga**

— Jugal Kishore Mukherjee  
419 pp., Rs.150.00  
ISBN 81-7058-141-9. See Foreword on page 4.

This book deals with one of the most unique and challenging themes that the mind of man has ever faced: The Evolutionary Destiny of the Human Body.

Though apparently a marvellous product of biological evolution man's physical body — with its proneness to disease, its constant subjection to fatigue and inertia, its decaying process and final disappearance at death — is full of limitations. But are these limitations something permanent and insuperable? In this book we have a treatment both metaphysical and scientific based on the profound vision of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother on this most unusual subject.

### **The Integral Yoga of Sri Aurobindo**

— Rishabhchand  
473 pp., Rs.140.00  
ISBN 81-7058-633-X

The author states in the preface to the first edition, "An attempt has been made in this book to present the fundamentals of the Integral Yoga of Sri Aurobindo against the background of the spiritual heritage of India and the incipient, but insistent and irresistible urge in humanity towards a harmonious perfection and fulfilment in life."

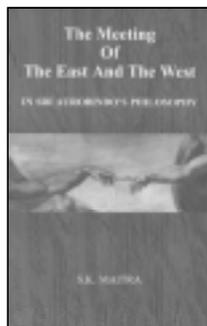
All components of the Integral Yoga are discussed in detail, from the "bases and preliminaries" and "the triple poise of the Mother to whom the aspirant has to surrender" to the integral liberation and transformation.

This book has been reprinted after nearly 30 years.

### **The Meeting of the East and the West in Sri Aurobindo's Philosophy**

— S.K.Maitra  
335 pp., Rs.125.00  
ISBN 81-7058-603-8

A collection of articles and writings on Sri Aurobindo's philosophy, with special emphasis on how Eastern and Western thought have blended in him.



### **Sri Aurobindo – His Life Unique**

— Rishabhchand  
427 pp., Rs.125.00  
ISBN 81-7058-621-6

This biography of Sri Aurobindo was serialised in the Bulletin of Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education from 1960 to 1971, and thus carries the Mother's "seal and sanction". The author could not complete the work, which covers the period till about

1920-21. The publisher's note states regarding the works of Rishabhchand, "One cannot fail to perceive in them an unusual harmony of the intellect's clear thinking, intuition's deep penetration and the spirit's permeating suffusion. They stand out impressively against the background of innate humility and colour gracefully the flow of his style and language."

### **Received from Other Publishers**

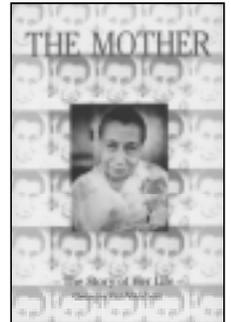
#### **The Mother - The Story of Her Life**

— Georges Van Vrekhem  
545 pp., Rs.495.00 (hard cover)  
ISBN 81-7223-416-3

It is the author's intention "in this biography of the Mother to examine all available material about her life and to present it in a clear, readable way." He "wants to draw the full picture, including the ... so important last years of her life, and even of some reincarnations explicitly confirmed by the Mother herself". The blurb says, "This book is the step by step description of the incredible effort of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo, the cause and base of the accelerated evolution our species and our planet is now subject to. Their vision is presently the sole perspective allowing for the understanding of what awaits humanity in the new millennium".

All in all, a comprehensive and illuminating biography.

*See review on page 10.*



#### **Sadhana – A Guide to Self-Mastery**

— Selections from the Works of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother  
(Edited by Ameeta Mehra)  
128 pp., Rs.120.00

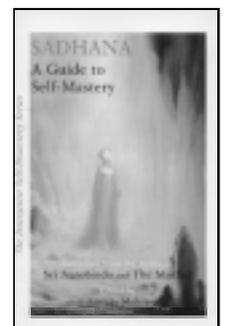
One of four books which form part of a series of compilations from the works of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. They have emerged from workshops and interactive sessions on the concerned subjects, and therefore show a strong practical orientation.

The other 3 books in the series are:

Abhaya: Fear — Its Cause and Cure

Dhyana: Meditation for Inner Growth

Karmayoga: Perfection in Work



**The Four Aspects of the Mother**

Audio cassette: Rs.40.00  
CD: Rs.249.00

Audio recording in the Mother's voice of the following from Sri Aurobindo's work *The Mother*: Chapter VI (03:49 min), Maheshwari (08:28 min), Mahakali (08:06 min), Mahalakshmi (11:03 min), Mahasaraswati (08:51 min), Supramental Mahashakti (18:41 min).



Produced by Hindustan Record.

**Bengali**

Sri Mayer Bani The Mother 90.00

**Gujarati**

Panchamrut Kiritbhai Thakkar 30.00

**Hindi**

Mataji ke Smaraniya  
Samparka Nirodbaran 70.00  
81-86413-18-9

Atimanas ki Aur Sukhvir Arya 50.00

**Kannada**

Agni Sukta Compilation 20.00

Sri Aravindayan Kailas 100.00  
81-7058-622-4

Smruthi Taranga Nolini Kanta Gupta  
& K.Amrita 50.00  
81-7058-629-1

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Kathamanjari The Mother 55.00  
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Surabharati (Part 2) Edited by Narendra  
81-7058-627-5 20.00

**Tamil**

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Sri Aurobindo 50.00

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The Mother 65.00

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Compilation 15.00

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Annaiyudan Serndhu Anma Valarchi Perudal  
The Mother's Correspondence with  
Tara Jauhar 30.00

Malargalum - Avatrin Anmeega Magathuvamum  
Edited by Vijay 55.00

81-7060-163-0

**Telugu**

Sri Aravindula Savitri Lokayatrikudu  
Edited by T. Purnachandra Rao 40.00

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## REVIEWS

**THE MOTHER: The Story of Her Life**

(By Georges Van Vrekhem; Published by Harper Collins Publishers India Pvt Ltd., New Delhi; Price: Rs.495/- (hard cover), pp.xiv + 544)



When my father, K.R. Srinivasa Iyengar, wrote the first biography of the Mother half a century ago, he confessed:

“What did one know about her except that she was the Mother?” During the last five decades, plentiful material on the externalities of her sojourn on earth has been made available. Yet she is the Infinite that may not be comprehended in its entirety. Father’s revised biography to mark the Mother’s birth centenary in 1978 had made a quantitative leap with regard to the size of the volume from a mere 128 demi-octavo pages to 924 quarto pages. And yet, he reminded the reader of the Mother’s warning: “Do not ask questions about the details of the material existence of this body; they are in themselves of no interest and must not attract attention.”

But children will be children and while she remained in the earthly envelope, there were constant interrogations and recordations. The abundant material we now have has itself proved to be a problem for it is easy to misunderstand the Mother’s statements drawn out of context. A corrective is needed for the common man as well as for the aspirant who gets drawn to the Aurobindonian yoga. Georges Van Vrekhem’s *The Mother* brings just the right lesson for the times to understand the Mother’s ways as she strove “to build a little room for timelessness” in this time-bound world. His enviable mastery of the subject on hand has already been successfully demonstrated in *Beyond Man: the Life and Work of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother*. Though the present volume traverses the same time-frame and deals with the same personalities, there is no tiresome repetition. With less of philosophy and more of childlike wonderment, *The Mother* is a delight to handle and read and meditate upon. Written in a style that does not distract the mind with vain questionings, the book literally leads us by the hand to make a *matri-pradakshina* and takes us closer to the presence of our Mother.

One of the important steps in the Mother’s sadhana

was her mastery of occultism. Without knowing the background of her involvement in this aspect, miracle-mongers have been having a field day while projecting Mother’s yoga. Van Vrekhem has devoted considerable space to her “exploration of the Occult” and has explained the various facets of the Cosmic Tradition propounded by Max and Alma Theon. The Theons were not engaged in mere miraculism, though towards the end, Max (who appears to have been the cosmic Asura of Death) fell a victim to self-importance. Their approach to divinise earth failed miserably. The Cosmic Tradition itself has touches of the incarnation theory and speaks of an involution into matter symbolized by the great Creatrix pouring her divine Love into the Inconscient. Anyhow, experiments with occult were given up later by the Mother on the advice of Sri Aurobindo. Van Vrekhem’s inputs in this regard will be valuable for students who explore the symbol realms in *Savitri’s* Books of Eternal Night and the Double Twilight.

So we also journey onwards with Van Vrekhem to note the major events in the Mother’s terrestrial life. Her marriages, the meeting with Sri Aurobindo, experiences in Japan, the united yoga of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother descending from Mind into the Vital and then into Matter. But deep within this darkness was a divine Presence visible to the Mother, an experience noted by Sri Aurobindo in 1908: “When darkness was blind and engulfed within darkness, / He was seated within it immense and alone.”

The descent of Krishna into Sri Aurobindo on 24 November, 1926 (the ‘Siddhi’) marked a new matrix of time. He went into seclusion and Mirra came to be known as the Mother while the Ashram took shape. Van Vrekhem wisely avoids cluttering the narrative with too many details. But there is enough to suggest the Mother’s work as a divine housewife, managing a variety of people drawn together with the single aim of achieving the life divine under the aegis of Sri Aurobindo. She was strict, but not stiff. There were the practicalities of mundane living and spiritual games for the soul’s ascent. There are occasional references to extraordinary happenings (like the sea remaining under her control when the seaside wall of the Park Guest House was under construction) but Van Vrekhem brings us immediately back to the earth. Antonin Raymond, architect of Golconde has described best the Ashram of those days: “Here indeed was an ideal state of existence in which the purpose of all activity was clearly a

spiritual one.” All life is yoga!

The Darshan days were a swirl of spiritual communion. In accordance with his yoga, Sri Aurobindo and the Mother took an abiding interest in earthly matters. The difficulties of the Ashram because of their stand in the Second World War (Mother’s War as Sri Aurobindo described it) and the interventions in political matters apart, what is of great interest to us is the way the Mother went about sculpting the members in the Ashram. She gave the right direction when India became independent by raising the spiritual flag of India that includes Pakistan, Sikkim, Bhutan, Bangladesh, Burma and Sri Lanka. The Mother remained as the Vedic Skambha upholding the morale of the innumerable devotees when Sri Aurobindo withdrew from the physical.

Van Vrekhem has an apt simile to indicate the fifty years when the Mother was engaged in the divine experiment in Pondicherry:

“Looking from a distance at how the Ashram developed, one might say it grew like a beautiful tree; at first planted, watered and protected with great care (the early years); then supported in its growth so that it might form a strong stem in optimal conditions (the ‘very strict’ period); then forming a wealth of branches and leaves (expansion and the coming of the children); then bearing fruit and seed (e.g. Auroville and other developments present and future). An evolutionary revolution is a huge undertaking; what one has seen of the material realization until the present day is only the beginning.”

As the Veda says: *paado asya viswabhootaani tripaadsyaamrutham divi!* Only a quarter of the Aurobindonian vision has been realised; three-fourths are yet to come. Van Vrekhem gives a clear idea of the Mother’s attempts to transform the body cells for compelling an integral evolution, “a self-revelation of the Divinity in things in that true power of itself in Nature which is to us still a Supernature” (*The Life Divine*).

‘The Mother’s reincarnations’ is colourful but not vital to the aspirant while the latter chapters admirably sum up the world-redeemer’s task in the light of *Mother’s Agenda* leading to a concretization of Divin-

ity in the physical cells: “and in that aged body there took shape, little by little, a body consisting of a new kind of substance.” The flaming pioneer had also proved the efficacy of the five-fold principles of the Integral Yoga: unity, surrender, sincerity, equanimity and aspiration.

And yet, the Mother had suffered much physical pain during the last months. Where was the supramentalized body then, asks the doubting gnome fluttering in our minds. Van Vrekhem points out that the Mother herself dismissed notions of her becoming supramentalized for “no earthly being at present could stand the unscreened presence of a supramental being, whose light, being divine, is of a brightness compared to which the light of the sun is dark.” The physical body is a transitional stage in the long journey of evolution. The author’s conclusion using the simile of the pupation of the caterpillar into a butterfly is strikingly apt. Not a death but a change, a change from the dimensions of a crawling world to the dimensions of a flying-world. The process that precedes the change must needs remain a personal experience and hence will have to be inexplicable in terms of blind science. In any case, where is the need to find an explanation?

Since the Mother’s life is also Sri Aurobindo’s life, we have some choice information gathered by Van Vrekhem like the Master being engaged in pranayama for six hours a day in Baroda. And how the Brahmin Champaklal hailing from a family of kathaks, decided to walk to Pondicherry from Gujarat. The sincerity of Champaklal and his two companions was so palpable that a friend sold his wife’s gold ornaments to buy train tickets for them. After all they were going to meet the Golden Purusha in Vedapuri!

The Mother was an incarnation of the Divine Mother as Mahapremi. This much is brought to us by the biographies written by Iyengar, Wilfried, Van Vrekhem and the reminiscences of innumerable disciples like Madhav Pandit, Sahana, Tara. From them we learn that she taught us to be cheerful, fearless, brave and remain tuned to the Infinite. That is all we know and we need to know.

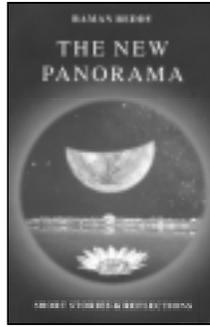
— Prema Nandakumar

*We ourselves are our own Fate through our actions.*

Sri Aurobindo

### The New Panorama

(By Raman Reddy;  
Published by Aurobharati Trust,  
Pondicherry; Price: Rs.60/-,  
pp.138)



The author of *The New Panorama*, Raman Reddy, was brought up in the Ashram as a young boy and passed out of the Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education in 1975. All those who had the Grace and privilege of having lived through those times from such a tender, impressionable age, I think, came out with quite a 'different' attitude and approach to everything. During those times an alchemic magic pervaded the very air that we breathed, everything was part and parcel of a larger vision of things. Spirituality was not a concept that we propounded, an idea that we learnt or juggled with or simply mentalised. Spirituality was suffused, as it were, with the oxygen that quickened our hearts, with the food that nourished our bodies. Yoga was not a mere peg for the intellectual scholar to organise seminars and conferences but it blended perfectly with the everyday living experience of Life itself. It was organic to our lives and served as an ever-present, infallible rudder to our sometimes-rudderless existence. I mention all this merely to illustrate why this book by Raman Reddy is somewhere a reflection of that bringing-up. As he himself mentions in his preface, Yoga to him is 'an *integral* way of life', a 'means of survival'.

Raman peoples his little world, a small library that opens out into a beautiful garden in a tiny town of South India, with simple, everyday characters and their ordinary lives and problems. And to hold this amusing array of characters together he invents Wagner, the hero of his short stories and reflections, a simple German who lives his everyday, tranquil existence in this world to the rhythm of a bygone era of laidback, innocent but perfectly well-centred poise and charm. From this state of happy equilibrium the solution to any problem, the untying of any knot, seems so very easy and self-evident. And therefore whoever comes in contact with him goes back with a little 'revelation' of the simple Truth of existence that leaves him 're-centred' and at peace with himself. Against this same utter simplicity and

inner poise, the razmatazz and self-righteous mutterings of the mind and the vital appear totally ludicrous. The solutions to our life's problems are, indeed, as Wagner points out, so very straightforward. How stupid and laughable we look as we go about strutting and fretting with our self-created mountains of burdensome life. And so we meet in this 'new panorama' the Scholar who leaves his books aside to re-discover the wonder that is Life as he is mesmerised into a thrilling, tranquillising identification with the goldfish in Wagner's pond, the Chartered Accountant who finds the cure for what he thought was an incurable skin-disease, the day he dumps 'desire' for money out of his system, Bhooswamy Naidu in search of the mantra of Moksha, who realises that 'bhoga' or the true enjoyment of life is still the best 'yoga' for him, Bokanath Bhootnath Bipode Mitranath Mukherjee, a 'battle-scarred warrior of endless inner wars', who is unable to gain entry into Heaven before the judgment of a narrow-minded, technology-infatuated jury but then whom Ganesha warmly ushers in on the strength of Bokanath having found his way to Heaven, Nawabsingh who suddenly finds new Life after his newfound reconciliation with Death. We have the amusing spectacle of rivalry between Bhishon Bhashon, the 'champion of 'jogo' (yoga), and Jaimon Thaimon, the founder of the World Wide Spiritual Society, who sabre-rattle their way to political extinction in their search for the redemption of humanity.

What runs through all these stories and reflections is a glint of mischievous laughter, a gentle, tongue-in-cheek humour. Isn't this the most delightful, the most loving and lovable aspect of our fun-loving, Ananda-filled Creator? Here is a world then of terrible 'suffering' and 'sorrow' you can laugh yourself free from into veritable 'moksha'!

*The New Panorama* is not a book that can be classified in any conventional category of our Ashram publications but it is most pleasurable readable because behind the apparent 'buffoonery' of these diverse, colourful characters one can hear the Divine chuckle prodding us happily on to a greater awareness of ourselves in this marvellous lila of human existence.

— Maurice Shukla

*All power is in the end one, all power is really soul-power.*

Sri Aurobindo

## Management with a Difference

( By Dr. G.P. Gupta; Published by Sri Aurobindo Institute of Research in Social Sciences, Sri Aurobindo Society, Pondicherry; Price: Rs.40/-, pp.72)



The Indian economy is undergoing substantial changes with reforms and globalisation. Concepts like growth, profitability, productivity, competition have become key features of organisations. Does this mean that the welfare of the people has been pushed down the priority list? How do we develop organisations based on human capital and sound values and still achieve high growth rates? For this, a new approach in the field of management is to be adopted. This book contains four articles outlining and charting the development of such an approach.

The first chapter “Management by Consciousness” establishes that modern management is materialistic, professional but soulless instead of being a ‘lever’ for higher life. The result is deterioration of society and loss of dignity of man. A fresh thinking is therefore necessary by putting people first. It is to be a yoga in management by recognising that there is something beyond mind and shifting its base from mind to consciousness. In order to follow the consciousness approach, the author has explained how the top executive of an organisation may adopt steps like aspiration, consecration, self-introspection, meditative silence and develop a programme that takes care of men, materials, machineries, methods and money.

The second chapter “Changing Values in Business” deals with the question of attitude and approach and suggests methods of formulating the attitude towards business, humanising the organisation and interiorising the management.

The chapter “Emerging Dimensions of Business” focusses attention on the dignity of man and the aggregate welfare of society in a new social order. This is to be based on spirituality, vision, quality and teamwork.

The last chapter “The Mother’s Ministry of Management” is an attempt to study how the Mother managed the Ashram and its various units. It shows that in Her management process, consciousness was Her approach, harmony was Her tool, perfection was Her aim.

The book bounds along with a lot of quotations from the writings of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. About this book, readers who are well aware of modern

management practices may say that it is a collection of old articles written in 1992-1993. Some current studies indicate that the development of human resources is increasingly getting the prime importance with people policies and value management becoming the mantras of leading and successful organisations. However, this book can introduce an uninitiated reader to some insightful thinking and add a new dimension to his understanding of management.

On a wider, global scale, India with its rich, ancient spiritual knowledge and wisdom should take a lead and show to the world how a unique blend of technological innovations and spiritual values can be woven through dedicated work into the very texture of human life leading to social and economic progress of all people. Several current developments provide such an opportunity to us. The e-development and internet can be widely used to spread education and provide equal opportunity to the depressed and deprived people and lead to their upliftment. The use of biotechnology and the genomic revolution for better quality and quantity of agriculture and also better health, combatting of diseases and longevity for people is another area. Similarly, use of new electrical and electronic appliances and labour-saving devices would give enough free time to individuals to look at some of the finer aspects of life.

We must assure that these material and economic developments do not get lost as soulless gains. These are to be seen as works of higher forces of Nature through man. Life is to be made more meaningful. The tenets of love, harmony, peace, unity are universal which are to be cultivated with virtues such as gratitude, steadfastness and faith.

Corporate India is well poised to play a greater role. We do have many great organisations, ideals and people. The onus is on the Chief Executive who, with a vision, can transform through his aspiration and sincere action the entire inner and outer spectra of human life into a higher, loftier purpose while simultaneously harnessing the full potential of new technologies. He has to create the right culture and values and nurture his organisation into a wonderful, people-oriented one, make it sustainable and form the basis to collaborate with higher forces of light. Surely, there will be many sceptics to say that this is not realisable. Let them not forget that the Taj Mahal is not only a material or physical wonder; much more than that it is a symbol of love and beauty as its foundation.

— Apurva Joshi

### Perspectives of Savitri – Volume I

(Edited by R.Y. Deshpande;  
Published by Aurobharati  
Trust, Pondicherry;  
Price: Rs.300/-, pp.555)



“All the rest, these are preparations, but *Savitri*, it is the message”<sup>1</sup>, the Mother is reported to have said about *Savitri*. She is also quoted as having said, “To read *Savitri* is indeed to practice Yoga, spiritual concentration; one can find there all that is needed to realise the Divine.”<sup>2</sup> Little wonder then that such a varied enterprise seems to be developing around this single work – a Center of study and display devoted to *Savitri*, a web-site not tardy in populating cyberspace with its growing exegetical and exhibitionary paraphernalia, several known and unknown aspirants to the identity of presenters of the epic as popular expression on celluloid, increasing numbers of musicians, artists, dramatists, choreographers, dancers, poets utilizing it as source of inspiration, many roving interpreters. Under these circumstances, it becomes not merely important, but imperative, to excavate the contexts of *Savitri*, its bases in tradition, spirituality, culture, biography, experience. This, not only to make the epic more accessible but to protect its integrity, resist its possible appropriation and circulation by traffickers of a miasmatic new-age or worse still, as cult-object, concretized icon in a religion of rote. The lapse of meaning in the bazaars of social intention deflects the focus of the Mother’s words, so that the material object *Savitri* becomes the metonymic substitute of its context – the one commodity possessing which our efforts can be put at rest, repeating whose lines can take the place of inner awareness and practice, opening whose pages at random can yield to us secret fortune cookie messages by which to succeed in the onepmanship of the everyday.

Of course, *Savitri* itself resists such use, its sheer integrality standing in the way of misappropriation, but this only when we have tried sincerely to establish a relationship with it, to feel its life invade our lives. Such an attempt can unlock the self-revealing mantra and bring understanding and spiritual growth in spite of our ignorance. But for a fullness of its embrace, the injunction in A.B. Purani’s words is worth heeding: “*Savitri* demands a certain minimum capacity of vision in addition to a broad cosmopolitan enlightened outlook familiar with the latest advances in several

branches of human knowledge.”<sup>3</sup> These would form what I have called the contexts of *Savitri*. And I would add - a firm grounding in the theoretical and practical aspects of Sri Aurobindo’s spiritual *darshan*, his philosophy and yoga and a knowledge of the facts of Sri Aurobindo’s and the Mother’s lives, so as to detect the pointers to the inner events of those lives “not lived on the surface for men to see.” In this respect, it is welcome indeed to come across a book such as *Perspectives of Savitri - I*, a substantial retrospective of interpretative writing on the epic by what the editor of the anthology, R.Y. Deshpande, calls “the first generation authors... many of [whom] came directly in contact with Sri Aurobindo and therefore in them is the glow of intimacy providing a rarer personal feeling...”<sup>4</sup>

The book is divided into six sections. Deshpande points to “internal affinity”<sup>5</sup> as being the principle for the grouping of articles in these sections, but in his otherwise illuminating introduction, he fails to clarify the specifics of this affinity, which are not always obvious. Nor is there any introduction to the authors, which might, once more, have served contextual purposes. The one other complaint one is forced to express is the poor proofing, leading to serious and numerous typographical errors, marring the excellence of its contents. These apart, the work brings together such a wealth of material of unflinching literary and interpretative quality, that I feel its reading is a must to anyone who has any interest in *Savitri*.

The book opens with three of Sri Aurobindo’s own letters written to K.D. Sethna, clarifying his intention in writing the epic and explaining some of the technicalities of the mantric overhead aesthesis which runs through it. This is followed by the Mother’s conversation with Mona Sarkar, where she spells out the inner magnificence, spiritual efficacy and uniqueness of *Savitri* from among Sri Aurobindo’s entire corpus. These two articles compose the first section of the book. Apart from these, and from Kapali Sastry’s Sanskrit translation of Canto I of *Savitri*, it is Nirodbaran’s historical account of the composition of the epic (in the last phase of which he played the crucial scribal role) that stands out by the singularity of its content.

Most other articles revolve around one or both of two concerns: the spiritual content of *Savitri* and its literary contribution. Not that these are mutually exclusive, its mantric aesthesis an inseparable part of its spiritual “message”, and several writers (Purani, Dilip Roy, Srinivasa Iyengar, Deshpande, Jyotipriya, Sisirkumar Ghosh) have been sensitive to the central-

ity of poetic valence to its overall meaning. A predominant number of articles provide the very valuable function of outlining the fundamental narrative structure of the story, bringing out thereby the broad lines of its “drama of integral self-realisation”<sup>6</sup> through judicious and eloquent quotes. The question of the original content of Vyasa’s story in the Mahabharata and Sri Aurobindo’s modifications thereof is dealt with in several of these approaches, but most completely in Deshpande’s essay. The biographical context, equating Savitri with the Mother and Sri Aurobindo with Ashwapathy and in places, with Satyavan, is also addressed in several of these essays, but as Srinivasa Iyengar points out, these “parallels should not be taken all the way”. Sri Aurobindo takes an ancient story as the motif of a recurrent symbol, its temporal and spatial specificity always present, yet always hazed with echoes from other spaces and times. Ashwapathy, Savitri, Satyavan, like the Symbol Dawn, repeat in history and prefigure the future brought by Sri Aurobindo and the Mother; yet this is an earlier cycle of the spiralic progression, “when the whole thing had to be opened up for man”, and the resulting play of past, present and future contributes to its overarching spiritual sense. A few articles focus on the content of specific movements in the poem: Nolini’s Upanishadic sensibility and Madhav Pandit’s exhaustive approach offering mystic insights into the first canto; while Madhusudan Reddy outlines masterfully the sequences of Savitri’s own yoga and Rohit Mehta draws out the passionate spiritual drama and rich significance of Savitri’s dialogue with Death. Relative to Prof. Reddy’s exposition, the yoga of Savitri, though containing in itself invaluable esoteric knowledge for the inner processes in any individual’s yogic journey, is seen as metaphysically far more than this, the rare inner record of an avatar’s process of self-revelation. Indeed, Ashwapathy’s yoga can be seen in a similar light, and a specific discussion of this would have been a most valuable addition to *Perspectives of Savitri*. But perhaps, such a revelation waits in *Perspectives II*.

However, several authors have taken a formalist and technical approach to the text as an epic poem and these articles are mostly grouped in Section II. Producing very interesting analyses of its imagery, similes, diction, symbolism, Overmind stylistics or epic qualities, these essays point to a new poetry and poetics established by Sri Aurobindo in the English language, what he himself has called “the future poetry”. Indeed, *Savitri* appears as an enigma in the field of contemporary poetry and its critical norms, paralleling naturally the enigma represented by Sri Aurobindo himself as a

modern personality. Several articles dwell on the place of *Savitri* as an epic in world literature and in doing so, address the supposition that epics are no longer possible in modern poetry. The modern sensibility is receptive only to the short passionate or reflective intensities of the lyric; moreover the dwarfing of modern humanity by a global technological, economic and political apparatus distances the grandeurs and totalisms of the epic to a remote and early age of human leisure and expectation. The responses in these essays to this charge of anachronism are various, but the root of the phenomenon is left untouched in all of these - i.e. the challenge represented by the author of *Savitri* himself to the social psychology of the modern. Purani’s comparative discussion of epic form stands out for its analytical insight: he marks a difference between the early epic of Homer, Valmiki or Vyasa, where a vast and complex outward action is the subject; and the departure towards subjectivism introduced by Dante and strengthened in Milton. *Savitri* could be seen as a modern efflorescence of this trend, an inner epic of spiritual integrality and vastness. Romen’s comparative study of *Savitri* and Milton’s *Paradise Lost* is another outstanding work in this genre, noteworthy for its elucidation by contrast of the special qualities expressed by spiritual consciousness.

V. K. Gokak’s exposition of *Savitri*’s diction begins in response to P. Lal’s modernist incomprehensions of the poem’s spiritual synonyms - vast, infinite, eternal, illimitable.... The defense is somewhat futile, since as Sri Aurobindo himself points out in a letter to Sethna, these epithets or nouns refer to things real and concrete to the spiritual sense and experience, but seem like dated romantic poetisms to those unvisited by the touch of the Spirit. Gokak concludes his essay with a very illuminating analysis of stylistic variety in *Savitri* - with examples of a high watermark in narrative, dramatic, reflective (antithetical/metaphysical/intuitive/allegorical) and expository passages. He also relates these to Sri Aurobindo’s own stylistic classification in *The Future Poetry* - the adequate, the dynamically effective/rhetorical, the metaphorical/illuminative, the intuitive/revelatory/inspired/inevitable. Of Sethna’s two articles, the most outstanding feature to my mind was his detailed technical exploration of the Overmind aesthesis - particularly the elaborate discussion of that mantric window into nuclear fission:

“The riven invisible atom’s omnipotent force.”<sup>7</sup> Ruud Lohman’s lapidary insight into the detailed architectural perfection of the poem and its cosmicity even in this aspect (brought out through an astrological symbolism), though grouped in Section III of the

book, belongs in reality to the genre of poetical technique (Section II).

All in all, as mentioned earlier, this book (and its upcoming companion volume) is indispensable to all students of *Savitri* - both for the loving fullness of the relationship and as a necessary corrective to misinformed appropriations and cultist practice.

— Debashish Banerji

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1. The Mother, *Mother's Agenda Vol. IV*, 1979, p.86.
2. R.Y. Deshpande, ed., *Perspectives of Savitri-I*, Pondicherry, 2000, p.45.
3. Ibid., p.100.
4. Ibid., p. lviii.
5. Ibid., p. lix
6. Ibid., pp. 419-28.
7. Ibid., p. 194, quoting from Sri Aurobindo, *Savitri: a Legend and a Symbol*, 1972, p.255.

## LIGHTS FROM SRI AUROBINDO

### LIBERATION

The liberation from ego, the liberation from desire together found the central spiritual freedom. The sense, the idea, the experience that I am a separately self-existent being in the universe, and the forming of consciousness and force of being into the mould of that experience are the root of all suffering, ignorance and evil. And it is so because that falsifies both in practice and in cognition the whole real truth of things; it limits the being, limits the consciousness, limits the power of our being, limits the bliss of being; this limitation again produces a wrong way of existence, wrong way of consciousness, wrong way of using the power of our being and consciousness, and wrong, perverse and contrary forms of the delight of existence. The soul limited in being and self-isolated in its environment feels itself no longer in unity and harmony with its Self, with God, with the universe, with all around it; but rather it finds itself at odds with the universe, in conflict and discord with other beings who are its other selves, but whom it treats as not-self; and so long as this disaccord and disagreement last, it cannot possess its world and it cannot enjoy the universal life, but is full of unease, fear, afflictions of all kinds, in a painful struggle to preserve and increase itself and possess its surroundings,— for to possess its world is the nature of infinite spirit and the necessary urge in all being. The satisfactions it gets from this labour and effort are of a stunted, perverse and unsatisfying kind: for the one real satisfaction it has is that of growth, of an increasing return towards itself, of some realisation of accord

and harmony, of successful self-creation and self-realisation, but the little of these things that it can achieve on the basis of ego-consciousness is always limited, insecure, imperfect, transitory. It is at war too with its own self, — first because, since it is no longer in possession of the central harmonising truth of its own being, it cannot properly control its natural members or accord their tendencies, powers and demands; it has not the secret of harmony, because it has not the secret of its own unity and self-possession; and, secondly, not being in possession of its highest self, it has to struggle towards that, is not allowed to be at peace till it is in possession of its own true highest being. All this means that it is not at one with God; for to be at one with God is to be at one with oneself, at one with the universe and at one with all beings. This oneness is the secret of a right and a divine existence. But the ego cannot have it, because it is in its very nature separative and because even with regard to ourselves, to our own psychological existence it is a false centre of unity; for it tries to find the unity of our being in an identification with a shifting mental, vital, physical personality, not with the eternal self of our total existence. Only in the spiritual self can we possess the true unity; for there the individual enlarges to his own total being and finds himself one with universal existence and with the transcending Divinity.

— Sri Aurobindo  
(*The Synthesis of Yoga*, pp. 679-680)