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## *Recent Publications*

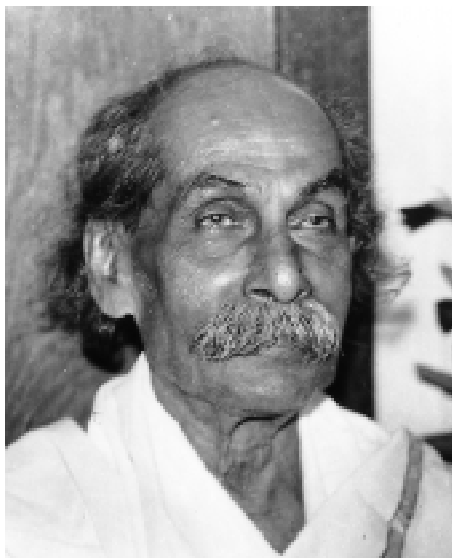
# *Sabda*

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**N**OLINI KANTA GUPTA'S vast literary output covered diverse themes: yoga, philosophy, mysticism, the Vedas and Upanishads, literary criticism, poetry, social issues, history, reminiscences, etc. Rick Lipschutz explores his writings...



*Nolini Kanta Gupta*



*Dr. Indra Sen*

**O**N THE occasion of Dr. Indra Sen's centenary, Aster Patel reminisces on her father's life and work in the field of Integral Psychology...

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## ‘The Secret Face That Is Our Own’: Nolinida’s Body of Literature

Rick Lipschutz

*Nolini Kanta Gupta was not only the foremost disciple of Sri Aurobindo, but a prolific writer and exponent of Sri Aurobindo’s yoga in his own right. Rick Lipschutz delves into his works...*

A blade of a question, shot back to a question, shows the esteem Sri Aurobindo held for his spirit-born son. “If Nolini does not know my yoga, who does?” “Nolini’s writing is direct and powerful,” he wrote in a letter to his brother Barin. As war drowned Europe in that sea of madness, the Master calmly observed, “I always see the Light descending into Nolini.” From Tagore, on whose travels into infinity Nolinida shed much light, we learn, “Nolini Kanta Gupta’s contribution to the literature of Bengal is unique.” The young revolutionary who “in blood drawn from his chest” wrote out a vow to give his life in service to the Motherland, evolved into the yogin whose revolution in consciousness rendered his whole life pure Shakti-movement. He authored more than 60 books, and his Collected Works available from SABDA run to eight volumes that grace the reader with inner inspiration, Brahmic silence applied to this new human hour, even concrete help in sadhana. This essay proposes to focus on his writings as a whole—search-rays into our human condition and its successor, literary criticism, poetry, mysticism, sociopolitical essays, philosophy, science, Vedic and Upanishadic interpretation, penetrations into the essence of the Indian spirit, talks to the Mother’s children, luminous personal reminiscences. His body of literature, like his life, is, as V. Madhusudan Reddy declared, “a model of psychic individuality and unique self-expression.”

A deep sonorous voice arises from Nolinida: “Do not say the load is too heavy for me, say rather, I have not yet learnt how to bear it.” “It does not prove anything that I cannot become a Kalidasa; for that matter Kalidasa cannot become what I am.” “The greatness of a person is the greatness of the Impersonal in him.” “We need at the present hour a complete and precise science of the Divine Consciousness.” “A solitary second can be the spark potent to explode a whole past.” “The Day will come towards which the whole creation has been aspiring from the beginning of time, it will come inevitably in due course, it may be today or tomorrow, it may be a decade hence, or it may even be a century or a millennium hence; it will come all the same.”

Imprisoned in Alipore Jail long ago, he came upon a passage of Sri Aurobindo’s that he found “absolutely unadorned and still most effective! The movement is that of an arrow, strong and firm and straight.” The “grand style simple” was in fact his own. Nolinida painted in few but vivid brushstrokes, a fine verbal artist, avoiding excess, true to essentials. Language all but transparent married music to meaning and stamped it throughout with clarities of vision. “A certain kingly ease and dominion in every shade of his expression” breathes through his writings, like a spiritual breeze. A natural formality is tempered and softened with use of phrases of the day. He wears lightly the mantle of erudition. In later volumes, he becomes more and more a ray of the Mother’s consciousness. His “Reminiscences” is shot through with humor and color, more personal touches. The style, like the man, is unobtrusive; he hides his art. In the future more will come to appreciate the incredible intricacy interwoven with that classically simple surface.

We discover in K.R.S. Iyengar’s *On the Mother* that Mother once assigned Nolinida to the line of sadhaks in whom Light was the dominant aspect. In the early 1930s, when she asked several sadhaks to describe the goal of their sadhana, Nolini wrote two words: “Divinising life.” Mother led the Ashramites in games where they concentrated, then chose passages from books; significantly, Nolinida struck upon the Kutsa Angirasa suktas from *Hymns to the Mystic Fire*. Sri Aurobindo’s rendering runs: “This is the fire of our sacrifice! May we have strength to kindle it to its height, may it perfect our thoughts. In this all that we give must be thrown that it may become a food for the gods; this shall bring to us the godheads of the infinite consciousness who are our desire.” If this is true for a true sadhak, then Nolinida was truly a sadhak among sadhaks. For he cast into purest fire everything he had and was, and so fueled his sadhana. This fire carried him to the heights of consciousness, made his mind a precious instrument, brought into him the powers and personalities of the Divine Mother. Restored to the Mother’s consciousness, his soul then served only to make her felt among the people, by all means, and with “well-connected words.” He did not learn of Sri Aurobindo or about the Mother; he knew them by becoming them. Finding his greater individuality in their light, this most reticent of sadhaks released his creativity in an unending stream. “His is the pure mind,” observed Sri Aurobindo of Nolini; and as Kapali Sastriar shows in his commentaries on the Kutsa hymns near the

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end of the *Siddhanjana*, the human being with such an inner instrument becomes “a meeting ground of the Gods.”

In “Man and the Gods,” Nolinida subtly suggests that the suppler human virtues surpass in some essential quality the powers of the universal spirits. The gods are “powers...agents of the One Divine...highbrow entities [who] carry things with a high hand...an imperial majesty...a sweeping mastery and sovereign indifference.” The human, however, has progressed slowly, developing through effort and much error. “The terrestrial creature... knows of things which the gods do not...has an experience which even they, strange to say, covet.” For a god is a “fixed and definite type”—bound by his godhood; but the human embodies all modes of consciousness, growing and changing. We, human, fail more than we succeed, gaining a fire-tested endurance. Forbearance and forgiveness are “the badge of the tribe.” And the gods? They tend toward impatience, a brittle perfectionism, brook no quarter, are in fact egoistic! Theirs is a sattvic egoism, replete with a sense of separate mission, rigid in its own orbit, lacking “the mellowness...understanding...sweet reasonableness of a human.” For our human ego is blocked at every turn, and our “mind...has something to give which even the overmind of the gods does not possess and needs.” Our very failings “contain and yield a deeper sap of life and out of them a richer fulfillment is being elaborated.” For “the divine grace embedded in matter”—the psychic being—“is the sole privilege of the terrestrial creature.”

Nolinida’s book “*The Yoga of Sri Aurobindo*” received its name from Sri Aurobindo himself.

To progress requires a psychic being; to advance, therefore, a god must take on a human body, which though rigid is more flexible than it seems and can “suffer a sea-change...not within the reach of the radiant body of an immortal.” The essay ends on a grace note of synthesis, a luminous suggestion. There is an evolutionary gap but no essential gulf between the human and the divine. The human mode of being holds within it its successor, and, in the new creation, even the gods shall change.

“The Yoga of Sri Aurobindo,” Volumes Three and Four of Nolini Kanta Gupta’s *Collected Works*, received its name from Sri Aurobindo himself. These volumes—clear short comprehensible essays—provide this revolutionary yoga a lucid presentation creative yet faithful to the original. An exception in its relative length, “Lines of the

Descent of Consciousness” is an enduring contribution to a clearer understanding of Integral Yoga. The theme could not be broader, yet closer to the heart of the curious human: “Let us see how it all came about.” Truly, as Sri Aurobindo writes in a perhaps related context, “All the Aspects disclose themselves, separate, combine, fuse, are unified together.” Consciousness, according to Nolinida,

*One can feel the psychic firmly in front in his writings; even as he scales the high overhead planes the soul is most prominent, that eternal sweetness of divine presence, firm and solid and profound.*

extends five distinct lines of descent. First comes that of Sachchidananda, supreme impersonal reality—the delightful conscious existence now masked behind all this grave and sorrowful stupidity. All the lines, the author weaves and disentangles. Read “Lines of the Descent of Consciousness” and much of *The Life Divine* may come into clearer focus. The essay itself is a descent of master-consciousness that “unravels the mystery.” I continue to learn much from his exposition of how the psychic being will “come into its own precisely by a descent of its own self from above, in the same manner as the other descents” and how it will unite with the Jivatman. There is much material here presented in a novel manner with many strands teased together. We see here Nolini-as-scientist of the divine consciousness, differentiating the high gods from the highest gods, the upper from the lower poles of the Overmind (where the One becomes “like a silent partner”). One can observe how the personal works together with the impersonal and the Divine with the human in a tour through all the worlds with this most reliable and charming of guides.

With an authenticity that can come only from experience he writes of the psychic being in many passages sprinkled throughout his work; how all one’s limbs can become a psychic movement. One can feel the psychic firmly in front in his writings; even as he scales the high overhead planes the soul is most prominent, that eternal sweetness of divine presence, firm and solid and profound. He shows us how, in Mother’s words, to “become concretely what we are essentially.” In “The Mounting Fire” and “The Labours of the Gods” and other essays, we meet Nolini-as-technologist of self-transcendence. He tells us much that we may wish to know about the “science of inwardness.”

Nolinida was also an accomplished sportsman. He sprinted into his eighties, and his “My Athletics” veers from reminiscences on to the very essence behind exercise. If this is not to be another lopsided yoga, athletics comes to play an integral part in our spiritual training. Our frailty must become strength to embrace the divine light descending. “If the consciousness is of the right sort, the new force can descend even from supraphysical worlds and give to the movements of the body a supreme beauty and strength.” All the parts of the being then participate in a more conscious exercise and the fire, light, and force can be grounded, harmonized, wonderfully contained. Here sublimity becomes practical and the practical is made sublime. His athletics is our challenge.



*Rick Lipschutz*

Nolinida is one whose psychic opening and transformation was allowed to proceed in the psychic way, who has shown a unique ability to express the higher consciousness in writing that is, indeed, direct and powerful. In his life and his writings he represents “at every moment, in all circumstances, one [who] follows the voice of the highest in oneself...and no inferior echo.” He had a long “happy collaboration” with the Mother, the Divine Consciousness—her own son Andre and others have described how they felt her in Nolinida; their “head was ringing for hours” after merely talking with him; they

found a lifelong friend who continues after his passing at age 95 in 1984 to be present to them; or they actually saw a vision of the New Creation. On our human condition, our maladies, the driving force of our times, his gaze is unflinching, his thought balanced, his point of view global yet close to the “tears of things.” His poetry in “To the Heights” is a rhythmic record of his sadhana in the 1930s. Volumes Three and Four, “The Yoga of Sri Aurobindo,” will only gain in importance with time as an original exposition of Integral Yoga rendering its aspects more comprehensible for the human consciousness, providing a much-needed bridge to Sri Aurobindo’s own writings. Perhaps equal to his third volume is Volume One, “The Coming Race and Other Essays,” which climbs the highest ranges of spiritual literature and at times manifests an intense mantric vision. His writings on India are universal and speak from an identification with her very soul and mission. His later writings provide diamond-like windows of the Mother’s Consciousness and an opening to the Yoga-Force. “Reminiscences,” his personal memoir is of much interest, a gleaming jewel of the genre. His writing on the Vedas and Upanishads (translations, commentary, tales) contain ancient Indian spiritual knowledge essential to more fully appreciate Sri Aurobindo’s writings and work.

Sri Nolini Kanta Gupta has given us all a subtle body of literature bound to widely extend into the frontal consciousness. What he said of Vivekananda’s words (which woke his courage up in Alipore) is true of his own: “These are luminous life-giving mantras and the world and humanity...have need of them.” One-volume editions include *Lights from Nolini Kanta Gupta* (highlights taken from individual essays) and *Evolution and the Earthly Destiny* (selected essays). *Education and Initiation*, translated from the Bengali, more timely than ever, has now been released. His eight-volume Collected Works continue to grow in relevance and merit more detailed scholarly study. Surprisingly, the eight volumes are as affordable as they are full of delights and unexpected turns. Or one may prefer to read his translation of *Savitri* into Bengali. The shining Arjuna of spiritual aspirants has left us a portion of the new creation, full of the force of yoga and packed with the light of Sri Aurobindo.

— *Rick Lipschutz discovered the Integral Yoga after exploring other paths and has been a devotee of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother since 1997. A member of the Cultural Integral Fellowship who attends retreats at Sri Aurobindo Sadhana Peetham in Lodi, he lives with his wife and son in San Francisco, USA.*

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*Compiled from his works:*

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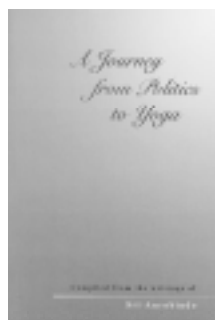
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Prabhakar (Batti)

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Twenty intimate pen-portraits of old sadhakas with whom the author was in close personal touch. These reminiscences, most of which were serialised over the years in *Mother India*, stretch back to events up to 60 years ago. Each piece is accompanied by a photograph. The author in his inimitably witty and intimate style brings alive the spirit of utter devotion to Sri Aurobindo and the Mother that marked the early days of the Ashram. The title, inspired by Dilip Kumar Roy's book *Among the Great* suggests how the achievements of these figures may not have been "great" in the conventional sense. But the moments of joy their memories bring "is reason enough...to bring them back from the past". These sketches reveal that true greatness lies in the deepest simplicity.

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Nolini Kanta Gupta

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From the Publisher's Note, "It is to help in this search for a truly Indian Education that we thought it appropriate and timely to bring out a translated version of Nolini Kanta Gupta's '*Shikkha O Dikha*' (*Education and Initiation*). Although the original Bengali book was published in 1926, his deep analysis of the malady of our present educational system and his insightful suggestions for an integral approach in education are not only most relevant today, but they can even now be a true guide to all sincere educationists in our country." See review on page 14

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155pp., Rs.225.00, ISBN 81-86413-24-3

Medhananda, a German disciple, joined the Sri Aurobindo Ashram in 1952, where he became the librar-

ian of the Sri Aurobindo Library. Equals One, or " = 1" was the title of the journal edited by Medhananda from February 1965 onwards.

From the blurb, "This unusual publication became an organ for the expression of his creativity, founded on a widely-educated mind that was always curious and ready to learn, and on his extraordinarily rich inner life and knowledge. His many articles were often written under pen-names, each representing a different aspect of Medhananda, a mode of consciousness, one facet of his vast being. ... Many of his contributions took the form of stories, full of illuminating humour, provocative new viewpoints and symbols that both veil and unveil deep spiritual realities.

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16 pp., Rs.10.00

The English translation of a long poem in Bengali by Nishikanta, written to celebrate the silver jubilee of the Mother's final arrival at Pondicherry on 24<sup>th</sup> April 1920.

### The Practice of the Integral Yoga With copious hints for the Pilgrims of the Path

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348pp., Rs.150.00

ISBN 81-7058-732-8

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**Srinvantu****125<sup>th</sup> Birth Anniversary of the Mother & Golden Jubilee special number (1953 – 2003)**

Edited by Sri Supriyo Bhattacharya  
235pp., Rs.100.00

This Golden Jubilee special number of the journal *Srinvantu* coincides with the Mother's 125<sup>th</sup> birth anniversary. It contains a special selection of old articles by eminent writers, as well as several new ones — essays, reminiscences, poems, etc — by a variety of contributors.



**Take Mother with You**  
**Experiences of the Mother's**  
**Loving Presence**

Rajnikant J. Mehta  
40pp., Rs.30.00  
ISBN 81-86413-25-1

From the blurb, "*Take Mother with You* is an account of some memorable moments in the life of a London devotee of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. The author,

Rajnikant Mehta, relates how he came into contact with Sri Aurobindo's teaching and afterwards experienced the Mother's presence and guidance in his life. He also recounts several inspiring meetings with sadhaks of the Sri Aurobindo Ashram and others. Towards the end Mr. Mehta describes the growth of the Auromira Relics Centre in London and shares some of the simple thoughts and practices that have helped him to face the challenges of daily life".



**A NEW BIRTH** — An Interview of the Mother with Surendra Nath Jauhar (11th May 1967)  
**Audio Cassette — Rs.60.00**  
**Audio CD — Rs.150.00**  
**VCD (with stills only) — Rs.250.00**

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**The Penguin Sri Aurobindo Reader**  
**Second Revised Edition**

Edited by Makarand Paranjape  
(Published by Penguin Books India)  
375 pp., Rs.295.00; ISBN 0-14-303015-9

From the blurb, "As a writer, Sri Aurobindo's range was staggering; there is hardly a field of human endeavour that escaped his notice. This collection offers a representative sampling of his writings with selections from most of his major works and areas of interest. The volume begins

with the early, often-ignored essays written during the struggle for independence, and traces the development of Sri Aurobindo's philosophical and religious thought, culminating in the system of Integral Yoga. Also included are some of his poems, letters and aphorisms. Together, they provide an ideal introduction to the complex and brilliant mind of a remarkable yogi and seer-poet."

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Veda Rahasya (Uttarardha) Sri Aurobindo 110.00  
ISBN 81-7058-721-2

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**ONLINE RESOURCES**

All issues of *Recent Publications/SABDA Newsletter* since August 2000, including this one, are available in PDF format on our website.

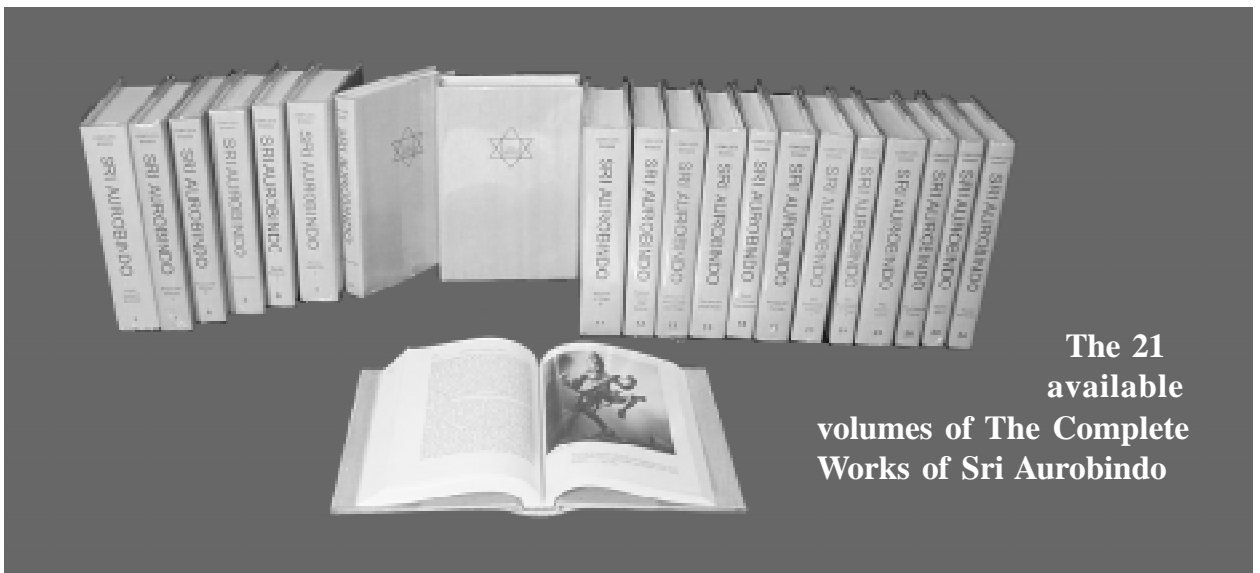
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**THE COMPLETE WORKS OF SRI AUROBINDO**

The seventh batch of three volumes of the set of The Complete Works of Sri Aurobindo was brought out in July. The volumes are:

- Bande Mataram I
- Bande Mataram II
- Early Cultural Writings

As of November 2003, 21 volumes of The Complete Works set are available. Further releases will be announced later. As more new material has been found, the set will contain at least 37 volumes — two more than originally anticipated. There will be four volumes of *Letters on Yoga* instead of three, and two of *On Himself* rather than one.



**The 21  
available  
volumes of The Complete  
Works of Sri Aurobindo**



## The Presence of Dr. Indra Senji

### These Hundred Years and More ...

*Aster Patel reminisces on her father Dr. Indra Sen's life and work in the field of Integral Psychology.*

As I write these lines for the Sabda *Recent Publications*, I sit facing the Valley of Ramgarh, nestling in a secluded part of Kumaon in the central Himalayas. A lithe little mountain stream swirls around beautiful boulders as it meanders through the valley. The Mother called it the "Valley of Divine Love". As though aware of this predestination, the trees of pomegranate blossom – which bear this spiritual significance – grow in profusion along the banks of these happy flowing waters.

This valley was very dear to Indra Senji. He chanced upon this spot while travelling in the Himalayas in the 1930s and was captivated by it. In 1945, when the place was offered to The Mother, Sri Aurobindo said, "This is our foothold in the Himalayas." A place which can serve as a base for the 'integration' of the new spiritual dynamism they bring to man – with the cumulative energy of past realisations that the Himalayas hold for us.

But how did this 'adventure' of life begin... a hundred years ago?

An adventure it always was – one that has shaped us too, and carries also the flow of time in its forward movement...

Indra Senji was born on May 13, 1903 in the Jhelum district of Punjab – now in Pakistan – but grew up in Delhi, where his family came to live. Since a very young age, he sought the company of spiritual persons, who were frequent guests at his father's home. Later, he would even disappear for days to the banks of the Yamuna, which flowed through the city, to be with them.

He was a being of great concentration, carried by a high sense of idealism and clear about his goal. Brilliant in his studies, his natural attraction was to philosophy and to psychology. But he had also been a science student, studied some medicine, taken a degree in law and been selected for the

*Teaching was with him  
a passion of the spirit.*

judiciary – the latter on the wishes of his father. He was, however, definite about not serving an alien government – and following his inner philosophical urge. He completed the Master's course in both Philosophy and

Psychology from the University of Delhi and became a professor there in these subjects. Teaching was a vocation with him, a passion of the spirit. He was married on December 5, 1928 to Lilawati, who was a graduate in Education and Child Psychology and was pursuing further studies. We know her as 'Violette-di' in the Ashram. Two children were born to them – myself and my brother.

For further studies, Indra Senji went to the University of Freiburg, Germany, and obtained a Ph.D. degree in Psychology. He also attended lectures of Martin Heidegger and taught Indian Philosophy and Sanskrit for a while at the University of Koenigsburg. His great attraction, at the time, was to the philosophy of Hegel and the psychology of Jung.



*Dr. Indra Sen*

After his studies in Western thought, he returned home to continue his teaching work at the University of Delhi. The intellectual life was rich and varied. Three landmarks, of that time, are still remembered –

- For the first time, a team of professional psychologists led by him, investigated a case of reincarnation which has come to be celebrated as the 'Shanti Devi case'.

- When the great psychologist, C.G. Jung, came to Calcutta in December 1938, on the occasion of The Indian Science Congress, he met him and had a long interview with him – which remains unpublished on the express wish of the latter. A record of it exists as a handwritten note among Indra Senji's papers.
- As President of the Indian Science Congress (Psychology Section), held in 1946, he wrote the inaugural address entitled 'The Urge for Wholeness'. This paper commanded much attention and continues to be referred to even today.

But the spiritual quest in him remained unfulfilled. In one of the few confessions that I have personally heard from him, he said, "I did not want to spend my life 'talking' about God, I wanted to 'know' Him."

He was in search of a Master, who could show him the way. A way that would satisfy his mind and heart and soul. The 'wholeness' he sought had to become a fact of experience. He had already travelled in the Himalayas which he loved and where he had come upon the secluded Valley of Ramgarh, and where he would go with the family and his students during the summer months. This place was to assume deep significance in the future and become a place of intense *sadhana*. Another one of these journeys, undertaken in 1939, together with his close friend Surendranath Jauhar, took him to Pondicherry. A journey that led him to his goal – to Sri Aurobindo and The Mother. He returned with Lilawatiji, then with the children, who were very young. The visits became frequent. Lilawatiji's direct contact with The Mother became manifest. The Mother asked her to wind up life and work in Delhi and come to live in the Ashram with the children by April, 1943. She wanted Indra Senji to continue at the University for sometime more. He resigned from there and came two years later.

A new life began. He had found the Masters, he was set on the path he had long sought. The deep concentration and the sense of purpose that marked even the boyhood years grew in fullness and in the intensity of the maturer years as the vision of the goal started to unveil itself. The entire being was given to the one task – to pursue the path of Integral Yoga.

On coming to live at the Ashram, the first work that The Mother gave him was to water the flower pots in the Ashram courtyard! The second was to start the Ashram Press, where he was to work for ten years. Some printing machinery had been offered to The Mother and She turned to him saying, "You 'read' books, so... you can learn how to 'make'

them!" It was another experience altogether – to 'relate' to machinery and to deal with workers! He set himself to the task with earnestness – learning the intricacies of printing and of organisation. Also, during that time, a journal in Hindi, called 'Aditi', was started – and which he edited.

When this work had found its moorings, then he was given work in other areas. These were –

1. To work out and teach the five-year Higher Course in 'Integral Psychology' at the Centre of Education.
2. To participate in the National Congresses in Philosophy, Psychology, Education, Yoga and to present Sri Aurobindo's work in the country. This was done extensively at universities and other centres of learning – through lectures and writing and personal contacts. Till then, Sri Aurobindo's work was not known in the academic circles where the traditional schools of thought, as also of the yogic disciplines, prevailed.
  - i) Of special focus was the work of 'Integral Psychology'. Indra Senji found, in the totality of Sri Aurobindo's writings, an entire body of psychological knowledge – a veritable system or rather 'structure' – that was a new creation, though in a line of continuity with the tradition of India, and which harmonised the truths of both the Indian and Western traditions in a framework of the 'whole', of 'totality'. Having been trained as a psychologist, this was, for him, so great a discovery that it came to be a life-long passion that never ceased to enthrall him. The understanding of it, the practice of it as Integral Yoga and the communication of it – to individuals or at seats of learning – became with him a mission.

The appropriate term for this new creation in the field of psychology could only be 'Integral Psychology' – a term which he referred to Sri Aurobindo and which was accepted by Him for presenting His work. This was sometime in the early 1940s – by which time, papers were being written by him on the subject. These papers were sent up to Sri Aurobindo, and later to The Mother, for approval before they were presented at scientific congresses or published in journals of the Ashram.

Parallel to this work, was the presentation of the body of psychological knowledge that has

existed in the Indian tradition in general from the earliest times. Indra Senji was much struck by the fact that such a rich treasure was there but was not available to the psychologists of the country, since the prevailing system of education imparted only a knowledge of the Western tradition on the subject. He was deeply concerned by this state of a cultural and intellectual imbalance and was specially committed to bringing about an awareness of this work.

He sought to recover this knowledge of the Indian tradition and to present the same forcefully at all possible fora. One remembers the almost pathetic title of one these early papers: 'The Indian Psychologist in Search of his Soul'. He made a plea for the teaching of Indian Psychology at universities, which was not being done at the time, and planned out courses for the same. He presented these to the appropriate authorities for inclusion in the prescribed curricula. In spite of the zeal with which this work was pursued for decades, the ground realities are little different even today!

- ii) Of equal significance was the presentation of the 'new lead' in philosophy that Sri Aurobindo's work offered in the context of the Indian tradition as such and of world philosophy as a whole.
- iii) As also, the formulation of the ideal and structure of 'Integral Education' as presented by Sri Aurobindo and The Mother – the new goals of education, the principles that governed them and the processes that could lead to their realisation. And to relate these to the ideals of education that have existed in India in the past and how they could fulfil the needs of the contemporary situation of man. Specific issues were taken up in national symposia and the proceedings were subsequently published.
- iv) The presentation, from a psychological perspective, of the path of 'Integral Yoga' – its unique goals and specific processes – in the context of the traditional yogic disciplines long practised in India.

All these presentations were made in both English and Hindi. The writings were prolific and the papers published in journals of the

Ashram and other scientific ones in the country.

A collection of papers was published as a book entitled 'Integral Psychology' by the Centre of Education in 1986. A second edition is now available.

Another collection of papers, 'Studies in Sri Aurobindo's Philosophy', will be published by the Indian Council of Philosophical Research as a companion volume.

Other writings will also be published in book form as found useful.

3. Another area of work which was given to Indra Senji, and which took up much of his time at a certain stage, was to develop three centres of the Ashram in the North which were directly under The Mother's charge –
  - one at Jwalapur, near Hardwar
  - two in the Kumaon Hills – 'Mountain Paradise', an orchard, and 'Tapogiri', a place of *sadhana*.

Indra Senji was specially committed to the work at Tapogiri. One could perhaps say that this had the deepest hold on him. Shri Champaklalji visited the place and described his vision of it in these words:

"Tapogiri is such a large place that ordinary sight cannot distinctly see across its long distances; but I was able to see all the scenes as if they were just in front of me.... I saw there many Sadhus, Sanyasins, Tantric Kapaliks, Vairagins, Avadhuts, Jain Sadhus, Aghoris, etc.; even family men as well as Sufis were present, all engrossed in their particular sadhanas.... Others were doing such penances as were never heard of or about which nothing was read anywhere. Some of them were beyond imagination....

"This Yajna at Tapogiri was in many ways extraordinary, for nowhere else have I heard such Vedic recitations.... The Vedic recitation of the priest in the sacrifice at Tapogiri was wonderfully unique.... Then was heard Sri Aurobindo's sweet yet sublime resounding voice:

'So be it.'

"... I saw before me the sacrificial flames rising impetuously and uniformly up and up. Their end was not visible. These golden flames were spreading their light everywhere, above, below, in all directions and penetrating the earth also. All the priests were seated in this light.... Indra Senji was the chief of the priests of this sacrifice."

Thus Indra Senji's life and experience ran its course. The inner one of a sadhak of Integral Yoga – pursued with a one-pointed concentration. Of the steps of this journey, one can say little. It was between him and The Mother. We may have glimpses of it but it is not for us to put it into words....

The outer activities – which offered a certain field of experience – were more visible. And these took the form of teaching, writing, giving talks, meeting people, helping in the growth of centres. In the last ten years, these outer activities diminished and he seemed to draw more and more inward for a greater concentrated effort towards the completion of inner experience. As though life's curve had to be drawn full circle and the realisation long sought to be attained.

One remembers that at one time, Indra Senji gave expression in writing to a few outpourings of 'love', which he called 'Longings for The Mother'. And said, on another occasion, that for ten years he had attempted the yoga of the cells and he had to take it up again. This was a year before he left – in 1994. At that time, he also conveyed to Shri Nirod-da, "I am ascending to meet the Divine."

The final months were charged with an intense concentration. A great sense of 'activity' filled his room in the Nursing Home – even though the body was in a weak state. A few days before the soul moved on in its journeyings – on March 16, 1994, the eve of my birthday – a smile of utter melting sweetness appeared on the face. A smile of something done – something fulfilled.

Sometime later, there was a clear perception that the work for this life was over. Now for the next manifestation....

The force of time carries forward the lines of work. The pursuit of Integral Psychology has gathered momentum world-wide. A 'Dr. Indra Sen Memorial Lecture' was set up at the Third International Conference of Integral Psychology held in San Francisco this summer. And there is a further demand for his early work on the subject to be presented afresh. Indian Psychology gains in attraction and acceptance. The work of Tapogiri gets consolidated in new forms of its ancient past.

The words 'integral' and 'wholeness' were the most dear to Indra Senji. 'Integral Culture' and 'Integral Man' were the other terms he used and presented in his writings.

Such was the stamp of the person and the nature of his quest.

These are also the most significant sign-posts on our way, as contemporary beings. The paths he walked, the goals he sought now resound with our tread – and our being throbs in close anticipation of reaching them.... Not only as individuals but as part of the collective advance of mankind.

—Aster

May 2003, Ramgarh

*Aster Patel was brought up in the Ashram since early childhood and studied and taught at the Centre of Education. She pursued her further studies (Ph.D. in Comparative Philosophy) at the Sorbonne, University of Paris. She is at present in Auroville, working in Bharat Nivas. She also gives workshops in Integral Psychology at 'Knowledge', the Higher Course of the Centre of Education. She is engaged in other areas of activity too, such as writing, speaking and conference work.*



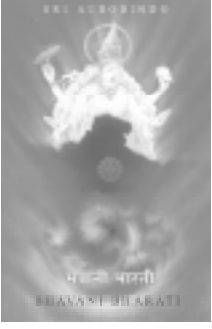
By Dr. Indra Sen  
available at SABDA:  
**Integral Psychology**  
**The Psychological System of**  
**Sri Aurobindo (In Original Words**  
**and in Elaborations)**

Published by Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education;  
Price: Rs.160.00, 379 pp.

From the blurb, by Prof. S.K. Bose (formerly Head of the Dept.

of Psychology, Calcutta University), "This book bearing the title *Integral Psychology* will be read with interest and profit by psychologists all over. It gives an excellent résumé of the viewpoints of several noted Western and Indian psychologists, traces the relationship between yoga and Integral Psychology, and discusses need, meaning and contributions of Integral Psychology. In the past we had delved down the surface of consciousness and founded the psychology of the Unconscious. Now, by yogic practice, we have moved up to the higher region of the Supramental and founded Integral Psychology. The author, Dr. Indra Sen, is a profound scholar of all systems of philosophical thought, and is a trained laboratory psychologist. He possesses deep knowledge of Sri Aurobindo literature and has personal experience of Integral Yoga. He is, thus, eminently suited to the difficult task of writing this book. He has done it with rare efficiency."

## A Tribute to the Language of the Seers — by the Last Great Seer



### Bhavani Bharati

By Sri Aurobindo. Original in Sanskrit. English translation by Richard Hartz. Hindi translation by Devdutta. Published by Sri Aurobindo Society, Pondicherry. Price: Rs.50.00, 108 pp.

In the course of a significant debate on Sri Aurobindo spread over several days in the British House of Commons in April 1910,

when Sir Ramsay MacDonald, the leader of the Labour Party (later Prime Minister) began reading the article “My Last Will and Testament” in the *Karmayogin* and challenged the Treasury Bench to point out where the element of sedition lay in it, Mr. J. King interrupted him, saying, “May I ask in a friendly way whether this article is published in Bengali and whether Mr. Aurobindo Ghose is not a Bengali?” The honourable Member, obviously surprised by the quality of the language of that article, suspected that it was Sir Ramsay’s translation from Bengali.

Replied Sir Ramsay, “The article is in the most excellent English. Mr. Aurobindo Ghose could no more write an article in Bengali than I could.” (See *Sri Aurobindo in the First Decade of the Twentieth Century*)

Needless to say, Sir Ramsay made his observations with profound goodwill for Sri Aurobindo, for he took great pains trying to tell the British Government, in what was probably the first ever debate of that length on any individual Indian leader, that Sri Aurobindo’s writing, far from being seditious, was “the one guarantee” against violence. According to him, “Mr. Aurobindo Ghose was practically an Englishman” and had no knowledge of any native language. Little did this statesman know that Sri Aurobindo, by that time had not only mastered Bengali, but also had, with incredible rapidity, developed an understanding of several Indian languages and had completed the study of major scriptures and classics in Sanskrit.

But between one’s capacity to study and appreciate the Sanskrit works on one hand and one’s ability to write in that language infallibly on the other hand, the distance is great. The discovery in 1985 of Sri Aurobindo’s Sanskrit bunch of verses published as *Bhavani Bharati*, could be a surprise of immense magnitude, had we not been

saturated with so many surprises his genius had given us. In any case, reading this captivating bunch, this reviewer had the feeling nearer to what Keats had when he read Chapman’s Homer:

*Then felt I like some watcher of the skies  
When a new planet swims into his ken;*

...

With their simplicity and lyrical quality, these verses leave a lasting impression on memory while for their power they invoke the spirit of a bygone decade when the poet was trying to arouse the children of Mother India, the Mother Divine, from the slumber into which they had fallen. Fire of patriotism mingles with a flame-like sarcasm when the poet speaks through Mother Kali: “Not by torrents of blood from hundreds and thousands and tens of thousands of goats am I satisfied. Break open your hearts and offer that blood to me....”

The order of Varnas which had been designed to secure inner progress for all through the external activities in accordance with one’s nature, had been rendered meaningless, for none adhered to one’s Swadharma, observe some of these verses. Exhortations through powerful imageries and visions dominate the entire range of 99 verses, uninterrupted by a single jarring note in the flow of ideas or in the sailing smoothness of style.

*Fire of patriotism mingles with a flame-like sarcasm when the poet speaks through Mother Kali...*

Written between 1904 and 1908, Sri Aurobindo does not seem to have cared to put the composition into any use (through circulation or publication) or even to have remembered it. Nevertheless, *Bhavani Bharati* is a beautiful tribute to the language of the great seers of the past by “the last great seer” (to use Romain Rolland’s phrase for the Master). The edition contains, along with the original, its authentic and easy-reading rendering into English and Hindi.

— Manoj Das

*Shri Manoj Das is a well-known writer. A Padma awardee, he is a recipient of the Saraswati Samman and Sahitya Akademi award.*

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## REVIEWS



### **Education and Initiation**

Nolini Kanta Gupta; Translated by Amarnath Dutta; Published by Sri Aurobindo Centre for Advanced Research, Pondicherry; Price Rs. 75.00, 103 pp.

Nolini Kanta Gupta was one of those very few among educated Indians who were not overwhelmed by western culture at the dawn of the twentieth century. As a teenager he had come under the aegis of Sri Aurobindo. What perhaps began as political initiation from Sri Aurobindo turned out to be an initiation for living the divine life.

Thanks to the Mother, Pondicherry could recreate the Upanishadic culture of a disciple learning, questioning and himself experimenting in material terms what he had learnt as a philosophy of life. Work-culture was part of the process, and so Nolinida received “total education”. Initiated by a Rishi, Nolinida became a Rishi in the course of time. Hence *Education and Initiation* is the precious spiritual message of a master spirit of our times.

What has Nolinida to say about education? Well, in general terms, “education signifies cultivation of faculties, development of various parts of the being – intellectual, emotional and physical.” But there is obviously more to it. Why has India had such a glorious past but has now become a nation of puny clerks? Nolinida says the decline began with the Kurukshetra war (empowering the brahministic ideology “that weakened the genius of the Kshatriyas”), the approach to life was emasculated by Buddha’s raising the flag of asceticism and finally Adi Shankara swept life’s view under the carpet through his Mayavada. Taken together, the seven essays make it clear that we have to get back to the work-ethics of the past, never run away from Karma, cease to delude ourselves with philosophical garrulity, learn to think, accept discipline, give attention to the “how” of things as much as to the “what” of things, avoid materialism while absorbing the process:

“India will not gain in any way if she becomes as materialistic and as dependent on the senses as the European science. The ancient subtle perception peculiar to India has to be kept awake but in the midst of it has to be planted the genius of the European science in seizing and manifesting the sequence of cause and effect.” (p. 82)

So what may this subtle perception be? Nolinida skates in twilight areas with a firm control on ratiocinative movement to reveal to us “the supra-physical firmament of vital consciousness which connects” the spiritual consciousness of the East and the material space of the West. Yoga helps us in awakening the subtle faculty that belongs to this connecting world, which would then lead us to a welcome transformation. This is not achieved by a mere parading of intellectual faculties. Nolinida points out how it is the lower classes of society which have repeatedly helped inspired teachers spread the message (the fishermen of Christ, the buccaneers who rallied behind Mohammed, the marginalised followers of the Buddha) proving repeatedly that it is life-force that matters, and we must cherish its adventurous spirit.

A dire warning from Nolinida concludes the book, drawing us into a meditative mood and advising us to recast our own approaches to Sri Aurobindo and all other spiritual *acharyas* of the past. They had harmonised emotive faculties and the intellect so well as to discover new spiritual truths. But aren’t we mere imitators and no more? Have we benefitted from their transformational touch to dare our own adventures?

“But we, who come after them, who become their disciples and grand-disciples take up only their emotional aspects and try to absorb the whole thing realised by others – we tend to forget this simple fact that the realisation to which we cling without subjecting it to tests at every step, without refining it in the light of our knowledge and intelligence soon becomes lifeless and its force diminishes – it turns out to be a blind passion and gradually sinks down into our *tamasic* nature and finally vanishes.” (p. 103)

“The ancient subtle perception peculiar to India has to be kept awake but in the midst of it has to be planted the genius of the European science...”

At a time when it is becoming increasingly difficult to choose from among the verbose tomes that keep cascading down our presses, it is cheering to find that not a line has been wasted in this slim volume and our initiation really begins with the guru-sishya painting of Nicholas Roerich on the cover. It takes some time to draw our eyes away from the Upanishadic scene with spiritual illumina-

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tions cascading down as a sheet of pearly waterfall, while Matter is underlined by the rock that looms behind. Then comes the English version of Nolinida's *Shikkha O Dikkha* (1926). Did Amarnath Dutta really translate it? Or, was it Nolinida himself who took up Dutta's pen and gave us *Education and Initiation*? Thank you, our perfect translator; and Ananda and Deepshikha for having gifted us this handbook of True Education.

—Prema Nandakumar

*Dr. Prema Nandakumar is a well-known writer and literary critic. Her biography of the Mother, The Mother of Sri Aurobindo Ashram (National Book Trust) has gone into several editions.*



### The Mother's Vision

Selections from *Questions and Answers of the Mother*  
 Edited by Georges Van Vrekhem;  
 Price Rs.230.00, 627 pp.

Following the excellent and well received biography of the Mother entitled *The Mother: The Story of Her Life* (New Delhi: Harper Collins Publishers, India,

2000), the author, Georges Van Vrekhem, has now compiled a selection of the Mother's conversations during the years 1929-31 and 1950-58. While the conversations of the Mother have been available in French and English for a long time, the present collection, due to its focus, brevity and comprehensive nature stands out as particularly noteworthy.

Divided into twenty sections under significant sub-heads, the compilation has the added attractions of a "Life-Sketch of the Mother", a "Life-Sketch of Sri Aurobindo", "Note on the Texts" and "Glossary". Taken together, the last four provide the necessary critical and contextual backdrop against which devotees, disciples and interested readers could assess the value of the conversations. The "Publisher's Note" in this respect acts as a useful guidance: "The conversations belong to two distinct groups. During the first period, from 1929 to 1931, the Mother spoke informally with a small group of Ashramites who met her every week, answering questions about life and Yoga. During the second, from 1950 to 1958, she spoke to a

larger audience, the Ashramites and students who attended her evening classes at the Ashram playground. The Mother often began by reading out to the class a passage from a work by Sri Aurobindo or herself. She then commented on the passage or invited questions on it. The conversations of 1929-31 were spoken in English; those of the 1950s were spoken in French and appear here in English translation."

The sub-headings themselves indicate the extraordinary range of the topics the Mother handles as well as the depth of her vision both material and spiritual. The twenty sections included demonstrate the clarity of the Mother's thinking and the unique manner in which she could invoke the great storehouse of the world's wisdom to explicate some of the most baffling aspects of human existence. Along with this, there is also the treatment of common problems of day-to-day life. The canvas itself is wide and impressive: 'The Human Species in Evolution', 'Plants and Animals', 'The Gradations of Existence and Their Expression in the Human Being', 'The Psychic Being or Soul', 'The Hostile Forces', 'Illness and Death', 'Reincarnation or Rebirth', 'Free Will, Determinism, Karma, Grace', 'Religion and Spirituality', 'Science and Materialism', 'Occultism', 'Day-to-Day Life', 'Art', 'Education', 'Yoga and Meditation', 'The Integral Yoga', 'The Supramental' and finally 'The Present Situation'. Nothing seems to be missing here!

It is hard to sum up the Mother's approach in the conversations. There is a pattern no doubt in the manner she approaches a topic. Sometimes, it could be a response to a question asked by a member present. Alternately, she could read a selected passage from Sri Aurobindo, such as "A Transitional Species" as outlined on page 97, before offering a commentary. However, whatever pattern we find would undeniably be superficial. She never fails to surprise! There is a great deal of simplicity and directness of vision, a fundamental apprehension of the Truth in all its complexity and profundity without the interventions of the so-called intellectual or ratiocinative faculties which more often than not confuse rather than enlighten us.

Above all, the Mother is a great conversationalist and a wonderful raconteur of stories. In the best manner of the storytelling tradition — of East and West — she knows, like the master storytellers, how to show and persuade rather than be didactic through sermons and homilies. Instead, she reminds us of the wonderful parables of Christ and the Buddha: simple, lucid and poetical!

The conversations are, at times, punctuated by silence just as it generally culminates in a group meditation so that the truth of the Mother's vision could sink into collective consciousness. On page 453, for instance, a questioner asks: "*Are illnesses tests in the Yoga?*" The Mother's answer is:

"Tests? Not at all.

"You are given an illness purposely to make you progress? Surely it is not like that. That is, you may turn the thing round and say that there are people whose aspiration is so constant, whose goodwill so total that whatever happens to them they take as a trial on the path to make progress. I knew people who, whenever they fell ill, took that as a proof of the Divine Grace to help them to progress."

Similarly, on page 451 the questioner asks: "*Sweet Mother, when we make an effort to do better but don't see any progress, we feel discouraged. What is the best thing to do?*" The Mother replies:

"Not to be discouraged! Despondency leads nowhere.

"To begin with, the first thing to tell yourself is that you are almost entirely incapable of knowing whether you are making progress or not, for very often what seems to us to be a state of stagnation is a long — sometimes long, but in any case not endless — preparation for a leap forward."

Reading this book will be a spiritual exercise that we can undertake again and again so that the questions we had always asked could be answered...

Again, on page 448, she advises:

"One must never make rules.

"Every minute one must endeavour to apply the highest truth one can perceive. It is much more difficult, but it's the only solution.

"...one must be always awake, always conscious and always full of an enlightened receptivity and of goodwill. To want always the best, always the best, always the best, and never tell oneself, 'Oh! it is tiring! Let me rest, let me relax! Ah, I am going to stop making an effort'; then one is sure to fall into a hole immediately and make a big stupid blunder!"

Finally, to benefit the most from reading this valuable book, *The Mother's Vision*, one should read a few passages at a time, in a state of quiet contemplation when one is alone or in the company of like-minded aspirants. One

imagines oneself to be seated in the Ashram playground around the Mother with a table lamp on, and the picture of the undivided India in the background. The book, thus, will not be 'read' and 'finished' as we normally do. It will be a spiritual exercise that we can undertake again and again so that the questions we had always asked could be answered and the difficulties encountered in the path of life overcome.

*The Mother's Vision*, in brief, is a significant recent addition to this genre. It is a book that should find a place in the shelf of every sincere seeker after the spiritual life.

— Dr. Sachidananda Mohanty

*Dr. S. Mohanty is Professor of English Literature at the University of Hyderabad.*

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

K. D. Sethna; Published by The Integral Life Foundation, U.S.A.; Price: Rs.120.00, 80 pp.

The Encyclopaedia Britannica in the Ashram Library describes Sri Aurobindo's work thus: "Opinions vary on the merit of his voluminous, extremely complex and sometimes chaotic literary output of philosophical pondering, poetry, plays, and other works." For the numerous followers of Sri Aurobindo this description of their Master does not mean much for they are moved less by intellectual concerns than by a direct spiritual appeal which the great Yogi exercised and still continues to exercise over them. Yet before dismissing the criticism of being "chaotic", it is worthwhile to ponder over the possible reasons for the uncharitable description.

The concepts in any spiritual philosophy are bound to be experience-concepts for it is upon his spiritual experience that the philosopher bases his notion of Reality. The aspects through which Sri Aurobindo's Reality expresses itself are not mutually exclusive but shade off into each other. To the analytic mind this may well create an impression of chaos. Moreover Sri Aurobindo's spiritual system evolved over many years and was modified and expanded by him more than once to take into account fresh experience. Past viewpoints were sometimes abandoned outright in the light of a more comprehensive revelation. To an unsympathetic observer this may indicate chaos.



There is thus a need for chronological research into the development of Sri Aurobindo's spiritual system in the light of which his works can be better understood. K.D. Sethna's book under review is a beginning in this direction. Sethna brings to his inquiry the intellectual rectitude of an impeccable scholar as well as the plastic mind of a sadhak centred in his psychic. The concept of the Supramental gnosis, which forms the cornerstone of Sri Aurobindo's spiritual system, has been variously interpreted in other systems. Sri Aurobindo points out the following, "Two opposite errors have to be avoided, two misconceptions that disfigure opposite sides of the truth of gnosis. One error of intellect-bounded thinkers takes *vijnāna* as synonymous with the other Indian term *buddhi* and *buddhi* as synonymous with the reason, the discerning intellect, the logical intelligence. The systems that accept this significance, pass at once from a plane of pure intellect to a plane of pure spirit. No intermediate power is recognised, no diviner action of knowledge than the pure reason is admitted; the limited human means for fixing truth is taken for the highest possible dynamics of consciousness, its topmost force and original movement. An opposite error, a misconception of the mystics identifies *vijnāna* with the consciousness of the Infinite free from all ideation or else ideation packed into one essence of thought, lost to other dynamic action in the single and invariable idea of the One. This is the *caitanya* of

Sethna takes the reader on a journey wherein the reader sees for himself that it is upon lived spiritual experience that Sri Aurobindo's system bases itself.

the Upanishad and is one movement or rather one thread of the many-aspected movement of the gnosis. The gnosis, the Vijnana, is not only this concentrated consciousness of the infinite Essence; it is also and at the same time an infinite knowledge of the myriad play of the Infinite. It contains all ideation (not mental but supramental), but it is not limited by ideation, for it far exceeds all ideative movement. Nor is the gnostic ideation in its character an intellectual thinking; it is not what we call the reason, not a concentrated intelligence. For the reason is mental in its methods, mental in its acquisitions, mental in its basis, but the ideative method of the gnosis is self-luminous, supramental, its yield of thought-light spontaneous, not proceeding by acquisition, its thought-basis a rendering of conscious identities, not a translation of the impressions born of indirect contacts."

But complete knowledge of this plane of consciousness did not come to Sri Aurobindo at once. In the first article, Sethna traces out the origins of the distinction between the Supermind and what came to be known as the Overmind. The Overmind was initially supposed to be an inferior sub-plane of the Gnosis itself. When Sri Aurobindo descended to the physical plane during the course of sadhana it was found that the Overmind-power was insufficient to transform the physical. Thus it was necessary to bring out in sharp focus the contrast between the Overmind and Supermind. With aid of numerous quotations and excerpts from Sri Aurobindo, Sethna takes the reader on a journey wherein the reader sees for himself that it is upon lived spiritual experience that Sri Aurobindo's system bases itself.

In an early letter Sri Aurobindo has written that his characteristic mode of action was through the Illumined Mind whereas the Mother acted through the Illumined Psychic. In the beginning of the collective yogic adventure the stress was laid on opening the yogic centre at the crown of the head. As the sadhana descended to the lower planes and many more were admitted to Ashram life, it was found that the head centre was too difficult an opening for most sadhaks. It was then that increasing stress was laid on the Psychic opening. As the Mother took the centre stage of Ashram life and Sri Aurobindo retired to pursue his quest for the supramental descent, the sadhaks were encouraged to follow the Mother's Sunlit Path of happy reliance and glad submission to the Divine.

Sri Aurobindo passed away in December 1950 and on his passing, *The Mind of Light* was realized by the Mother. With the passage of time the Mother added new details to Sri Aurobindo's spiritual system. She pointed out that one of the two ways towards the supermind would be a progressive diminishing of the animal in man through the creation of intermediate races between man and Superman. The other way would be the creation of a body through wholly supramental means. This is the theme of the second article.

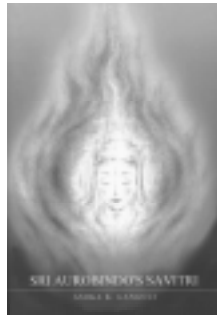
The third article has to do with a subtle point connected with the nomenclature of planes of consciousness. The gradation of Consciousness is continuous yet each peculiar poise of relation between *purusha* and *prakriti* defines a new plane. The matter is complicated by the fact that each plane contains as it were, the shades of all the other planes but subordinated to its particular character. Sethna explores the distinction between the Physical-Mind and the Mental-Physical and its various

ramifications. He quotes Sri Aurobindo: “The physical mind is technically placed below the vital and yet it is a prolongation of the mind proper and one that can act in its own sphere by direct touch with the higher mental intelligence.” Sri Aurobindo continues, “And there is too an obscure mind of the body, of the very cells....” Sethna rightly concludes that “the ‘body mind’ to which the Mother alludes [in some of her talks] is to be specially regarded as additional to and not overlapping with the physical mind.”

The book ends with Sethna’s answers to a series of questions posed by a well-meaning sadhak in the assumed role of *advocatus diaboli*. It is possible to differ with Sethna on minor points here and there, but by and large, throughout the book, Sethna’s persuasive logic succeeds in carrying the reader along with him. This slim volume will, it is hoped, set the trend of similar research by other scholars. It is a must for those Aurobindonians who wish to add mental clarity to their devotion to the Gurus.

— Hemant Kapoor

*Hemant Kapoor is an M.Sc. in Chemistry from I.I.T., Kanpur. He works at the Sri Aurobindo Ashram Press in Pondicherry. His interests include poetry and philosophy.*



### Sri Aurobindo’s Savitri

Asoka K. Ganguli; Published by Sri Aurobindo Institute of Research in Social Sciences, Sri Aurobindo Society, Pondicherry; Price Rs. 90.00, 288 pp.

Asoka K. Ganguli has done a good academic research work, which will be beneficial for students and teachers of our universities. *Savitri* is already included in the syllabi of quite a few universities and Mr. Ganguli’s book is something like a supplement to Dr. Prema Nandakumar’s book and the two-volume anthology edited by R.Y. Deshpande (*Perspectives of Savitri*). In many ways Mr. Ganguli’s book is more useful as a complete introduction to Sri Aurobindo’s aesthetics and practice.

The price of the book is surprisingly low if we think of its contents and the rich get-up. The book deals with Sri

Aurobindo’s concept of ‘Future Poetry’ — its inner laws of composition and overmind aesthetics. There are also illuminating discussions on the form and style of the new epic. Mr. Ganguli discusses at length about the Aurobindonian idea of new poetry, its aim and object, its essence, the theory behind it, its aesthetic principles and above all the poetry as mantra of the Real.

Then he takes up *Savitri* as an epic drawing our attention to the evolution of the epic form, which Sri Aurobindo has indicated in *The Future Poetry* and spoken of in detail in the letters on *Savitri*. The epic of the future will turn inward from outside. From objectivity of the past the epic moves to pure subjectivism in Sri Aurobindo’s *Savitri*. Sri Aurobindo’s epic is visionary stuff, not common to ordinary human experiences. It demands a widening of the consciousness to appreciate this kind of poetry. Mr. Ganguli rightly observes: “The narrations of the epic are not based on any objective story element; they are the poet’s experience — spiritual and occult. It is this pure subjective element which enters the epic for the first time and here lies the newness of *Savitri*, bringing a new method in epic tradition.” Quite correctly, the stress is on the mystical vision of Sri Aurobindo and also on the Overhead aesthetics. For the benefit of academicians Mr. Ganguli has examined the various rhetorical devices used in the poem, like double adjectives and epithets, inversions and repetitions.

Sri Aurobindo’s epic is visionary stuff, not common to ordinary human experiences.

Mr. Ganguli’s examination of the symbolism in *Savitri* is quite lucid, but he could have added here some of the basics of *Savitri* symbolism from M.P. Pandit’s *Introducing Savitri*. Of course when we consider the laborious textual commentaries of Mr. Ganguli, we have to overlook this slight limitation of the book. The linking of the planes (the Illumined, the Intuition, and the Overmind) with passages from *Savitri* is an extremely interesting part of the book. The last two chapters entitled *Evolution of Consciousness* and *Transformation of Consciousness* speak of the author’s high serious intention. After all, one must know the relation between Sri Aurobindo’s Yoga and *Savitri*.

— Goutam Ghosal

*Dr. G. Ghosal received a D.Litt. for his study on Sri Aurobindo’s prose style. He teaches at Visva-Bharati and resides in Santiniketan.*

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HISTORY OF INDIA: FROM A PSYCHOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

**History of India : A New Approach**

Professor Kittu Reddy; Published by Standard Publishers (India), New Delhi; Price: Rs. 850.00, 503 pp.

There have been a number of books on the history of India written from different approaches and different perspectives. There was the imperial way in which some of the British writers were made to present Indian history. To counteract such an approach, there was the imperative need to write from a nationalist point of view. There was also the Marxist interpretation of Indian history. In recent decades, the subaltern historians started to look at the history of India from the point of view of subordinated classes, where the poor and downtrodden are brought on to the center stage for historical analysis.

The book under review *History of India: A New Approach* by Professor Kittu Reddy is different from others on the subject at least on the count that it is written from the cultural and spiritual point of view. It presents the 'spiritual genius' of the country – India. It was Edmund Burke, that famous 18th century orator and British Parliamentarian who for the first time used the phrase "genius of a nation". But it was Winston Churchill who in his "History of the English Speaking Peoples" exhibited without any inhibition the "genius of England". Kittu Reddy's book has clearly emphasized this aspect of national genius with regard to India. There is, in his book, great thrust for the intellectual and psychological events in history. The book deals in a comprehensive manner with the entire period of Indian history, from ancient to medieval to modern.

The book is in two parts. The first part deals with the period from the ancient times to the middle of the 19th century. The second part covers from the Sepoy Mutiny to the attainment of Independence. The chapters on the Vedas and Upanishads are presented in a balanced way with several interesting details. The ancient social systems and polity are well brought out with all the details. The historical significance of Sankara, Madhva and Ramanuja is well dilated. The role of Shivaji, Tipu Sultan and Ranjit Singh occupy an important place in this part of the book. The second part of the book has highlighted the Indian

The book has clearly emphasized the aspect of national genius with regard to India.



National Congress, the partition of Bengal, the early revolutionaries etc. The various phases of the national movement, like the Home Rule, Non-Cooperation, Civil Disobedience, Quit India Movement etc. are given prominence.

One very important and welcome change that the author of the present book has brought in, is that he has kept chronology at its low ebb. If the undercurrents of a civilization are to be assimilated and appreciated, you should save the reader from the burden of too many years and dates. Prof. Kittu Reddy, with nearly half a century of experience in teaching of history has rightly kept the chronological details to the minimum. This is something that every future author of history should emulate. Though no one can deny that Chronology is one of the eyes of History, it is certainly a deterrent in appreciating the philosophy of history. The author has succeeded in presenting the history of India at a deeper and psychological level. The book is from the Indian spiritual point of view. However, the Muslim invasions and the advent of the British are discussed in a brief manner. They are not commensurate with the details found in other chapters. The impact of Islam on Indian thought and culture, if only it were discussed, would have been very appropriate in the book.

The author has succeeded in presenting the history of India at a deeper and psychological level.

*History of India: A New Approach*, is written with a facile pen. The language used is very readable. The Appendices at the end of the book containing the messages from the Mother and Sri Aurobindo on the occasion of partition of the country, have added value to the book. The author, Prof. Kittu Reddy has succeeded in presenting Indian History from the point of view of its spiritual genius. The most striking aspect of the book is that it has a strong nationalist point of view but with malice to none.

— Prof. K.S.S. Seshan  
*Prof. Seshan is a retired Professor of History, University of Hyderabad.*

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## Sri Aurobindo in the First Decade of the Twentieth Century

Manoj Das; Published by Sri Aurobindo Ashram Publication Department; Price Rs.95.00, 218 pp.



It is heartening that the second edition of the book bearing the above title is now available. It is also significant that this new edition has appeared this year which marks the 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Mother's birth. The author, Manoj Das, is well known world wide. Among many other awards, Prof. Das was recently awarded a Padmashree by the Indian Government. He is also an internationally renowned writer of short stories and essays. In addition to all these, he is a recognised expert on the integral philosophy of Sri Aurobindo. It is therefore not at all unexpected that this definitive work is so immensely readable.

The *raison d'être* for this new edition is clearly spelt out in the preface, where anecdotal reminiscences are presented in a chatty style. The author's research into the private correspondence between Lord Minto, the then Governor-General and Viceroy of India and Lord Morley, the Secretary of State for India, resulted in a wealth of informative reading. The noted industrialist, Sri Birla, sponsored this research which had to be undertaken at the India Office Library, London. Manoj Das initially was not absolutely certain whether Sri Aurobindo would at all feature in these correspondences. According to Sri Manoj Das, "Would not my proposed search amount to beating in the bush?" When this was placed before the Mother, she wrote back: "GO, with my Blessings." Thus, it is rewarding that a second edition of this wonderful book has appeared this year.

The contents have done justice to the title. The book vividly recreates Sri Aurobindo's action during those tumultuous 'Agni yuga' years of the first decade of the last century. These essays also chart the genesis of the *Bande Mataram* — the English daily edited by Sri Aurobindo which had the propensity to stir up endless controversy. Sri Aurobindo's flaming utterances

*What Sri Aurobindo wrote was so cleverly worded that it never appeared to be seditious.*

stirred up the national psyche and people from all walks of life seemed determined to revolt against oppressive British policies. Manoj Das' witty notes, sprinkled with liberal doses of Aurobindonian humour, constantly focus on Sri Aurobindo's ingenuity at beating the English at their own game. Much to the chagrin of the imperialist regime, nothing inflammatory or seditious could be found in Sri Aurobindo's editorials. Yet, it said everything to rouse the nation to fight for freedom. In this context, I am reminded of a joke that I first heard from my uncle in Calcutta which concerned 'Englishness'. In those days Calcuttans said "An Englishman will never lie to you, but what he will tell you would be far from the truth!" In a similar vein, what Sri Aurobindo wrote was enough to raise the public morale against British administration, yet, it was so cleverly worded that it never appeared to be seditious.

The chronology of events charting Sri Aurobindo's involvement in the national politics is carefully presented. Chapter I really sets the scene and provides "Glimpses of Calcutta Days" at a time when Curzon resolved to partition Bengal along communal lines. This is immediately followed by a very interesting although journalistic interview of Sri Aurobindo by Henry Nevinson. This interview gives a feel for his personality during that time. For a lay reader, or a non-devotee, such a description is essential — it helps sustain the interest of the general reader in the principal figure of the book. It required the keen discretion of a Manoj Das to choose this particular interview as relevant material to be incorporated. To quote Nevinson, "He was a youngish man, I should think still under thirty. Intent dark eyes looked from his thin, clear-cut face with a gravity that seemed immovable, but the figure and bearing were those of an English graduate..." That intent face is very much apparent on the accompanying picture the book includes — it shows a Sunday edition of the *Bande Mataram* (September 1907), the newspaper that caused such a furore in its time.

Manoj Das has won international acclaim as a storyteller. He has used this remarkable talent to introduce or illustrate a particular point at the most appropriate places. I will cite an example. In order to illustrate the impact of the 'Swadeshi' movement and the involvement of Sri Aurobindo in the Surat congress in 1907, he narrates the following tale: "In a remote Indian village a grandmother was putting chips of wood in the fire one evening, with her little grandson relaxing against the wall beside her, perhaps waiting for the twilight gift of a tale from the

granny. A flash of flame from the oven revealed to the boy a red-bellied mosquito on his chest. 'See, grandma, how this mosquito is sucking my blood. It must be British!' 'Oh, no,' said Grandma, 'All those who suck blood are not British.' 'Is this one then Swadeshi? Well, in that case I will not kill it even though it is so bad,' the boy said blowing the mosquito away."

The book subsequently deals with all the ramifications of the famous Alipore Bomb trial. The author chose to unfold the saga of the trial by quoting the following punchy opening lines: "'The Alipore Bomb Trial was the first State trial of any magnitude in India...' The trial was the biggest news in many of the Indian Newspapers for one full year — 1908-1909." Interesting footnotes, undoubtedly a result of painstaking study and research, heighten the impact of many leading passages. For example, while describing the impact of *Bande Mataram* as well as of *Yugantar*, the following footnote is appended: "Valentine Chirol wrote in the *Times (London)*, 'The sale was unbounded. The circulation of *Yugantar* rose to over 50,000, a figure never attained before by any Indian newspaper, and sometimes when there was a special run upon a number the Calcutta newsboys would get a rupee for a single copy.'" Although the Alipore trial is dealt with at considerable length covering chapters V-X, there was never a dull moment as I read through the details. It was revealing to read in context all the subtle nuances of the argument — not merely the dramatic although prophetic conclusion. In fact, C.R. Das' inspired summing up (beginning with the famous lines "My appeal to you therefore is that a man like this...stands not only before the bar in this Court but stands before the bar of the High Court of History...") stands apart prominently only *after* the context is clearly set out. This has been done admirably well by the author who has offered a distilled flavour of the entire case. A wealth of press reports from both English and Bengali newspapers provide interesting information — both humorous as well as sensational. These include *The Bengalee*, *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, *The Times (London)* and *Statesman* in English, and the *Basumati* and *Bangabandhu* in Bengali. In fact, after reading the author's own notes and the news reports one can really appreciate why the Alipore bomb trial stands out as a landmark event of the first decade of the twentieth century.

After reading the author's own notes and the news reports one can really appreciate why the Alipore bomb trial stands out as a landmark event of the first decade of the twentieth century.

Although many of us have heard about the Morley-

Minto reforms, we are generally not aware of the sheer enormity of the number of times references have been made to Sri Aurobindo in a series of correspondences between Lord Minto, the Viceroy and Governor-General of India, and Lord Morley, the Secretary of State for India. Only after reading this delightful book did I learn that often the two had differing viewpoints on Sri Aurobindo. While Minto consistently adopted an unsympathetic attitude, Morley often adopted a rather reasonable tone. For example, Manoj Das pertinently quotes the following from Morley's letter to Minto (May 5, 1910) concerning the issue of further proceedings against Sri Aurobindo: "...I have always understood that proceedings for sedition was only advised when a conviction was reasonably certain. Is a conviction reasonably certain in this case? I should think decidedly not, and I *hope not*..."

The enduring appeal of the book is attributable to the author's ability to seamlessly weave anecdotes, press reports, correspondences, and even parliamentary debates related to Sri Aurobindo, and to put before us his genius in shaping the destiny of India during the first decade of the last century. In fact, only after reading chapter XIII did I learn that there was a debate in the British Parliament on Sri Aurobindo. The introductory notes are spelt out succinctly: "...But the evaluation of a debate in the first decade of the century must be done keeping in mind the

quiescent spirit of the time. And in this light the first debate on India in the 'new Parliament' in 1910, was almost revolutionary! And this debate was on Sri Aurobindo." From Manoj Das' explorations we can

feel the verve of these debates. They illumine the oratorical abilities of some of the then British parliamentarians — Mr. Keir Hardie (the founder of the Labour Party), Mr. Ramsay MacDonald (former Labour Prime Minister of Britain), Mr. Montagu (the Under Secretary of State for India) etc. They also reveal Mr. Keir Hardie's and Mr. MacDonald's favourable disposition towards Sri Aurobindo. They also remind us about certain magnanimous utterances in favour of the Indian uprising and Sri Aurobindo which, very often in our nationalistic zeal, we tend to overlook. Manoj Das' researches present the readers with a thoroughly balanced view of these parliamentary debates.

Even after Sri Aurobindo's departure to Pondicherry, the British Government relentlessly tried to arraign him.

The concluding chapter provides a summary with astonishing clarity of the then press coverage on Sri Aurobindo's 'disappearance' to Pondicherry. Not all were sympathetic to him — including the *Statesman*.

The book includes four appendices. Glowing tributes to Sri Aurobindo, first, by Bipin Chandra Pal (appendix 1) and by R. Palit (appendix 3) are included (mainly as extracts from published books). This provides the reader with a wealth of interesting biographical information. The second appendix presents "Two Articles from a Banned Book". The first deals with the *Bande Mataram* Prosecution Case of 1907 while the second deals directly with the famous Alipore Trial, 1908. The latter also includes details about Sarojini Ghose's (Sri Aurobindo's sister) appeal to the general public for funds to defend Sri Aurobindo — the poignancy of the appeal is bound to touch every reader's heart. The last appendix is entitled "Government's Dread of People Meeting Sri Aurobindo" — this includes very interesting extracts from *Ruler of Baroda* by Philip W. Seargent.

The book should be of sustaining interest to a diverse set of readers — researchers studying this period of Anglo-Indian politics, biographers, journalists and, generally, all interested in a good read in the English language. It should also form a delightful companion to Peter Heehs' *The Bomb in Bengal*. Most importantly, the contents and the style should equally appeal to the devotees of Sri Aurobindo as well as to the general reader interested in this epochal period of our country's history. Non-resident Indians based in Britain should also find this book interesting — they can relish and compare the tone of current parliamentary debates daily aired on British television, with those of yesteryear. Manoj Das' explanatory notes, his style of presentation and, importantly, the judicious choice of material included have all contributed to the intellectual appeal of the book. Although an enormous amount of resource material was collected from the India Office Library in London, the maturity and discernment of the author enabled him to overcome the temptation of including too much material. As a result, he has never wearied his readers with superfluous information. The first edition of the book received the prestigious Sri Aurobindo Puraskar in 1997, the 125<sup>th</sup> Birth Anniversary of Sri Aurobindo. This second edition deserves another similar award during the Mother's 125<sup>th</sup> Birth Anniversary.

— Dr. Satyajit Ghosh

*Dr. S. Ghosh is a Research Fellow at the School of the Environment, University of Leeds, U.K.*

## Sri Aurobindo and The Mother on India and Her Future

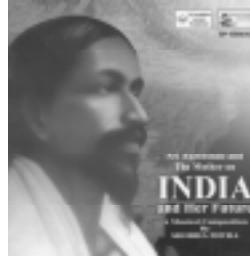
A Musical Composition by Shobha Mitra

*Songs and hymns in Sanskrit with recitation in English from Sri Aurobindo's and the Mother's writings*

Total duration: 68:30

Audio cassette – Rs.50.00

Audio CD – Rs.249.00



I have had the privilege of listening to Shobha Mitra's (Shobha-di to many of us) music for the past ten years. She graciously agreed to give me recorded versions of her earlier creations 'Invocation', 'Adoration' etc. All these were privately recorded only for the devotees of the Mother and Sri

Aurobindo. Undoubtedly, each one of these choreographed compositions was wonderful to listen to. I had always thought that it was about time that her creations reached out to a much wider target audience. I was delighted that my wish came true in 2001 when *India and Her Future* was released through the courtesy of Hindusthan Musical Products Ltd. in collaboration with the Sri Aurobindo Ashram Trust.

As the title suggests, this cassette concerns India's future and this is enacted through a delectable sequence of recitations from the works of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, as well as a garland of inspiring songs.

As far as I am concerned, every time I unwrap a new cassette to play on my hi-fi, I am always thrilled – perhaps the thrill of new music. When the first strains of music from this particular cassette streamed out from the speakers, I experienced not just the initial thrill – I was transported instantly to a different level of consciousness. I know I have used this rather clichéd expression – but that is exactly how I felt. From the very start, I knew that this

*The future of India is very clear. India is the Guru of the world. The future structure of the world depends on India. India is the living soul. India is incarnating the spiritual knowledge in the world.*

— The Mother

cassette would form a part of my most treasured collections.

The English recitations (in familiar voices, easily recognised by all Sri Aurobindo Ashram regulars) were clear and well complemented the song sequences and the musical arrangements. Special credit must be given to Shobha-di for choosing the most appropriate passages from the enormous body of writings of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother on the true mission of India. First, the spirit of patriotism is invoked. This patriotic fervour and love for our Motherland is then raised to a higher level – one is led to appreciate India’s pioneering role in shaping the earthly destiny. Finally, the recitations, in conjunction with the music, lead to the realisation that India’s unique mission in the committee of nations is indeed spiritual.

The composition easily rises above the ordinariness of some of the commercially available devotional music. The dreamy slow movements of the invocations (in Sanskrit) blend well with the perfectly sung choruses. The richly cadenced voices – both male and female – are a delight to listen to. Many popular and much loved tunes (e.g. *Samgachchadhvam*, *Dhano Dhanye Pushpe Bhora [Rupanilayam Atulaneeyam]*, *Sarvesham No Janani*, *Vande Mataram*) have been adapted with twists and turns that are not only refreshingly new, but are also brilliantly rendered in flawless Sanskrit. These choruses showcase the entire compilation’s warmth and depth and the singing is constantly alive and uplifting. Shobha-di’s choreography is always inherently devotional, and here it is especially fluent and lyrical, and very loyal to her Sri Aurobindo Ashram roots.

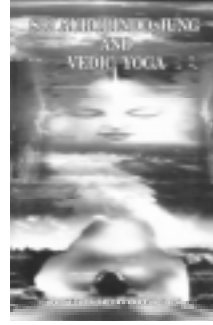
The cassette is carefully crafted and digitally recorded with a rich Dolby stereo output and has an attractive cover. A CD version of *India and Her Future* is also available with SABDA.

— Dr. Satyajit Ghosh

*Dr. S. Ghosh is a Research Fellow at the School of the Environment, University of Leeds, U.K.*

*There is a mighty law of life, a great principle of human evolution, a body of spiritual knowledge and experience of which India has always been destined to be guardian, exemplar and missionary.*

— Sri Aurobindo



## Sri Aurobindo, Jung and Vedic Yoga

Professor Satya Prakash Singh;  
Published by Standard Publishers (India), New Delhi;  
Price Rs.650.00, 423 pp.

The book under review is an enlarged edition of Prof. S.P. Singh’s previous book, *Sri Aurobindo and Jung: A Comparative Study in Yoga and Depth Psychology* (1986). In addition to the contents of the previous book, the present edition includes new sections presenting the Vedic perspective on various topics which were dealt with previously only from the viewpoints of Jung and Sri Aurobindo. The present edition contains also a new chapter on “VedicYoga” which fills the last fifty-three pages of the book.

Though the title of the book begins with Sri Aurobindo, the comparisons made in the book stem from the thought of Jung. Commanding a unique combined

*One fundamental similarity between Jung and Sri Aurobindo is that they both base their views of the psyche on empirical and experiential data rather than on speculative theory.*

scholarship of Jung, Sri Aurobindo and the Vedas, the author presents the basic concepts of Jungian thought and delineates their similarities and differences in relation to Sri Aurobindo’s thought. The sections on the Vedic perspective also bear on some of the core Jungian concepts.

One fundamental similarity between Jung and Sri Aurobindo is that they both base their views of the psyche on empirical and experiential data rather than on speculative theory. But whereas Jung was reluctant to accept the spiritual discoveries of past sages and chose to rely on intellectual inferences drawn from his own findings, Sri Aurobindo freely and profoundly imbibed the ancient Indian spiritual traditions and used them in the true scientific spirit as working hypotheses for his own spiritual search and experiments, thereby arriving at discoveries which are, unlike Jungian thought, not an inferential mental knowledge but truths based on spiritual realisation. As the learned author states in writing about the Vedic view

of the conscious and the unconscious: "By virtue of his access to the Veda in the original, Sri Aurobindo could take advantage of the Vedic wisdom and frame his psychology in an integral way. The same was not available to Jung. Lacking in the Yogic power to make direct access to the psyche by himself, he also had to rely on inferences made on the experiences of others. This twofold lacuna in his approach has told adversely on the substantiality of his conclusions regarding the phenomenon he calls the collective unconscious."

The collective unconscious, which looms large in Jungian thought, has been compared by the author to what Sri Aurobindo has called the subliminal. Generally, Sri Aurobindo has used the term "subliminal" to connote the inner being, "taken in its entirety of inner mind, inner life, inner physical with the soul or psychic entity supporting them." This is what he calls the subliminal proper. But a few times Sri Aurobindo has employed "subliminal" as "a general term used for all parts of the being which are not on the waking surface." In this broader sense the subliminal includes not only the inner being (the subliminal proper) which is *behind* the surface consciousness, but also the subconscious which is *below* the surface consciousness, and the superconscious, which is *above* the surface consciousness. The author has generally used "subliminal" in the broader sense of the term, which is apt to cause confusion to readers who are familiar only with the usual narrower meaning given to it by Sri Aurobindo.

Another point of confusion is that at some places in the book, the subliminal has been used synonymously with the psychic entity or soul, the innermost centre of the inner being. For example, the author's description of the subliminal as that which "burns in the temple of the innermost heart" is Sri Aurobindo's description of the psychic entity. Statements such as these are apt to mislead those who are not adequately familiar with Sri Aurobindo's thought.

The author rightly observes in the Preface of the book that "the perspectives from which they [Jung and Sri Aurobindo] have viewed the human psyche are poles apart

from each other." But many of their radical differences regarding the nature of consciousness, the unconscious, ego, self and transformation have not been adequately brought out in the book.

In the last chapter on "Vedic Yoga" Prof. Singh has presented eight types of yoga which he has formulated on the basis of the Vidyas, techniques and practices mentioned in the Vedas and Upanishads. In making comparisons between the Vedic yogas and Sri Aurobindo's yoga, the following remarks of Sri Aurobindo have not always been kept in view:

"I do not think exact correlations can always be traced between one system of spiritual and occult knowledge and another. All deal with the same material, but there are differences of standpoint, differences of view-range, a divergence in the mental idea of what is seen and experienced, disparate pragmatic purposes and therefore a difference in the paths surveyed, cut out or followed; the systems vary, each constructs its own schema and technique."

*Sri Aurobindo, Jung and Vedic Yoga*, "a product of the author's keen study and contemplation extending over four decades," is a feat of rare scholarship, abounding in choice quotations from Jung and Sri Aurobindo, and references to the Vedas. The inclusion of an Index is a welcome feature of the new edition. The book will be of interest to students and scholars of transpersonal psychology and yoga. To profit most from the wealth of ideas contained in the book, the reader will do well to begin by acquiring a sound understanding of Sri Aurobindo's comprehensive cosmological and psychological thought to serve as an integral and illuminating framework within which the stray and hazy insights of Jung and the intuitive discoveries of the Vedic Rishis can be placed and properly understood.

—A.S. Dalal

*Dr. A.S. Dalal was a practising clinical psychologist in the USA. He now lives in Pondicherry. He has authored books on Sri Aurobindo's psychological thought, and has edited a popular series of compilations from Sri Aurobindo and the Mother.*

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***From the historical point of view the Rig Veda may be regarded as a record of a great advance made by humanity by special means at a certain period of its collective progress. In its esoteric, as well as its exoteric significance, it is the Book of Works, of the inner and the outer sacrifice; it is the spirit's hymn of battle and victory as it discovers and climbs to planes of thought and experience inaccessible to the natural or animal man, man's praise of the divine Light, Power and Grace at work in the mortal.***

— Sri Aurobindo, *The Secret of the Veda*

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## Sri Aurobindo and Western Thought

*This comparative article written from a refreshingly unique perspective raises intriguing possibilities of a synthesis of Eastern and Western thought based on their common roots. The views expressed are the anonymous author's own.*

Sri Aurobindo is not only a leader of East Indian spirituality, but he is also a very important figure in Western thought, especially in Western Heathenism/Paganism. His mystical, or “esoteric,” interpretation of the Rig Veda and ancillary writings, which considers the essence of these to be the evolution of consciousness, places him at the center of Western spirituality and thought and therefore at the center of the great tripartite supersystem formed by Vedism, Zarathushti Din (Zoroastrianism), and Western Heathenism.

In old Anglo Saxon, “heathen” refers to the people of the heath, of the countryside, who were nature-worshipping folk; in Latin, “pagani” means people of the hills, the unurbanized, nature-connected folk. Today, the authentic heathen movement is called “Odinism” (after Odin, the Norse-Germanic God) or “Asatru” (true, or loyal, to the Aesir, the collective Norse-Germanic gods).

Recent molecular genetic studies have shown that East Indian Brahmins have significant genetic similarity with the European folk.

The geographic origin of the Indo-European people is unknown, but it is known that they divided into three main migratory groups: one went into India and produced the Vedic literature, another went to what became Persia and elaborated Zarathushti Din, and the third ventured westward and diversified into the various European ethnic groups (Slavs, Scandinavians, Germans, Kelts, Mediterraneans, etc.). Interestingly, recent molecular genetic studies have shown that East Indian Brahmins have significant genetic similarity with the European folk, and this finding substantiates the intimate connection among the Indo-European religions.

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Indo-European spirituality developed in parallel in all three geographic areas, and was based upon the same Idea of Evolution: the evolution of Universal Consciousness, biological evolution of life, and personal development towards the realization of one's soul, of the divine

within. The progress of Indo-European spirituality was temporarily interrupted by the interjection of an alien and antithetical creed, Judeo-Christianity, but Heathenism is the essence of the souls and the minds of the Indo-European folk, and today it is recovering and resurgent.

This event is making Sri Aurobindo ever more relevant and important, since a study of his thought reveals that his philosophy has strong similarities to Western Heathen philosophy: This is because both systems are based upon the Vedas, upon the Vedic Idea that the evolution of consciousness is the main universal, cosmic, and human dynamic. Consideration of a few common ideas and themes demonstrates this identity.

*The resurgence of Heathenism is making Sri Aurobindo ever more relevant in the West.*

First, the basis of Sri Aurobindo's thought (which was partly derived from the Rig Veda) is Evolution: The Universal Self is Consciousness itself, and this Oneness, this “spirit-energy,” realizes itself or evolves itself through the evolution of the cosmic or physical order and through the human order wherein individuals strive to raise their consciousness to the supernal within their souls - to the Godhead, to the Universal Self.

To Sri Aurobindo, Involution (descent) and Evolution (ascent) occur simultaneously and cooperatively; generally, this action produces an upward spiral as there is steady improvement and increasing complexity resulting from the spiritualization and divinization of the cosmos and of life. To Sri Aurobindo, Reality is the evolution of consciousness; at the human level, this involves the ascension of consciousness from the “self” (the isolated, individual ego) to the “Self” (the Universal Self) in a process of ensoulment. In this process, aspirants (Agni) try their utmost to Become, to know and to participate in the spiritual Being, i.e., to attain true Being.

Heathenism teaches the same system. In Norse mythology, the initial state is Ginnungagap, an emptiness, a void (non-Being), a potential from which spontaneously come Fire and Ice (cosmic complementary opposites, heat and cold, energy-action and matter-substance), and from the interplay of these, comes the world, the Midgard of the Vikings. The existence of this cosmos is punctuated by a series of cataclysms called “Ragnarok,” or the

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Twilight of the Gods; these are evolutionary nodes since they mark the end of one cycle or era of upward development and the beginning of a new, improved, higher phase. This, the key myth in Heathenism, depicts the death of one group of gods (which signify the ideas and ways that support a given level of civilization) and the end of their world, and the birth of a succeeding group of gods, of a new, better world. One order of gods dies, but it is replaced by its progeny gods on the Field of Gimli, and evolution proceeds: death is ever followed by rebirth, or regeneration, and this is the action of evolution.

This point is discussed by Hans F.K. Gunther in Religious Attitudes of the Indo-Europeans (reprint, London: Craig Press: 1968).

Second, mysticism is the essential factor, or mode in both Vedic and Western Heathen practice and experience and in Sri Aurobindo's praxis. Briefly, mysticism is the direct, unmediated, intimate knowing and experiencing of the Godhead, the Universal Self, the Universal Truth. For Vedism and for Heathenism, it is the means by which the aspirant develops and transforms his consciousness so as to attain the final step to the Supermind which is the mystic state in which the Godhead is apprehended and entered, in which "mystic union" is realized.

According to both Sri Aurobindo and to Heathen thinkers, this mystical process occurs because the divine is transcendent (Involution) and immanent (Evolution); because the divine is immanent it is within, it is at the core of one's self – the self has within it the Self (in its soul). In the Vedic terms used by Sri Aurobindo, "Atman is Brahman," the self is the Self (and vice-versa), and likewise in Heathen terms, "God is within." In its slow revival beginning just before the Middle Ages in Europe, Heathenism expressed itself through mysticism: In the Judeo-Christian Church, crypto-heathens acted as mystics, and in the modern era, heathens have appeared as nature mystics, such as John Richard Jefferies.

An informed reading of the Western Mystics' writings discloses that their soul-impulsions and ideas were the same as those of the Vedic rishis who later so inspired Sri Aurobindo. For example, Heathen Mystic Meister

Eckhart (1260-1328?) wrote: "The Father [Sat] looked at the Son [Chit] and laughed [Ananda], the Son looked at the Father and laughed, and together their laughter was the Holy Spirit." This expresses the Vedic idea of the joy in and of Being, of Ananda as the main cause and true character of Becoming [Chit] and of Being [Sat], as the essence of the world.

In the last 50 years, a number of books have appeared which trace and document the connection - the identity - between Vedic spiritualism and Western Mysticism; thus, there is an increasing awareness of the great continuity of Indo-European spirituality which extends from Vedic India to the modern age – and to the future. One such book is Hindu Thought and Carmelite Mysticism by Swami Siddheswarananda [Translated by William Buchanan (New Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers Pvt. Ltd., 1998, 172 pp.)].

Third, the Vedic sacrifice is reiterated in Indo-European mythology. The sacrifice involves the giving up of all of the smaller self (the lesser consciousness, ignorance) to earn the greater Self (true knowledge, the higher consciousness, divine realization). In effect, it is the giving of self to Self, of the One giving Itself to Itself. The Indo-European version tells of Odin, the god of intelligence (of consciousness), hanging from a tree for nine days and nights in a giving of "Myself to Myself" to win the knowledge of the Runes (the mystic symbols/diagrams

knowledge of which enables, or empowers, the aspirant to know Reality, the Truth, the Godhead, or in Vedic words, the Universal Self).

Fourth, Sri Aurobindo has commented extensively on the Purusha-Prakriti duality whose interaction sustains the cosmos.

In the One, Purusha is the male, the soul aspect, and Prakriti is the female, the nature aspect: Purusha realizes or embodies itself through Prakriti, and this action, this dynamic unity of Soul and Nature, is the world in the process of evolving. The Norse pantheon reflects this idea because all the chief male gods have a female counterpart, that is, male and female are considered to be two different aspects of the same action/entity: Odin/Frigga [Chit], Thor/Sif [Sat], and Frey/Freya [Ananda]. The first pair are man and wife and the last are brother and sister, and thus fully represent the male-female relationships.

*A number of books have appeared which trace and document the connection between Vedic spiritualism and Western Mysticism; thus, there is an increasing awareness of the great continuity of Indo-European spirituality which extends from Vedic India to the modern age.*

Fifth, the tripartite scheme so prominent in the Vedas and in Sri Aurobindo's system, is equally prominent in Heathenism. This point is demonstrated by the Frenchman, Georges Dumézil, who wrote a number of major studies showing that the same tripartite idea is the basis of Vedism, Zarathushti Din, and Western Heathenism. Dumézil's work may be the first to suggest that Vedism, Zarathushti Din, and Western Heathenism form a huge unified spiritual supersystem.

Sixth, modern Western philosophy, all of whose worthwhile thinkers were or are Heathens, with exactitude recreates and restates Vedic philosophy, as does the philosophy of Sri Aurobindo. One example is Max Stirner (Caspar Schmidt) whose classic, The Ego [the self] and Its Own [the Self], is a Vedic paraphrase: Its theme is that true and progressive living (which promotes general cosmic evolution) requires one to discover and act according to his inner self, and this is a repeat of the Vedic theme that to satisfy dharma, the outer person (self) must act in accordance with the inner person (Self). Some other Western philosophers who share the evolutionist viewpoint of the Vedas and of Sri Aurobindo are F.W. Nietzsche, Charles Sanders Peirce (pronounced "purse"), Duren J.H. Ward, and Martin Heidegger.

Peirce, a practising experimental scientist and a philosopher of logic and science, restated and extended Vedic evolutionary ideas in modern rational scientific terms. Consider this synopsis by scientist Francis Abbott:

Peirce begins with absolute or pure potentiality [the One, Brahman], with absolute Chance, or negation of all law, even logical, to evolve at last Absolute Being [Atman] and Absolute Law... [Francis Abbott Diary, February 13, 1886, quoted in Charles Sanders Peirce: A Life by Joseph Brent (Bloomington and Indianapolis, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1993, 1998, p.177)].

Writing in The Monist, January, 1893, Peirce elaborated:

Like some of the most ancient and some of the most recent speculations it would be a Cosmogonic Philosophy. It would suppose that in the beginning, – infinitely remote, – there was a chaos of unpersonalized feeling [impersonal Brahman], which being without connection or regularity would properly be without existence [non-Being]. This feeling, sporting here and there in pure arbitrariness, would have started the germ of a generalizing tendency. Its other sportings would be

evanescent, but this would have a growing virtue [evolution]. Thus, the tendency to habit would be started; and from this with the other principles of evolution all the regularities of the universe would be evolved [Brent, *ibid.*, p.207, brackets added].

Peirce's evolutionism is the same as that of the Vedas and of Sri Aurobindo:

I have begun by showing that *tychism* [from astronomer Tycho Brahe] must give birth to an evolutionary cosmology, in which all the regularities of nature and of mind are regarded as products of growth, and to a [Frederich von] Schelling-fashioned idealism which holds matter to be a mere specialized and partially deadened mind [condensed Consciousness] [Brent, *ibid.*, p.209, first and third brackets added, second original].

Peirce's tripartite scheme of Reality, explained in the issue of The Monist cited above, is that of the Vedas, too:

First is the conception of being or existing independent of anything else [Sat]. Second is the conception of being relative to, the conception of reaction with, something else [Chit, active consciousness]. Third is the conception of mediation, whereby a first and a second are brought into relation [Ananda, the joyful realization of Being]... [Brent, *ibid.*, p. 207, brackets added].

Lastly, Sri Aurobindo's integral approach is echoed in the "holistic" approach of the more advanced forms of Heathenism: the transcendent is immanent, the spirit-energy is innate, inherent, in everything, Consciousness is the source and the essence of All, hence all of Reality is integrated.

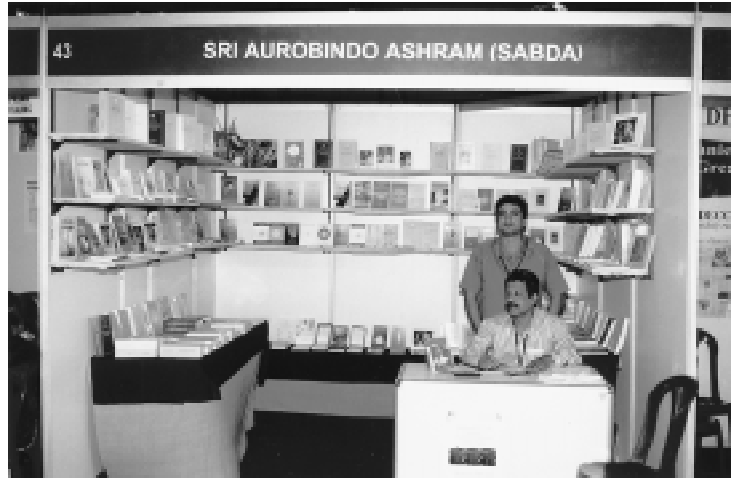
It is evident that in principle Sri Aurobindo's Vedic-derived system has strong parallels to the other major Indo-European spiritual and philosophical systems – Zarathushti Din and Western Heathenism/Paganism. Sri Aurobindo is gaining in importance because Western Heathenism, for centuries suppressed by Judeo-Christianity, has recovered and is growing and enriching itself once again, and is destined to exercise dominant power among Indo-Europeans. Western Heathens are increasingly cognizant of Sri Aurobindo, and thus he is a central factor in the development and in the success of this great movement and in the emergence of the tripartite spiritual supersystem – Vedism/Zarathushti Din/Western Heathenism.

— anonymous

## BOOK FAIRS

SABDA participated in the first Bangalore Book Festival held at Palace Grounds, Bangalore, from 12<sup>th</sup> to 21<sup>st</sup> September.

**SABDA's stall at the Bangalore Book Festival 2003**



The response from the public was very encouraging. Apart from English, books were also sold in Kannada, Tamil, Telugu, Malayalam, Hindi and Sanskrit. It is heartening to note that there is an ever-increasing interest in the major works of Sri Aurobindo.

SABDA also participated in the Neyveli Book Fair held from 1st to 10th August, in collaboration with Sri Aurobindo Society, Neyveli.

**SABDA's stall at the Neyveli Book Fair 2003**

Left to right: Shri R. Narasimhan, Director NLC; Shri K.S. Anandan, Director NLC; Shri C. Jayaraman, Chairman NLC; Shri K.S. Misra IAS, Secretary, Ministry of Coal, Govt. of India; Shri Rajamohan, executive member, Sri Aurobindo Society, Neyveli.

