

Recent Publications

S a b d a



Dyumanbhai in the 1940s

The Mother used to have meetings with some of the disciples in 1928 in the “Prosperity” Room in the Library House. Both Dyuman and I belonged to that group.

Once the Mother raised the question: “Who among you has progressed the most during the past year?”

The answer would not mean which sadhak or sadhika was the most advanced in general. It would declare which one had taken the most marked step forward during the preceding twelve months.

While recollecting this question, I turned to Dyuman and asked whether it had struck in his memory too. He said “Yes”. Then I asked him whether he recalled the answer. He looked at me but kept quiet. I smiled and said: “We thought of Nolini, Amrita, Champaklal, Pavitra and Anilbaran, all old timers. But the Mother named you.” Dyuman’s face beamed and he exclaimed: “So you remember this?”

I replied: “Who could forget so great a compliment?”

— Amal Kiran

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DYUMAN “THE LUMINOUS” — *Karmayogi*

Krishna Chakravarti

Dyuman-da or Dyumanbhai, as he was popularly known, was one of the sadhaks who moulded himself in the light of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. His life is an example of selfless and relentless work in Their service. Let us pay our respect to him on his centenary on 19th June 2003, and remember him in fondness and be grateful for all that he has done for Them and for us.

Krishna Chakravarti completed her Higher Course from the Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education in 1966. She was assigned to work at the Central Office by the Mother and continues to work there today. From 1969 to 1992 she was in regular contact with Dyumanbhai, who was closely connected to the Central Office. Her reminiscences are partly based on How They Came to Sri Aurobindo and The Mother (Volume I) by Shyam Kumari.

Occasionally, late at night, one would observe an interesting and amusing sight inside the Ashram main building. The Mother would call from Her room on the first floor, “Dyuman!” Instantly, a man in his early thirties would rush out of his room below with a ladder in his hands, place it near the open terrace of his room, climb it and announce, “Yes, Mother. I am here.” He did this so he would not lose time using the staircase (which was further away from his room) and then cross the corridor to reach the Mother. Should one keep the Divine waiting! The Mother would ask him some questions or give him some instructions and he would climb down the ladder, go back to his room, and carry out Her wishes. Thus was the magnitude of his devotion, dedication and urge to serve.

Chunibhai Desai bhai Patel was known as *Dyuman* — the luminous one — the name given to him by Sri Aurobindo. The Mother found him to be a wonderful worker when She met him for the first time. He joined the Ashram at the age of twenty-four (in 1927) and till his passing at the age of eighty-nine, he assisted, managed, and laboured for its growth and prosperity. This devotion

was reflected clearly in a letter written by Sri Aurobindo in 1936 when replying to an inmate of the Ashram: “If Dyuman and a few others had not made themselves the instruments of the Mother and helped her to reorganise the whole material side of the Ashram, the Ashram would have collapsed long ago under the weight of mismanagement, waste, self-indulgence, disorder, chaotic self-will and disobedience. He and they faced unpopularity and hatred in order to help her to save it.”

He came from Gujarat, the land where the Narmada, one of the seven holy rivers flows and meets the sea. During the formative years of the Ashram, many sadhaks including Champaklalji, Puraniji and Pujalalji flocked around Sri Aurobindo and the Mother to further their *tapasya* for attainment to Supramental yoga and also laid the foundation of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother’s vast and daring work. Dyuman, the *karmayogi*, was one of the pillars on whose selfless work and faithfulness the Ashram grew to its present stature.

Born on 19th June 1903 in Napada village near Anand, Gujarat, at the age of eight he was called away from school and married to Kashi-ba, also eight. When he was eleven, he realized that his life was not to be an ordinary one, but was meant for something higher. Since then, an unknown force guided his life. He was restless and kept searching for some-



Dyumanbhai at the Central Office

thing without knowing what it was or where to find it. He travelled all over the country, went to Shantiniketan and Belurmath and when he came back home, he also met Gandhiji. He also came to know Lele, but his thirst was not quenched. Little did he know then that his destiny lay south, beyond the Vindhya, on the eastern shore of India, in a small town under French rule, lulled by the chant of the blue waters of the Bay of Bengal.

Bhakti-ba, a relative of Kamalaben, was aware of

His inner contact with the Mother was such that he could draw her out of the deepest trance. This I was told by Udar in connection with the last hours of Sri Aurobindo. The Mother had gone away to rest sometime before the end was expected, so that Sri Aurobindo might have a passage free of the Mother's constant inevitable impulse to prevent him from his contemplated self-sacrifice to effect a radical step forward for the earth-consciousness. Dyuman was sent to call her inwardly out of her trance into which she had gone in the interval — between her leaving Sri Aurobindo's side and his taking his last breath. Without a whisper or a touch he is said to have informed her of the need to go back to Sri Aurobindo's room.

— Amal Kiran

Chunibhai's restlessness. When she returned after visiting Pondicherry, she told him, "Your place is not here with us, but at the feet of Aravinda Babu in Pondicherry." Chunibhai forgot everything else — even Ramakrishna and Vivekananda, whom he revered — only one name filled his whole being: *Pondicherry*. He had heard of Sri Aurobindo in 1920 and had already started reading *Arya*, and *The Secret of the Veda*. In his school, his boy-scout troop was called "Aravinda troop." Finally, Bhakti-ba got permission from Sri Aurobindo and arranged for his journey to Pondicherry. Chunibhai and his wife Kashi-ba reached Pondicherry on 11th July 1924.

They both had the Darshan of Sri Aurobindo in the Library House. Chunibhai told Him that he had come here for Yoga and Sri Aurobindo talked to him about it for about an hour. His ears heard every word and in his heart Chunibhai replied, "You are my all. This is my life, this is my home." Kashi-ba offered her gold bangles at the feet of Sri Aurobindo. One offered his life and the other her precious possession. That was the end of Chunibhai's search. At last he had found his home — his Guru — his life's fulfillment.

They went back to Gujarat after two months. Chunibhai wrote to Sri Aurobindo every week seeking the Guru's permission to stay permanently in the Ashram. The long wait finally ended when he came to the Ashram permanently in May 1927. He left behind his parents, his wife, and the non-cooperation movement of Gandhiji. He even left his fight for the freedom of India. The moment he joined the Ashram, he no longer felt the pull of all his old connections.

He met the Mother for the first time in 1927. Her remark to Sri Aurobindo was, "He will go very far." She asked him to help Satyen in serving rice in the Dining

Room in the main building of the Ashram — that was 22nd May 1927, and till his passing on 19th August 1992, his close connection with the Dining Room remained uninterrupted. It grew deeper and closer as he treated the workers there as his close family members. The Mother accepted him as Her close attendant — a faithful, dependable worker. On his part, he had already accepted Her in 1924 as the Mother, even though he had not even met Her!

This was the beginning of a close association between the Mother and Her child, Dyuman. Sri Aurobindo had given him that name on 24th November 1928 based on his request earlier that year. His only aim in life became to serve Her. Yoga was far away, but through his work, he started understanding the yoga of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. That is why one day the Mother told him, "You do my work and I will do yours" — meaning his sadhana. In those early years, the emphasis was on discipline and work. No sadhak could talk to another without informing Her. So when Kashi-ba came in 1930, the Mother asked him not to talk to her. He obeyed and met her only once in the presence of the Mother when she went to Her for *pranaam* before leaving Pondicherry.

The Mother asked him to keep two notebooks. One was to note down his daily inner movements and the other was about the details of daily work. One was given to Her at noon and the other at night. One day the Mother asked him if it was necessary to keep these diaries. He replied, "Not necessary, Mother." She instructed him to inform Her whenever any difficulty arose. That was the end of his writing the diaries. The external need was over. Henceforth, his inner guide would guide him. She gave him a picture of Her taken in Japan and told him to meditate in front of it before opening the Dining Room door in the morning and before closing the door at night.

His passion for gardening began when along with others he participated in a flower exhibition at the Pondicherry Botanical Garden in 1930. The people of Pondicherry were surprised to see the size of the carnations and discovered that these men of the Ashram were not making bombs but were engaged in growing flowers! It was at that time that the Mother asked them to get a sapling of a Service tree from the Botanical Garden. Manibhai, Ambubhai and Dyuman-da planted it at the place indicated by the Mother. They watered it and took care of it. Planted in 1930, the tree still stands high and mighty in all its majesty over the Samadhi — proud, protective and undaunted. From then on, he started his double work of Dining Room and gardening and this was soon followed by numerous errands as the Mother slowly started putting more confidential work into his trustworthy hands.

In the Dining Room, which was then located in the Ashram main building, the cooking was done by servants under the guidance of an inmate. When Tara-di and Lila-di joined the Ashram, they proposed to the Mother that they would cook for the inmates. Later they took charge of Datta's kitchen, which came to be known as Sri Aurobindo and Mother's kitchen and was managed by Dyuman-da. He would carry Their food upstairs — a service that could only be done by a *punyatma*. When the fruit room had a cold chamber, he arranged to get fruits from various parts of the country to have an uninterrupted supply for Them. The Dining Room was shifted to its present building on 4th January 1934. Life went on smoothly in Their service but the strain started with World War II. More and more people joined the Ashram and the money was not enough. Dyuman-da was worried. How to feed so many! One day, as he was walking down Gandhi Road and thinking about the funds, he was taken in his subtle body to visit Kubera's treasures and realized that everything was there — he need not worry. Somehow or the other, the funds would come and the needs of the Ashram would be provided for.

Once in 1937-38, the Mother gave him a piece of Her jewellery and asked him to sell it as an inmate was in dire need of some money. That was the first time, but it was not to be the last! Soon, selling Her jewellery became one source of income for the Ashram to maintain the numerous devotees who had started pouring in. The Mother gave Her ornaments — the timepiece given by Her grandmother, the Durga crown, which She did not want to sell but had to because of adverse circumstances, and even her pearl necklace, which She was in the habit of wearing on Darshan days. However, She wanted to know whom these

were given to as they carried a special aura and power and any mishandling would be disastrous for those who had bought them. She warned them against misuse. Dyuman-da became Her instrument for such work. Soon Her jewellery coffer became empty.

Her next step was to sell Her saris. That disturbed Dyuman-da a lot and he protested as Her children embroidered most of them for their loving Mother. But She insisted on selling them in one lot to a single person. The saris were brought out and Vasudhaben wept on seeing them. But who could imagine the play of Dyuman-

da! He collected the amount that the Mother wanted from a disciple who was close to him, took away the saris and kept them in his room! The generous disciple did not want the saris even though they were paid for. However, he requested Dyuman-da to sell them piece-by-piece and offer the proceeds to the Mother.



Sketch of Dyuman by the Mother

The Mother also used to distribute saris to inmates and devotees who were present before each Darshan. Once She wished to give Her own saris to Her children but alas, the remaining saris were not enough. When Dyuman-da heard about this, he told Her that Her wish would be fulfilled and brought nearly 500 saris from his room from the lot that was supposed to have been sold! What joy, what inner fulfillment he must have felt to be an instrument to execute Her wish! Not only this, but no one really knows how many of Her wishes he fulfilled. For example, She once saw a blue Ford V8 car and wished to have a similar one. Dyuman-da collected the required amount from a friend and bought an exact replica of the car She wanted. But was he satisfied with this? No! She must have something better; so he again collected money from some friends and bought a Humber for Her. The Mother used that car till 1952. Imagine how closely he was connected with those devotees staying far away from

Pondicherry that they immediately gave — in cash or in kind — whatever he wanted for the Mother, without a question or a doubt crossing their mind. The trust they had in him only reflected the trust the Divine Mother had in him. If Hanuman was the *Dasa* of Rama, then truly, Dyuman-da was no less a *Dasa* of the Mother.

The work to clean Sri Aurobindo's room was given to Dyuman-da, as Pavitra-da was unable to do it because of his knee problem. Dyuman-da cleaned Sri Aurobindo's room for five years and never even glanced at Him as that was the Mother's instruction and he obeyed it. Once he had to repair the beams of Sri Aurobindo's room as some bees had made holes in them. He had to climb a ladder, clean the beams with a vacuum cleaner, and seal them without dropping anything on Sri Aurobindo, who was lying on the bed directly below the beams. Surely that must have been the toughest work in his life-long service! And he was aware that the Mother had put him to test; he did his work to Her satisfaction.

The Ashram started growing rapidly with the School, Playground and many other departments. Dyuman-da's activities also increased; other than his regular work, he now also had the additional responsibilities of a trustee. The Mother created the Sri Aurobindo Ashram Trust on 1st May 1955 and She made Dyuman-da one of the Founder Trustees. She gave each of the four trustees the flower "Divine's Love" on the first day and the next day, She gave each of them the flower "Faithfulness." It was a duty he discharged till the end even though the other Founder Trustees had long since passed away. He *had* to stay, for that was the Mother's wish and She wrote it on his Birthday card in 1972:

" To Dyuman

Bonne Fête

And a long, long, long life of happy and remarkably useful life.

With love and blessings..."

For February 29, 1960, the first recurrence of the leap year after the Supramental Manifestation, Dyuman-da decided that the entire celebrations would be in golden colour. We were given golden-coloured dresses, the saris had a golden border, the Meditation Hall was decorated

with golden satin curtains and the lights glowed golden. Her room was spread with golden satin. On the first floor corridor, he spread golden satin so She could walk on it to the Balcony Darshan. Her dress had gold buttons, and the cutlery She used was of a golden hue. She distributed gold-coated symbols to the Ashramites. The whole Ashram vibrated with a golden aura; truly a dreamland on earth! In the evening, the Service Tree was decorated with coloured lamps; in the quietness of the night, they glowed golden — a fairyland — a wonderland in the universe! She asked him, "Why do you want to do all this?" His reply was that even if the vibration touched one soul, he would be happy and fulfilled. Then the Mother asked, "And if I ask you to sell all these things off later?" His immediate reply without any hesitation was, "Yes, Mother I will do it." A detached, unsentimental, disinterested worker.

One day when he saw that the Mother wanted to lie down after coming back from the Playground in the evening, he was worried. She must have a room of Her own. The Mother hesitated. Finally, She agreed to have one constructed on the second floor with money he would collect from his friends. She shifted to Her new room on 9th December 1953, but slowly, even that room turned into Her working place when She retired there in 1962.

The Strength of Dyuman's character is his essential straightness of aim, fidelity to the highest he sees and intensity of will to receive the Light and serve the Truth.

— Sri Aurobindo, 10-4-1934

That was not the end of his untiring endeavour. He found out that a parcel of land near the Lake was up for sale. Once again he collected funds from his friends so that the Ashram could purchase the land. Here his normal life pattern changed again. Until now his responsibilities included looking after the Mother, the Dining Room, the Granary, going to the market to buy vegetables for Dining Room, the store, etc. Now he had to look after a farm. His dream was to grow vegetables and fruits without chemical fertilizers because the Mother was against its use. So how could he give Her food that was grown with chemical fertilizers? His life was simple because he had a single, one-pointed aim — to serve Them in whatever way he could.

He was a visionary and never stepped back for fear of overwork or paucity of funds to give shape to his vision. It was his idea to make the documentary film "Sri Aurobindo Ashram — Four Chapters." It was filmed by

Ajit Bose and was displayed in many centres of the Ashram. Where the money came from, no one knew, and neither did anyone need to know. The immense archival value of the documentary can never be measured. It is a treasure for future generations as it shows some of the activities of the Mother in real life. His preparation for the centenary of Sri Aurobindo in 1972 started many years in advance and he got a steam boiler in 1967 for the Dining Room, which was well geared to cater to innumerable visitors who came for the celebration. For the second time in the history of the Ashram, the Service Tree glowed with coloured lamps in the evening:

*There showered upon the floating atmosphere
Colours and lights and evanescent gleams
That called to follow into a magic heaven,*

...

He personally arranged the celebrations of the Mother's centenary in 1978 and saw to it that the Dining Room met its requirements. The distribution process went on till the evening. Among other things, the most prized possession was a folder containing the pieces of cloth worn by Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. He single-handedly managed the distributions and did not require any support or help from others. It was *his* work and he must perform it — the body *must* serve. The body obeyed his spirit in harmony and bliss.

Once when Indira Gandhi, then the Prime Minister of India, spent one night in the Ashram main building, she stayed on the first floor in Pavitra-da's room. A sentry was posted there on guard duty, but Dyuman-da sent him away and did the duty himself all through the night, all-watchful and guarding the Prime Minister.

April 4th, 1985 was approaching — the 75th anniversary of Sri Aurobindo's coming to Pondicherry. Dyuman-da thought it would be a good idea if we could visit the room in Sankar Chetty house where Sri Aurobindo was staying at the time. However, the house belonged to someone not connected with the Ashram. This did not daunt Dyuman-da. He approached the owner who gladly agreed to his suggestion. The Ashramites and devotees had the opportunity to pay their respects to the Lord in His room where He stayed on 4th April 1910.

Dyuman-da could do all this and many other things because he had the conviction, the courage, and the indomitable spirit and trust in the Divine as his assistants. Service, only to serve, was his motto. No going to

the Playground for him — no cinema; no cultural activity of any kind. From early morning till late at night, he was occupied with various kinds of work. They too had such confidence and trust in him! Once when the Ashram was passing through a critical financial crisis Sri Aurobindo was asked what He would do if He had to feed five hundred people. He simply replied, "Why, I will send them to Dyuman!"

The Mother tested him but also played with him! In 1934 She asked him to go to Her kitchen and tell Lila-di and others that it was his birthday. That day they cooked eleven dishes and since then something special is always served in the Dining Room on his birthday. For a person who never joined Group (physical activities), the Mother called him to the Playground on one of his birthdays. She made him sit on the hands of two men and they carried him around the ground and She stood in front of the map of undivided India and Pranab-da greeted him by saying, "Bonne Fête to Dyuman!" This continued till 1958 when the Mother retired from Playground activities.

Dyuman-da was so selfless in his service to Her! She used to give books or other items to people on their birthdays but he never got anything. During the napkin or message distribution, he used to stand by Her side and hand over the items to Her one by one. But he never got any! He never asked for these nor did he feel any resentment for not receiving them. She would often say, "You don't care to have these things." And Dyuman-da's answer always was, "Yes, Mother, as long as you are there I don't care." Yes, She gave him things. Once She gave him a picture of Ganesh and wrote behind it, "Let him become your generous friend." Another time, She took his right hand in Hers and said, "Lakshmi is your friend." And truly, how he assisted, managed, and laboured for the growth and prosperity of the Ashram. He never wasted money and tried to put a stop to wasteful spending, and naturally, faced criticism and opposition. A letter written by Sri Aurobindo on March 6th, 1932 proves how priceless his actions were: "Your spirit of economy is very precious and extremely helpful to us, the more so as it is rare in the Ashram where the push conscious or subconscious is towards the other extreme."

Years passed by in the service of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo. As a trustee, he continued his usual work. He would bring food to the Mother three times a day, visit the granary and the Dining Room early in the morning, go to the market to buy vegetables for the Dining Room, visit the gardens, look after the Mother's store, vacuum

the 1st floor, look after Her kitchen, etc. When Amrita-da left his body in 1969, the added responsibility of the Central Office also fell on him. When the Mother retired completely in 1973, the monetary affairs of the Ashram fell on him. He worked relentlessly. When She left Her body, he saw to it that things continued without a break and remained as they had been during Her time. A disruption anywhere would damage the core of the Ashram.

Work increased with the passing away of Nolini-da and Pradyut-da. The devotees who were associated with them found in him their loving, caring, elder brother. Each additional work got adjusted to his already busy daily schedule as if time stretched itself out to accommodate his spirit. His gait, his look, his talk never showed any sign of stress or strain, or hurry — his body adjusted that much. He had had a nervous breakdown in 1934. When he recovered, the Mother asked him to put on Pavitra-da's hat and walk in the midday sun every day. Sometime back I came across some of his letters of earlier years written to the Mother about his failing health. I wonder by what method or in what manner he changed that failing physical

body to acquire tenacity and stature of uninterrupted service. It must be the physical aspiration of a *Karmayogi* to change the capacity of the body by selfless work in Their service.

The Ashram was growing at a fast rate. More and more devotees started coming. He kept in touch with some

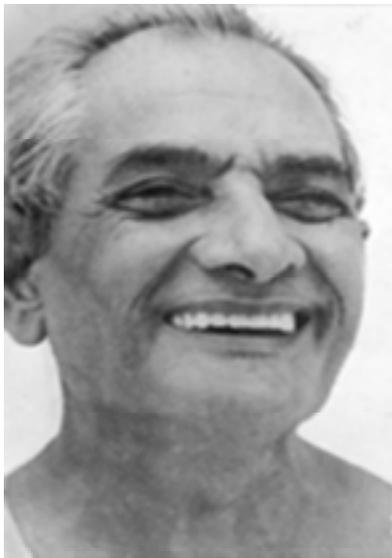
of them through letters. Often, just a few lines, but that was sufficient to keep their contact with the Ashram. On the eve of Darshan, or on Darshan Day, after distribution late at night one would find him sitting with just a *dhoti* on, his upper body bare, deeply engrossed in writing letters. The *Karmayogi* at work. We would often complain about his late night work. He would be up very early in the morning, go throughout the day without even a short break, meet visitors and not neglect his daily routine, and

go on past midnight. This was too much for us. But not for him. Devotees in India and abroad would be waiting eagerly for Darshan messages and blessings packets. How could he while away time in sleep or rest! That was the magnitude of his consideration.

Once on his early morning rounds, his all-watchful eyes picked up a cycle without a seat cover near the Ashram. He watched for a few days and then concluded that the person might be coming early in the morning to serve Nolini-da or to work at the Samadhi. It did not matter if he did not even know the name of the person. He got a seat cover and had it put on the cycle. On enquiry, the bewildered person found out that it was Dyuman-da's idea. At the Theatre, participants used to have their dinner in aluminium dishes. He happened to see this just once. The next time, they had dinner in stainless steel dishes. He moved fast, without wasting time in pondering and dilly-dallying. The entire Ashram was his family. He would drop in at homes unannounced or uninvited, but not unexpectedly — especially on birthdays. Does anyone invite a family member?! Never. So it was with him. He was so informal and very close to one and all.

As Pondicherry was becoming over-populated, the rent of houses was also shooting up considerably. He moved at once. "We must have our own houses. We can't be at the mercy of the house owners." By that time the financial position of the Ashram had improved. Funds were available for buildings. Thus the projects of New Creation, Park Guest House and others began. In the afternoon after finishing the cash work and signing of money orders, clad in *dhoti* and a white coat on his *fatua*, sunglasses on and a hat on his head, he would stride to the car waiting for him and drive off to the new construction sites before pushing off to Gloria — his dream farm. He would be back in the evening, sign the receipts of donations received, take his meagre dinner lovingly served by Swarno-di, and then would help inmates with their problems, or talk to devotees wanting to hear some words. In the dead of night, he would read or write letters not only in reply to the ones he had received, but would drop two lines to someone he remembered in the day and enclose a Blessings packet. And it often happened that the person was remembering him or had some difficulty and was in dire need of Blessings from the Mother! He had so much joy in giving; perhaps as much as the person who was receiving!

But that was not to be in his relationship with Kashi-ba. She settled down in Pondicherry in the eighties.



Dyuman-da made it clear to her that she should not expect any special consideration from him. She stayed in a room given by Ambapremiji and was looked after by Ashokbhai. There was hardly any communication between them.

Dyuman-da was a poet at heart. He would not express his feelings in writing but would share the joy with others by calling them up to the first floor of the Ashram main building, and from the corridor window would show them the palm tree with fresh new green leaves sprouting. The beauty of it could not be seen from the courtyard. When the Service tree would be in full bloom, he would say the scenery was ethereal from Ravindraji's terrace on a full moon night! Or so often, he would describe the beauty of the *Kadamba* tree covered with golden "Supra-mental Sun" at the Gloria land.

*Work, work and work will be my motto ceaselessly to work, work for all time.
It has no night, no day. To go beyond the time and there to work.
Speech less, advice less, preaching of the sermons less — but to work and to act and to live upto the highest idea.
My dear Mother, all love to you.*

— Dyuman's prayer to the Mother, 4-12-1949

When the Managing Trustee, Counoumaji's health began deteriorating in the 1980s, Dyuman-da got more involved in the day-to-day running of the Ashram. He consulted his colleagues and took decisions — always unassumingly, with no show of power or position — with the same attitude of serving Them by serving the Ashramites and devotees. He became the Managing Trustee after Counoumaji left his body in 1991. A huge responsibility indeed. For one who had served Them from the age of twenty-four, it was a culmination of Their faith and trust in him.

Now, devotees began demanding or requesting him to visit their place. He visited Orissa and Bengal to be with them, be a part of their celebrations. His health was failing. However, he had a wonderful way of curing too. Give the body a rest and he would be up serving. Even when he would be admitted to the Nursing Home, he would sit up and sign the receipts or discuss the work. *Work* was his food and not his daily meal.

His next big assignment was to celebrate the golden jubilee of the School in 1993. He met Paru-di and Pranab-da to discuss the celebrations. It was his brain-child. He moved quickly to collect the addresses of ex-students. We did have the celebrations. But alas, without him. He left his body the year before.

Did nothing upset him or ever disturb him? Yes, occasionally. I have seen him pass through these phases. He had a wonderful method of coming out of these spells. He would sleep not only at night, but also throughout the day. I have seen him sleeping more than twenty-four hours and when he would get up, he would be his own self — the hurt or the disturbance vanishing as if it did not exist at all.

Though he looked very strict and stoic, in his heart he was like a child. He had a child-like trust in people. His room was never locked. It could be used by anyone to keep their mats or cushions for sitting in the Ashram or their books before going to the Group, anything at all. They would just walk in — even if he was sitting or sleeping — keep or take their things and

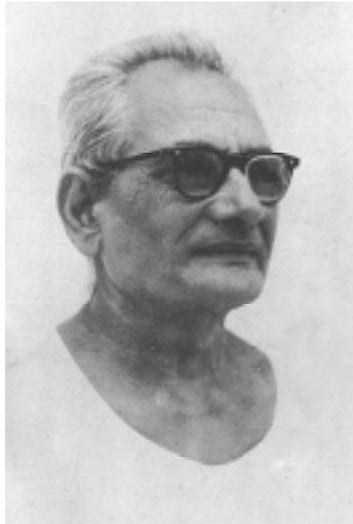
go out. There was no need to ask or take his permission. At nights he would sleep on the first floor with just a mat and a pillow, as was his habit since the Mother's time.

Once on the eve of his birthday in 1992, he was presented with a new pair of *Dhotis*. He was overjoyed. "Two new Dhotis! I will wear them both!" He did so. After a few days he told me it was the first time in his life he had changed clothes during the day. Till the end he washed his own clothes. His life-style was so simple — in his entire life he had very little need of material things. But his inner gains who could measure? That happened to be his last birthday.

The most striking and admirable aspect of his personality was his attitude of clinging to the Mother, come what may. Often he would say that whatever happens or whatever one does follow one thing — never leave the Mother, cling to Her. He would give a very beautiful and touching image: a toddler clings to the sari of his mother, never letting her go — following her wherever she goes — even if the mother had scolded him for doing something wrong. The toddler would cling to her sari crying his heart out, but would never let her be away from him. That was the way one should cling to the Divine Mother. It was the most important lesson I learnt from him. He was a workaholic. He would say, "When I die and

am put in the funeral pyre, you will burn my body but my soul would jump out of the flame and take birth immediately to be able to serve the Mother.” That was the *karmayogi* from the Narmada Valley.

He was a *Siddha Purusha* too. Did he have a premonition of his death? In a diary in his office, Dyumanda used to note down the daily amount received for Dining Room expenses. As he would be very busy before Darshan, he used to note the amount in advance for the next few days, as the sum given was a fixed one. In August 1992, a few days before Darshan, he told me he had filled up the amount in advance in the diary. On the evening of 14th August, his talk was broadcast by All India Radio Pondicherry. His voice was resonant and young — not the voice of an eighty-nine-year-old man at all.



The speech stirred everyone who heard it. The Darshan on 15th August went on till late afternoon. Dyumanda distributed Darshan messages all day. The next day he had fever, but he refused to go to the Nursing Home. There were many devotees who had come from out-of-town and wanted to see him. He attended the funeral of Ichcha-di. The next morning, he was persuaded to go to the Nursing Home. He walked to the car by himself. The next day, we went to him with some work. He attended to that. He also did office work on the 19th, and then suddenly left his body in the evening. At the end of the month, I took out the daily diary to work on the accounts. To my disbelief, it was filled up to 19th August! Was it a premonition or a coincidence? Or was it *Ichchamrityu*? I remember vividly my last meeting with him on 19th August. He was sitting on his bed, we discussed office work, and then I left. But before closing the door of his room, I looked back. He was sitting on his bed looking in my direction, and with both his hands, he was doing *namaste*. I was surprised and thought I had seen wrong. But that night when the news of his passing reached me, I realized it was not a hallucination — he was bidding me *adieu*.

He must have heard the Mother call “Dyuman” from the other world and must have immediately rushed up that invisible ladder that connects this world with Hers and said “Yes Mother, I am here.” All ready to be at Her service there.

IMMORTALITY

We renounce ourselves in order to find ourselves; for in the mental life there is only a seeking, but never an ultimate finding till mind is overpassed. Therefore there is behind all our mentality a perfection of ourselves which appears to us as an antinomy and contrast to what we are. For here we are a constant becoming; there we possess our eternal being. Here we conceive of ourselves as a changeful consciousness developed and always developing by a hampered effort in the drive of Time; there we are an immutable consciousness of which Time is not the master but the instrument as well as the field of all that it creates and watches. Here we live in an organisation of mortal consciousness which takes the form of a transient world; there we are liberated into the harmonies of an infinite self-seeing which knows all world

in the light of the eternal and immortal. The Beyond is our reality; that is our plenitude; that is the absolute satisfaction of our self-existence. It is immortality and it is “That Delight”.

Here in our imprisoned mentality the ego strives to be master and possessor of its inner field and its outer environment, yet cannot hold anything to enjoy it, because it is not possible really to possess what is not-self to us. But there in the freedom of the eternal our self-existence possesses without strife by the sufficient fact that all things are itself. Here is the apparent man, there the real man, the Purusha: here are gods, there is the Divine: here is the attempt to exist, Life flowering out of an all-devouring death, there Existence itself and a dateless immortality.

— Sri Aurobindo (*Kena Upanishad*)

Creation? Evolution? Or Both?

Joan Price

The affirmation of a divine life upon earth and an immortal sense in mortal existence can have no base unless we recognise not only eternal Spirit as the inhabitant of this bodily mansion... but accept Matter... as a fit and noble material out of which He weaves constantly His garbs, builds recurrently the unending series of His mansions.

Sri Aurobindo¹

In the Western world, one of the strongest disagreements between scientific materialism and religious fundamentalism is the theory of evolution versus the theory of creation. Scientific materialism asserts that anthropological findings and biological facts verify that humankind is a result of millions of years of evolution – from the simplest fish to complex philosopher. Religious fundamentalists argue that a literal reading of the Bible will verify that God created human beings as humans to be humans. Because God created humans in His image, humans are now as they have always been, and in no way related to the fish or the ape. Based on the above perspectives of scientific materialism and religious fundamentalism, these views cannot be reconciled.

German philosopher Immanuel Kant would say both the materialists and the fundamentalists see the world through different sets of lenses. Today, thanks to Sri Aurobindo, we have an even clearer lens through which to view creation and evolution theories. Although it appears to our ordinary consciousness that spirit and matter are at opposite poles, Sri Aurobindo perceived the evolution as a “self-unfolding” of the spirit. What is necessary in his schema is to understand the hierarchy of the levels of consciousness from the subconscious involved in matter through the ascending steps into the spirit.

Based on his own experience of a spiritual consciousness beyond the rational mind, Sri Aurobindo developed a theory that the ongoing process of change is the evolution of *consciousness* and therefore an integral part of the creation connecting humankind with all life. If the world and everything in it is an evolution of consciousness, then evolution is spiritual as well as biological and in no way contradicts either scientific findings or the meaning of scripture. Sri Aurobindo called evolution the *ascent* of matter, life, and mind to the true home in the spirit. He considered evolution a growth out of ignorance into consciousness awareness. Before evolution could begin, however, there had to be an *involution* or *descent* of spirit into matter, life, and mind.

For Sri Aurobindo, each step of evolution is directed by the involution of the spirit into the lower states. Without the descent of the spirit into the world there could be no ascent of the world into the spirit, and to the same extent that the spirit descends into the world the world ascends into the spirit. Thus, the evolution of matter, life, and mind is possible only because there has been an involution of the spirit into matter, life, and mind. The world and everything in it is in a constant state of development and growth. Creation is an ongoing process.

During the process of evolution the spirit directs every step to spiral upward. The first step is the evolution of matter out of the nescience. The involution into nescience pushes the evolution upward resulting in organized matter (natural law) in which each atom holds infinite potential energy. Because of the involution of the spirit, atoms combine to form a molecule, and hydrogen and oxygen unite to make water. The second step in evolution is life. As matter evolves into life, it does not reject its old basis, rather new impulses appear that were implanted in it. Each cell or unit of life holds within itself the power of becoming. The third step is the evolution of mind. With mind appears the mental or intellectual consciousness in humanity. Mind does not leave matter and life behind — it assimilates both.

Although intellect gives us great capacity to reason, it cannot answer the questions “Who am I?”, “What created this world?” But Sri Aurobindo went beyond the mind and found a greater power of consciousness that he called supermind or truth-consciousness. The descent of supermind into humanity would mean a transformation of everything in the world. The lower evolutionary stages in nature would awaken to a greater action of the latent truth in them and human beings would break the bonds of ignorance by joyfully ascending to the supramental consciousness of truth, beauty, and goodness:

*And when that greater Self comes sea-like down
To fill this image of our transience,
All shall be captured by delight, transformed:
In waves of undreamed ecstasy shall roll
Our mind and life and sense and laugh in a light
Other than this hard limited human day,*

...

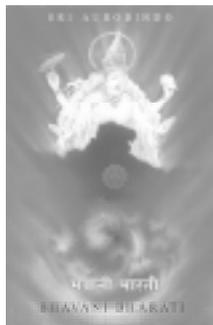
Sri Aurobindo²

¹ The Life Divine, Ch.2, p. 8.

² Savitri, Bk. Two, Canto Five.

RECENT PUBLICATIONS

Sri Aurobindo



Bhavani Bharati

108 pp., Rs.50.00
ISBN 81-7060-202-5

Bhavani Bharati is Sri Aurobindo's only poem in Sanskrit, written between 1904 and 1908. It has 99 verses in the "Upajati" metre which is an apt choice for emoting heroism, power, anger, war. Confiscated by the Calcutta Police, this piece was rediscovered in 1985.

The poem depicts the victory of the

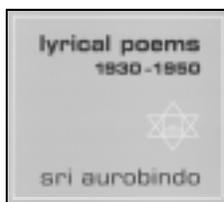
Shakti, the Mother of the nation, over Ignorance and Evil.

Lyrical Poems 1930-1950

78 pp., Rs.50.00
ISBN 81-7058-684-4

Sri Aurobindo once wrote that he wanted his short poems published in two separate books, one of sonnets and the other of "(mainly) lyrical poems". His sonnets were published in 1980. This book contains all other significant short poems composed between 1930 and 1950. Most of the poems included are "lyrical" in the technical sense: they are short and express the writer's personal thoughts and feelings. Unlike most other examples of the genre, however, their lyricism is spiritual and psychic. Along with the later sonnets and the epic *Savitri*, they represent Sri Aurobindo's highest achievement in spiritual or yogic poetry.

This book is brought out in the same shape and format as *Sonnets*.



The Mother and the Integral Yoga

Letters of Sri Aurobindo

132 pp., Rs.40.00, ISBN 81-7058-695-X

From the blurb, "This compilation of Sri Aurobindo's letters deals primarily with the role of the Divine Mother in the practice of the Integral Yoga. In these letters Sri Aurobindo explains who the Mother is and how one can open oneself to her help. Surrender to the Mother; true relation with her through faith, devotion and love; work for her as part of one's sadhana; receiving her help in difficulties; her Presence, Light and Force; her human embodiment — these are some of the subjects Sri Aurobindo discusses in these letters. He wrote most of them in the 1930s to disciples living in his Ashram in Pondicherry."

The Mother

The Mother's Vision

Selections from Questions and Answers

627 pp., Rs.230.00
ISBN 81-7058-687-9

This book contains a selection of the Mother's conversations during the periods 1929-31 and 1950-58. Speaking to members of the Sri Aurobindo Ashram and students of its school, she drew upon her unique occult, spiritual

and practical experience to answer their questions. The topics range from the spiritually elevated and philosophically complex to the practical and mundane. Taken as a whole, the conversations offer an uplifting vision of human existence. In the Mother's view, we are destined to outgrow our limited ego-centric personalities, discover our true selves, and ultimately create a divine life on earth.



Prayers and Meditations

388 pp., Rs.75.00
ISBN 81-7058-699-2

*Now published in pocket size
(10 cm x 17 cm)*

Prayers and meditations from the Mother's diaries, originally written in French. These are a record of her early spiritual experiences.



Compiled from the Works of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother

Darshan Messages of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother (1927-1973)

72 pp., Rs.35.00
ISBN 81-7058-698-4

This book contains the Darshan messages distributed at the Sri Aurobindo Ashram during the lifetimes of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. The first message was issued on 21 February 1927, soon after the Ashram was formed; the

last was issued on 24 April 1973, the year in which the Mother left her body.



During Sri Aurobindo's lifetime, messages were given out only occasionally on the Darshan days; afterwards they were issued regularly. Some of these messages were written expressly for the occasion by Sri Aurobindo or the Mother; other messages were passages chosen from their works.

New Year Prayers and Messages (1933-2000) **(Prières et messages annuels, 1933-2000)**

147 pp., Rs.30.00

Each year from 1933-73, the Mother gave a message on New Year's Day — a thought, a prayer, an aspiration to serve as a guide for the whole year. These messages, written both in English and French, are reproduced in facsimiles of the Mother's handwriting whenever possible.

Between 1974 and 1984, New Year messages were not distributed at the Ashram. We publish instead the photographs of the Mother that appeared on the Ashram calendars for these years along with 'Bonne Année' written by her.

On New Year's Day, from 1985 to the present, the Ashram distributed messages selected from the writings of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo. These messages make up the concluding part of this book.



Emergence of the Psychic **Governance of Life by the Soul**

Compilation and Introduction by
A. S. Dalal

135 pp., Rs.55.00

ISBN 81-7058-688-7

The three objectives of this book are, first "to help one in becoming more conscious of what most human beings are almost entirely unconscious, namely, the action and influence of the soul in one's life";

secondly "to describe and clarify various states of consciousness that pertain to experiences of the soul. These include the influence of the psychic, coming in contact or being in touch with the psychic, discovery of, identification with or awakening of the psychic, and the opening, coming forward or emergence of the psychic"; and thirdly to kindle "an aspiration for a spiritual goal which goes beyond the discovery and freedom of the soul — one which envisages the governance of life and the transformation of one's outer being by the soul".

This book, "in a way an expansion" of the previous compilation *The Psychic Being*, deals more extensively with the practical aspects of the subject.

See review on page 17



The Mother : Images of Her Life

61 pp., Rs.65.00

ISBN 81-7058-704-2

On the occasion of the 125th Birth anniversary of the Mother, this pictorial booklet presents more than a hundred photographs of the Mother, some of them published here for the first time. The images cover the entire panorama of her profound and versatile life. The

primary focus, though, is on her activities in the Ashram in the 1950's.

The photographs are accompanied by explanatory captions, a brief narrative of the Mother's life, and quotations from the works of the Mother, Sri Aurobindo and others.

The entire book is printed on art paper.

125th Birth Anniversary of **The Mother (21st February 2003)**

73 pp., Rs.100.00

This souvenir volume is brought out on the occasion of the Mother's 125th birth anniversary. It quotes liberally from the Mother. The contents best illustrate the varied themes presented in the book: "The Mother", "Sri Aurobindo", "The Four Powers of the Mother", "Sri Aurobindo Ashram", "Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education", "Sri Aurobindo Society", "Auroville", "The Words of the Mother".



Reprints from All India Magazine:

Divine Life upon the Earth

40 pp., Rs.15.00, ISBN 81-7060-196-7

The Path of Surrender

44 pp., Rs.30.00

Other Authors

Sri Aurobindo, Jung and Vedic Yoga

Professor Satya Prakash Singh

423 pp., Rs.650.00, ISBN 81-87471-12-3

The author approaches the study of the structure and manifestation of the human psyche from three angles: yogic sadhana, psychological experimentation and Vedic revelation. These supposedly irreconcilable sources are harmonised, "leaving thus the way to re-emergence of the human psyche in all its non-spatio-temporal immensity and purity."

The part of the book dealing with Sri Aurobindo and

Jung was published in 1986. With the addition of the Vedic perspective, the study of psychology gains in depth while spirituality is “enlarged in the historical perspective”. In the process our understanding of the Veda itself is enriched as the “Jungian perspective adds to the feasibility of its psychological content” and the “Aurobindonian perspective unfolds the treasure of spiritual knowledge embodied in it.”



The Birth of Savitr

R. Y. Deshpande
95 pp., Rs.100.00
ISBN 0-930736-04-4

Short poetic contemplations on each canto of *Savitri*. The author “attempts an accurate subjective impression of each canto but through a personal retelling, using a focused mystic style. Bringing to this the aspiration for the overhead word, his poem becomes a seeking

for the *mantra* — a *mantra* that will capture the heart of the grand *mantra* that is *Savitri*, in other words, *Savitri's bija*.”

Also included are a Résumé of *Savitri*, and notes on the Legend and the Symbol.

See review on page 21

The Development of Sri Aurobindo's Spiritual System and the Mother's Contribution to it

K. D. Sethna
80 pp., Rs.120.00

Articles on a wide variety of topics related to the integral yoga, the descent of the Overmind and the Supermind, and the advent of a new race.

Vedic Symbolism

Professor Satya Prakash Singh
614 pp., Rs.795.00, ISBN 81-901304-0-4

The Vedas have had a profound impact on the Indian psyche since untold ages. Yet Western scholarship has not been able to draw anything coherent out of the texts. Could this fount of India's cultural ethos be so shallow as to be a mere description of nature by a bewildered, primitive mind?

The author shows how gross objects such as cow, horse, chariot and cave have been used by the Vedic seers as symbols of deeper realities. He discusses the process of symbol formation, and establishes the primacy of the spiritual aspect over the physical and mythical which are of secondary character. The light Sri Aurobindo has shed on the secret of the Veda has been an indispensable aid in this study.

In Search of Hinduism

Dr. Prema Nandakumar
55 pp., Rs.30.00

These essays examine how over two millennia various traditions and cultural spaces have been absorbed into the Indian religious stream. However, in recent times one aspect of this complex system has been placed against the other, and in the process, forgetting that Sanatana Dharma was an all-comprehending humanist doctrine that expanded to meet the inflow of new ways into India, “Hinduism was set up as a narrow concept that was out to destroy the religions that India had welcomed.” This book shows the way to the rediscovery of Sanatana Dharma in the light of Sri Aurobindo; a supremely relevant issue in these times of communal strife.

Is Velikovsky's Revised Chronology Tenable?

A Scrutiny of Four Fundamental Themes
K. D. Sethna

104 pp., Rs.100.00

The historian Immanuel Velikovsky has radically challenged the accepted times and sequences of Egyptian and Near-Eastern history in his work *Ages of Chaos*. The four fundamental themes of the revised chronology are the Exodus of the Israelites from Egypt, the invasion of the Hyksos or Amu, the Egyptian Queen Hatshepsut, and her successor Pharaoh Thutmose. In this book K. D. Sethna closely questions Velikovsky's “valiant attempt on many fronts to bring down the antiquity of Near-Eastern history by almost six hundred years”.

See review on page 24

Sri Aurobindo Mandir (Annual) 2002

186 pp., Rs.50.00

History of India

A New Approach
Professor Kittu Reddy

503 pp., Rs.850.00
ISBN 81-87471-14-X

“This book is an attempt to write the history of India from the subjective viewpoint, without in any way distracting from the external events”.

“History, as it has generally been conceived and written in modern times, has limited itself to the outer narration and interpretation of events and ignored the psychological forces and factors that affect human life ... This book is an attempt to look at Indian history from the psychological and inner angle. It is an attempt to place in proper perspective, the deeper psychological and spiritual elements even in the outer life of the Indian nation.”



The Wonder that is Sanskrit

Sampad and Vijay

210 pp., Rs.195.00, ISBN 81-7060-182-7

From the blurb, “Sanskrit is indeed a beautiful and a wonderful language. Known as Devabhasha or the language of the gods, admired greatly by scholars from all over the world, its very name means ‘refined’ or ‘sculpted to perfection’.

“We see here Sanskrit in its manifold aspects — the perfection of its grammar, some interesting and amazing creations which border on the unbelievable, and the charm and beauty of its poetry. We look at it as a source of upliftment and enlightenment, as a sacred medium for expressing the highest spiritual truths and experiences. We try to understand its importance for India and the world and how the Soul of India has expressed itself through it for centuries.

“This book reveals the many wonders of Sanskrit as a living experience and has something for all — whether a scholar deeply immersed in it or someone who has had no previous contact with it.”

See review on page 18

The Silent Symphony

Shatadal

32 pp., Rs.20.00

Sixteen short poems on a variety of themes.

Reprints**The Mother of Sri Aurobindo Ashram**

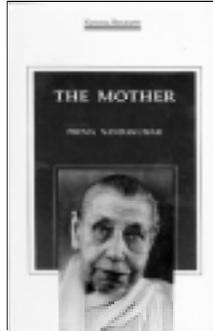
Prema Nandakumar

134pp., Rs.35.00

ISBN 81-237-2386-5

“The benign and fascinating personality of the Mother is brought to life in all its vividness and complexity in this short biography” published as part of the National Book Trust’s “National Biography” series.

[Now available with SABDA]

**Our Light and Delight****Recollections of Life with the Mother**

Amal Kiran (K. D. Sethna)

230 pp., Rs.150.00, ISBN 81-87916-02-8

Articles serialised in the monthly *Mother India* during 1978 and 1979 on the occasion of the Mother’s birth centenary. These writings, bearing on the Mother, her work and various related themes, are sprinkled with wit and humour.

Sri Aurobindo’s Savitri**An Approach and a Study**

A. B. Purani

370 pp., Rs.135.00, ISBN 81-7058-683-6

The author states in the preface, “*Savitri* is a great epic which ushers in a new age in poetic creation. Being a masterpiece of the greatest mystic of our times it does not lend itself easily to mere intellectual understanding. Its meaning, rather its Reality, is to be felt. One has to allow the vibration of it to sink into oneself, one has to arouse in himself the power of vision and see what the Master is showing.

“In course of reading *Savitri* with some friends I tried to make it better and more easily understood by acquainting them with the general idea, the symbols, the legend etc.

“This book is the result of putting all that material for the general reader. It is hoped that the book will fulfil its purpose of encouraging and helping earnest students to enter into the Master’s great vision.”

The Book of Beginnings

M. P. Pandit

392 pp., Rs.150.00

ISBN 81-7509-086-3

From the blurb, “Sri Aurobindo turns the legend of Savitri into a symbol of the quest of humanity for the crown of immortality. He fills the frame of the legend with a wealth of spiritual and mystic imagery, invests the characters with a profound evolutionary significance and lifts it up into an epic of the Conquest of Death for Man by the Divine Grace.

“*The Book of Beginnings* is a line-by-line commentary on the first Book of Savitri which begins the narrative with the symbol Dawn and the fate of humanity that hangs in the balance before Savitri. The Yoga of Aswapathy and the secret Knowledge that is revealed to him form the rest of the Book.”

Sri Aurobindo in the First Decade of the Twentieth Century

Manoj Das

218 pp., Rs.95.00

ISBN 81-7058-697-6

When first published in 1972 as *Sri Aurobindo in the First Decade of the Century*, this book brought to light the then unknown private correspondence relating to Sri Aurobindo between Governor-General Lord Minto and Secretary of State for India Lord Morley, as well as the debate on Sri Aurobindo in the British parliament. Long out of print and now reissued, this book provides a unique insight into the politically active phase of Sri Aurobindo’s life.

[This book has not been available for the last ten years.]

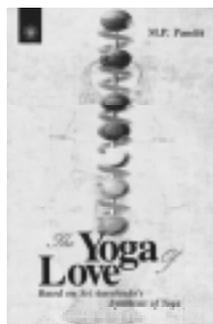
The following three books are published by New Age Books and ARE FOR SALE IN SOUTH ASIA ONLY:

The Yoga of Love

Based on Sri Aurobindo's Synthesis of Yoga

M. P. Pandit

103 pp., Rs.125.00, ISBN 81-7822-057-1



From the blurb, "The Yoga of Love concerns itself with the union of the human soul with the divine through emotion, the heart's movements of aspiration, longing and seeking, and the fulfilment of the divine relationship with the soul. This yoga is the fount from which the great saints have drawn their inspiration and strength. The soul's ecstasy of love has given us Mirabai, St. Francis, Hanuman,

Kabir and others in all the religious and spiritual traditions of the world. The yoga of love transcends any one spiritual teaching or path and in its fulfilment brings about the soul of unity and harmony which looks beyond all the divisions to find that ultimate oneness of man with god, and with his fellow man."

The Yoga of Knowledge

Based on Sri Aurobindo's Synthesis of Yoga

M. P. Pandit

281 pp., Rs.195.00, ISBN 81-7822-078-4

In *The Synthesis of Yoga* Sri Aurobindo has addressed fundamental issues concerning the creation, the universe and evolution. He "directs our minds towards the unifying knowledge behind the facts, to the power of synthesis which alone can bring into focus the motive forces and directions of our existence and the universe in which we live." In this book the author illustrates the principles of the yoga as described by Sri Aurobindo. "The seeker gains

insight into the transformation of man the mental being seeking knowledge into a spiritual being embodying knowledge through oneness."

The Yoga of Works

Based on Sri Aurobindo's Synthesis of Yoga

M. P. Pandit

185 pp., Rs.175.00, ISBN 81-7822-079-2

From the blurb, "The 'Yoga of Works', translated from the Sanskrit Karma Yoga, is essentially the harnessing of the vital creative energies of man and directing those energies towards the spiritual fulfilment. Life is the field of yoga, and activity is no longer a hindrance, but rather, the method of the yoga." In this book "The basis and movements of the yoga are described and the conflicts that we so often feel between our spiritual and material natures are taken up and addressed directly."

OTHER LANGUAGES

French

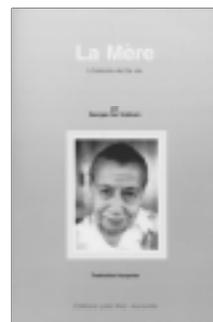
La Mère — L'histoire de Sa vie

Georges Van Vrekhem

538 pp., Rs.400.00

ISBN 81-87582-00-6

Cette biographie de la Mère retrace pas à pas l'extraordinaire aventure spirituelle de la Mère et de Sri Aurobindo, qui explique l'évolution accélérée à laquelle notre espèce est soumise, et permet de comprendre ce qui attend l'humanité au cours de ce nouveau millénaire.



Prières et messages annuels (1933-2000)

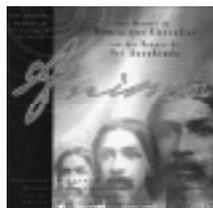
(New Year Prayers and Messages, 1933-2000)

147 pp., Rs.30.00

Ce recueil comprend les messages de Nouvel An donnés par la Mère de 1933 à 1973, les photographies de la Mère

NEW AUDIO CDs

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Soprano: Katharine Fuge
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Violin: Yu Yasuraoka
Organ: Dominique Chevalier
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TEN POEMS

BY SRI AUROBINDO

Moon of Two Hemispheres; Trance; Flamewind; Pall of Black Night; In Horis; Aeternum; Dreamboat; Divine Hearing; Lost Boat; The River; Journey's End.

Music By Holger; Recitation By Graeme Allwright.

Total Duration 30'30".

Price : Rs.200.00



qui ont paru dans les calendriers de l'Ashram de 1974 à 1984, et les messages extraits des écrits de la Mère et de Sri Aurobindo, imprimés de 1985 à nos jours.

Itinéraire d'un enfant du siècle

Philippe Barbier Saint Hilaire

Philippe Barbier Saint Hilaire (Pavitra), à peine sorti de Polytechnique, quitte l'Europe en 1921, se rend au Japon, puis dans une lamaserie, et enfin à Pondichéry où il devient disciple de Sri Aurobindo, et l'un des principaux artisans du développement de l'Ashram. Dans ces lettres, belles et émouvantes, il essaie de faire comprendre à son père les raisons de son choix, qui l'ont conduit à entreprendre cet itinéraire hors du commun.

(Publié par Buchet/Chastel et distribué par Éditions du Seuil. Il est disponible chez SABDA, mais peut être commandé directement chez Éditions du Seuil.)

Italian

L'Essere Psichico Compilation 550.00
ISBN 88-88508-03-1

Bengali

Hey Savitrivani Compilation 200.00

Gujarati

Prajwalita Yajnavedi The Mother 20.00
Shwet Gulab Huta 100.00
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Divyatana Pushp Champaklal Jyoti Thanki 5.00
Bhavani Bharati — Ek Swadhyaya Ramanlal D. Pathak 30.00

Hindi

Bhavani Bharati Sri Aurobindo 50.00
(English/Hindi/Sanskrit) ISBN 81-7060-202-5
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Kannada

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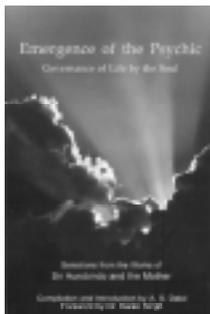
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REVIEWS

Emergence of the Psychic Governance of Life by the Soul

Selections from the Works of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother; Compilation and Introduction by A. S. Dalal; Price Rs.55.00, pp.135



What is it about Sri Aurobindo and the Mother that so captivates us? Is it the mystique of two human beings living the highest spiritual life, the profound Truth, Beauty and Goodness of their writings, or the power of their words and experiences that touch a deep need within us to break the shell of ignorance? What is it in us that relates to Sri Aurobindo's and the Mother's teachings on striving for a higher state of consciousness? According to A. S. Dalal it is the psychic being — soul nodding to soul.

Soul or psychic is a term of common usage, but how many of us understand its meaning? In his compilation, *Emergence of the Psychic*, A. S. Dalal gives us the answer. Through extensive research, Dr. Dalal produced a series of selections from the writings of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother that clearly explain the evolution of the psychic being (the soul) from its beginnings to its full emergence in the individual human being. Most importantly for me, he exemplified how Sri Aurobindo and the Mother “distinguish between the *psychic principle*, which is present in all things and creatures, and the *psychic personality* which is characteristic of the human state of development.”

Using well-chosen writings from Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, Dr. Dalal encourages us to climb the spiritual ladder. The book commences with the nature and function of the psychic being and guides the reader through the growth of the psychic to the apex of its consciousness.

At the beginning the soul in Nature, the psychic entity, whose unfolding is the first step towards a spiritual change, is an entirely veiled part of us, although it is that by which we exist and persist as individual beings in Nature.... (p. 1).

The psychic is the inmost being of all; a perception of truth which is inherent in the deepest substance of the consciousness, a sense of the good, true, beautiful, the Divine, is its privilege (p. 5).

For Sri Aurobindo, the psychic principle is a spark of the Divine and permanent. In the course of evolution, the psychic principle gathers round itself the necessary experiences of life to become individualized in the human being. When the psychic becomes individualized, it eventually develops a psychic personality or soul:

... which insisting always on the good, true and beautiful, finally becomes ready and strong enough to turn the nature towards the Divine (p.x).

According to the Mother, for those in whom the psychic comes forward from behind the veil of ignorance:

Everything seems beautiful and good ... their health improves, their consciousness grows more luminous; they feel happy, peaceful and safe; they think that they have reached their utmost possibility of consciousness (p. xxvii).

The psychic being is always there, but is not felt because it is covered up by the mind and vital; when it is no longer covered up, it is then said to be awake. When it is awake, it begins to take hold of the rest of the being, to influence it and change it so that all may become the true expression of the inner soul (p. 86).

In the preface Dr. Dalal sets out three objectives for the book:

1. To help us become more conscious of the influence and action of the soul in everyday life:

If you have within you a psychic being sufficiently awake to watch over you, to prepare your path, it can draw towards you things which help you, draw people, books, circumstances, all sorts of little coincidences which come to you as though brought by some benevolent will and give you an indication, a help, a support to take decisions and turn you in the right direction... (p. 38).

2. To clarify various states of consciousness that are relevant to soul experiences when we are in touch with the psychic, and how the psychic emerges:

The psychic being is always there, but is not felt because it is covered up by the mind and vital; when it is no longer covered up, it is then said to be awake. When it is awake, it begins to take hold of the rest of the being, to influence it and change it so that all may become the true expression of the inner soul (p. 86).

3. “Kindling an aspiration for a spiritual goal which goes beyond the discovery and freedom of the soul ... the transformation of one’s outer being by the soul.”

There has to be a preliminary stage of seeking and effort with a central offering or self-giving of the heart and soul and mind to the Highest and a later mediate stage of total conscious reliance on its greater Power aiding the personal endeavour; that integral reliance again must grow into a final complete abandonment of oneself in every part and every movement to the working of the higher Truth in the nature (p. 109).

The selections Dr. Dalal uses vary in length and complexity, thus keeping the reader’s attention. The various works of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother are well represented and helpful to our growth. The journey through the *Emergence of the Psychic* is, in my opinion, one well worth taking.

— Joan Price

Dr. Price has taught History, Philosophical Psychology and World Religions in the USA for over three decades. She is the author of An Introduction to Sri Aurobindo’s Philosophy.

The Wonder that is Sanskrit

Sampad and Vijay; Published by Sri Aurobindo Society, Pondicherry in association with Mapin Publishing, Ahmedabad. Simultaneously published by Grantha Corporation, USA; Price: Rs.195.00, pp.210

The Wonder that is Sanskrit is beautiful from cover to cover. It has an elegant cover, with reverberating vibratory lines of ‘a’ the *adi akshara* or the first letter of the Sanskrit alphabet, thereby representing the primeval language *Sanskritam*, the origin of all languages, reverberating its creative force and genius to mother all the



languages of the world. In the foreground is a delicate feather stylus inscribing the first mantra of the *Rgveda* which is surely among the first of the revealed truths of the Divine Wisdom, that has given birth to the oldest and most refined and opulently beautiful language of the world, *Sanskritam*.

The back cover of the book gives a quotation from Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru on the importance of Sanskrit in relation to India. It comes from the writer of *Discovery of India* almost suggesting and urging us to discover the past glories of our *Sanskriti* which is impregnated in the Sanskrit language.

Over the years I have always felt the need of a good English presentation — English, because it is most accessible to all, — of the glory and greatness of the Sanskrit language. I wanted something pleasant to read and easy to handle, something which should cover the interesting aspects of Sanskrit yet not be heavy and pedantic; a work that should be acceptable to the standards of a scholar and give a true taste to the novice; a work that should be simple and yet bear the extraordinary richness of the most beautiful language of the world. On reading this book, my mind feels satisfied that this is indeed what I had expected.

As we go through the pages, we are constantly made aware of our rich heritage and we pause awe-struck to believe all that is truly true and nobly noble.

The introduction gives us the purpose of the book, which is to open our shut eyes to the exuberant culture and throbbing ethos of our own motherland and its language, the life-giving river Sanskrit. There are apt quotations of westerners who loved India deeply. The author was surprised to know that Sanskrit conforms to “the greatest and highest achievements of India in every field”. He says it was an enthralling and fulfilling experience.

The first chapter deals with grammar which is not only made palatable but delicious. A brief history reveals the unique, scientific and logical approach in the creation of the alphabet. The noun and *Kāraka* theory point out that the expression of the thought is not dependent on the syntax of the sentence. The root sounds with the use of prefixes give an interesting insight into the capacities of the language.

The second chapter deals with amazing creations in Sanskrit. Here we see the agility and flexibility, and the

mental gymnastics that the human mind is capable of. These are unparalleled feats which leave us with a sense of sheer wonder.

The third chapter deals with Arts and Science in daily life. Here we see the number of varied fields in which Sanskrit literature has made its contribution: in poetry, mathematics, science, astronomy and astrology; in logic, law, religion, politics, drama, fulfilment in married life; in history, geography; in medicine, in yoga and spirituality and the list continues. The ancients knew that the sun is the centre and not the earth, that the earth moved but appeared still. They knew the value of \bar{O} in mathematics to 17 digits beyond the decimal point. Finally the chapter states that a noted NASA scientist vouches that Sanskrit is most suited to be the language of computers.

The next chapter deals with the opulence, exuberance, subtlety, perfection and exquisite beauty of Sanskrit literature. It is explained in simple, lucid English and is a feast for the lover of Sanskrit.

The spiritual and sacred aspect of the Sanskrit tongue is most commonly known to us. The introduction to the lofty ideas touching and illuminating our deepest self is well-presented in the next section.

It is because man has always sought to overpass his limits, to look for his true self, to find God, light, freedom, bliss and immortality that a language like Sanskrit came into being. ... From ancient times Sanskrit has been looked upon and even venerated in India as a sacred and a spiritual language (p. 111).

The subsequent chapters deal in great detail with the possibilities of Sanskrit being revived back to a national status and being our national language. Some common questions of whether this is a difficult language or not are well answered. That Sanskrit is the language of India's soul and there are no real differences between the so called Aryan and Dravidian cultures is carefully dealt with. The book ends with a transliteration of all Sanskrit texts discussed in the book, and a glossary and a list of references has also been added for better comprehension.

This book gives our Motherland and our language a lift in our eyes. We feel proud of our richest, loftiest, deepest, and most beautiful heritage, the legacy and

wisdom of our ancient seers.

I strongly recommend this book to every lover of India. If only it would have been more moderately priced it would have been excellent in every respect.

— Radhikaranjan Das



Bhāva Sumam

Asha Agarwal; Published by Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education, Pondicherry; Price: Rs.70.00, pp.130

Bhāva-Sumam is an anthology of poems and songs in Sanskrit, filled with the devotion, admiration, and surrender of a being at the lotus feet of the Divine Mother.

These are all her original creations and not a compilation. The songs and poems are written basically on three different themes, first singing the praise of Lord Sri Aurobindo and our loving Divine Mother. The second group is dedicated to *Bhāratamātā* the Mother India, seen as a *shakti*, as a godhead, a guiding force and inspiration for all lovers of India. The third group consists of miscellaneous subjects.

The language of these songs is beautiful, the rhythms are easy to sing or teach, the poetic alliterations are praiseworthy. The songs are harmonious and extremely pleasing to the ear when sung. The internal rhymes in the lines give a sonorous and compatible gladness, and are well composed. This is genuine inspiration, and the quality is of a very good standard and yet it is accessible to the student and lover of Sanskrit, appealing by its simplicity, its neat and clear print and layout; and of course the price is also affordable.

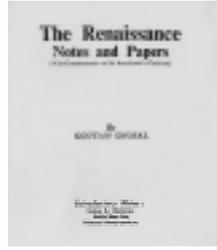
I was deeply touched to know that many years back the poetess herself had made a footstool and offered it to the Mother. A photograph of this footstool adorns the cover of the book.

The poem *Shri Charanam Shubhadham* (p.94), is a homage to Sri Aurobindo. The words here are all in appellatives, without any *visargas* (which sometimes give a harshness to the sounds), give a sense of glory and grandeur, and remind me of the last stanza of the poem *Who* written by Sri Aurobindo:

It is He in the sun who is ageless and deathless,
 And into the midnight His shadow is thrown;
 When darkness was blind and engulfed within
 darkness,
 He was seated within it immense and alone.

— Radhikaranjan Das

R. Das teaches Sanskrit at the Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education, Pondicherry.



The Renaissance: Notes and Papers

Goutam Ghosal; Published by
 Indranath Majumdar
 Subarnarekha, Calcutta;
 Price Rs.65.00, 72 pp.

This is a collection of essays compiled by Dr. Goutam Ghosal of Visva-Bharati University. A slender volume of 72 pages, it contains eight essays. The introductory notes, as befits the title of the volume, deals with three chosen literary aspects of the Renaissance. The two essays that follow are excerpted from Sri Aurobindo's book *The Future Poetry* and express his views on Elizabethan drama. The remaining six essays/notes by Ghosal deal with the same theme in the light of Sri Aurobindo's views.

The Introductory notes are divided into three sections. The first section "The Literary Renaissance in England: A short note" is authored by Dr. Sukla Basu Sen. Much has been said and written about the Renaissance period. Even today, it continues to be written about, perhaps because there is much to be said about it. Since literature is one of the major aspects of Life, and English Literature was then passing through its formative period, it readily lent itself to the Renaissance sway. A literary osmosis followed.

All literary forms then in circulation either received a fillip or a modification besides importation of new forms. The movement coincided with Colonial expansion and exchange became a routine. English luminaries like Wyatt, Surrey, Sidney, Shakespeare and a host of others reacted positively with forms such as Sonnet, Blank verse etc. The themes of the drama of Marlowe and Shakespeare reflect the Renaissance spirit. When questioning, examination and analysis underlie the attitude

of the commoner, a positive and progressive change follows logically.

The second section, "Melancholy: The Spirit of Renaissance" is written by Debarati Bandhopadhyay. The term has several shades of meaning: the context of "humours", reference to old age, "literati" with prophetic powers (artists or statesman), and generally, in the words of Hamlet: "noble in reason, infinite in faculties... how like a God."

The third section by Prof. Kalyan K. Chatterjee is titled: "The fiction of Poets: Colet and Literary Education". John Colet (1467-1519), an English theologian, played a pioneering role in modifying education towards achieving humanistic education, one of the salient features of the Renaissance. The author logically develops his argument, citing the opinions of both ancient and modern critics.

Sri Aurobindo is known as a Yogi and a Philosopher but primarily, he is a poet and a critic. His views on Elizabethan drama were unique and original when he published them about eighty-five years ago; they remain valid today. If one carefully studies his views along with those of the leading Shakespearean critics of the last century, one wonders if the latter had studied Sri Aurobindo sometime ago.

According to Sri Aurobindo there were very few inspired dramatic poets — the literary world probably gave us no more than a dozen. True drama depends on an interpretive vision of life; not mere words, action and passions. Other than Shakespeare, the rest lack interpretive vision. Of the lesser Elizabethan dramatists, Marlowe alone had some vision but not the power of dramatic execution; Shakespeare is "... a great vital creator and intensely, though within marked limits, a seer of life." Sri Aurobindo felt that Shakespeare "accomplished mentally the legendary feat of the impetuous sage Viswamitra."

The second essay "Hindu Drama and Elizabethan & Jacobean Drama" by Sri Aurobindo is another fine piece of this book. While Elizabethan Drama aims at a mixed audience, Hindu Drama is meant for an educated or courtly audience. A Hindu with his "Divine tenderness" cannot draw pleasure from the sufferings of Oedipus or Macbeth. "Aesthetic beauty" and "aesthetic gratification" are the basis of dramatic composition. He states that European nature is "still semi-civilized" and "their mind feeds on the physical...". The differences between these two dramas

are "... more vital and go deeper." However, "the national element" has its role in any approach to poetry.

In his essay "Sri Aurobindo on Shakespeare," Ghosal rightly agrees with Sri Aurobindo and points out that the creations of Shakespeare can be understood by a study of their consciousness. Sri Aurobindo has disclosed the planes of consciousness in Man, even to the extent of identifying the plane of 'Mantra' poetry. As such, the characters of Shakespeare belong to the vital plane of consciousness.

The future may find for us a higher and profounder, even a more deeply and finely vital aim for the dramatic form than any Shakespeare ever conceived, but until that has been done with an equal power, grasp and fullness of vision and an equal intensity of revealing speech, he keeps his sovereign station. The claim made for him that he is the greatest of poets may very well be challenged, — he is not quite that, — but that he is first among dramatic poets cannot well be questioned (p.35).

Ghosal feels that Timon is the most vital of all. In the beginning Timon announces, "I am wealthy in my friends" but when he tastes the pain and bitterness of life, he prefers "to retire to the woods."

The essay on Dr. Faustus is quite impressive and the essayist has fully exposed his approach to the light of Sri Aurobindo and observes that Faustus is obsessed with the Renaissance spirit and mistakes falsehood for knowledge. As the observation goes Magic is related to the mastery of the senses and the transformation of ego. However, Dr. Faustus is the comedy of a soul in despair.

In "The Sonnets of Petrarch and Shakespeare," Ghosal makes a comprehensive note that "The Sonnets of Shakespeare speak of a Dante without a Paradiso..." and he draws his sustenance from the Vital and seldom from the "overmind".

"Three layers of the Self: Queen Isabella, Younger Mortimer and Edward II" is another interesting article from a curious perspective.

The note on Bembo's theory of Love in "The Courtier" is a thought provoking one and as it is noted,

"all love is on the move and ultimately it seeks a merger, first blindly, then half-consciously and finally consciously."

The book inspires a student of Sri Aurobindo's writings and comes as a surprise to one who thinks that Sri Aurobindo is only a Yogi.

— D. Venkateswara Rao

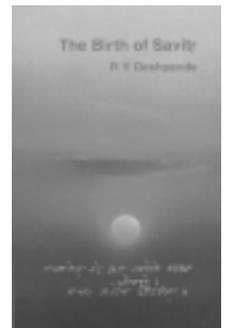
Dr. D. V. Rao is the former head of the English department, B.V.K. College, Visakhapatnam. He is the author of Sri Aurobindo: The Critic of English Poetry and Sri Aurobindo and the Poets of the Dawn.

The Birth of Savitr

R. Y. Deshpande; Published by The Sri Aurobindo Center of Los Angeles, USA; Price: Rs.100.00; pp.95

From *Paging the Unknown* (a collection of lyrics by Deshpande the scientist turned poet) to *The Birth of Savitr* is a leap indeed towards the Unknown. Sri Aurobindo's *Savitri* is the Word supreme that can bring the Divine into the life of man, nay, help man attain his soul's fulfilment. The book under review comprises 49 compositions (cantos) each of 12 lines and is based, as the poet says, on each canto of *Savitri*. 'To think of putting such a work (*Savitri*) in scarcely six hundred lines is a perilous task ...' (— An Apologia) yet Deshpande did it though much diluted from the original in inspiration, poetic speech and level of consciousness; that was expected to be, for Sri Aurobindo is one and unique. But Deshpande's attempt did 'not desecrate the magnificence' of the original poem.

Sri Aurobindo's *Savitri* is a cosmic poem, 'a revelation and a quest of the Infinite, the Eternal' (The Mother). Each verse of *Savitri* is 'like a revealed Mantra'. Here a serious question may rise in the mind both of the readers and the critics whether a cosmic poem like *Savitri* can be captured in short compositions such as those of Deshpande, or is it at all advisable to make such an attempt? Moreover, is there any valid justification to do so? The reviewer is of the opinion that there is nothing wrong in such an attempt. The supreme Truth is many-sided and has many distinct ways expressing itself from many levels of consciousness and inspiration received therefrom, according to the mind or the receptacle through which they



are channelled.

There is nothing wrong if Deshpande has attempted in his shorter compositions to encapsulate the supreme Word which is *Savitri*. Here lies the justification for the composition of *The Birth of Savitrī*.

The technique I have adopted is mostly that of a short even narrative, though at times it may be lyric-sensitive or occult-symbolical. In the process there is the likelihood of moving far away from the original's wholesome Hellenistic beauty and of falling into the trimmed expressive form that is profiled and geometric in character. ... Yet possibly it could secure in its deep hushful seed-state everything (p. 111).

Though Sri Aurobindo's multi-dimensional and cosmic poem and its revelatory nature has been replaced by Deshpande into 'atomic parcellings of the Infinite', yet this method has its use for lay readers. Without dissipating the original the poet of *The Birth of Savitrī* has made *Savitri* accessible to common readers of poetry. This is a 'refreshing gain' of the present book. Here the poet has attempted 'an accurate subjective impression of each canto but through a personal retelling, using a focused mystic style' as Debashish Banerji comments in the Foreword to the book.

While reviewing *Paging the Unknown*, the present reviewer commented that though 'the poems of Deshpande are certainly moving away from the poetry of the so-called modernist poets, yet the style is still intellectualised and heavy'. The 'vocabulary and phrases have on them the unmistakable stamp of intellectuality, of course a natural outcome'. It is, however, heartening to note that *The Birth of Savitrī* has overcome this inhibition. Now there is a greater spontaneity of feeling and a smoothness in the expression. It is more akin to what Wordsworth says of poetry, a spontaneous overflow of emotion recollected in tranquility:

Happy life rushed in bird and beast and tree
And through dreaming quietude ran swift joys of men
And the rishis in the forest felt a change,
As though the past had vanished into fire ...

— Canto 49.

Take for example Canto 46, a delightful reading moved and inspired as if by the very spirit of delight. This

canto especially its opening line reminds us of Tagore's well-known ethereal line – *ananda dhara boheechhey bhuvane* (stream of ananda flows in and through the universe):

Is it not ananda that flows in a stream?

And ananda that surges in the calm ocean,

A wave of ananda on the waters of ananda, ...

— Canto 46.

All the attributes of good poetry like inspiration from beyond mind consciousness, rhythmic movement, expressive metaphorical language with images and symbols carrying deeper meaning, sometimes occult, adorn the cantos of the book:

At the river's bend hope took a northward turn —

As if stumbling on a strange post of the night

Stars found a sudden way through emptiness;

— Canto One.

Apt use of personification (Canto 18), metaphorical images are spread all over the book. The first half a dozen cantos have beautiful descriptions of Nature in language sweet, musical and symbolic :

Music streamed down from blue of the upper sky

And the hills and the lush fields and the choir birds

Bore its eager delight in earthly moments.

— Canto Two.

Whatever critics might say against Deshpande's attempt at miniaturising the vast cosmic canvas of *Savitri*, it is still very good poetry.

Besides its poetic value, the book contains some other useful material for readers. The most significant being a canto-wise *Résumé* of *Savitri*, that would prove helpful to readers who wish to enter into a thematic touch with Sri Aurobindo's *Savitri*; the story of *Savitri* under the title *The Legend*, the symbolic meaning of the epic as given by Sri Aurobindo under the heading *The Tale*, an essay on Sri Aurobindo's Gayatri Mantra under the heading *The Symbol*. All these form very useful addenda to the study of *Savitri* and make Deshpande's book very exhaustive and comprehensive.

The phototypeset and printing as well as the symbolic cover design have been done beautifully and artistically. The publisher, The Sri Aurobindo Center of Los Angeles, U.S.A. and the printers, All India Press, Pondicherry deserve all compliments.

— Asoka K. Ganguli

Dr. A. K. Ganguli retired as Professor of English, Delhi University.

Brahman and Sri Aurobindo's Integral Approach to the Upanishads

G. N. Sarma; Published by Ultra Publications, Bangalore; Price: Rs.125, pp.94

I

Professor G. N. Sarma is already known as the author of important works on Sri Aurobindo. The book under review is about Sri Aurobindo's approach to the Upanishads. We may speak of two broad divisions of the book. In the first (chapters 1 to 5) the book deals with the Upanishads in general; in the second (chapters 6 to 10) its main focus is on the Isha Upanishad.

We know that Sri Aurobindo has commented on only two Upanishads – Isha and Kena. Each is a unique work. In the first he is mainly concerned with the underlying harmony of ideas, whereas in the second he has shown how the words of the Upanishad serve as keys to open the treasure-house of the great masters. On reading them one feels that the masters have come alive and elucidate the texts as they originally conceived them. Sri Aurobindo's commentaries are considered to be matchless works in Indian history.

... Sri Sankara has held that the Upanishads are our single authoritative source of Truth and that according to Sri Aurobindo, the aid of the Upanishads is indispensable to the understanding and realisation of Brahman. ... As the Upanishads are the revelations of truths directly heard and seen, they remain the supreme authority for the knowledge of Brahman (p. 8).

II

As the Shwetashwatara says, Brahman is threefold — individual, universal and transcendental. All are equally and simultaneously Brahman, for Brahman is absolutely unconditioned and free. Shankara makes a distinction between the transcendental on one side and the individual and universal on the other, and says that while the former is real, the latter are mere appearances. But this is contrary to fact. From the teachings of the Upanishads

we understand that Brahman is real in all three aspects. Sri Aurobindo points out that this is the true significance of the repeated Upanishadic affirmation that all is Brahman, *sarvam brahma*. All propositions about Brahman become harmonious when viewed in the light of the formula "All is Brahman". Therefore, Professor Sarma says that "the key to the synthesis of the Upanishads" is to be found in the above formula.

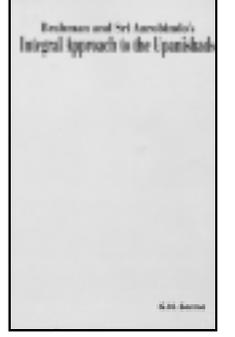
The Advaita of the Upanishads does not consider that Brahman and Matter are opposites, even though the latter is insentient. The Taittiriya (2-6) says that the insentient Matter is but a state of self-absorption of Brahman in the forms of the world. If this is so, Matter is inert only in a particular condition and not in other conditions. Hence, Brahman and Matter are declared to be one by the same Upanishad, *annam brahma* (3-2-1). As a result Sri Aurobindo does not face any difficulty in accepting the Upanishadic proposition that Brahman is the material cause of the world. Brahman's material causality is a metaphysical truth. As some say, it is neither an impossible idea nor a metaphorical statement. The Taittiriya text (2-6), as Professor Sarma rightly says, has revealed "one of the darkest and most impenetrable secrets of Brahman".

III

After a brief study of the Upanishads in general, Professor Sarma takes up the Isha Upanishad. Sri Aurobindo's explanation of its key concepts is justified in the light of the discussions of the previous section. This definitely enhances the merit of Sri Aurobindo's original commentary.

The book carries a Foreword by V. Sivaramakrishnan, former associate editor of Bhavan's Journal, Mumbai, and an Introduction by Dr. T. S. Krishnamurthy, Professor of Sanskrit, Bangalore. Both speak about the value of the book and welcome it as a scholarly work. It is a book to be read and enjoyed by all interested in the original Vedanta.

— N. Jayashanmugam
Prof. Jayashanmugam is a retired professor of Philosophy, Annamalai University.

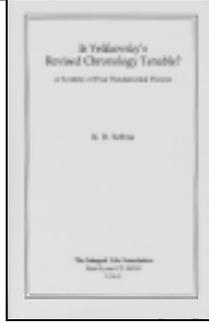


The Spirit who is here in a man and the Spirit who is there in the Sun,
it is one Spirit and there is no other. — Taittiriya Upanishad

Is Velikovsky's Revised Chronology Tenable?

A Scrutiny of Four Fundamental Themes

K. D. Sethna; Published by The Integral Life Foundation, U.S.A.; Price: Rs.100.00, pp.104



In 1987 author-poet K.D. Sethna wrote a critical appraisal on Immanuel Velikovsky's radical attempt to shorten the history of antiquity by 600 years, and which was only first published last year. By the straightforwardness of his appraisal, without an introduction on Velikovsky (1895-1979), it is evident that the author assumes — not unjustified — that the average reader in 1987 was familiar with Velikovsky, but time has since reduced his fame to a mere shadow. Hence, a few notes to enlighten the shadow: as a physician and psychoanalyst, Velikovsky's cataclysmic and historical theories not only sparked an extreme controversy, but proved to be a source of inspiration for numerous science-fiction movies, future generation science-fiction writers and modern scientists entranced by a future collision of the Earth with a meteorite or comet. Although the fact that Velikovsky was a psychoanalyst is usually obscured by controversy, it is by his own admission the initiating source for his historical research. After writing an essay on Freud's *Moses and Monotheism* — Velikovsky studied psychoanalysis under Wilhelm Stekel, a co-worker of Freud — he "came upon the idea that traditions, legends and memories of genetic (historical) origin can be treated in the same way in which we treat in psychoanalysis the early memories of an individual." He called it, "an analytic experiment on Mankind [...] an approach to the reconstruction of history." (cit. John MacGregor) So it is perhaps well to bear in mind that — although un-addressed by Sethna — for Velikovsky revising the chronology of the four fundamental themes of antiquity served a twofold purpose: *to validate his cataclysmic theory and the theory of collective amnesia — an offspring of Freud's inherited racial memory!*

The four fundamental themes addressed by K. D. Sethna in his book are: (i) the Exodus of the Israelites from Egypt, (ii) the invasion of the Hyksos or Amu, (iii) the Egyptian Queen Hatshepsut, and (iv) her successor Pharaoh Thutmose III.

Sethna has set sail upon a voyage seemingly void of any poetry or spirituality, yet has accepted the serious and commendable burden of examining the records of

antiquity, to be able to respond in a meticulous and objective way. Early on Sethna already sees no other option but to comment — an appraisal that will circumnavigate each theme — "we may mark an inconsistency by which Velikovsky tries to turn everything into grist for his mill."

While closely examining Velikovsky's philology, Sethna not only discovers that it is defective but "slanted in his own favour," this in order to square the chronology of the Exodus of the Israelites from Egypt with the invasion of Egypt by the Hyksos; and the latter to be identical with the Amalekites; Queen Hatshepsut to be identical with the Queen of Sheba; the land Punt with Israel, and Thutmose III with the Old Testament's Pharaoh Shishak.

Time and time again Sethna is not only confronted with a lack of coherency — which elucidates how a straightforward tale becomes "completely illogical [...] and a mess of scriptural sense" — the moment he resorts to the actual documents, he realizes that Velikovsky has taken the "selections out of context, and turned them to his own purpose"; he mistakes "psychological presence to be physical"; he assigns words of an Egyptian god to a human being and deliberately omits sentences! But a reader familiar with Velikovsky will hardly be surprised — reconstructing history by psychoanalysis validates Velikovsky's singular method!

Only half way Sethna is already forced to conclude — a bleak but objective judgement that ultimately applies to each theme of the chronology, and a conclusion with which we may end this appraisal — that "Velikovsky's many-sided attempt to change the historical chronology [...] radically, [...] fails irretrievably on a substantial number of counts."

Summarizing, we may assume that the book was especially written for people interested in the ideas of Velikovsky. But the absence of an analysis of these ideas in the light of the Integral Yoga will make it perhaps less interesting for the average sadhak. Finally, it is somehow tragic to observe how Velikovsky failed to sense the spiritual and poetic in every sacred scripture, myth or papyrus he studied — only in apocalyptic verses around the world did he recognize the synthesis of his cataclysmic ideas, ideas that inevitably made him a fervent believer of *pralaya*.

— Robbert Stephan Schrover

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In God all things find their secret truth and their absolute reconciliation. – Sri Aurobindo

1. An Interview with Nirodbaran

Compiled and Edited by Supriyo Bhattacharya; Published by Sri Aurobindo Bhavan, Kolkata; Price: Rs.10.00, pp.23

2. Selected Essays and Talks of Nirodbaran

Compiled and Edited by Supriyo Bhattacharya; Published by Sri Aurobindo Bhavan, Barrackpore; Price: Rs.100.00, pp.271

Supriyo Bhattacharya must be congratulated for taking the initiative in bringing out these two books, one a short interview with Nirodda and another a selection of some old essays and talks written over a long period of time.

The first one, which consists of an interview with Nirodbaran, is a small book of just a little more than 20 pages. In this short interview Nirodda illumines us on two aspects of Sri Aurobindo. The first one is the help he got from Sri Aurobindo in his poetic creation and the second some very illuminating aspects of the composition of Savitri. Both these aspects are very interesting and useful. To the budding artist and poet, there are profound hints, which will help him in his creative work. The second aspect regarding the composition of Savitri is a wonderful testimony to the creative genius of Sri Aurobindo. It depicts the way a Yogi goes about his creative work.



The second book *Selected Essays and Talks of Nirodbaran* is a very fine and timely production. It contains a series of talks and essays written by Nirodda spread over a long period of time. These writings are mainly descriptions and pen-sketches of the sadhaks who formed the backbone of the Ashram in the early days. Of course, there is a chapter on Sri Aurobindo as Guru and this is definitely the most inspiring chapter in the book.

The Ashram was formed or rather formed itself in 1926. It started with a small number of disciples. Over the years the numbers started increasing and quite naturally the outer form and structure also underwent great changes, sometimes even radical changes. But through all these

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changes the central spirit and ambience of the Ashram has always remained the same. However to be able to see and feel this central spirit is not always easy. For we human beings tend to be carried away by the external form and often miss the depths. It is in this context that this book serves a very useful purpose. Through the lives of the early sadhaks, through very interesting anecdotes and above all their interaction with the Mother and Sri Aurobindo, one is taken back to the old ambience and atmosphere of the early Ashram. To all those who are sensitive and open, it can become the starting point of a deeper contact with the Mother and the Master. Written in a simple and intensely personal style, this book can be a springboard for newcomers in particular to go back in time and feel the old atmosphere, which though apparently covered up is always there below the surface waiting to be discovered.

Starting from the apparently aloof spiritual personality of Nolinida, the witty and ever charming personality of Amritada, the author moves through a gamut of personalities, each one unique in his own way till we come to the dogged determination and ever faithful personality of Nishikanta. The author has traced some very interesting aspects of these early sadhaks; much more he has brought out some intimate aspects of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo, which are generally not known to most disciples. The selection of these essays and talks is also quite remarkable. For they throw a great deal of light on the Ashram of the early days. All the names selected have been stalwarts in their own way and have played their role in the great work and the formation of the Ashram. As one goes through the chapters one is taken back to the spiritual ambience when Sri Aurobindo and the Mother were in their physical body. For those who were fortunate to live in the Ashram during those wonderful days, it is a very sweet reminder of the past, and for those who were not fortunate to be physically present then, it opens the door to feel the atmosphere of those wonderful days.

This book is, to put it simply, a timely and fine contribution to kindling the fire of aspiration in the hearts of the devotees and disciples of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother.

— Kittu Reddy

Kittu Reddy has been teaching at the Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education since 1958. He currently teaches History and Sri Aurobindo's works.



AMAL KIRAN on NIRODBARAN

On the occasion of Nirodbaran's centenary (November 17, 2003), some questions were put to Amal Kiran (K. D. Sethna). His verbal answers are reproduced herewith.

Nirodbaran joined the Sri Aurobindo Ashram in 1933 and served Sri Aurobindo as a personal attendant for twelve years from 1938. He was privileged of being Sri Aurobindo's scribe when he dictated "Savitri" to him. A prolific writer and accomplished poet in English and Bengali, Nirodbaran dedicated himself to the service of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother.

Amal Kiran – a name given to him by Sri Aurobindo – first joined the Sri Aurobindo Ashram in 1927 and is himself a prolific author, poet, literary critic and artist. He has served the Ashram in several capacities, and since 1949 has been the Editor of Mother India, a monthly review of culture.

Question: *In the early days when the Ashram was relatively new, "social norms" and collective life must have been quite different from what they are now. What was it like then?*

Amal Kiran: Life was simpler then, less crowded. People did not meet as much as they do nowadays. Each one was more occupied with his own sadhana. If we did meet, then we met in the Ashram itself, only rarely in each other's rooms. In fact, it was understood that we should not visit each other.

Q: *When Nirod-da arrived, he described himself as a "man of the world". What do you remember of him in those days?*

A. K.: From those early days all I remember of Nirod is his talk about life in England and the kind of work he had done there. There was no particular reference to anybody. He was naturally interested in our life here and tried to share it. He had to adjust himself to the routine of our life here, as it must have differed a good deal from the one in England. He was troubled by the idea of going away.

Q: *Do you remember your first meeting with Nirod-da?*

What did you think of him?

A. K.: We first met in the dispensary. Nirod used to be the Ashram doctor at that time. So we first met in his capacity as a doctor. He would dispense some gargle to cure my sore throat and he would also give me injections with semi-blunt needles for little pimples in my eyes. He could be indignant with patients for being ill. Hence I called him "The Frowning Physician". My first impression of Nirod was that of a natural friendliness; it was on the whole a good impression. He seemed to be an honest, dependable, consistent person. I felt I could depend on him. We were at ease with each other.

Q: *How did the two of you become friends? Besides poetry what brought the two of you together?*

A. K.: After our meetings in the dispensary we made it a habit of meeting daily in Nirod's office on the first floor of Sri Aurobindo's house. We discussed poetry. We discussed mutual friends and — to a lesser degree — medicine. We were both aspiring poets. Sri Aurobindo's attention and attitude to our literary attempts were our main objects of interest. These meetings went on for several years. We became friends in connection with Sri Aurobindo's correspondence to each of us. We had a Master in common!



Nirodbaran and Amal Kiran

Q: *From the early correspondence, we gather there were discussions about Yoga, the Supermind, Death, Immortality, Sri Aurobindo's spiritual achievements, etc. How did you deal with these topics?*

A. K.: It was expected that Sri Aurobindo would not "die" — he would have the power to prolong life. We definitely believed that Sri Aurobindo could change his body. To change the body specifically is not quite the same as to prolong one's life. We were all the time talking about the Supermind. Somebody once remarked that we talked as though we carried the Supermind in our pockets and knew everything about it. Was there any manifestation of the Supermind in the physical of the sadhaks? The power to

tackle illness was increased. But about Sri Aurobindo, I certainly believed that his body was undergoing change. Mother even asked us to try not to look at his body. People's attention to Sri Aurobindo's body must have had an effect on its condition. Nirod used to be in intimate contact with Sri Aurobindo so he had the opportunity to see the weaknesses of his body, like its possible liability to accidents. Sri Aurobindo's keeping aloof from people struck us as part of the process of his bodily change.

When Sri Aurobindo passed away, it was a great shock and puzzle to all of us. We took it as if he had concentrated within his body the whole Death-power at work in the world. It was as if Death itself had died in the death of Sri Aurobindo. Sri Aurobindo made a self-sacrifice. I have elaborated on this in my article "The Passing of Sri Aurobindo: Its Inner Significance and Consequence" which was first published in 1951.

Q: *Did you share your correspondence with each other? Can you give us an example?*

A. K.: We did not share our correspondence directly, but we used to share our literary correspondence. I came to see how Sri Aurobindo evoked the sleeping poet in Nirod. All of Nirod's letters to Sri Aurobindo ended with "Blessings from Nirod". I think he was the only one in the Ashram to do so.

Q: *In the 1930's there was a special force that inspired and helped creative work like poetry, music, literature, etc. We know that both of you worked and profited a lot by it. What was that period like?*

A. K.: It was a period of great interest to us, especially the mutual sharing of Sri Aurobindo's help and clarifications. We used to read each other's literary correspondence. As a sadhak, Nirod did not like to be drawn out of his concentration by queries from other people about their own sadhana.

Q: *With each friend we share something unique and wonderful. What is the unique thing you share with*

Nirod-da?

A. K.: Poetry! We have a Master in common: Sri Aurobindo! Sri Aurobindo's trust and confidence in Nirod has influenced me deeply. Our friendship has helped in our literary aims, our literary natures.

Q: *How has your friendship changed over the years?*

A. K.: The occasions of meeting are less now. But the inner relationship remains the same.

Q: *Of the sadhaks from the early days, only Nirod-da and you remain. Nirod-da had been in physical contact with Sri Aurobindo and you by way of corresponding with Sri Aurobindo. Do the two of you ever reminisce?*

A. K.: We do not talk about old times as we do not realise that we are the only two sadhaks left who were in contact with Sri Aurobindo. We basically talk about Sri Aurobindo's letters — the letters dealing with Yoga and poetry. We discuss certain details of poetry.

Q: *Did Nirod-da tell you how he received inspiration while writing poetry? What form did it take (images, colours, etc.)?*

A. K.: He used to ask Sri Aurobindo to send him inspiration and he would write to Sri Aurobindo whatever happened as a result. The inspiration came in the form of words.

Q: *Is there a difference in the quality of inspiration with respect to the plane from which it descends?*

A. K.: Generally, we did not know ourselves which plane the inspiration came from. It was Sri Aurobindo who would tell us. I remember Sri Aurobindo writing to Nirod that they would cooperate and that he would receive greater and rarer inspirations. Each plane lends its own particular imagery and peculiar turns of phrase. If one is familiar with these from each plane, one can recognise the plane in general. There may be a general indication, but to be precise about the source is difficult. Certain planes send their messages more easily than others.

We came into contact with each other some time in 1934, after which our acquaintance grew into an intimacy nurtured by the Guru's quiet encouragement and inner solicitude. This contact gave me the opportunity to see Amal in various situations, and what I came to admire in him most was his freedom from vanity, largeness of spirit and an inborn equanimity.

— Nirodbaran in "Amal-Kiran: Poet and Critic", 1994

Q: *Do you have any favourites among his poems or songs?*

A. K.: All were favourites. Of one of his poems, the phrase “A dying warrior’s last half-uttered word” has stuck in my mind.

Q: *The correspondence gives us a clear picture of his relationship with Sri Aurobindo. How was his relationship with the Mother?*

A. K.: Nirod had a special relationship with Sri Aurobindo. The Mother saw them like two babies playing with each other on the bed.

Q: *Nirod-da held so many occupations in the Ashram: carpentry, medical services, teaching, writing, serving the Lord, etc. Any special memory of him?*

A. K.: I remember him supervising the carpentry work that took place next to my house. As a doctor, he did not

like to be bothered very much with people’s complaints about their illnesses.

Q: *Both you and Nirod-da had a unique and special association with Savitri. Did you share your experiences relating to this?*

A. K.: I think so. When we met, we must have talked of our experiences.

Q: *In your opinion, how will Nirod-da inspire future generations?*

A. K.: There will be many people in a state like he was in; they will certainly learn from the advantage he got from his relationship with Sri Aurobindo. There will be some who will have a similar or the same bent of nature and temperament as Nirod’s. They surely will learn a good deal from the correspondence between Sri Aurobindo and him.

Thirty years finding his way to Pondicherry: six years as a sadhak, physician to the body’s ills, experimenter with poetic composition in Bengali and English exploring the mystical, intuitive and the overmental, and presently twelve years with Sri Aurobindo as privileged attendant, secretary, an amnuensis to Mahakavi Sri Aurobindo reminiscent of Ganapati to Vyasa inditing the “Mahabharata”: and this magnificent chapter in the joint life of Nirod and Sri Aurobindo ended on 5 December 1950. For Nirod as for others, the loss seemed total at first, with no mitigation at all, and yet Faith and Grace conquered. Sri Aurobindo seemed to whisper ‘I am here! I am here!’, and the assurance to Nirod is also a universal assurance to all who have faith and wait on Grace.

— K. R. Srinivasa Iyengar in “Nirodbaran: Sadhak and Poet”, 1994

COLLECTED WORKS OF THE MOTHER Second Edition

To commemorate the Mother’s 125th birth anniversary, the Sri Aurobindo Ashram is currently publishing a second edition of the Collected Works of the Mother in a uniform library set of 17 volumes. The format will be as follows:

Pages : 420 pages per volume on the average

Size : 23 cm x 15.3 cm (9’ x 6’)

Typeface : Sabon, 11 point

Paper : acid-free paper for longevity

Cover : hard-bound in cloth, with a hand made paper jacket wrapped in PVC plastic

The set will be available by the end of 2004. Further details will be announced later.

